

Out▼Smart

MARCH 2008

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Lisa Lampanelli



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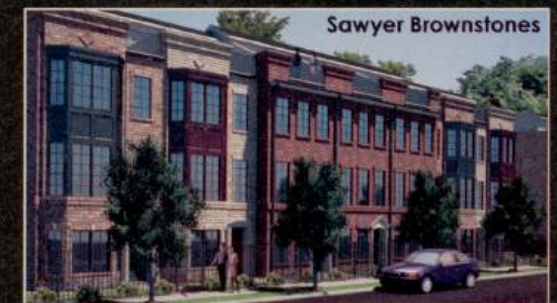
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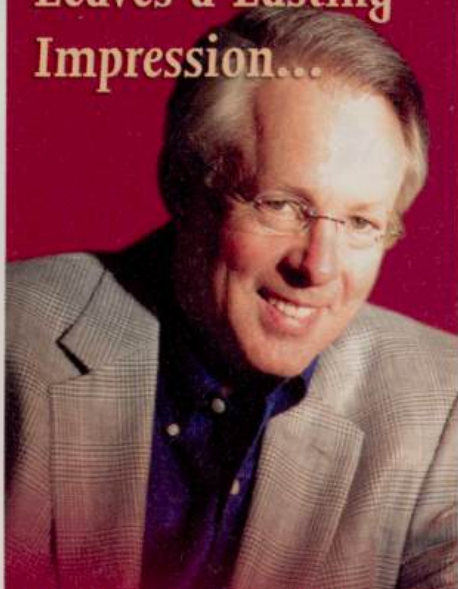


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Letters

MORE ON MANKIND

I was disappointed, shocked, and angered by the article that Wayne Besen wrote titled "Nude Warrior Adventure" ["LeftOut," January 2008]. It appears that he has based his findings on hearsay, third-hand rumors, and unfortunately is blatantly misinformed. I would think that a writer of his stature would at least check some of the facts. Apparently he did not.

He is somehow confused, thinking that The Mankind Project has a mission of providing some type of ex-gay therapy. In fact the mission of The Mankind Project is to make the world a better place, one man at a time. They have a nondiscrimination policy that very prominently includes sexual orientation.

I gained first-hand experience when I attended a weekend training in April of 2007. It was targeted as a bi/gay weekend and was staffed by many supportive straight men. The targeting to bi/gay men was really a non-event because sexual orientation was pretty much not an issue for the weekend training.

His article goes on to weave in stories about ex-gay experiences of a number of people that have nothing whatsoever to do with The Mankind Project. I did not experience the outrageous claims that he has made in his bizarre rendition. My experience was very safe, affirming, educational, supportive, and at the same time challenging. I feel that I have grown to be a better person, partner, father, employer, and citizen of the world as a result of The Mankind Project.

Randy Mitchmore, D.D.S.
Houston

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the February OutSmart, we published a revised Wayne Besen column on the Mankind Project, in which he corrected some of his statements about the organization that were included in his original column. A Publisher's Note in the February issue (which can be read at www.outsmartmagazine.com) further attempted to set the record straight on the Mankind Project and its New Warrior Training.

MEANWHILE, IN GOTHAM CITY...

Early in 2004, I received an e-mail from a man named JD Doyle ["Listen Up!" January 2008] asking why there was nothing on the Internet about the comedy/musical group called Gotham, of which I had formerly been a member. Neither my former Gotham partners nor I had ever met JD or were aware of all the great work he does archiving past and present gay, lesbian, and transgender musicians.

Strictly speaking, we didn't fit into the category of musicians. We had always been "out" performers in the years we worked together (1972-1992), but whereas we participated in creating our own arrangements, for the most part we only did covers of other artists' songs. To our surprise and delight, however, JD had seen us perform at the 1979 March on Washington, and we somehow got stuck in that encyclopedic mind of his. JD not only did a show on us in April 2004, he ended up with over six hours of additional interviews, hundreds of photographs and reviews from London to Los Angeles, and copies of our albums, along with previously unreleased cuts and recordings, both audio and video, of decades-old performances by our group. JD put them all on his unique Queer Music Heritage website, along with an incredibly detailed history of our largely forgotten →

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Letters *continued from page 10*

contributions to the post-Stonewall world. JD recognized, and eloquently shared with his audience, the fact that we were the first group, post-Stonewall, to be openly gay onstage and off without hiding behind the previously obligatory masks of drag or hyper-macho male stereotypes.

We're so proud to finally be represented on the Internet, the history book of our times. We're so pleased to be remembered. And we owe it all to JD Doyle, a true gentleman and artist, a man we are all proud to call friend. He deserves this *OutSmart* tribute (it was a tremendous tribute that you asked him to write it himself) and many more such accolades from every corner of the world. The gay, lesbian, transgender, and, yes, the heterosexual communities owe him a debt of gratitude for his diligence and thoroughness in archiving music and the lives of performers who otherwise would have been forgotten the moment the applause ceased resounding in their ears.

I truly believe that JD is a man who completely enjoys his work, and is every bit as much an artist as any musician, writer, or performer he has ever researched and interviewed. The modesty he displays in the writing of this article is proof of that. The kudos for his work from other writers and award-givers is only beginning to echo in his ears.

David McDaniel
 New York, New York

CHARACTERIZATION OBJECTION

Let me start right off the bat. I have an issue with your staff writer/interviewer Lawrence Ferber, who did an article called "Good Golly, It's Dolly" [*GrooveOut*, November 2005]. Now, I am journalism student, so when reading this article something just didn't feel right. I finally figured out what it was when I realized that Ferber was referring to "rednecks" in his questions towards Parton. This is one example: "Let's talk about your dichotomous fan base for a moment. If I may use a breast analogy, on one teat you have the gays suckling, and on the other teat, the right-wing rednecks." And here's another: "Have any rednecks learned anything or become accepting of homosexuals because they've met under your umbrella?"

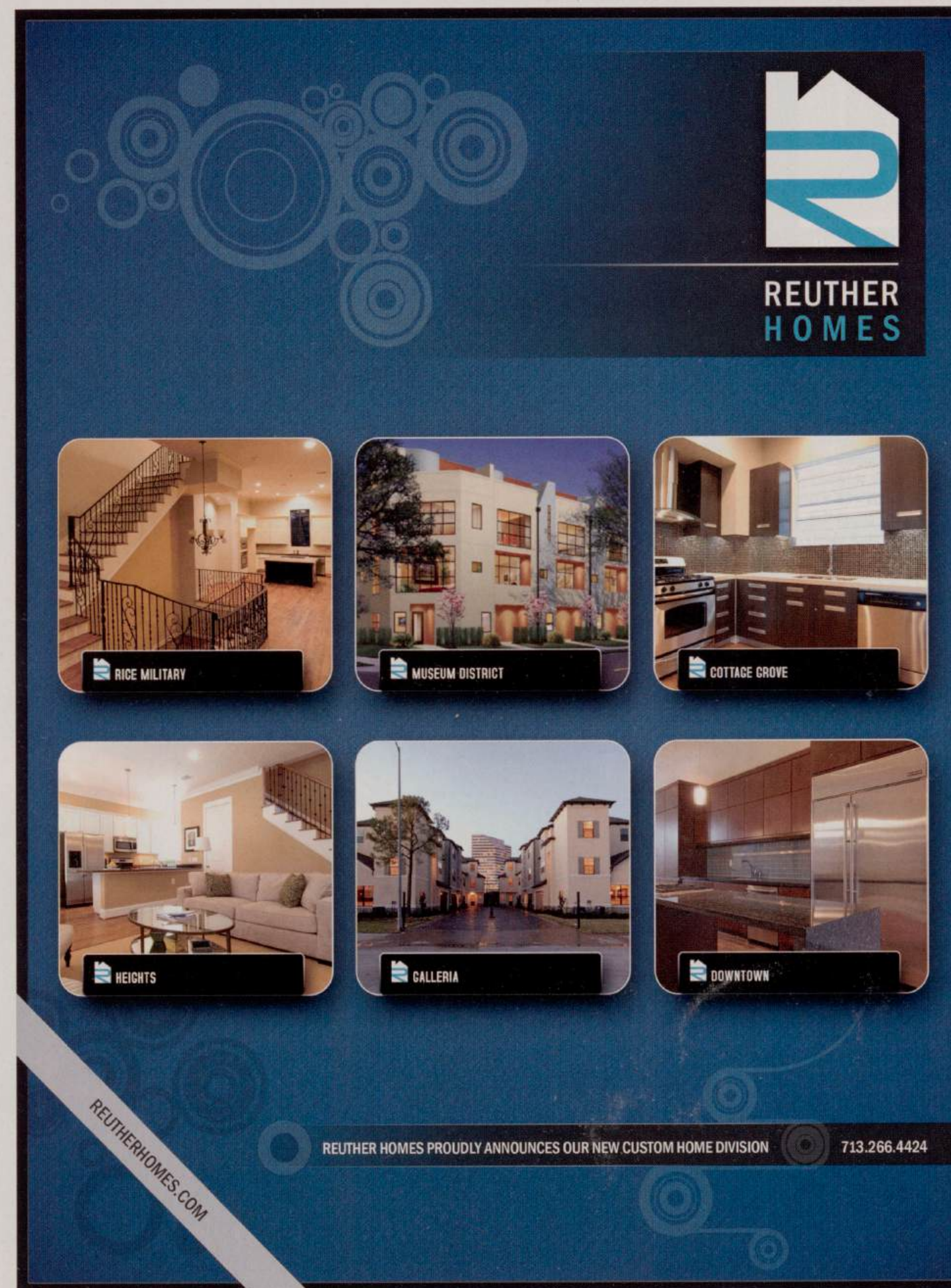
If Ferber has neither the tolerance toward people who view homosexuality a sin, or knowledge that not everyone who disagrees with homosexuality is a redneck, then that's fine. It just shows how uninformed he is, but let's keep it out of the workplace, people. I take offense to Ferber using the term "redneck" to describe the opposition to agreeing with homosexuality, and I assure you there are other people who feel the same. I may only be a student, but sir, that is not journalism. Your questions are biased and hateful.

I am a right-wing, arms-bearing, pro-life, not-agreeing-with-homosexuality middle-class American. I am not a redneck. And I don't like being put into the box that Mr. Ferber so graciously drew for people like me.

Lacey Keel
 Crandall, Texas

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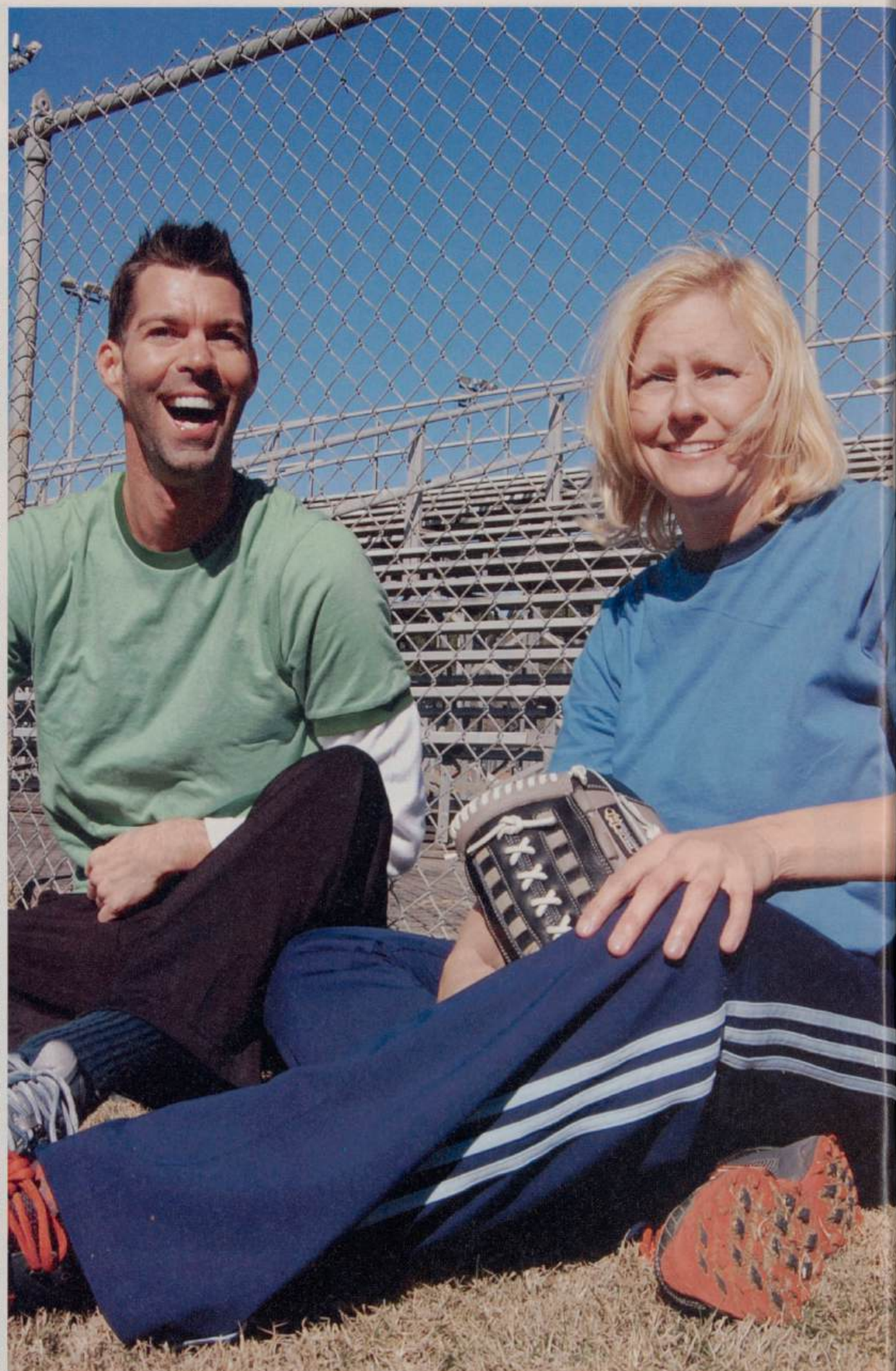
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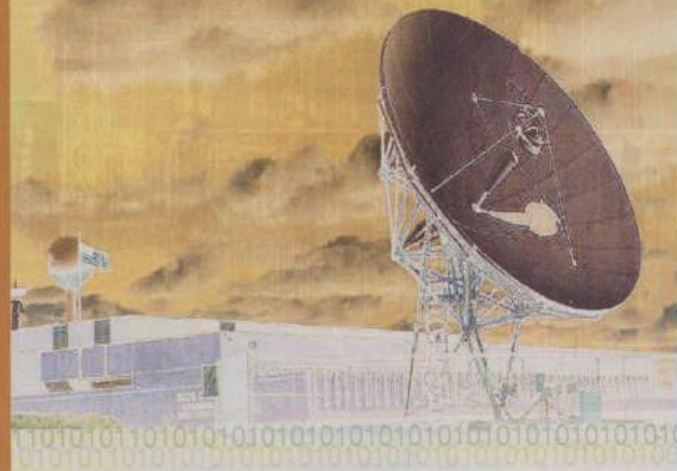
The Montrose Softball League, one of the largest gay sports organizations in the state, has been batting and balling since 1979. Their newest season begins March 30 with a record-setting abundance of men's and women's teams—28 this year—competing against each other. • But the league is about much more than some 448 men and women playing softball, insists league publicity chair Anthony Fry, who is pictured here (on the left) with fellow leaguer, Julie Tyree. "It's not about skill level," Fry says. "It's about making relationships and friendships that last a lifetime." • Exhibiting admirable sportsmanship, each year MSL helps support the community it plays in. The 2008 beneficiaries are the Houston GLBT Community Center and Legacy Community Health Services. • The teams play ball each Sunday through June at the newly renovated Slo-Pitch City in north Houston. Details: www.montrosoftballleague.com.

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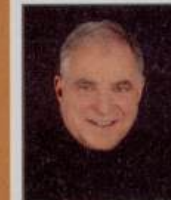


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BYO BLARNEY

On March 14, Montrose Counseling Center throws one of its favorite fundraisers, Bringing in the Green. Center supporters John Danielson III (left) once again hosts the 5:30-8:30 p.m. party at his home, and Dwane Todd (right) provides sustenance. Suggested donation is \$30, or \$25 for seniors (details: 713/520-7237, www.montrosecounselingcenter.org). • Historically, Bringing in the Green was a favorite event of one of the center's long-time supporters, Jack Jackson, who died in 2006. This year, partygoers are encouraged to continue honoring Jackson's tradition of dressing as a leprechaun and soliciting donations by affixing contributions to a special leprechaun display. • The center hopes to raise at least \$20,000 with the event, with funds financing renovation of first floor of the center's building at 401 Branard. • "I love the new building, and our clients love it, too," says community projects specialist Sally Huffer. "We've already started construction on the first floor, which will be the community floor." Huffer says she expects first-floor renovation to be complete in two to three months, just in time for Pride season in June.

Photographed by John Conroy



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CAUCUS, STONEWALL DEMOCRATS ENDORSE CANDIDATES FOR MARCH 4 PRIMARY

At its February 6 meeting, the Houston GLBT Political Caucus political-action committee endorsed a record number of candidates for the 2008 Democratic Party primary on March 4. Candidates were endorsed after screening with the caucus PAC to determine their support of equal rights for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community as well as their positions on other issues. Caucus PAC-endorsed candidates:

U.S. Senator: Rick Noriega
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District Judge, 176th: Shawna L. Reagin
District Judge, 179th: Randy Roll
District Judge, 190th: Andres Pereira
District Judge, 215th: Steven Kirkland
District Judge, 337th: Herb Ritchie
District Judge, 339th: Maria T. Jackson
District Judge, 351st: Silvia Pubchara
Family District Judge, 312th: Robert Hinojosa
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Harris County Sheriff: Adrian Garcia
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Harris County Commissioner, Precinct 3: Dexter Handy
Justice of the Peace, Precinct 1, Place 1: Dale Gornznski
Justice of the Peace, Precinct 2, Place 1:
Raymond Stewart
Justice of the Peace, Precinct 6, Place 1: Richard C. Vara
Harris County Constable, Precinct 1: Jack Abercia
Harris County Constable, Precinct 7: May Walker
Precinct Chair 1: C. Patrick McIlvain

"Very difficult decisions had to be made, and I am very proud of the work everyone has done to make this one of our largest endorsement rosters," caucus president

Jenifer Pool says. "We look forward to our success in the March primary."

Houston Area Stonewall Democrats made its endorsements for the primary election at a February 9 meeting. Many of the endorsed candidates match the caucus PAC endorsement list. For the Stonewall Democrats endorsed candidates, visit www.houstonareastonewalldemocrats.com.

Log Cabin Republicans-Houston had submitted questionnaires to selected Republican candidates but had received no responses by mid-February and did not intend to make endorsements in the Republican primary, according to Noel Freeman of the Log Cabin chapter.

Two local judicial candidates, Andres Pereira and Steven Kirkland, have received endorsements from the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, which supports openly GLBT candidates across the nation. In other Texas primary races, the Victory Fund has endorsed Lupe Valdez, who is seeking a second term as Dallas County sheriff; Glen Maxey, the former state representative who is a candidate for Travis County (Austin) tax assessor collector; and Brian Thompson, candidate for District 46 (Austin) state representative. Another Victory Fund-endorsed candidate, Randi Shade, is a candidate in the May 4 election for Austin City Council.

POLITICOS LINE UP BEHIND NOMINEES

Ahead of the March 4 Democratic primary election, a number of Houston-area elected officials with GLBT community ties have announced support for one of the Democratic presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama.

At press time, politicians who have publicly endorsed or supported Clinton include U.S. Congressional representatives Sheila Jackson Lee and Gene Green, City Controller Annise Parker, City Council members Sue Lovell and James Rodriguez, Harris County commissioner Sylvia Garcia, and state representative candidate and former City Council member Carol Alvarado. All have received the endorsement of the Houston GLBT Political Caucus in their current or previous races.

Parker (who also contributes a monthly column to *OutSmart*) and Lovell are members of the national GLBT steering committee for the Clinton campaign. Lovell, Green, and Lee are three of the much-discussed super delegates who may play a major role in selecting the final nominee. Lovell is also a member of the Democratic National Committee.

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Protesters rallied for same-sex marriage rights at the county clerk's office on February 14.

Local protest marriage laws at county clerk's office

On February 14, a group of nearly 40 gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender activists and allies marched from City Hall to the Harris County Clerk's office to protest laws that prohibit same-sex couples from obtaining marriage licenses. The action was part of local Freedom To Marry Week activities, organized in Houston by the Foundation for Family & Marriage Equality. Other Freedom To Marry events included the annual same-sex wedding celebration, held on February 17 at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church. Thirty-seven couples participated in the ceremony.

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Politicians who have endorsed or supported Obama include state representatives Alma Allen, Garnet Coleman, Borris Miles, Senfronia Thompson, and Sylvester Turner, and City Council member Peter Brown. Former City Council member Ada Edwards has also endorsed Obama. Thompson is a superdelegate. The political caucus has endorsed these politicians this year or in the past.

The leading community political organizations, the Houston GLBT Political Caucus, the Houston Area Stonewall Democrats, the Houston Stonewall Young Democrats, and Log Cabin Republicans-Houston, did not endorse presidential candidates by the *OutSmart* press deadline.



Ugly Betty star America Ferrera stumped for Hillary Clinton in Houston on February 17.

CELEBS FLY IN TO SUPPORT CANDIDATES

As the primary season heated up in Texas, celebrities began winging into Houston to drum up enthusiasm for their favored presidential candidates. The celebs supporting Hillary Clinton included America Ferrara, star of the gay-positive ABC series *Ugly Betty*, who spoke at a February 17 rally at 6th Street Bar & Grill in the Heights. Barack Obama-supporting celebs included comedian George Lopez, who spoke at a February 16 event at the Houston for Obama headquarters in Midtown.

VOTING CONTINUES FOR PARADE GRAND MARSHAL NOMINEES

Pride Houston organizers have announced the following nominees for Grand Marshal positions for the 2008 GLBT Pride Parade.

Kelly McCann, Jenifer Rene Pool, Cristina Martinez, and Barbara Walker are nominees for female grand marshal. Mark Cohen, Dalton DeHart, and Keith Napier are candidates for male grand marshal. Julie Eberly is the sole candidate for honorary grand marshal. AIDS Foundation Houston and Legacy Community Health Services are nominated for the organization grand marshal.

Adults living in Harris or adjacent counties may vote for grand marshals at the following locations: March 1 at Club Eden (20701 Gulf Freeway, Webster); March 14 at Chances (1102 1/2 Westheimer); and March 21 at JR's Bar & Grill (808 Pacific). Voting also takes place at the Pride Houston office (1415 California) each Saturday through March 15, from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m.

As in previous years, the community at large nominated female, male, organization, and honorary grand marshal candidates at the end of January. Pride Houston will announce the grand marshals at a March 24 event at Cafe Adobe (2111 Westheimer).

The Pride Parade is set for Saturday, June 28, beginning at 8:45 p.m. at the intersection of Dunlavy and Westheimer in Montrose. Details: www.pridehouston.org.



Once known for extravagant shows, the Diana Foundation has scaled back its gala but continues to raise money.

DIANA FOUNDATION MARKS 55 YEARS OF FUNDRAISING WITH MARCH 29 EVENT

The Diana Foundation, once best known for its annual elaborate variety shows, celebrates 55 years of fundraising in the local GLBT community with its event "Diana at 55" on March 29. As one of the oldest active gay philanthropic organizations in the nation, the Diana Foundation has scaled-down its yearly events but continues its work.

Established in 1953 by a group of gay men as an Academy Awards-viewing party, the foundation has since raised in excess of \$2 million for local causes. This support has included early operating funds for AIDS Foundation Houston; start-up funds for the McAdory House, which was a residence for people living with AIDS that operated in the first years of the HIV crisis; and early support for the Montrose Clinic (now Legacy Community Health Services following the clinic's merger with the Assistance Fund, another Diana beneficiary). Other community organizations that have received Diana Foundation funds are Bering Omega Community Services, the Colt 45's Houston AIDS Trouble Fund, and the Pet Patrol.

Dallas entertainer Linda Petty will perform at the Diana Foundation black-tie dinner and show, which begins at 7 p.m., at the Houston City Club in Greenway Plaza. Proceeds from ticket sales (\$150) from the 2008 show benefit the Houston GLBT Community Center and Saving Animals/The Mickey Hagey Center for Animals. Tickets: 713/639-2000.



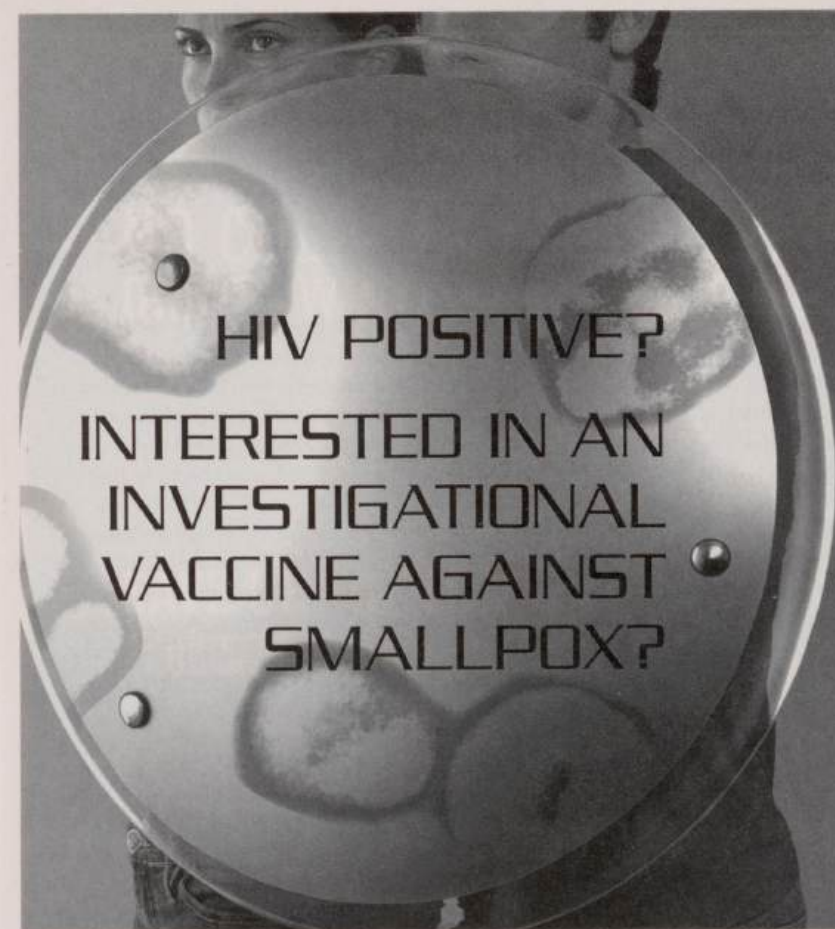
One of the rodeo horses painted by Kermit Eisenhut.

HORSING AROUND: ARTIST PAINTS EQUINES FOR RODEO

Kermit Eisenhut is one of the artists painting 28 fiberglass horses displayed around the city during the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in March. Eisenhut, who frequently contributes work to gay and AIDS causes, has completed 12 of the hand-painted mustangs, most of which will be displayed at Reliant Stadium throughout the March 3-22 rodeo. Some of the horses will then be auctioned for charity. The public art project developed from the Cow Parade in 1999, which originated in Chicago and then developed into a popular nationwide effort.

When he isn't painting horses, Eisenhut leads the weekly HIV+ Healing Art Group at Art League Houston.

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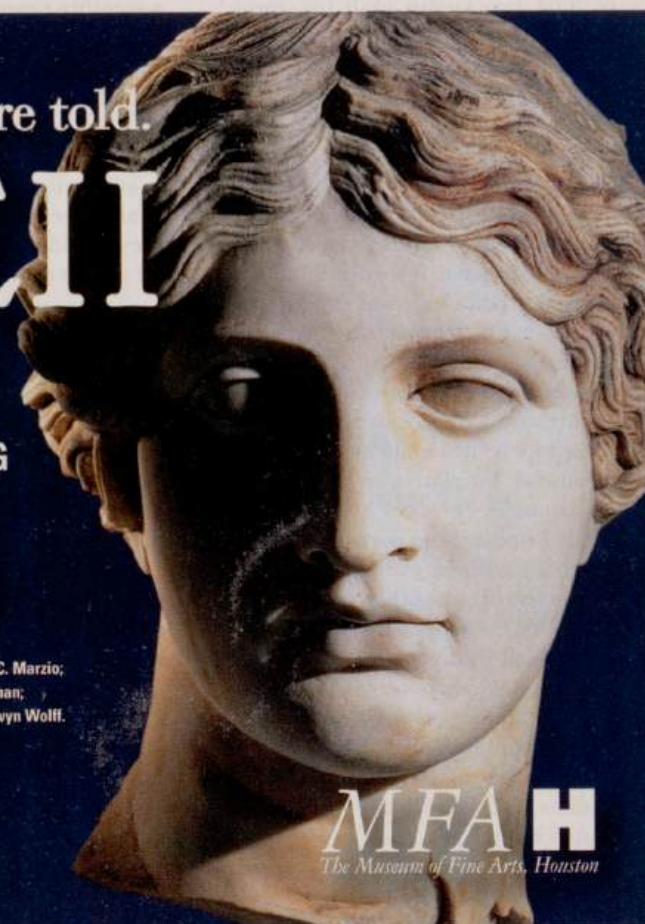
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FREE AT LAST

Texas legislators finally stop toying around with dildo laws

Ladies and gentlemen, start your dildos: Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has overturned a Texas statute outlawing sex toy sales.

That's right. Until just this past February 13, it was illegal in this state to "sell, advertise, give or lend obscene devices, defined as a device used primarily for sexual stimulation," according to Texas law.

Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, free at last.

Employing the *Lawrence v. Texas* decision, the judges in Austin determined that the anti-dildo ban violated the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment regarding right to privacy.

In 2004, two Austin adult-toy stores sued over the constitutionality of the law, so it's fitting that the decision to free the dildos was handed down there.

The appeals judges wrote: "The case is not about public sex. It is not about controlling commerce in sex. It is about controlling what people do in the privacy of their own homes because the state is morally opposed to a certain kind of consensual private intimate conduct. This is an insufficient justification after *Lawrence*."

Previously, Texas law stated that one could purchase a dildo, but only if it were to be used for a "bona fide medical, psychiatric, judicial, legislative or law enforcement purpose."

While I understand perfectly how one could benefit medically and psychiatrically from the dil, the other three applications mystify me. *Judicial and legislative purposes?* Isn't that what gavels are for? *Law enforcement purposes?* If I remember correctly, that disruptive University of Florida student didn't cry, "Don't dil me, bro!"

Besides, dildos don't kill people. People with guns kill people.

Prior to February 13, it was presumed in Texas that anyone in possession of six or more dildos intended to sell them.

According to this line of thinking, anyone with more than six golf clubs intends to open a pro shop.

Just like golf clubs, one needs different dils for different predicaments. You don't use a putter to get yourself out of the rough.

Nonetheless, legislators determined possession of sex toys, when in a flock of six or more, was obscene based on community standards.

Beijing legalized the sale of sex toys—in 1994.

But how can "community standards" be defined in a town like Houston? In an area measuring less than two square miles, my personal community contains Joel Osteen's mega-church, the Islamic

Society of Greater Houston's mini-mosque, a satellite branch of Legacy Community Health Services, the Diamond Club where women dance purt-near nekkid, and a Schlotsky's. The standards of my community are anything but standard.

Then again, if legislators were forced to get excited about real issues—like healthcare, education, feeding the poor—they wouldn't get much media attention. Or in this column, for that matter.

Texas conservatives, including Rep. Warren Chisum (R-surprise!), were responsible for making possession of six or more dildos a nuisance-level Class 3 Misdemeanor, like a traffic ticket. Chisum later told his dissenting then-colleague, Rep. Debra Danburg (D-of course!), that he would happily elevate the charge to a felony if he could.

That exchange prompted inimitable Texas satirist, the late Molly Ivins, to quip, "It's now illegal for a prick to touch an asshole in this state."

Today, Molly would be proud that Texas is finally catching up with the rest of the world: Beijing legalized the sale of sex toys—in 1994.

Alabama now has the distinction of being the state with the strictest ban on such devices. You might want to rethink that transfer to Birmingham.

My pal Ray Hill recently told me that

there are 112 known outlets selling sex toys within Houston's city limits, not including farmer's markets. Ray also told me the ban was rarely enforced unless a complaint was filed against the purveyor. That was the case last July when members of the Houston Police Department entered Hollywood Superstore in Montrose, arresting owner Denny Denh and two employees for "selling and promoting obscene devices." Denh settled his case before February 13, but I bet he's busy restocking his inventory as we speak.

Certainly, it was time to sweep this insane, inane law from the books. Besides restricting Texans' sexual pleasure to its basic Judeo/Christian, vagio/penile application, anti-dildo legislation deprives us of our cultural heritage. According to The History Channel, there is plenty of hieroglyphic and artifactual evidence that the ancient Egyptians—including Cleopatra—enjoyed their dildos. Insert your own asp-plug joke here.

Speaking of jokes, I used to tell one that went a little something like this: "My mother used to ask me, 'How do you know you're gay? Can't you have an orgasm with a man?' I would reply, 'Yes, Mother, I can have an orgasm with a man. I can also have an orgasm with a six-pack of Lone Star and a hairbrush, but I don't want to set up housekeeping that way.'"

Who knew then that that joke could have been considered a confession?

At this writing, prosecutors and the Texas Court of Appeals had not decided whether or not it should revisit its decision to lift the ban. Just in case, just as a precaution, perhaps it's time to form a new lobbying group—the National Dildo Association. The NDA motto: "They can take my dildo when they pry it from my cold, dead fingers."

But as long as there are hairbrushes, zucchini, ketchup bottles, Barbie dolls, corn dogs, stick shifts, turkey legs, inflatable slappy tubes like the ones at Houston Comets' games, gnome lawn statuettes, fire hydrants, the Hindenburg, and similarly shaped objects, the world will never be without the mighty dildo.

Oh, the humanity. ■

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MAKING CHANGE

It will take more than sloganeering to shift our national culture

I caught the political bug while in college in 1992, seduced by the charming optimism of Bill Clinton's presidential campaign. At the time, I was interning as a radio news reporter at KQED in San Francisco. One of my assignments was to cover a Clinton visit. Although I was still a political neophyte, there was something special about this candidate. With a central theme of "change," he inspired and instilled hope—while making the future seem limitless.

Beyond his political gifts, Clinton substantively appealed to me because he was in favor of gay and lesbian equality. I had come out four years earlier, and a pervasive silence on GLBT issues had been the norm for political discourse. By and large, "gay" was something to be whispered in the cloakroom—not an issue thoughtfully discussed by the most powerful political figures in the land.

Bill Clinton changed this.

On May 11, 1992, the presidential candi-

date made an unprecedented appearance at a gay fundraiser at the Palace Theater in Hollywood. Organized by GLBT advocate David Mixner, \$100,000 was raised for the Clinton campaign. The candidate gave an historic speech that led the audience to break out in spontaneous applause on several occasions.

"Tonight I want to talk to you about how we can be one people again, without regard to race or gender or sexual orientation or age or region or income," Clinton told the appreciative crowd. "Those of you who are here tonight represent a community of our nation's gifted people whom we have been willing to squander. We cannot afford to waste the capacity, the contributions, the heart, the soul, and the mind of gay and lesbian Americans....What I came here to tell you in simple terms, is, I have a vision and you're a part of it."

Today's young people (and many older voters) forget Clinton's mesmerizing and momentous outreach to the GLBT community.

He offered groundbreaking opportunities and an unsurpassed vision of hope. Clinton's call for unity sparked the imagination and inspired a new generation who wanted a break from the old ways. Indeed, it becomes crystal clear when one reads Clinton's old speeches that he was the Barack Obama of 1992—the change agent who would transform Washington.

So, what happened?

From the moment the Clintons set foot in the White House, they endured unrelenting attacks by the right, who saw the family as illegitimate usurpers of ascendant conservative power.

The far right—mostly Republicans, but some Democrats, such as Sen. Sam Nunn (D-GA)—kneecapped Clinton's efforts to allow gays to serve openly in the military. Of course, Clinton deserves blame for cravenly capitulating and allowing the disastrous "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy to become law.

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A FAILING MID-TERM GRADE FOR THE DEMS

Pro-gay legislation may be a harder subject than they expected

A year ago at this time there were high hopes among gay activists for the new Democratic Congress. They were going to pass legislation expanding gay rights and eliminating discrimination that had long been blocked by the Republicans in power since 1995. Even if Bush vetoed new gay-rights legislation, the Democrats would at least put him on the defensive about it and build momentum for the day when the Democrats took the White House. All of this would be payback for the huge amount of time, energy, and money that gay Americans—their third most loyal voting constituency after blacks and Jews—had given the Democrats.

That was then.

At the midpoint of this Congress, it's not looking very good. Not one piece of pro-gay legislation has even reached the president's desk.

Let's look in more detail at just how far short the Democrats have fallen. In a column one year ago, I proposed a 100-point scorecard based on four key issues and suggested

how to evaluate the total:

- 75–100 points: Never vote for another Republican.
- 50–74 points: Democrats are worth our first-born children.
- 30–49 points: Democrats are willing to fight for gay equality, at some political risk.
- 10–29 points: Democrats will do the minimum necessary to mollify gays.
- 0–9 points: Democrats know they can take gays for granted.

Now here are the four issues and how things are looking so far:

(1) **Federal Recognition of Gay Relationships** (worth up to 50 points): Congress has done nothing to eliminate or modify the Defense of Marriage Act, passed by a Republican Congress and signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996. It has also done nothing to give spousal benefits to the same-sex domestic partners of federal employees. Not only has no vote been taken on proposals to do these things, there

have not even been hearings on them. While the Democratic presidential candidates have talked about such things, we learned painfully from the 1992 presidential campaign of Bill Clinton that talk is very cheap.

Points for the Democrats: 0.

(2) **Gays in the Military** (worth up to 30 points): Congress has done nothing to eliminate or modify the ban on gays in the military, passed by a Democratic Congress and signed by Clinton in 1993. There have been no hearings on the subject, either, despite a stream of military leaders coming out against the policy and a wartime decline in antigay discharges. Again, the Democratic presidential candidates all oppose DADT on paper, but this counts for nothing until something is actually done.

Points for the Democrats: 0.

(3) **ENDA** (worth up to 15 points): The Employment Non-Discrimination Act passed the House, with 35 Republicans providing the necessary margin for passage. That first-ever triumph for a gay-rights bill was thanks →

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LeftOut

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But, let's not forget that it was a concerted effort by the right wing to humiliate Clinton that resulted in this fiasco.

Led by the Clinton-hating tycoon Richard Mellon Scaife and Rev. Jerry Falwell, the barrage of phony "scandals" and outrageous allegations continued unabated. Matters got worse when the irrepressible Newt Gingrich became House Speaker in 1994. The Clinton obsession reached a head, so to speak, during the Monica Lewinsky drama. In what amounted to an attempted *coup d'etat*, the right wing tried to impeach Clinton for private sexual relations.

The truth is, the conservative movement is as pugnacious as it is repugnant. It is arrogance with a self-centered sense of entitlement, with its unpatriotic actions wrapped in the flag and justified in the name of God.

As imperfect and, at times, disappointing as the Clintons may have been, for many years they were all that stood in the way of the conservative movement's complete domination and takeover of America.

Unfortunately, for their successful efforts at partially derailing the conservative juggernaut, the Clintons are being blamed for sully the tone in Washington. This twisted line of reasoning reminds me of the kid who finally retaliates against his bullying tormentors, only to be sent to the school's office and reprimanded for fighting. The historical revisionism on the Clinton era must stop because it does not conform to reality. They did not pick the fights, they just retaliated, and often won. If Obama is elected president and faces the same frontal assault as Bill and Hillary, he will suffer precisely the same partisan fate. We can only hope that he has the killer instinct and resourcefulness to effectively fight back.

There are many reasons to vote for Obama: He is smart, inspiring, and an historic figure that would likely make a terrific president. But, changing the tone in Washington is not a reason to cast your vote on his behalf. The conservatives are still there—though largely discredited—serving their selfish movement rather than America. We ought to reward candidates who stand up to their evil agenda, rather than peg them as divisive and part of the problem.

While this may make great campaign rhetoric, Bill Clinton's presidency is a cautionary tale. Nothing in Washington is going to "change" until the modern conservative movement is transformed or vanquished.

Wayne Besen, author of *Bashing Back and Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth*, writes a weekly column published at www.waynebesen.com.

OutRight

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largely to the leadership of Barney Frank, who fended off efforts by left-wing gay groups to kill the bill because it did not include explicit protection for transgendered people. Senator Ted Kennedy has promised to introduce the bill in the Senate, but so far no action has been taken or scheduled. It's unclear whether the bill will even get a vote in the Senate this year.

Points for the Democrats: 5.

(4) **Hate Crimes Legislation** (worth up to 5 points): This is the least important of the four issues. There's no evidence hate crimes laws actually deter hate crimes, but a federal law would have some symbolic value. Yet even that seems unlikely to come out of this Congress. Both the House and the Senate have passed hate-crimes legislation, but have waffled on how to send the bill to President Bush for his signature or veto. An effort to send the bill to Bush as part of a larger defense spending authorization foundered when anti-war liberal Democrats opposed the spending.

Points for the Democrats: 3.

By my scorecard, the Democrats have earned just eight out of a possible 100 points at mid-term, which means that so far at least they're taking gay support entirely for granted. While they still have about 10 months to go, it seems unlikely they'll accomplish much in an election year when they have to worry about reelection and are likely to let gay rights take a seat even further back on the bus.

The Democrats' anemic performance so far does not necessarily mean you should vote for Republicans this November. If you support the Democrats' views on taxes, the Iraq war, national healthcare, and other issues, you're likely to back them even if they get nothing more done on gay rights.

But the Democrats' failure to produce does liberate other voters—those who intensely support gay rights but disagree with the Democrats on other important issues. Many of these voters, subordinating their strong feelings about non-gay issues, have supported Democrats in the past because they believed the Democrats would actually accomplish something positive for gay rights.

Now these voters will find it harder to support a Democrat they would otherwise oppose just because the candidate says she supports civil unions, employment protection, ending the military ban, and the like. For them, voting Republican is not a strategy to punish the Democrats for their faithlessness on gay issues. It's a vote of principle.

Soothing words are nice, and the Democrats excel at such kindnesses. But results matter much more. On this, so far at least, they're failing.

Writing from the conservative side, Dale Carpenter began his column for OutSmart in 1994, when he lived in Houston. Now residing in Minneapolis, Carpenter is a University of Minnesota Law School professor.

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by Annise D. Parker

FULL CIRCLE

An ironic farewell to former Houston mayor, Louie Welch

I had a truly surreal experience one day last month. And the next day on the front of the Metro Section of the *Houston Chronicle* was a photograph that captured it. It was a photo of a police honor guard arrayed at attention awaiting a funeral procession. Standing at the end of the row, also at attention, is a woman. The photo is nicely composed, shot from behind to capture the individuals and the shadows they cast.

It lead me to think about both the "odd" bedfellows (old-timers who remember the Frank Mann versus Eleanor Tinsley council race will understand the use of that word) that politics can create and the hair-splitting that politicians sometimes have to do to arrive at a position on complicated issues. How do you deal with a person who has valuable skills or has done great things politically, but does stupid and irresponsible things on a personal level (a former president and a local state rep jump quickly to mind)?

This doesn't just happen in politics, of course. Most of us have a relative who makes us cringe when he opens his mouth and attacks some minority group, but whom we love for other reasons. Or we have a friend who embarrasses us when he drinks too much, but who has our back when we need a hand. It's just that in politics some reporter is bound to find that relative you want to keep hidden or print something linking you to that friend with the lapse in judgment. Then you have to play out that cognitive dissonance in public. (See, that psychology degree has come in handy!)

Courtesy is certainly owed the holder of a political office, at whatever level of politics. This is, of course, why we stand when the president enters the room. One shows respect for the office, whether one respects the person who holds the office or not.

There have been times when I had to perform a personal reality check while at-

tending a public function. For example, I've attended events honoring former U.S. Rep. Tom DeLay, whose politics I found reprehensible. He was being honored for his steadfast support for NASA and as a champion of foster families. I share his strong support of both those causes and the organizations in question.

And as a fellow Rice graduate, I admired the intellect and inspirational personal success story that characterized former U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. I have always found him to be a kind, decent, and humble man. Yet this is the same man who displayed breathtaking intellectual dishonesty in several rulings and testimony as the nation's highest attorney.

Where does one draw the line?

Former Houston Mayor Louie Welch was not a simple man. He served five terms as mayor (1963-1973), after two unsuccessful tries. Before that, he was a council →

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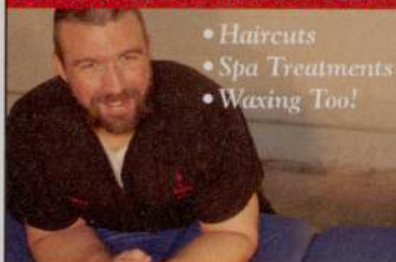


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InsideOut

continued from page 28

member for four years. I believe he is the only former council member to become mayor. He led what is now the Greater Houston Partnership after leaving office. He was a true visionary, securing the water rights that Houston uses today, creating the EMS function of the fire department and expanding Houston's international presence. Gregarious and quick with a quip but fiercely tenacious, he was a rat terrier of a man—he simply adored Houston with every inch of his 5'6" being.

Yes, this is the same Louie Welch who uttered those stupid, derogatory words "Shoot the queers" in 1985. As you may recall, while waiting to begin a TV interview he tried to make a joke about his strategy to prevent AIDS. The camera was rolling and the live feed went directly to the TV station.

Welch was a man of his time and that time had passed him by. He was a politician who learned his craft when reporters carefully edited the public personas of the powerful, and all interviews were on tape. The remark would be utterly shocking by today's standards of public humor, but it was crude and offensive even in the 1980s. An overnight printing of hundreds

of T-shirts pleading "Louie, don't shoot!" raised money for the gay community's political efforts. Welch subsequently lost his political comeback bid to unseat mayor Kathy Whitmire.

Funerals are a part of politics. Attending a funeral is a sign of respect to the deceased and a gift of compassion to their family. When a person in elected office attends, it can be especially meaningful. I have colleagues who seem to comb the obituaries for funerals to attend. My personal rule, however, is to attend only those where the deceased would actually know who I am. For example, when Ann Richards died many of my council colleagues traveled to Austin to attend the service. I am a great fan, have read her autobiography, and even have a picture on my office wall taken of the two of us while she was governor. While we had met several times, she would not know me on the street. I did not attend the service.

On the other hand, I make it a point to attend services for city employees (police, fire, and civilian) who have been killed on the job during my tenure in office. I perceive that as part of my duty to a colleague in public service. I have been shocked that many of my peers do not view this the same way.

When Mayor Welch failed for the first time to attend the most recent city inauguration, I knew he was very ill. When he died, the mayor, council members, and I received notice of the funeral arrangements. He would be accorded what is our version of a state funeral. Out of respect for his devotion to the city I also love, I joined hundreds of mourners and attended.

Former mayors Hofheinz and Lanier attended the service, but slipped away at the end. Mayor White actually had to leave before the service ended. No other sitting city official bothered to attend.

So there I found myself, standing at attention with the honor guard, the lone representative of the elected leadership of the City of Houston. I still have my T-shirt, carefully saved. I think Mayor Welch might have appreciated the irony.

Annise D. Parker is the second-term city controller and the highest-ranking openly GLBT-elected municipal official in any of the 10 largest U.S. cities. Her website is www.houstoncontroller.org. Parker's television program, Money Matters, airs Monday on the Municipal Channel (Comcast) at 2 and 8 a.m. and 2 and 8 p.m. The City Controller's webpage is www.houston.tx.gov/controller/index.html. To receive the controller's newsletter, send an e-mail to cicely.wynne@cityofhouston.net.

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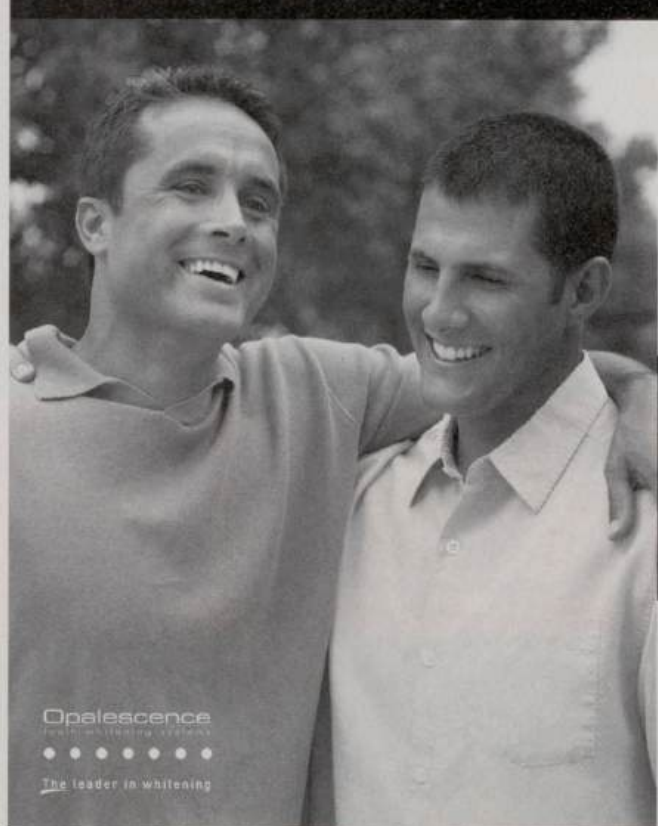
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WORDPLAY ON A SERIOUS SUBJECT

March is the time to march against HIV/AIDS

March! I'm referring to the proper noun, not the verb.

I love this month! March has always been special for me. When I was a young girl, March heralded the arrival of softball season, which was for me akin to a religious experience. A strawberry on my leg obtained from sliding safely into second base was far better than any stigmata.

Throughout my childhood, my mother made March 17, St. Patrick's Day, a festive day in our Irish-heritage household. The leprechaun would visit, leaving green and white mints for me and green beer for the adults. I now see the adults got the better end of the deal.

Later, in 1979, during my senior year in high school, March took on singular significance. I came out on March 23, after being felt up in the back seat of a Chevy Caprice following *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Ain't that romantic?

I still celebrate my coming-out anniversary each March, but the month now has an even more important event associated with it—AIDS Walk Houston, the largest AIDS fundraiser in the Southwest.

Proceeds raised through the walk support the work of AIDS Foundation Houston and 18 other AIDS service organizations and clinics. Together, walk beneficiaries provide medical care, food, housing, counseling, case management, and other supportive services to thousands of HIV-infected Houstonians each year, as well as offering HIV testing and life-saving prevention information to our entire community.

The 19th AIDS Walk Houston is March 9 in Sam Houston Park. For more information, or to register, please visit www.AIDSWalkHouston.org or call 713/403-WALK. Listed here are the partner agencies and a little about what AIDS Walk Houston helps each of these fine agencies do.

AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc. provides a full array of prevention interventions and supportive services, including food and housing programs, to men, women, and children living with HIV/AIDS. Details: 713/623-6796

Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative improves the health and lives of HIV-infected children and families through comprehensive care and treatment, health professional training, and multi-center clinical research. Details: 832/822-1038.

Bering Omega Community Services provides compassionate care to low-income and disenfranchised individuals living with HIV/AIDS, including dental, day care, housing, and hospice programs. Details: 713/529-6071.

Bread of Life Inc. empowers the less fortunate with compassion by providing a continuum of care and by using a community network approach. Details: 713/650-0595. →

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AIDS Watch continued from page 32

Brentwood Community Foundation is a nonprofit organization committed to providing education and supportive services to people with HIV/AIDS. Details: 713/852-1451.

Career and Recovery Resources, Inc. is a multi-faceted social services agency specializing in job placement and substance-abuse treatment. Details: 713/754-7000.

The Center for AIDS Information and Advocacy empowers people living with HIV to make informed decisions about their healthcare by providing the latest research and treatment information. Details: 713/527-8219.

Families Under Urban and Social Attack, Inc. (FUUSA) strives to address societal problems that affect families by empowering the community through education, prevention, research, advocacy, intervention, and collaboration. Details: 713/651-1470.

Houston Buyers Club improves the quality of life for people with health-related conditions through nutritional education and affordable nutritional supplements. Details: 713/520-5288.

Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program, Inc. provides legal assistance in civil matters to low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS. Details: 713/228.0735.

The Lazarus House is a nonprofit organization that provides a low-cost program of wellness in a comfortable environment for clients suffering from muscle loss due to chronic illness. Details: 713/526-5071.

Legacy Community Health Services is a federally qualified health center open to all Houstonians. Legacy specializes in HIV/AIDS testing and treatment for all members of our community. Details: 713/830-3000.

New Hope Counseling Center, Inc. is a community-based agency working to find solutions to the health and social problems of minorities and new immigrants. Details: 713/776-8006.

Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas, Inc. provides healthcare, testing, information, and education so that people can make informed decisions to live and love the way that is best for them. Details: 713/522-6363.

Rapha House Outreach Center, Inc. seeks to provide HIV/AIDS services in Northwest Houston that will prevent health disparities and give hope to communities of color. Details: 713/668-6868.

Resurrection MCC maintains an HIV Benevolence Fund that assists those with HIV/AIDS status with food, utility assistance, rental assistance, gas cards, and other resources. Details: 713/861-9149.

Southeast Texas Legal Clinic provides

free legal advice and representation to people living with HIV/AIDS in the Houston area. Details: 713/523-7852.

Spay-Neuter Assistance Program, Inc. works to prevent the suffering and death of cats and dogs due to overpopulation, especially in low-income areas. Details: 713/862-3863.

Texas Children's Hospital-Department of Allergy & Immunology provides testing, treatment, clinical trials, and social services to children, adolescents, and pregnant women living in Houston and surrounding cities. Details: 832/824-1319.

AIDS Walk Houston is the year's most important fundraising event for our local HIV community. So put on your sneakers, grab your checkbook, and get out there on Sunday, March 9!

Join 15,000 of your friends and neighbors at Sam Houston Park. You can people-watch, enjoy the entertainment, get a little exercise, learn about HIV/AIDS and our local service providers, remember your friends and loved ones, show your support, and raise money.

Make this March something special and walk the Walk, please.

March! This time, it's the verb.

Kelly A. McCann is the chief executive officer of AIDS Foundation Houston, which recently marked 25 years of service. Details: www.aidshep.org.

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THE NEW k.d.

**Chanteuse
k.d. lang talks
about her new
CD—her first all-
original recording
since 2000—her
former flame, and
her new love...
but not much**

by Lawrence Ferber
Photo by Jeri Heiden

K.d. lang is on the phone, and I immediately sense that she has probably endured a long day of press and publicity chores—perhaps fielding the same questions over and over again, suffering ill-prepared journalists, who knows? She is short with her answers. Too succinct. She even clams up a couple of times, leaving only dead air on the line.

That's fine, though. Lang's latest CD, *Watershed* (Nonesuch), does more than enough speaking for itself: a sumptuous, dreamy, melodic affair wedding introspective lyrics with romantic and melancholy music. Producing, writing, singing, and playing multiple instruments, lang proves a true musical auteur. Country twang can be found within "I Dream of Spring," and "Once in a While," harkening back to her country roots (after all, lang hails from the cattle and prairie country of Alberta, Canada), while the combo of shimmering vibraphone, strings, and effects on "Je Fais La Planche" bring to mind Chicago's post-rock legend, Tortoise. And "Sunday" and "Shadows and Frame" are so lushly beautiful that they could melt a boulder-sized knot of angst.

"*Watershed* is like a culmination of everything I've done," lang explains in the press release for the CD, which is released this month. "There's a little bit of jazz, a little country, a little of the *Ingénue* sound, a little Brazilian touch. It really feels like the way I hear music, this mash-up of genres, and I think it reflects all the styles that have preceded this in my catalogue."

Watershed is lang's first album of original material since *Invincible Summer*, released in 2000. Since then she's kept quite busy, however, with the 2002 Tony Bennett collaboration, *A Wonderful World*, *Hymns of the 49th Parallel*, a 2004 cover album of songs by fellow Canadian artists, and numerous duets/guest appearances with the likes of Anne Murray, Madeleine Peyroux, and Nellie McKay. In support of her new recording, lang launched a tour on February 23 at the Boston Opera House, following a January 26 preview performance aboard an Olivia cruise, part of the 35th anniversary celebration of the travel company for lesbians and friends.

But back to that phone call, during which we spoke of the meanings behind her songs, ex-girlfriend/*L-Word* star Leisha Hailey, and some election predictions.

Lawrence Ferber: Did *Watershed's* songs pour out all at once?

k.d. lang: No, I wrote it over around six years.

You produced, wrote, sang, played multiple instruments... What was your biggest indulgence in making this album?
Time. Giving myself the time to do it.

On "I Dream of Spring," you sing, "She arrives like autumn in a rainstorm/the threat of thunder above/I'll return from the streets of Melbourne/I'll return my love." Who is the "she" in question?

It's not necessarily about a woman. It's just about a love. It's about a pure love that makes you feel new life in you. Not necessarily about one particular person. →

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The New k.d. continued from previous page

There are a few songs about being in love, but also songs about being vulnerable, adversities, and possibly breakups.

Well, even though I use love as the conduit for expressing and examining oneself, it's really a record about looking at myself and how I am in relationships. It's not necessarily about a relationship or even love relationships, because it can be applied to spiritual relationships, to art, to myself, to a lover.

In "Sunday," you sing, "Six days a week/I spend waiting to be spending Sunday afternoon/naked in your room." I find myself wondering why you have to wait until Sunday to get naked with her. Why not Tuesday? Good question. I don't know the answer to that one. [Laughs] I just like Sundays.

What mood were you in when you wrote "Flame of the Uninspired," and what light can you shed upon its meaning?

It was sort of a self-reflecting, introspective mood. I was looking at, I guess, my relationship towards being an artist or someone who has to look for inspiration. Habitually, I have this tendency to look for chaotic experiences to write about. That is the flame of the uninspired. To be habitual in my seeking out inspiration. It was really a moment where I decided to look past the pattern I was in.

When 2000's *Invincible Summer* came out you were in a relationship with Leisha Haley, very much love, love, love and in a happy place. Where does today find you? I've been in a relationship for the last six years and I'm happy. Her name is Jamie Price.

There hasn't been a lot written about you and Jamie so far. That's because it doesn't really have that much to do with my music.

And which song does she like you to sing to her while she eats grapes? Oh, she's not thrilled by me singing to her while she's eating grapes.

Are you a better person when single or when in a couple? I don't know—I'm probably not good at either one!

What are three things that bring k.d. a smile? Sundays. My dogs, definitely. And I guess the unexpected.

And three things guaranteed to make you unhappy or disgusted? Hypocrisy. Violence, definitely. And too much work.

What about foie gras—yea or nay? Nay.

You're one of the all-female singers who appear on Annie Lennox's "Sing" fundraiser single. When she approached you, were you hoping it was a flirt at first?

No. Annie and I have known each other forever. She contacted me to do it and of course I would do it.

What is the strangest duet or guest appearance you've been approached to do? [Matt Johnson of] The The contacted me way back in the early days. Never happened but that was pretty out there.

I'm all for people having faith, and spiritual foundation. I think when it starts creating dualistic thinking, which is "I'm right and you're wrong," then I don't condone it.

Would you like to sing with one of Rufus Wainwright's parents?

Sure, why not. I'd rather sing with Rufus, but yeah. I had him open for me at the Hollywood Bowl, and in both of our sets we did our renditions of "Hallelujah," which I thought was lots of fun.

You're a Canadian, and Canadians are rather secular. But you're living in the USA, a country that has taken quite a religious turn. How do you feel about that? That's a big can of worms to open. I'm all for people having faith, and spiritual foundation. I think when it starts creating dualistic thinking, which is "I'm right and you're wrong," then I don't condone it.

If Hillary Clinton could pick one of your songs as her campaign song, which would you recommend? "Miss Chatelaine."

And Mike Huckabee?

Umm... this is fun. "Jealous Dog" from the new record.

Have you been watching *The L Word*? Never seen it.

Would you appear on the show if asked? No. I don't think it's necessary.

According to IMDb [the website Internet Movie Database], you haven't acted in almost a decade now.

I don't like to act. I'm not an actor, so it's not something I'm out pursuing.

How do you look back on your starring role in the 1991 lesbian indie, *Salmonberries*? It was a good experience. I think just the experience of being in Alaska [for the shoot] was pretty interesting. It was very cold! And that was a nice experience for sure.

You once said that prior to your relationship with Leisha...

You keep talking about Leisha, and that's such old history.

OK. Your election predictions?

I think Al Gore's going to come back at the last minute.

And who's going to get the biggest beating?

Probably Giuliani.

Did some songs not make it to the album?

Yeah, a couple.

Will any of those or B-sides come out?

Maybe remixes but no, probably not.

How should first-time k.d. lang listeners approach this album?

Anyway they want. I have no stipulations!

And what should people do when they listen to this CD?

Anything they want.

Perhaps you should limit us a little bit. It's not something you'd want played while the crazy from *The Silence of the Lambs* makes his prisoner put the lotion in the basket, right? No, I probably don't, but I think people can figure that out.

ON THE WEB: Crave more k.d.? Read an April 2004 *OutSmart* interview ("k.d. Comes to Town") at www.outsmartmagazine.com. Click on the Archives link on the home page.

Lawrence Ferber frequently writes about entertainment for *OutSmart*. His annual report from the Sundance Film Festival also appears in this issue.

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Walking the Talk

Volunteer fundraiser Paul-David Van Atta and AIDS Foundation Houston fight the pandemic one step and one dollar at a time

by Nancy Ford

It's quite the awe-inspiring sight.

For the past 19 years, Houstonians from all walks of life—men, women, children, gay men, lesbians, clergy in collars—each of them taking part in the procession as it snakes down Allen Parkway. Creating a perfect photo op of caring, they gather together to step off as one, symbolically marching together against the scourge that has claimed more than 25 million lives since it entered our global consciousness in the early 1980s.

Each has a different reason for being there for AIDS Walk Houston. Some come with their church groups, dressed in their spring finery, eager to pull some Sunday-morning inspiration from the promenade along Buffalo Bayou in the gentle March sun. Some come with co-workers, corporately banding together in logo'd T-shirts, hoping to motivate employees through a common cause. Some come to remember a late partner, or daughter, or son, a photograph of the loved one pinned to their clothing. Some come with children who have never known the lost aunt or uncle. Some who have recently tested positive come for the hope that emanates from that many like-minded people. Some come as long-term, 20-plus-year survivors, daring their virus to do its worst with every step down Allen Parkway.

Regardless of motivation, they're there, in numbers strong enough to nearly fill Reliant Stadium.

"You see Girl Scout troops, you see church groups, you see same-sex couples walking, you see straight couples walking—it's all there," says Paul-David Van Atta. "If you want to use a metaphor here, the walk is the face of the fight against AIDS."

NEW WALKER

Relatively new to Houston, Van Atta first participated in AIDS Walk Houston in 2006 at the urging of his partner, Brian Teichman, who was walking with his real-estate firm.

"I said, 'OK, how many of you are walking?'" Van Atta recalls asking his partner. "He said '32.'"

Van Atta had just moved to Houston from Washington D.C., where he had produced a gala that raised \$250,000 to help shore up local AIDS service organizations. With numbers like that under his belt, Van Atta playfully scoffed at his partner's \$5,000 goal.

"I said, 'That's pathetic!'" he recalls, laughing. "I said, 'Well, I'll tell you what. I will walk, but I'll walk as an individual walker, and I'll match your \$5,000!'" →



More than 16,000 people walked in the 2007 AIDS Walk Houston, raising over \$900,000 funds to support HIV/AIDS service organizations throughout the city.



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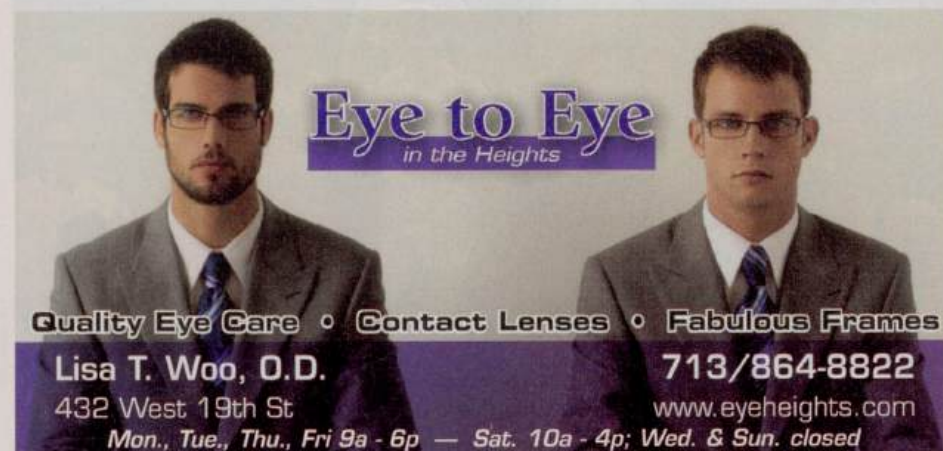
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Walking the Talk continued from page 40

After registering online and sending notices out to friends and associates, Van Atta had raised his \$5,000—by the end of the next day.

"It just went on from there," he now states, matter-of-factly.

Indeed, it did go on from there. The following year, after becoming more familiar with the mission of AIDS Foundation Houston (AFH), which organizes the walk, Van Atta and his walk team emerged as the number-one cash cow, bringing in approximately \$42,000.

Van Atta's walking group, dubbed Team Cabaret, then went on to produce one of the organization's most successful fundraisers, Cabaret for Cure, which was held in January at the Hilton Americas, where Van Atta is director of catering. The event featured Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter Oleta Adams and an array of local musical talent. By the close of the evening, AFH had realized an additional \$262,000 to support its programs.

GIFT OF TIME

Despite his exemplary monetary track record, Van Atta recognizes another valuable commodity that AFH—and most nonprofit organizations—have in short supply.

"The hardest thing in the world to give, let's be honest, is time," he says. "It's the one commodity that everyone gets the same amount, no matter who you are. And it's difficult to give that."

Kelly McCann, AFH chief executive officer, agrees.

"Community members can make a huge impact and support their favorite charities by giving of their time," McCann says. "Not everyone has the money to donate, but just about everyone has a few hours to give each month. So I would encourage all citizens to decide where their passions are, then volunteer for organizations that embody that passion."

For those readers whose passions reside with fighting HIV/AIDS, McCann has a suggestion. "AIDS Walk Houston needs hundreds of volunteers to help with all manner of tasks, from distributing information to setting up booths in the park the day before the walk, to greeting participants on the day of the event, to helping with cleanup after the walk." (To volunteer, call 713/403-WALK.)

WORK TO BE DONE

When asked why he chose AIDS Foundation Houston, in particular,



"I think we're at a real disadvantage in the United States," says AIDS Foundation Houston's champion fundraiser, Paul-David Van Atta (photographed at the Hilton Americas, where he is catering director). "It's a double-edged sword to have good medicines here because we have basically downgraded AIDS to a chronic disease. It can be maintained just like diabetes or anything else. But I think that as a result of that, we have really stuck our heads in the sand. AIDS Walk Houston, to me, is the face of the cure itself—that is, breaking down all boundaries and having an inclusive addressing of this pandemic."

as the beneficiary of his considerable fundraising skills, Van Atta's answer is simple.

"They support everything that is of interest to me in the fight against this disease," he says.

AFH currently administers 43 separate programs that continue to assist and comfort Houstonians infected with and affected by HIV. Programs include housing assistance, the Stone Soup food pantry program, camps both here in Texas as well as in Africa that provide normalcy and recreation for children living with HIV—and their families—and more.

Though AFH and other HIV/AIDS service agencies that have been valiant in educating the public about HIV, particularly how it is transmitted, have been in "business" for more than 25 years, Van Atta recognizes that there's still work to be done.

"This thing [HIV] is on the rise just like it was in the '80s," he says. "First, it was a gay disease and a disease of stigma. Well, now it's become mainstream. And if it's not addressed forcefully and aggressively right now, we could end up in the same boat as some of the African countries."

"That's really my fear," he continues. "It's amazing to me that my voice is now louder than it was years ago as I was losing friends. Sadly enough, I think the reason for that is that I can do that now and not have to do it on a gay platform. I can do it on a humanitarian platform."

STEP UP

AIDS Walk Houston hosts the 19th annual AIDS Walk Houston on Sunday, March 9. Registration is at 8 a.m., and step off is at 10. The walk begins in Sam Houston Park (1000 Bagby). Details: 713/403-WALK or www.AIDSWalkHouston.org. ■

COMMUNITY HELP

Now in its 19th year, AIDS Walk Houston raises funds to assist Houstonians living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, while simultaneously raising awareness of the disease.

This year AFH is collaborating with Chevron to produce the noncompetitive 3.1-mile walk. Proceeds from the event benefit AFH and these local AIDS service organizations that provide assistance to more than 100,000 Houstonians each year:

- Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative
- Bering Omega Community Services
- Brentwood Community Foundation
- Career and Recovery Resources, Inc.
- The Center for AIDS Information and Advocacy
- Families Under Urban and Social Attack, Inc.
- Houston Buyers Club
- Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program, Inc.
- The Lazarus House
- Legacy Community Health Services
- New Hope Counseling Center
- Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas, Inc.
- Rapha House Outreach Center, Inc.
- Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church
- Southeast Texas Legal Clinic
- Spay-Neuter Assistance Program, Inc.
- Texas Children's Hospital Department of Allergy and Immunology

GRIM NEWS

According to City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services:

- In Harris County, 55 percent of those persons diagnosed with AIDS since 1981 have died.
- Three Houstonians become infected with HIV every day.
- Five percent of the new HIV infections in Houston are occurring in teenagers, 13 to 19 years of age. Nine percent of the new infections are in persons over the age of 49.
- Since January 1, 1999, black women have accounted for 74 percent of HIV infections reported in females.
- Male-to-male sex has been the reported mode of transmission for 38-42 percent of all HIV infections since 1999 and 54 percent of AIDS diagnoses since 1981.

PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation

Youth Scholarship Foundation
Scholarship Requirements
 The scholarship application deadline is April 30 of each year.

Student Requirements

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 Essay
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 Continue 2.0 GPA
 to continue scholarship

The PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation offers a scholarship program to assist worthy gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth in the Houston area in pursuing a college education. The scholarship program is for students who have demonstrated outstanding achievement while in high school or college. Application packets are available for download from the website.

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Open Arms

Local color: The regular Dinner With Friends gatherings that raise money for Brazos Abiertos have become popular events in Merida, the capital city of the Yucatan Peninsula. Brazos Abiertos will hold its first Houston fundraiser on May 10 at a local residence. The wine-tasting event will also honor musician Oscar de la Rosa of the group La Mafia.

Brazos Abiertos, the Houston-based HIV/AIDS education and healthcare project, serves the Yucatan

by Tracy Morris

What do you get when you combine a group of dedicated Houstonians—including a former dancer-turned-educator/developer, a busy Texas mom involved with myriad nonprofit boards, a Harvard-trained attorney, a bed-and-breakfast proprietor with public-relations expertise, and one of the original HIV medical experts—with a renegade Catholic priest in Mexico? You get Brazos Abiertos, an innovative new HIV clinic and educational resource for the residents of the Yucatan peninsula.

Located at the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, the Yucatan juts out into some of the most beautiful and hospitable water

in the world, all just a few hours' flight from Texas. Two Yucatan cities, Cancun and Cozumel, are favorite destinations for Houston vacationers, and a second home to many. But as is often the case with tourist spots, the areas most visited by gringos don't represent the conditions in which many of the natives reside.

"The people who live in remote mountain villages are of Mayan descent," says John Truax, one of the founders of Brazos Abiertos (Spanish for "open arms"). "The conditions there, coupled with the generations of cultural stigma between the Mayans and the Mexicans of more Spanish ancestry—in many ways, it's like

stepping back in time to what it was like in the U.S. in the 1980s as far as the prevention and diagnosis of HIV, and even treatment."

In Merida, the capital city of the Yucatan, quiet attempts have been made, often by missionaries, to meet the needs of the many orphaned children and neglected adults with HIV in the area. Politics, religion, and cultural norms have been obstacles to serving this socially stigmatized population. But so far, those barriers have not stood in the way of the formation and development of Brazos Abiertos.

"It's all happened much faster than we anticipated," Truax says, "thanks in →

large part to an anonymous donor whose contributions put us on a whole different playing field than when we started."

Eye-Opening Experience

The idea for Brazos Abiertos started in 2004 when Truax, who shares a home in Merida with his partner, Jose Solis Pacheco, heard about a shelter off the beaten path. At the time, he and Solis, an attorney, owned the bed-and-breakfast property Angeles de la Merida, which they have since sold.

"The idea of this shelter, which is owned and operated by an independent organization based in Mexico, is to be a place where people with HIV can get their meds and assistance so they can move on with their lives," Truax says. "But really when we went there, out in the jungle, the reality was that it housed and acted as a hospice for, at that time, 38 people, including 18 children."

The first mission for the loosely organized group of ex-pats and Mexican residents (now called the Merida Advisory Board) was to help support existing services at this shelter. A fundraiser was held to pay for the installation of water and septic systems for the facility. Brazos Abiertos continues to provide the shelter with monthly food supplies, using funds raised at the regular Dinner with Friends gatherings that have become popular in Merida, a city of about 730,000 in the Yucatan interior.

Truax then mentioned the conditions of the shelter to his friend, the physician Gordon Crofoot, M.D., the renowned HIV specialist. When Truax told Crofoot about an eight-year-old girl with Kaposi's sarcoma, Truax recalls, "he was just floored and said, 'That shouldn't be.'" With an initial thought of instituting a widespread testing program, Crofoot began traveling regularly to the area to further investigate possibilities of helping the residents.

What Crofoot and the other Houstonians found was disturbing, recalls Sally Russ, who is the Brazos Abiertos board member in charge of educational efforts. Truax had asked his friend Russ to join the board of directors because of her wealth of experience with culturally sensitive educational programs for organizations that have included Planned Parenthood. As the Houstonians learned, just offering testing could actually create problems for affected people in the Yucatan.

That's where the Catholic priest who has lived in the area for several decades



Houstonians to Mexico: The board of directors of Brazos Abiertos, the HIV/AIDS organization that serves people in the Yucatan, are (l-r) Jose Solis, Susan Rule, Jane Kavanagh, Dr. Gordon Crofoot, Chris O'Niell, Sally Russ, John Truax, and Nita Lindley. The board was photographed in Crofoot's Houston offices; he is the Brazos Abiertos board president.

entered as a tremendous resource.

"He and some others who'd lived in Merida for awhile are savvy regarding the healthcare system in Mexico," Truax says. "They let us know that just testing people for HIV might actually do more harm than good. They explained that the stigma of HIV is still so great there, and one's diagnosis is made public. For example, women who test positive are likely to be put out of their homes and on the street. People lose their jobs, regardless of their positions. Treatment options there lag behind the U.S. by 20 years. So just knowing your HIV status isn't going to make a big difference and could actually be harmful."

To serve this population, Crofoot and the Brazos Abiertos board decided to develop a freestanding clinic. Scheduled to open later this year under the direction of a Mayan physician, Dr. Carlos Cabrera, the clinic will serve patients in the Yucatan who test positive for HIV, offering a new option for treatment, one that will provide the dignity and confidentiality often not experienced with other area healthcare services in the region. Even prevention efforts in Mexico are still under the scrutiny of the government; residents are required to sign their names in order to obtain free condoms from government-connected sources such as clinics. "You're then thought to be either a prostitute or gay, just for obtaining condoms," Truax says. "So, of course, many people won't do it." The Brazos Abiertos team always has thousands of condom packages on hand.

The clinic will be serving four groups of people, Truax says: "those who test negative and need education on how to stay that way; those who are diagnosed early, are healthy, and can learn lifestyle management of the disease; those who are later in their diagnosis and in need of medications; and those with end-of-life issues."

Cross-Cultural Collaboration

Rather than simply treating those who are already HIV-positive, the rapidly developing nonprofit decided to work from an additional angle: to educate the area's young people about prevention.

Sensitive to the nuances required in cross-cultural education and using her experience on the Planned Parenthood board as a foundation, Russ realized the need to create a peer-education format for the Mayan and Mexican residents of the Yucatan.

"We looked at the many possible approaches and groups in need of education—including men who are bringing HIV home to their families via connections with prostitutes—and we decided that our initial target should be the young people," Russ says. "You can change behavior and give more opportunity for future choices there."

Using the priest's existing network of families and villages, Russ and Brazos Abiertos developed an exchange-type program in which Houston undergrads and medical students are trained as prevention educators and then share what they have learned

with students in the Yucatan. Their first educational efforts—programs with students in 2007 and a recent seminar with adults—have been incredibly well-received.

"A local nurse practitioner said we must be doing something right, because of the numbers in attendance at our workshops," Truax relates with obvious relief in his voice. "She can't believe we've attracted as many people as we have." One mother who attended the adult seminar in January said that everything she knew about HIV she had learned from her teenage son—and that everything he knew he had learned from Brazos Abiertos. So that's why she was there.

Helping the Helper

Brazos Abiertos will hold its first Houston fundraiser on May 10, a wine tasting with music at a local residence. During the evening, Grammy Award-winning artist Oscar de la Rosa of the group La Mafia will be honored for his work as an HIV and health issues spokesperson. Tickets (\$100) may be purchased through the website, www.brazosabiertosyucatan.com.

Truax points out that \$100 is far more than a drop in the bucket for this nonprofit. Because of the value of the U.S. dollar in Mexico, far-reaching activities are realistically attainable in the Yucatan at a relatively low cost, compared to the United States. "With our dedicated board donating their time, and our incredible development team far exceeding my expectations, our contributors feel like they're really making a lasting difference down there, where only \$100 can feed a family for a month," he says.

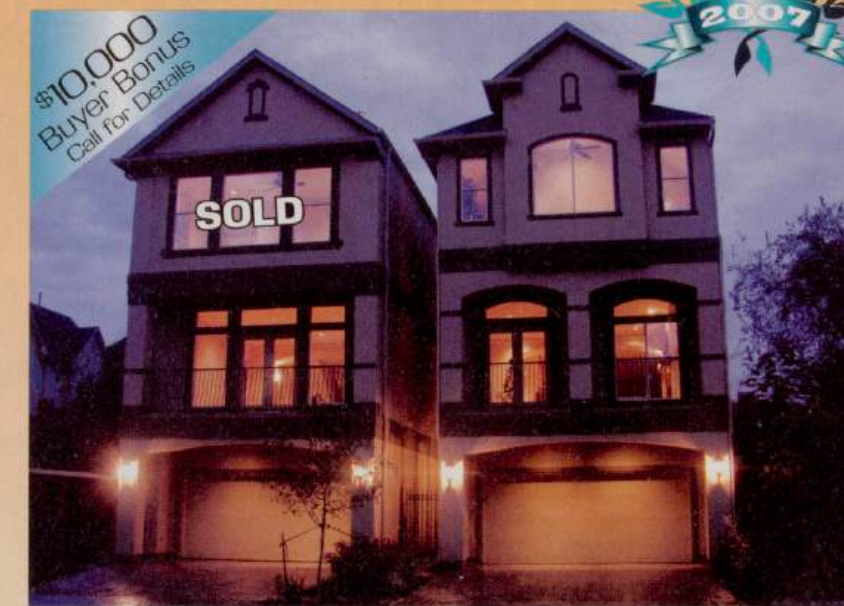
"Our support systems in both Houston and Mexico are absolutely amazing. It's such a compelling project. Everyone who's involved is totally committed, down there with the kids in 100-degree weather doing the workshops, besides applying for grants and putting on fundraisers."

Upcoming Brazos Abiertos workshops include a middle school run by members of the Jehovah's Witnesses church, a university-level program, and more adult-education sessions. Lessons in basic anatomy will be the starting point for these programs, Truax explains. "We've had questions from high schoolers about the most basic understanding of their bodies, even though it's common in their culture to marry after the ninth grade. It's a whole different world down there, and it's so gratifying that we can see the difference we're making in an immediate way."

Tracy Morris reported on legal and emotional issues for same-sex couples in OutSmart's February issue.

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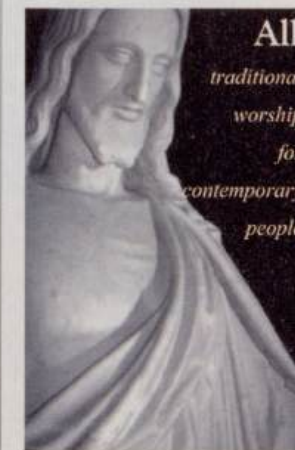
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Welcome to our annual list of new and redesigned cars introduced in the 2008 model year. Whether it is your dream car or you want to make someone in your life really happy—here's our list of fun, sexy, good-looking cars which offers a variety to fit all budgets and tastes.

by James Hurst



Volvo C30

Volvo's all new C30 is the smallest and sexiest car in Volvo's model range. For 2008, the C30 offers Volvo's first-ever custom-build interior combinations, which allows for up to 17 different exterior colors and 12 interior combinations. Available in version 1.0 and 2.0, both are front-wheel-drive models. The C30 comes equipped with a turbocharged inline five-cylinder engine that produces 227 horses and 236 pound-feet of torque. Anyone familiar with Volvo's product line will appreciate that the new C30 is 8.5 inches shorter and weighs around 320 pounds less than the Volvo S40 sport sedan. Inside this very safe car are four bucket-style seats and typical Volvo amenities we have grown to appreciate over the years.



Smart ForTwo

The Smart ForTwo is the first mass market microcar to go on sale in the United States. These cars have been roaming all over Europe with lots of success. It has plenty of room, lots of cargo space and they're fun to drive. They also come in an array of cool colors. If you live in a crowded urban city, are eco-minded and want a car that is really easy to park, then the Smart ForTwo is for you. Don't expect to break the speed limit as the three-cylinder engine sets a moderate pace around town.

continued on page 50

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Drive Yourself Crazy

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BMW 1 Series

The legend continues and grows a bit smaller for 2008 with the introduction of the new 1 Series Coupe from Bayerische Motoren Werke AG (Bavarian Motor Works). This sporty rear-wheel-drive coupe or soft-top convertible combines agile handling, powerful engines, and seating for four into a fun-filled package. The 1 Series Coupe reinvents the niche that the legendary BMW 2002 created 40 years ago, and for '08 comes in two engine choices. The 128i coupe is propelled by a 230-horsepower, 3.0-liter six-cylinder, while the more powerful 135i coupe features a twin-turbocharged 3.0-liter inline six-cylinder engine that produces 300 horses and an incredible 300 pound-feet of torque. Both engines are offered with a choice of either a six-speed manual or six-speed automatic. U.S. pricing for the 128i coupe will be just under \$30,000 and the 135i likely will be in the mid-\$30,000s. It is relatively safe to guess the 1-series convertible will probably be in the \$40,000 range.



Chevrolet Malibu

Chevy said the new Malibu is well-equipped even in the base model, with standard antilock disc brakes, six airbags, traction control, turn-by-turn navigation, air conditioning, and XM Satellite Radio. The base and optional engines are bigger and more powerful for 2008. Choices range from the 2.4-liter four-cylinder to the optional 252-horsepower DOHC 3.6-liter V6. The all-new 2008 Malibu hybrid models are easily distinguished by their specific exterior appointments and badges. Inside, a unique gauge cluster provides info and feedback about the hybrid powertrain's operation. The Malibu hybrid is equipped with a unique electric motor/generator mated to a 2.4-liter Ecotec VVT four-cylinder engine and Hydra-Matic four-speed transmission rated at 164 horsepower.



Saturn Astra

Saturn staged the world premiere of its new Astra XR three-door compact car at last year's Chicago Auto Show. We are glad to say the 2008 Astra is offered this year in two trim levels for the XR and the XR five-door models, and single trim XR three-door configuration, the latter being created for enthusiastic drivers in mind. Well-appointed interior combined with proven success in Europe provides a fun, easy-to-drive car. All Astras are equipped with a 1.9-liter Ecotec four-cylinder engine that delivers 140 horsepower, and paired to a five-speed manual gearbox. A four-speed automatic transmission is optional.

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Drive Yourself Crazy

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Mercedes-Benz C-Class

All new for 2008 is the fourth generation of the C-Class, Mercedes-Benz entry-level four-door sedan. Larger, roomier, and more powerful, the new C-Class arrives in three basic versions, the C300 Sport, C350 Sport, and C300 Luxury. Propelling the C300 offerings is a 228-horsepower 3.0-liter DOHC V-6. The C350 offers the 3.5-liter DOHC V-6 and 268 horsepower. C300 buyers get a choice of a six-speed manual gearbox, or seven-speed automatic, while the latter is the only choice for the C350. Also available is the C63 AMG version with a 336-horsepower 6.3-liter DOHC V-8 for those people who still like to play hard and sexy.

Scion xB

For 2008 Scion has expanded the xB into a proper larger-size car, endowing it with plenty of room for five. A new, bigger engine addresses the old xB's lack of muscle. Yet the new xB retains its stand-out styling, big boxy cargo bay, good fuel economy, and road manners of a mid-size car. The interior is far from boring in this Toyota-engineered vehicle—rest assure it will provide fun weekends to Salado "antiquing" or hauling the gang to IKEA.



Infiniti G37

One of my favorites for 2008 is Infiniti's 330-horsepower fast, sexy, and elegant G37. A fantastic deal on your pocketbook (\$35,000), it is available in graphite, wheat, and stone leather with lots of other luxury amenities. Infiniti offers several models and provides excellent service. My favorite would be the sport model with its six-speed manual transmission, tighter suspension, bigger brakes, and limited-slip differential. The G37 comes with a really sweet-sounding exhaust which everyone will notice.



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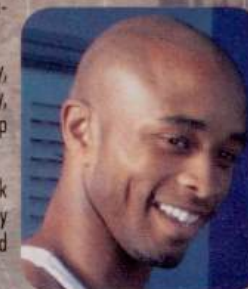
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Drive Yourself Crazy

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Subaru Impreza WRX

In 2001, Subaru changed the face of the performance market with the introduction of the original turbocharged, rally-bred Impreza WRX. For 2008, the WRX is all-new, 50 pounds lighter than its predecessor, and now rides on a 3.7-inch longer wheel base that improves ride, interior space, and utility. The 2.5-liter flat-four Boxer engine has been modified, delivering 224 horses and 226 pound-feet of torque. Standard transmission is a five-speed manual, and the optional four-speed automatic comes with Sportshift manual control. Available in two new body styles, a four-door and a five-door, each with refined interiors that contain a sweeping twin cockpit for five passengers, and, with rear seats folded flat, 45 cubic feet of cargo space. The WRX frontal design features a widened grille with a spread wing logo that connects to Subaru's aircraft heritage. All in all, a lot of fun!



Volkswagen Tiguan

VW's new '08 Tiguan is the small brother of the Toureg, and offers a chassis that sets new standards in the world of SUVs. The VW GTI shares its 200-horsepower turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder power with Tiguan. The transmission choices are the standard six-speed manual and optional six-speed automatic. The interior is akin to the well-appointed big brother Toureg. The well-organized interior offers five-passenger seating, and the reclining rear seats offer six inches of for-and-aft travel for additional legroom or cargo space. There is 16.6 cu. ft. of cargo room with rear seat folded flat. A new entertainment system is offered in the Tiguan that features a 6.5-inch color touchscreen and optional 18-inch wheels, as well as a panoramic glass roof that stretches the length of the cabin.

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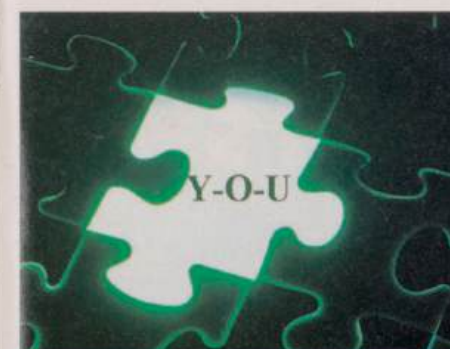
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Drive Yourself Crazy

continued from page 54



Bentley Continental GT Speed

For 2008 Bentley has stepped up with the Bentley Continental GT "Speed." This special variant traces its roots back to Bentley Speed models of days of yore. The 2008 model is powered by a twin turbo 12-cylinder engine producing over 600 horsepower at 6000 rpm—an increase of 50 horsepower over the base Continental GT. Bentley claims the GT Speed will go 60 mph in 4.3 seconds. This is one car you should dream of owning for sheer audacity and high-profile elegance. The gorgeous interior and supple leather are a feast for the senses.

Ford Hybrid Escape

For 2008 Ford has given the Escape Hybrid a facelift making it stand out better in the crowded small sport-ute segment. For the Escape, that translates into a new squared-off grille, power bulge hood, cleaner sides and, as Ford claims, "the most fuel-efficient SUV on the planet." Using both gasoline and electric engines, plus an advanced battery pack, this eco-conscious SUV gives you outstanding fuel efficiency with the benefits of V6-like performance. The Hybrid electric engine captures kinetic energy whenever you apply the brakes, so your battery is being recharged as you drive. The Escape Hybrid can be praised for its spaciousness, size, ease of driving, and excellent gas mileage. ■



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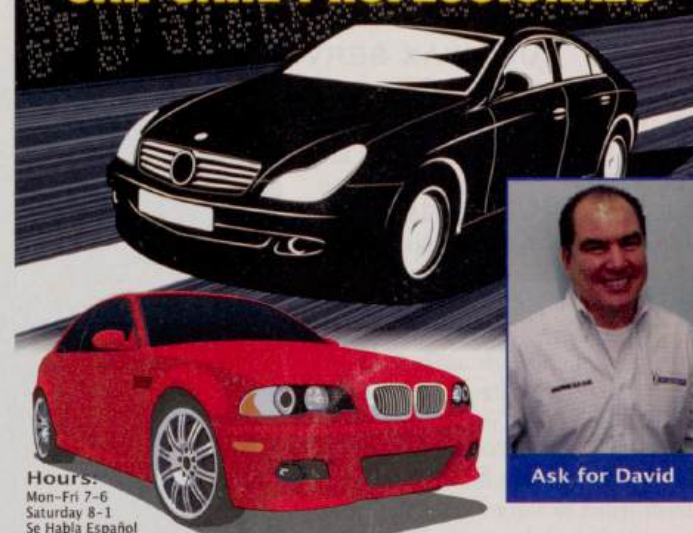
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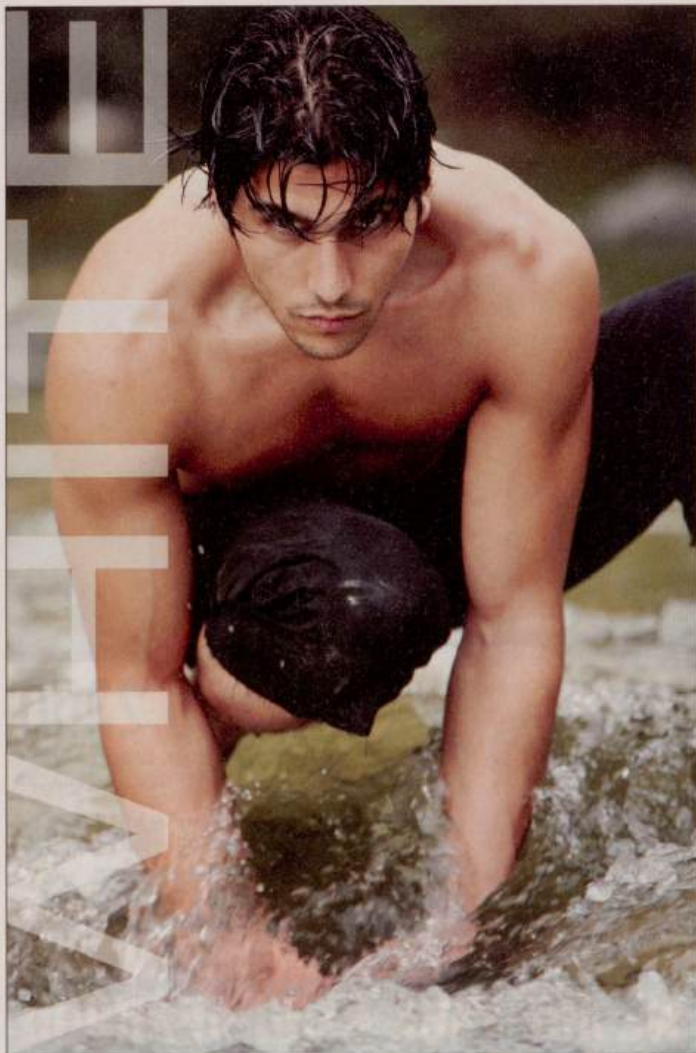
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A Queerer Sundance

Though not an out-and-out GLBT event, this year's Sundance Film Festival featured more queer content—from lesbian soldiers to gay zombies

by Lawrence Ferber



A gut f--king good time: Jey Crisfar plays a gay zombie in Bruce LaBruce's *Otto; or, Up with Dead People*. The scene in which Crisfar's character makes sweet love to (in? on?) his dead boyfriend's gaping stomach wound sent at least a third of the usually unshockable Sundance audience viewers running for the lobby.

They say you can never go home again, but that aphorism isn't entirely true judging by the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. In January, seminal New Queer Filmmakers Tom Kalin (*Swoon*), Bruce LaBruce (*Hustler White*), Gregg Araki (*The Living End*), Isaac Julien (*Looking for Langston*), Marcus Hu (producer/distributor, *Frisk*), and Killer Films co-founder Christine Vachon (*Boys Don't Cry*, among other queer movies) reconvened at the Park City, Utah, event, where nearly two decades ago their movement was born (and given a name by critic B. Ruby Rich). And they were still able to shock and awe new audiences—especially Bruce LaBruce.

During the world premiere screening of LaBruce's *Otto; or, Up with Dead People*, a third of the

audience bolted at record speed, all but leaving cartoonish Road Runner dust clouds behind them, when a gay zombie started having explicit intercourse with a stomach wound that he made in his dead boyfriend (while literally eating him out). The "gut f--k," as LaBruce put it.

Even given that bit of homo zombie sex, Sundance 2008 was just marginally gayer, film-wise, than the barely queer 2007 festival. The concurrent Slamdance (now in its 14th year) did add a couple of much-needed GLBT-inclusive docs, a feature, and handful of shorts to the mix.

Outside the screenings, the queerness was, as usual, an overflowing river. Partnered with Absolut and the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), the four-year-old Queer Lounge upped its game with a prime three-floor →

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A Queerer Sundance continued from previous page

Main Street location for meeting and chilling; an amazing series of panels and parties (opening night featured a rawkin' set by The Donnas); an endless supply of Borba Skin Balance drinks and Absolut cocktails; and an exhibition of posters from previous years' queer films.

As everywhere in Park City, the Queer Lounge was the scene of much commiseration and puzzlement over the shocking death of Heath Ledger, news that rushed through Park City like a frosty avalanche.

The annual Outfest Queer Brunch at the Grub Steak restaurant was as schmoozy as ever, with chatter about community developments that included the here! TV network Change Starts Here! initiative (which sees \$10 from each new subscription donated to a community non-profit group) and the Outfest Legacy Film Preservation project.

Outfest also hosted an evening filmmaker party, where I ran into *Boy Culture* co-writer/producer Philip Pierce, who mentioned a new project in the works: *Ditto*, a feature about a pair of twins, one gay, the other straight.

MOVIE RECAP

The word *queer* only begins to describe LaBruce's *Otto*, which follows the title character, a cute young gay zombie (Jey Crisfar)—or is he merely delusional?—cast in a politically charged zombie porn flick lensed by an iconoclastic lesbian director. As typical of LaBruce's repertoire, there's hardcore gay sex, hot young punk boys, and bizarre flourishes like a character that exists in a black-and-white silent-film universe. Shot in Berlin, *Otto* also represents a step forward for LaBruce, who imbues the outrageous proceeding with emotion, fantastic music by the likes of Antony & The Johnsons, and nods to influences like the 1962 horror film *Carnival of Souls* (which stars Sidney Berger, the retired University of Houston drama school chairman, who was a grad student at the time) and George Romero's *Martin*.

What inspired LaBruce to make a gay zombie flick? "A bathhouse is like *Night of the Living Dead*!" he quipped.



Julianne Moore and Eddie Redmayne play mother and son in *Savage Grace*.



Amy Redford (I, daughter of Robert Redford) directs Saffron Burroughs in *The Guitar*.

Otto; or, *Up with Dead People* director Bruce LaBruce is also the author or *The Reluctant Pornographer* (Gutter Press, 1997), a chatty reminiscence of drag, drugs, sex, and gay culture.



Tom Kalin's *Savage Grace*, set for a May theatrical release by IFC (and produced by Vachon), also scored high on the twisted-o-meter. In this based-on-a-true-story tragedy, Julianne Moore plays Barbara Daly, a former model who develops a sordid connection with her spoiled gay son, Tony (adorable, freckled British actor Eddie Redmayne).

The highly anticipated *Mysteries of Pittsburgh* got plenty of attention for a different reason: It sucked. Based on—make that eviscerated from—Michael Chabon's novel by dreadful hack Rawson Marshall Thurber (*Dodgeball*), this snorefest follows the dull, inarticulate son of a crime lord as he dabbles in a summertime affair with a woman and her bisexual thug boyfriend (Peter Sarsgaard). In short, a major gay character in the novel was scrapped entirely, and the book's finest elements were amalgamated into pabulum. An online boycott website elaborates on the film's awful changes: myspace.com/mysteriesofpittsburgh. At least Sarsgaard (*The Dying Gaul*, *Kinsey*) adds yet another queer love scene to his résumé.

Downright polarizing critic-wise, Amy Redford's *The Guitar* is an indie twist on *Last Holiday*, the 2006 Queen Latifah vehicle. A milquetoast New Yorker (the out Saffron Burroughs) discovers she has terminal cancer and goes credit-card batshit, ordering delivery meals and Jonathan Adler vases and housewares, and screwing a married black deliveryman and repressed Latina pizza delivery girl. The messages are dubious (Enrich your life through retail therapy! Hump unavailable men and women!), but I found the movie entertaining. And Burroughs is truly Oscar-y.

Two sisters (Emily Blunt and Amy Adams) start a crime-scene cleanup business in *Sunshine Cleaning*. Blunt's character becomes involved with a lesbian played by Mary Lynn Rajskub. Though their relationship never goes where it should (rumor is a same-sex smooch was cut), the flick is a pleasing and accessible 90 minutes.

Less mainstream-friendly, and quite arty, the partly animated ensemble drama *Half-Life* boasts a young gay Asian and his African-American boyfriend. Narratives with peripheral or subtle queer characters included *Pretty Bird* and *Birds of America*. At the premiere of the latter, out director Craig Lucas cracked up the crowd by kicking off the Q&A with the observation, "Watching this with you was as fun as cleaning the cigarette butts from the urinals at Grand Central Station—a job I always wanted." If only *Birds* were as

continued on page 64

Lisa LAMPANELLI



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A Queerer Sundance

continued from page 61

consistently amusing as Lucas himself.

Tanaz Eshaghian's documentary *Be Like Others*—about Iranian gays who, rather than risk the death penalty for homosexuality, undergo sex changes—represents a big fat finger in the face of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his cockamamie remarks last year about the absence of homosexuals in Iran. Expect to see *Be Like Others* on cable this year. Edet Belzberg's *An American Soldier* includes a lesbian recruit amongst its subjects.

Sundance's best queer documentary was *Derek*, Isaac Julien's clip-rich retrospective of the late, great queer artist/filmmaker Derek Jarman's work, structured around a lengthy filmed interview. Actress Tilda Swinton, one of Jarman's muses, wrote the film, which she narrates (she is also executive producer). At the premiere, Swinton discussed her belief that a carpet has been laid over Jarman and his era of maverick filmmaking, which Julien is trying to remove. Film Sales Company bought the U.S. rights and intends a 2008 theatrical release.

Over at Slamdance, the queer face included *Goodbye Baby*, in which a young wannabe comedienne (Christine Evangelista) moves in with her gay musician brother (Ivan Sandomire) and his model/actor boyfriend (Kane Manera). The jubilant documentary *Pageant* introduces five Miss Gay America contestants, while another Slamdance doc, *I Think We're Alone Now*, plumbs the crazy depths of two Tiffany stalkers, one of them an intersexed individual (and not really a choice spokesperson for his/her community).

Yet another concurrent movie event, the Park City Film & Music Festival, opened with a feature with GLBT content. In his autobiographical *Single Tracks*, Utah filmmaker An Dinh presents an Asian-American man and his recently out lesbian wife who maintain a close friendship despite their split (Dinh and ex-wife Elena play themselves). For those who doubt that Salt Lake City is pretty gay year-round, Dinh intercuts *Single Tracks* with interviews with plenty of real-life local GLBTs, including Queer Lounge volunteer Dominique Storni.

Queer-inclusive or -themed cinema didn't come away with many prizes or big buys at Sundance this year, exceptions being an honorable mention for the short documentary *La Corona (The Crown)*, about a beauty pageant in a Columbian women's prison, and at Slamdance, the satirical short *Woman in Burka* snagged the Spirit of Slamdance Award—a Jagermeister gift basket. Not bad, after 10 days of watered-down Utah beer.



Isaac Julien (l) and Tilda Swinton took *Derek* to the festival...Derek being Derek Jarman.



Peter Sarsgaard (l) and Jon Foster star in *Mysteries of Pittsburgh*.



Amy Adams (l) and Emily Blunt play sisters in *Sunshine Cleaning*.



Sex-change surgery is preferable to execution for gay Iranians in *Be Like Others*.

SCENES FROM SUNDANCE

• Gregg Araki and Marcus Hu unveiled and screened a remastered version of *The Living End*, their 1992 cult favorite. With the screening, *Living End* (written and directed by Araki and produced by Hu) entered the Sundance Collection, the University of California-Los Angeles film archive.

• One evening I ran into the openly gay winner of the CBS series *Survivor: China*, Utah-born Todd Herzog, at GLAAD's "And The Nominees Are..." reception. What was it like being stuck on an island with nobody he found hot? I asked Herzog. It was a moot point, Herzog shared. "We all smelled so badly! There was no deodorant!"

• During the "And the Nominees Are..." ceremony, GLAAD unveiled its new public-service announcement, conceived by and starring actor Alan Cumming, aimed at eradicating the F-word (*faggot*, that is). I can't say the spot was met with pumping fists and ACT-UP fervor. In fact, it was the subject of much eye-rolling over the following days and nights.

• *Dante's Cove* cast member (and former Lance Bass arm candy) Reichen Lehmkuhl told me that a movie version of his autobiography, *Here's What We'll Say*, is in pre-production. "It's gonna show the effects of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" he promised.

• During one Queer Lounge panel, Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato of World of Wonder (*Eyes of Tammie Faye*, *TransGeneration*, *One Punk*, *Under God*) discussed their upcoming HBO documentary, *When I Knew*, which airs in June. At another Queer Lounge event, *The Advocate* presented a raucous "Gay Filmmakers and Sexual Provocation" panel with Bruce LaBruce, Lesli Klainberg, Isaac Julien, and film critic Kyle Buchanan. During the evening, the conversation morphed into a sort of "GLAADgate" (as an observer put it), during which GLAAD was criticized for watchdog practices perceived as censorship, such as reviewing scripts and providing notes. GLAAD entertainment media director Damon Romine then felt compelled to clarify the mission and intent of the New York-based advocacy group. "It was good to have that discussion," Romine reflected, "so filmmakers have a better understanding of what GLAAD does. GLAAD's mission is to advocate for fair, accurate images, which is different from positive [images]."

• Commenting on what director Derek Jarman (who died in 1994) would be up to

continued on page 105

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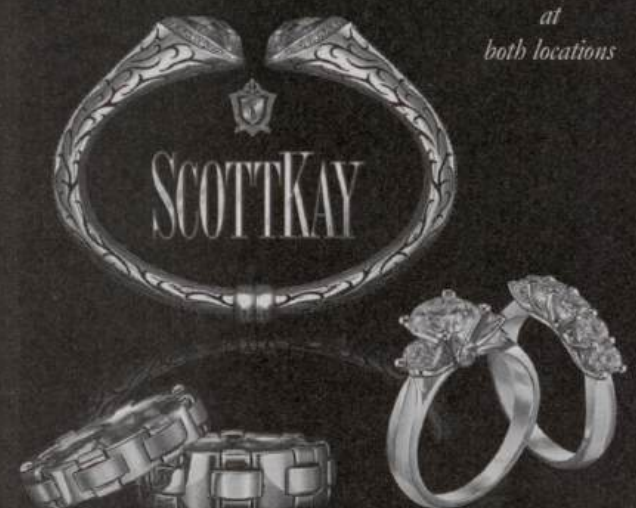
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For the Next Generation



The support of the PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation helps smart young people in the community like Christopher Michael Wick realize their dreams

by Josef Molnar
Photo by Yvonne Feece

"I do public speaking, and when I tell them they can overcome their problems, I use my life as an example," says Christopher Michael Wicks, who attends college with the support of a PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation award. "They can make it, no matter how many people say they won't."

When Christopher Michael Wick received one of the major scholarship awards from the local PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation last year, he considered it an affirmation of his work to struggle against the adversity in his life.

"Being transgendered and growing up

with a single mother hasn't been easy," Wick says, "and some people said I wasn't going to make it. I overcame a lot of things, and this is a really important thing for me."

What would test the resilience of most adults has given Wick, who is 19, the strength to help other youth to pull ahead in their lives. As a public speaker

to straight and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth, Wick shares his experience growing up as a transgender child in a blended family of seven siblings, working two jobs, as a movie-theater box-office cashier and a waiter, to help support his family, and successfully completing high school while discovering and beginning to live his true identity. →

For the Next Generation continued from previous page

"It was challenging, but there was a lot of motivation behind it, and if you have that, you can find a way to make it," Wick says.

Wick graduated from Woodlands High School in the Conroe Independent School District in the suburbs north of Houston. "I came out when I was 16 as transgender and started making the transition," he says. "I started living as a full-time male at age 18."

Through these years, Wicks drew support from HATCH, the support group for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth (a program of Montrose Counseling Center). He held several leadership posts in the group, including that of president, and he helped organize the annual HATCH Alternative Prom held in June at the Magnolia Ballroom downtown. (Wick appeared in *OutSmart* in the past when he was still presenting as a young woman and using the name Christina Wick.)

"HATCH was a great lifeline for me," Wick says. "HATCH is wonderful."

As he began the female-to-male transition process, Wick didn't always find things easy: He was verbally assaulted at his job by one of his managers and was the subject of vicious rumors. Wick approached a higher-level manager, who provided help.

"In the end, one of the people who wrote a recommendation [for the scholarship application] was the manager I went to about that," he says.

Wick, who has since become a manager at another theater, the AMC Deerbrook 24

in Humble, has broken another barrier: At 19, he is the youngest person to hold that position on a full-time basis. While the hours at the multiplex may be long, he is proud of his accomplishments. "I'm very excited about all of it."

Wick is now a freshman at Houston Community College and plans to study in the college cosmetologist program ("I hope to become a stylist"). His community involvement includes participation in Helping TransGenders Anonymous, the support group that meets weekly at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. "That is where I kind of grew into my transgender identity," he says. "That's the first place I went when I started my transition."

Wick is also a professional photographer, who shoots events and portraits. "It started as a hobby when I was 16 and now has developed into a small business."

Today, Wick uses his life as a teaching tool to inspire others, especially other transgender young people. "I never thought I would ever go to college, but now I am," he says. "I do public speaking, and when I tell them they can overcome their problems, I use my life as an example. They can make it, no matter how many people say they won't."

Supporting Our Students

The PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation, which gave the money for college to Christopher Michael Wick, has to date awarded 161 scholarships worth \$799,750 (through the 2006-2007 academic year). The foundation, now an independent nonprofit organization, is

a combination of two earlier scholarship efforts, one administered by the local chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, the other by HATCH, at the time an independent nonprofit (formally known as the Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals—since joining the Montrose Counseling Center in 2003, the youth support group has adopted the acronym as its name). In 1999, a group of donors merged the two programs and established the new entity. The PFLAG/HATCH Foundation is now one of the most successful GLBT scholarship-granting programs in the nation.

The all-volunteer foundation relies on private donations to support its scholarship program, which has assisted 161 students from 68 area high schools. On April 10, PFLAG/HATCH hosts its major annual fundraising event, the Spring Fling "Dollars for Scholars," at the Houston Inter-Continental. A portion of every ticket purchased (\$100 and \$150) includes a donation to the foundation endowment fund. Tickets: 713/269-8763, www.physf.org.

PFLAG/HATCH scholarships are available to self-identified GLBT youth in the Houston area. Though public service to the community is not required of applicants, it is considered. Financial need is a factor in evaluation. The deadline is April 30. Interested applicants can obtain information and the application at www.physf.org. Scholarships are awarded during the summer.

Josef Molnar profiled Houston playwright Fernando Dovalina for the June 2007 issue of OutSmart magazine.

Show Them the Money

Here are several sources of scholarship money for GLBT students

• **Gay & Lesbian Latin Organization.** The local GLBT Latino/a group will present a scholarship at its annual black-tie dance in June. Deadline: May 15. Details: www.houstongallo.org.

• **Gay & Lesbian Rainbow Pages.** The Houston-based telephone directory (www.rainbowpages.net), which also publishes editions in Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio, as well as five other U.S. cities, awards a scholarship in each of its Texas cities. Deadline: May 15 (Austin and San Antonio), August 1 (Houston and Dallas). Details: 281/997-9778.

• **GLBTHeroesFund.org: Athletic Scholarship Fund.** The Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Gay & Lesbian Athletics is developing a scholarship program for high-school jocks. No deadlines are currently set. Details: www.heroesfund.org, www.glaf.org.

• **Matthew Shepard Memorial Scholarship.** The LEAGUE Foundation of New Jersey awards up to seven scholarships in the name of the young gay man murdered in 1998. (Judy Shepard, Matthew's mother, will give the keynote address at the Human Rights Campaign Houston gala dinner on April 12.) Deadline: April 30. Details: www.leaguefoundation.org.

• **PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation.** The Houston organization—now independent of both PFLAG and HATCH, the youth support group—is one of the leading local GLBT scholarship sources in the nation. Deadline: April 30. Info: www.physf.org.

• **Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).** The national organization offers a number of scholarships, with various requirements. Deadline: March 15. Details: www.pflag.org.

• **Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship Fund.** The Houston Transgender Unity Committee will present one or more awards to trans-identified students at the April 26 Unity Banquet. Deadline: March 15. Details: www.htuc.org.

• **The Point Foundation.** The Chicago-based organization awards scholarships through 17 different programs. Deadline: March 1. Details: www.the-pointfoundation.org.

• This scholarship program is aimed at children with one or more GLBT parents: **Lee Dubin Memorial Fund.** The San Francisco-based Children of Gays and Lesbians Everywhere, in partnership with the Horizons Foundation, awards four scholarships each year. Deadline: May (date not determined by press time). Details: www.colage.org. ■

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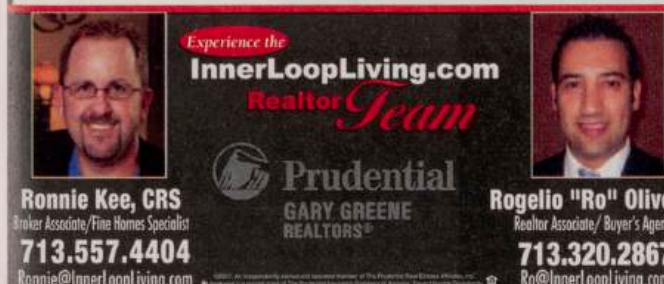
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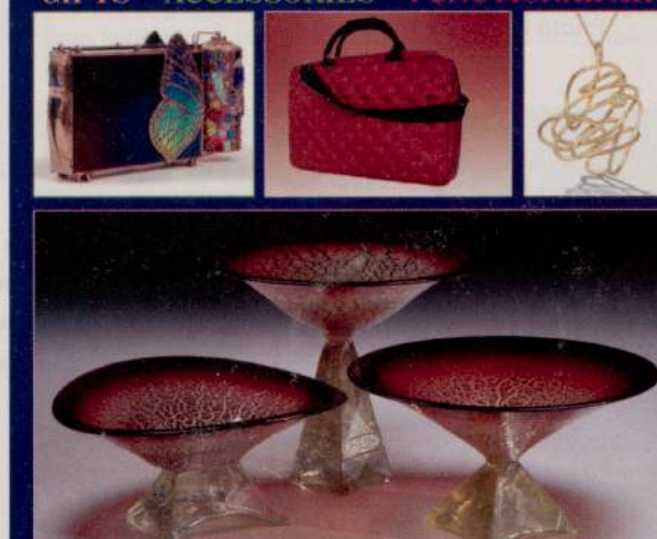
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Dirty Girls

Lisa Lampanelli is tasteless, profane, and unladylike. What's not to love?

by Steven Foster
Photo by Karen Moskowitz



When we called Steven Foster to do an interview with Grammy-nominated comic Lisa Lampanelli, he asked: "Why me?" We told him it was the perfect editorial decision. "You're both wicked, inappropriate, foul-mouthed dirty girls," we told him. After a week of phone-tagging, this is that conversation, which took place during a bout with food poisoning (Lisa) and teethbrushing (Steven).

Lisa Lampanelli: Alright, ya pickle-smoking homo, get that d**k out of your mouth.

Steven Foster: I'm brushing my teeth. You're calling me a half hour early. Yeah, sorry about that.

Lemme call you back. Here's my number. Burn it after you call me. I don't want any faggots stalking me, ya know.

Gimme two minutes. [Spit, rinse, dial.]

Hey, fag.

Hey, bitch. Food poisoning? What'd you stick in your mouth?

I can't believe it. I was on a movie set yesterday, and I was on a 12-hour shoot and got sick

as a dog. But I'm not gonna die. I'll be here and haunt you fags forever.

Good. We look forward to it. You've been really busy lately. Yeah. I'm not complaining. I →

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Dirty Girls continued from page 70

swear to God, you f**king got the shaft, because I've had to postpone you twice, which never happens. But, yeah, we had the Grammys, and then I took my parents away for two days, and then I had this movie shoot, so thank you for your homosexual patience.

You're more than welcome. Where'd you take Mom and Dad?

I bought this house at Canyon Ranch health spa in Tucson, because I'm very wealthy. I don't like to brag, but I got two slammin' houses and two Toyota Camrys, you know? Don't think I'm f**kin' not rich, OK?

[Laughs] Speaking of the Grammys, those two New Zealand jerk-offs stole your statue. What the f**k's up with that?

I know. I figure they need the money more than I do. The best thing that they won is I can't really s**t on any of the other guys, because I like the other guys. So this makes for better jokes when I'm dickin' around about *Flight of the Conchords*. I mean, I don't even know who they are. They're on HBO, and from what I've heard,

the rape scenes in *Oz* are funnier than that f**kin' show. Probably hotter, too. So, you know what? It's good that they won. Because I couldn't really s**t on George Lopez, because he has only one kidney of his own, which is kinda sad. And Steven Wright's a dirty old Jew who has nothin' to look forward to, so it's best they won, because I get more material.

Well, they're not playin' Carnegie Hall.

They certainly are not! Nor are they gonna be playing the Houston Enormo-dome, where I'm going to be at. Is that where I'm playing?

You're at Verizon. You don't wanna play the Dome. The A/C's broken.

Oh, that would suck. Sweating my ass off with all of the blacks and the fags and those Mexicans. It's better I play at the intimate [affecting a Brit accent] Verizon Wi-ah-less The-ah-tah.

Great special on Comedy Central, by the way. Nice work.

Thanks, dude. Wait'll you see the next one. It's even harsher. I can't believe every sick thought in my head gets to be on TV. How do people even survive in life without a vehicle to vent? What do you do with all your

evilness and all your bad thoughts? I just take it on the stage and make it funny.

Have you ever been to Houston?

Yeah, dude, I played that place about a year ago.

George Bush's hometown. Sorry about that.

Oh, it's OK. I got laid. I don't give a f**k. I banged my security guard. You guys think I'm joking, but these f**king ... security guards are so sexy. It's almost in the contract that they have to bang me after the show if I want 'em to. So all I remember is I had a hot chocolate daddy. How else could I f**kin' remember [Houston] in kindness?

You've been famous for your roasts.

Who'd you enjoy going after most?

I have to say that it has to be somebody you like. You know what I mean? 'Cuz to do a roast the right way, there has to be some love between the people. Or at least a respect for their work. I mean, I really like Pam Anderson. I think she's adorable. She doesn't take herself seriously. I love William Shatner. I love Jeff Foxworthy. Flavor Flav was awesome. The ones you don't wanna roast are the ones who take themselves seriously like that f**kin' →

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Dirty Girls continued from page 72

c**t Sandra Bernhardt who don't like me. She can go suck a d**k. I hate her. I couldn't roast her because there's no love between us. You can sense that I meant every joke I said. So the only people you can really, really roast are people you like. Luckily, most of the roasts I've done, that's been the case. Even Jerry Lewis, that old f**kin' Jew windbag.

Can I ask you a personal question?

Are you kiddin'? I just told you I banged the darkey security guard. Sure!

Have you ever been married?

Yeah, once. I hit 30 and thought, "Ooh, I better get married. That's what people do when they're 30." So I married this guy, Jim, who wasn't like a retard, but he had a bad car accident. And I'm a caretaker. You know? Caregiver type? I have that kind of personality. So I liked him for, like a minute, and then we got married. I was like "What the f**k did I do?" It was almost like that Pet Shop Boys song. *What have I? What have I? What have I done to deserve this?*

[Laughs]

And then I ended up like, "Dude, I'm just not happy." And, thankfully, we parted friends because, you know, I'd feel really guilty, 'cuz he's dead now. So that woulda sucked if he died and I didn't like him. He was a little retarded, but married LL. What can you do?

But you must be lovin' life right now.

Listen, 90 percent of the time I am. But then I don't get in my gratitude. I really get very sad—"Oh, my God, I don't have a boyfriend. Waaah." And then I go, "It'll happen when it's supposed to happen." But that's the only thing missing is the nice boyfriend. But I am an older woman with lovely hair extensions, two Camrys, a nice rack, and a tight box. I think life is good.

I think you're kinda sexy.

I'm the f**kin' hottest chick you ever saw! What do you mean *kinda*, you f**kin' a**hole?! If you were straight, you'd be cornholin' me over the phone and you know it!

You're right. You're right, I would. Hey, what's the movie you're workin' on?

Oh, that was great. It's called *The Group* and it's about a group of sex addicts. It's

with Tom Arnold and Henry Winkler, and it's by the guy who directs *Alias* and *Felicity* and this and that. And what happened was, they wrote a part in for me because they're big fans of mine. Those are the f**kin' parts I want, dude. Like the Owen Wilson movie that I just did that's comin' out in March. They wrote the part for me. And I get to be myself and just get more famous and sell more tickets. That's all I give a s**t about.

I hear you've got an animation project in the works.

Yeah, those f**kin' freaks at Comedy Central.

Oh, they suck!

Yeah, but thank God they're still pondering if they're gonna do it. It's the funniest pilot in the world. It's me and a black guy running from the law, going around the country. It's like *The Fugitive*, but nobody's really chasing us. Like I'm delusional. I think somebody should be chasing me because I'm so f**king important. Kinda like my life is anyway. It's called *Run, Lisa, Run*. So now hopefully by the time I come down there, we'll know if they picked it up or not. And if they don't, we'll shop it somewhere else.

The concept sounds fantastic. Is that yours?

Yep. I wrote it with the guy who wrote *Drawn Together*. It's genius. I have a pretty good feeling about it, but you never know with a network. You just go with it and don't get disappointed. Whatever!

Well, I won't take any more of your time. I just wanted to say I think your work is dead-on. Thank you for fitting me into your schedule.

Oh, are you kidding? I love it. When she sends me the list and it's always like these f**king white guy journalist idiots from these awful papers and then I see Fag Paper! I'm like, oh God, thank you Jesus, because I know it's always gonna be the big honkin' cornholer who gets me. You're the only guy I'd be happy to talk to today. I was like, "Oh, I can't talk to a straight guy." F**k that s**t. Thanks for being a big dirty fag and making me happy.

Steven Foster, a producer/director with ADV Films, the Houston-based media company and anime distributor, is a former OutSmart staff member. Foster, who appeared on our November 2001 cover for his work with anime, was named to the Out magazine Out 100 List in 2006.

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Just Our Bill

Acclaimed choreographer Bill T. Jones returns to Houston with his provocative work 'Chapel/Chapter'

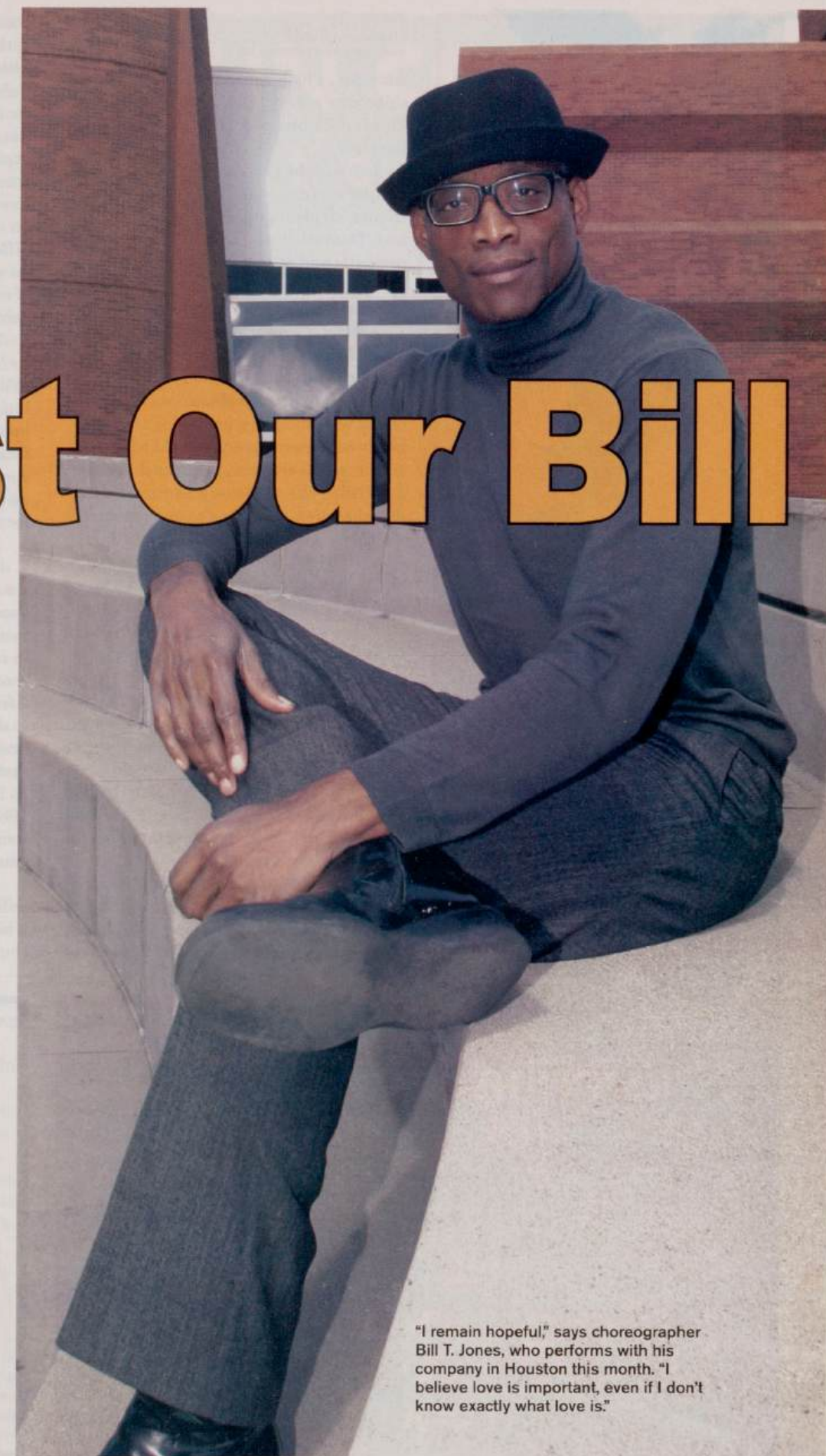
by Neil Ellis Orts

Photo by Kevin Fitzsimmons/Wexner Center for the Arts

If you know anything about Bill T. Jones, it's that he is an internationally recognized dancer and choreographer, artistic director and co-founder of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, recipient of a number of awards and honors, among them the MacArthur Fellowship (often referred to the "genius grant") and a Tony Award.

Of course, there is much more to know about the man and his work.

Jones' latest work is on view this month in *Chapel/Chapter*, the evening-length show currently on national tour and coming to Jones Hall on March 28 (presented by Society for the Performing Arts). The work presents three narratives juxtaposed against each other and woven around each other. They are tales of startling violence and complicated



"I remain hopeful," says choreographer Bill T. Jones, who performs with his company in Houston this month. "I believe love is important, even if I don't know exactly what love is."

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Just Our Bill

continued from previous page

emotions, which portray the way relationships play out within these circumstances. This is, of course, only a surface reading of the piece.

In YouTube previews of *Chapel/Chapter*, the viewer can hear religious-like chants, strident guitar noise, and spoken text. Dancers dress in prison-orange coveralls and solid black. There is reverence and anger. The set moves between darkness, shadow, and light.

Chapel/Chapter had its beginnings when Jones' partner's French mother visited for a month before Memorial Day. The then-recent Zacarias Moussaoui trials had ended with the judge predicting that the newly convicted terrorist would be forgotten. In a conversation, the Frenchwoman mentioned the *oubliette*, a feature in medieval castles, a hole in the floor through which noblemen might drop people they wished to be forgotten. All this judgment and forgetting so near a day called "memorial" set Jones' creative process in motion.

Jones says he had the title before he began work—"Titles help organize my feelings," he says—and he knew he wanted to explore something about modern sacred space. He also knew that this was impossible without addressing evil and how we engage it. "I knew [this piece] would try to create the sense of being in a place of judgment," he says. This "religious space/legal space" dichotomy drives the dramatic tension of *Chapel/Chapter*.

Past work from Jones shows that he has never shied away from difficult topics. One of his more famous pieces, *Still/Here*, directly addresses his HIV-positive

status by exploring a spectrum of people with life-threatening or terminal illness. Titles like *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land* tell you he will confront race issues with his multicultural company. *Another Evening: I Bow Down* explores disaster, full of water images from Noah, the Titanic, and New Orleans. Even with these works, Jones says he isn't an activist ("An activist is out doing very different things from what I'm doing") but an artist exploring the "mysterious nature of experience" from a more philosophical or spiritual perspective.

The *New York Times* review of *Chapel/Chapter* opened with this observation: "All this time, people have been complaining about Bill T. Jones, or praising him, for being political. It turns out he was instead being moral, even religious." When I ask Jones how he responds to this statement, he simply replies, "I'm sorry it took so long for them to figure it out."

If you've read anything about the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, you know that the company was founded by Jones and the late Arnie Zane. The two men met in college and became partners in art, life, and love. As *Out* noted in its recent Out 100 issue, Jones and Zane, an African American and a Jew, marched in demonstrations while still in college, dressed in drag and holding hands. Zane and Jones were simultaneously diagnosed as HIV-positive in 1984. Zane died in 1988. Jones remains healthy and symptom-free. Where closets are concerned, Jones was never "in."

A strength of Jones' work is his willingness to explore his experience as a black, HIV-positive gay man through the experiences of non-black, straight,

HIV-negative men and women. He doesn't explore only HIV but also cancer. His multiracial company doesn't address only the "black experience," but considers a fuller spectrum of dynamics among people of every ethnicity. "I truly believe in engagement, participation in the world," Jones says. If his personal experience starts a creative journey, he is also clear that he must explore beyond his experience. To paraphrase an old writing adage, Jones doesn't dance only what he knows, but also what he finds out.

At the same time, he has written in his blog that part of what drew him to modern dance is the fact that it was a medium where gay men were prominent and gender roles were already being questioned and explored. Who lifts whom? Who partners whom? He expressed to me his desire that the gay community know and pay attention to modern dance. "It is a distinctively American art form," he says, "one that gay men have helped shape from the beginning."

If you've only read program notes or a brief news piece about Bill T. Jones, there is one thing you may not have noticed about him. The word *community* is very important to him.

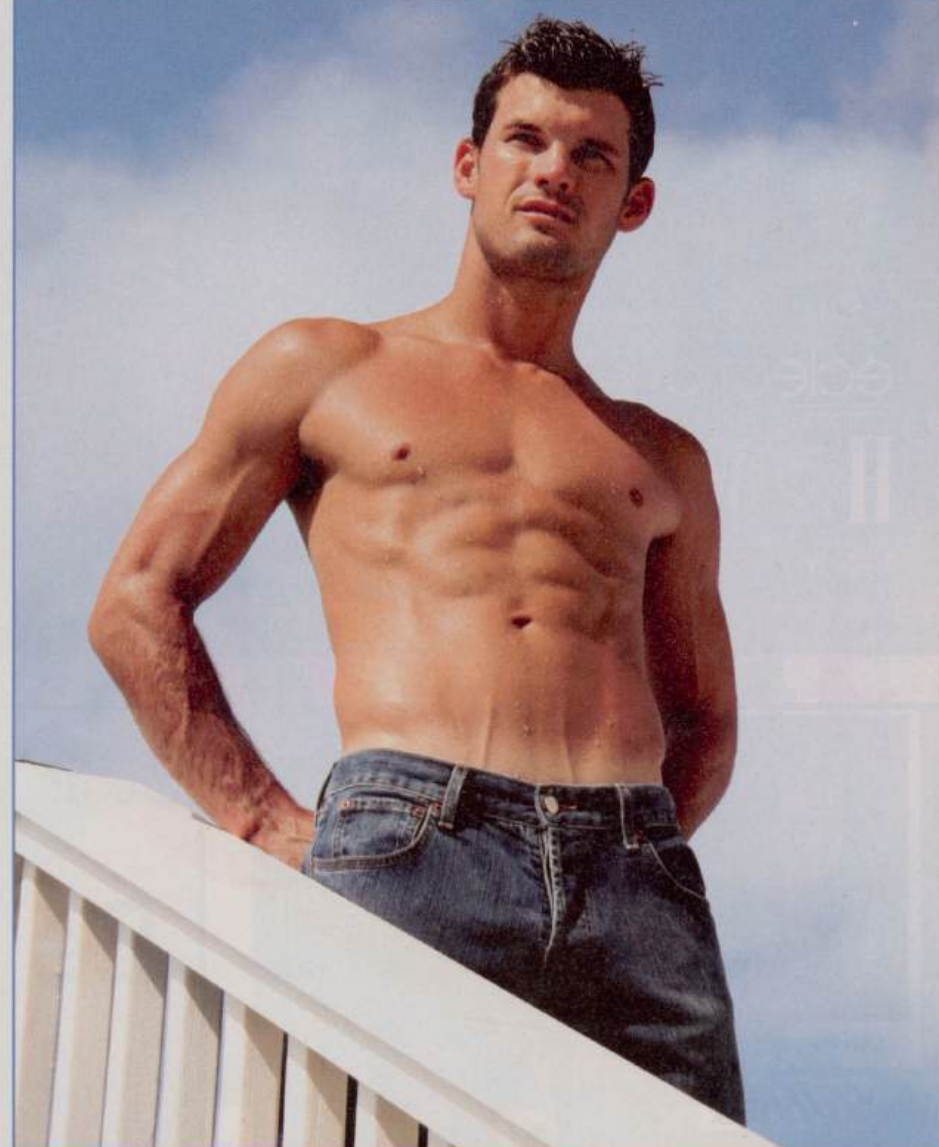
"Bill T. Jones is something of the brand name," he says, "but my company isn't just me but a community of people working together. Some have been with the company for a very long time."

Indeed, there are several company members and collaborators who have more than a decade of history—up to two decades in some cases—with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. These individuals include the associate artistic director and video designer Janet Wong, the creative director and set designer Bjorn G. Amelan, and actor/choreographer Andrea Smith. Jones speaks of these longtime collaborators with gratitude, affection, and a profound appreciation that this company is not a one-man show.

As our too-brief conversation comes to an end, Jones speaks of his values, often with the qualifiers of a man who understands the slipperiness of language. "I remain hopeful," he says. "I still like people. I believe love is important, even if I don't know exactly what love is. I try to bring some standard of beauty to my work." He pauses briefly. "And we can talk all day about what beauty is."

Writer and performer Neil Ellis Orts is a frequent *OutSmart* contributor. He recently had work included in the 2007 edition of *Windhover*, published by the University of Mary Hardin Baylor, and the anthologies *Charmed Lives* (Lethe Press) and *Able To...* (neoNUMA Arts).

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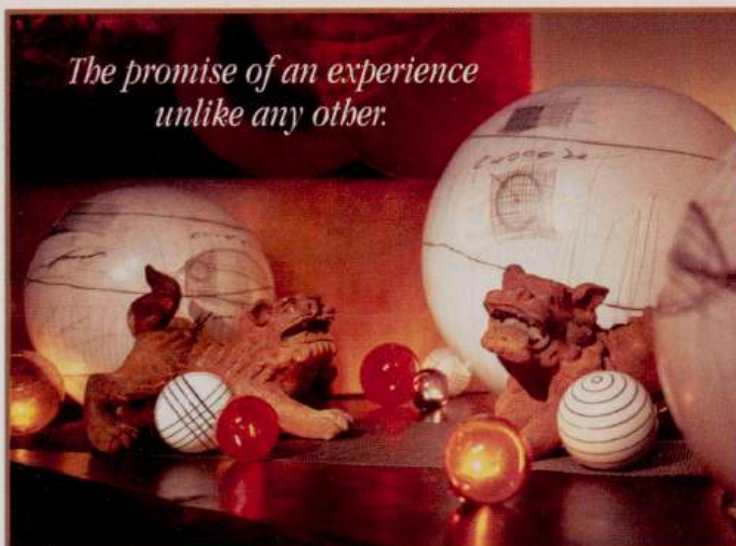
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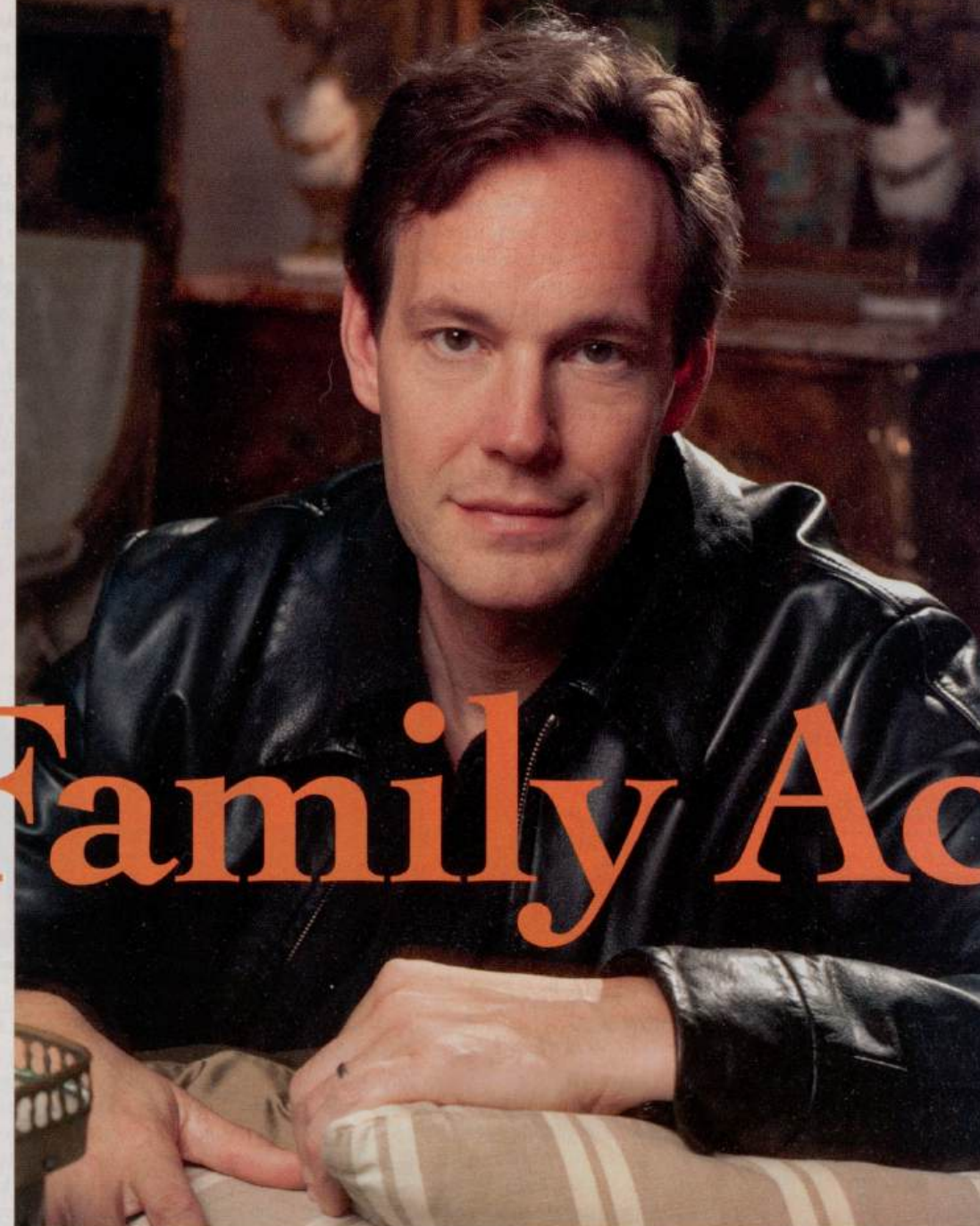
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Family Act



*Rising young American composer Jake Heggie
returns to Houston to premiere his new opera, 'Last Acts,'
an emotional tale of a mother and her children*

by Rich Arenschieldt
Photos by Terrence McCarthy

Continuing its rich tradition of presenting intriguing world premieres, including two this season, Houston Grand Opera brings back gay composer Jake Heggie, presenting his chamber opera, *Last Acts* (through March 15), featuring operatic icon Fredericka von Stade in the title role. *Last Acts* is an adaptation of Terrence McNally's unpublished play *Some Christmas Letters*, which chronicles the emotionally charged life of an actress and her son and daughter.

Heggie, who lives in San Francisco, is most famous for his first opera, *Dead Man Walking*, which premiered in 2000 (also created in conjunction with McNally). Heggie's work was last heard here in 2004 in a world premiere production of his *The End of the Affair*, a sexy operatic adaptation of the book by Graham Greene, commissioned by Houston Grand Opera (HGO) with Madison Opera and Opera Pacific. *Last Acts* is smaller and more theatrical in scope than those works, comprising →

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Family Act continued from previous page

three characters who are accompanied by a 10-piece onstage orchestra.

This cast promises to be easy on the eyes and ears. Mezzo-soprano von Stade (Madeline, the mother) needs little introduction, since her musical appearances in Houston span three decades. She was last seen here descending a three-story evaporating staircase in the edgy production of *Coronation of Poppea*. Baritone Keith Phares (Charlie, her son) was a finalist in the HGO Eleanor McCollum Competition and is making his main stage debut. Recently, his movie-star looks were put to use (in various stages of undress) at the brash production of the Gluck opera *Merlin's Island* at the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston,

wonderful collaborative partnership which allows that to happen. Everyone's work is improved by participation in this collective endeavor. As an artist you always seek people who raise the bar to expand your creative results.

"There is such a level of trust between all of us. If anyone has questions, they bring them to the table. The love and admiration that we have for each other gives us an incredible level of comfort with which to pursue the artistic process. With this creative team and with the singers who realize this music, I am able to be extremely productive and creative—essentially unfettered and free to compose."

Much of Heggie's inspiration has come from the leading ladies of his life—first from his musical mentor and teacher, pianist Johana Harris, to whom he was once



All together now: In rehearsals for *Last Acts* are (standing, l-r) Keith Phares, Frederica von Stade, and Kristin Clayton.

South Carolina. Kristin Clayton (Madeline's daughter, Beatrice) made her debut in the recent HGO production of *The Magic Flute* as one of the hilarious trio of ladies-in-waiting to the vampy Queen of the Night. Clayton has known Heggie since the 1990s and, like von Stade, has a voice that inspires the composer to create new works for her.

As Heggie has risen to prominence within the operatic world, he has maintained a close group of artistic collaborators, many of whom have contributed to *Last Acts*. "Working with the same people continually helps me a great deal," Heggie said in a recent telephone interview. "No matter what endeavor you are involved in, everyone needs to have good artists to collaborate with in order to achieve optimal results."

As Heggie's work has entered the international musical mainstream, his output has expanded in scope. "I like to take on different subjects and projects that challenge me, and with this group of artistic partners we have created a

married, and secondly from Fredericka "Flicka" von Stade.

"I knew Flicka from my early days at San Francisco Opera," he said. "I had written some folk songs for her as a gift, and soon after that she started to champion my work. We have been working together on various projects ever since."

Von Stade is not only a musical companion for Heggie, but she also serves an important role model. "As a person and an artist, she lives her life from a very generous, joyful, and creative perspective," Heggie said. "Flicka recognizes all the weaknesses and frailties that people possess and simultaneously realizes the good in everyone. She has an incredible clarity and perspective in her approach toward life. *Last Acts* would not exist without her inspiration and artistry."

Another of Heggie's constant collaborators is McNally, the renowned gay playwright (*The Lisbon Traviata*, *Lips Together*, *Teeth Apart*, *Love! Valour! Compassion!*), who lived as a child in Corpus Christi, Texas. "Terrence had written a

short 14-page play for a one-time benefit performance in 1999," Heggie says. "I asked to read the play and immediately knew that I wanted to musicalize the work and that the lead role of Madeline was perfect for von Stade. The play was so touching and beautiful. It just read so true to me. When Flicka read it, she had the same reaction. Since then she and I have been on this seven-year journey to get this piece to the stage."

While McNally's script provided a textural framework for *Last Acts*, Heggie turned to frequent collaborator and librettist Gene Scheer to expand the piece and realize it operatically. "Much of the libretto comes from the original work," Heggie said, "but Gene's additional contributions are very intelligent and insightful—completely in keeping with the spirit of McNally's script. In *Last Acts* there are three characters enduring three deaths over three decades. Terrence was masterful at weaving all of these things together within such a brief piece, and Gene's additional contributions are amazing as well."

Last Acts shares similarities with Heggie's other works in that many of his characters are searching for identity, belonging or closure in some form or fashion. In *Dead Man Walking*, the perpetrator, a convicted murderer on death row, seeks absolution. In *The End of The Affair*, the adulterer seeks redemption. In *Last Acts*, a family craves connection to replace truncated lifelong relationships predicated upon a deceit.

Within the tightly constructed framework of *Last Acts*, the Madeline character maintains a certain identity throughout her life to assure the emotional survival of her family. In the final analysis, Heggie says, "One of the most powerful components of the opera is that Madeline creates in her words 'a version of our lives that this family can live with.'"

On Stage

Houston Grand Opera presents *Last Acts* through March 15 in the Cullen Theater at Wortham Theater Center's Cullen Theater. Details and tickets: www.houstongrandopera.org. The date for the OUT mixer for Jake Heggie's *Last Acts* is March 13. The mixer begins at 6:30 at the Wortham Center and everyone that attends will get a ticket to the performance for only \$35 (almost half price).

Rich Arenschioldt reported on the controversy over concierge care in Houston for OutSmart's December issue.

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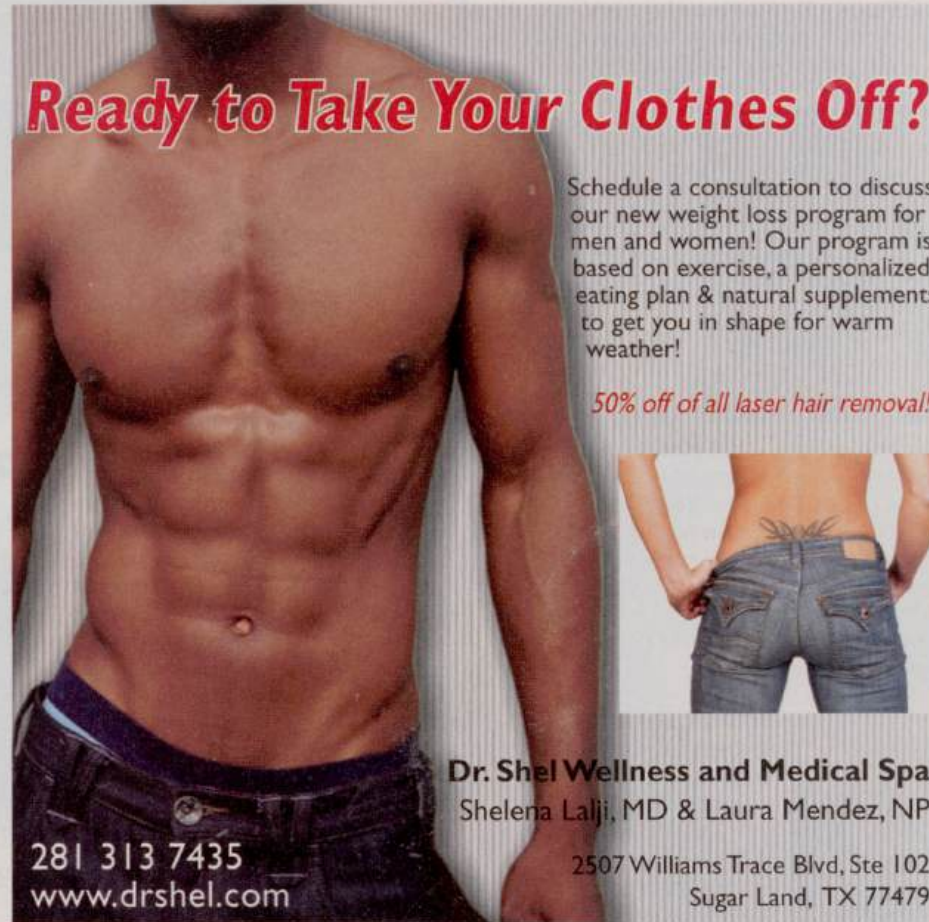
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SPRING IS HERE

This season, make living outdoors better

by Marene Gustin

Spring has sprung. That means it's time to get back to the great outdoors—as in outdoor living areas, flower beds, and gardens that attract wildlife. Here are a few of our best bets for making your garden, patio, or yard the best ever this year.

FLOWER POWER

What would springtime be without blooms? Over at Thompson + Hanson's garden emporium, the bulbs are pouring in. Manager Steve Crowson recommends anything that is bright and sassy and smells good: hyacinths, tulips galore, and daffodils. "They're seasonal," he says. "They bloom and then they're gone, but while they're here they are beautiful, and people love them." Among the nursery greenery, you'll also find English boxwoods and red-leaf maples and a newly refurbished shop and a charming little café on the premises called Tiny Boxwoods. Grab a chorizo-egg taco in the morning as you stroll through the plant selection.

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PLANTER PARADISE

Greg Mouser at The Blair House does a bustling business in the spring months as some clients with huge yards are looking for outdoor living arrangements

with his versatile teak furniture, while Heights- and Montrose-neighborhood folk look for smaller yet quaint porch swings for the warmer months. But everyone, it seems, is wild about his pebble pots. Handmade in Indonesia, these



concrete planters are set with hundreds of polished river stones, creating a serene yet fashionable façade. The pots start at \$65 and go up depending upon size, and, yes, you can request them any size, although getting custom pots may take a while. Best of all, these gorgeous planters make superb outdoor statements, and they work indoors as well.

The Blair House, 4901 Rose, 713/869-5558, www.theblairhouse.com

WEDGIE WHIZ

Trash that trowel and pick up the hottest new gardening tool around: the Wedgie. Not a cool shoe, but a nifty gardener's gadget, this simple tool, available only at Buchanan's Native Plants, allows you less wrist strain and



Thompson + Hanson's garden emporium.

more ergonomically correct action for digging and planting. The seven-inch bright yellow high-impact plastic wedge is easy to use and hard to lose, and makes for the perfect gardener's gift. Under \$15. Buchanan's Native Plants in the Heights, 611 East 11th St., 713/861-5702, www.buchanansplants.com

LIGHTS, GARDEN, ACTION

You may have a beautiful garden and patio, fine flowers and furniture. But come sundown, how do you enjoy it? Tim Turner with Windswept Landscape Studios has the bright idea: outdoor lighting. "For as little as \$1,500 and up," he says, "you can create a lighting scenario for your garden and patio that will illuminate your yard." Why waste the hard work and fantastic foliage just because it's nighttime? Showcase your handiwork at night with serene and beautiful lighting. And it need not cost an arm and a leg. Turner says low-voltage lighting and timer photo cells will save a bundle on electric bills while still making the exterior of your home a showplace. Windswept Landscape Studio, 1356 Chippendale Rd., 713/263-7771, www.windsweptlandscape.com

DON'T FORGET THE WILDLIFE

Buchanan's Native Plants in the Heights has everything you need to turn your garden into a haven for hummingbirds and butterflies. Check out the plethora of bottlebrushes, flowering yarrows, black-eyed Susans, and milkweed, which is nectar for monarchs. While you're there, pick up a copy of *Butterflies of Houston and Southeast Texas* by local naturalists John and Gloria Tveten (University of Texas Press, \$21.95) for a lively garden. Buchanan's Native Plants, 611 East 11th St., 713/861-5702, www.buchanansplants.com



GRAND GARDEN

If you need inspiration, look no further than Bayou Bend, the landmark residence and gardens created by philanthropist and arts patron Ima Hogg. Located just off Memorial Drive, Bayou Bend houses the Hogg-assembled collection of American decorative arts, now part of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The grounds designed by the landscape architect C.C. "Pat" Fleming provide sterling examples of plantings, both classic and more informal, as well as ideas of ways to place art and furniture in a verdant setting. The recent book *Bayou Bend Gardens: A Southern Oasis*, by Bayou Bend



founding director David Warren (Scala/MFAH, \$45), provides a history of this Houston treasure. It's a companion volume to the new *American Decorative Arts and Paintings in the Bayou Bend Collection*, by curator Michael Brown (Scala/MFAH, \$45). There is no better time to view the Bayou Bend gardens than during the March 7-9 Azalea Trail, presented by the River Oaks Garden Club (details: www.riveroaksgardenclub.org). Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, 1 Westcott, 713/639-7750, www.mfah.org

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Barney Frank and George W. Bush

(*Boston Globe*, 1/29/08, Susan Milligan)

On his way to make his State of the Union address, Bush was passing Barney Frank, who was on the phone with his boyfriend.

"Tell him I said, 'Hello,'" Bush said to Frank, leaning in to pat the congressman's shoulder. As Bush continued into the House chamber, Frank told his skeptical boyfriend that it had been the conservative Republican president sending his good wishes. Frank's boyfriend didn't believe him, so the Massachusetts lawmaker put one of the sergeants-at-arms on the phone to back up his story....

Frank sought out the president.... "Mr. President, by the way, the person I was talking to when you said to say hello was my boyfriend," Frank said he told the commander-in-chief.

"Well, I hope you said how open-minded I am," Frank said the president replied.

"I considered telling [the president] I wouldn't marry him," Frank said, "but then I thought, 'Nah.'"

Joan Rivers

(*Out*, 3/08)

Fag hag and fruit fly are perfectly acceptable terms. Especially for Katie Holmes.

Sidney Lumet on Al Pacino

(*Entertainment Weekly*, 2/1/08, Chris Nashawaty)

Editor's note: Sidney Lumet is the director of 1975's *Dog Day Afternoon*, starring Al Pacino. He also directed *The Group*, in which Candice Bergen plays a lesbian, and *Deathtrap*, in which Michael Caine and Christopher Reeve play lovers.

Al was terribly nervous about doing *Dog Day Afternoon*. I don't think any major American star had played not only a gay guy but a gay guy who's in love with a man getting an operation to be a woman [Chris Sarandon]! The night before we started rehearsals his hands were shaking. He was ready to quit. I was nervous that this thing would be showing in Brooklyn on a Saturday night and some guy would shout "Fag!" at the screen. The only way to prevent that was to be so true to these characters that everybody couldn't help but get swept up in the movie. I think it's Al's best performance.

Janet Jackson

(*The Advocate*, 3/11/08, Brandon Voss)

Bradon Voss: In *Discipline*'s title track you ask a "daddy" to dominate you. Do you like men to take control in bed, Miss Jackson?

Janet Jackson: Yeah, I definitely have my moments, but there are times when it goes the other way around. My friend asked me the other day, "Are you a T or B—a top or a bottom?"

Straight people use that terminology?

Well, he wasn't straight!

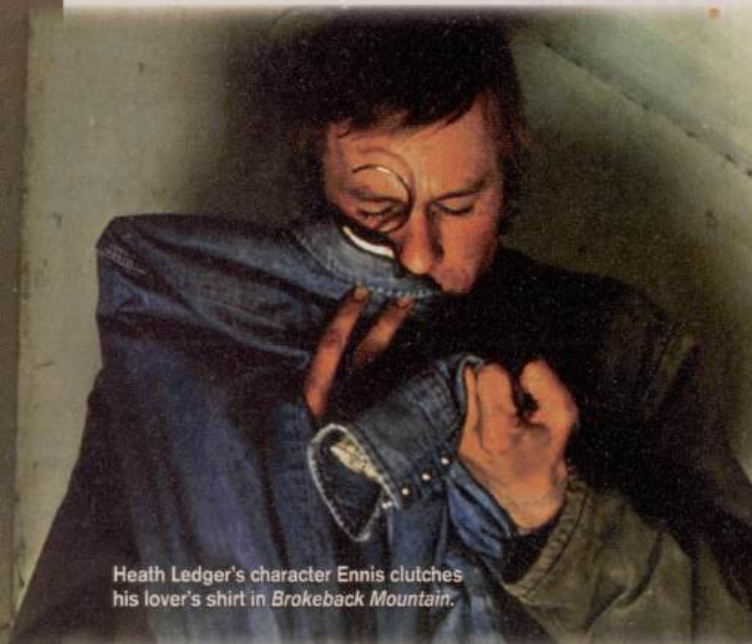
On Heath Ledger

(*USA Today*, 1/28/08, Lorena Blas)

When Daniel Day-Lewis accepted the best-actor trophy [at the Screen Actors Guild Awards] for his role in *There Will Be Blood*, he dedicated his award to Heath Ledger, 28, who was found dead [Tuesday, January 22] in his New York apartment. An intense Day-Lewis described Ledger's *Monster's Ball* character as "almost like an unformed being retreating from us, and yet, we wanted to follow him." He added, "And then of course in *Brokeback Mountain*, he was unique. He was perfect. That scene in the trailer at the end of the film is as moving as anything I think I've ever seen."

(*The Advocate*, 3/11/08, Diana Ossana)

Diana Ossana (*Brokeback Mountain* screenwriter): Before the first take [of the final scene], Heath...said "I think you're going to like what I've done with this scene." ... I watched the monitor as Ennis opened his tiny closet door and revealed the two shirts he had found hidden inside Jack's childhood bedroom, like skins, one inside the other...and realized that Heath, as Ennis, had chosen to reverse the order of those shirts, with his on the outside, embracing Jack's.... Afterward our grizzled and thoroughly macho first assistant director marched over to me, and whispered in my ear, "Diana, I've worked in this business 50 years. This is the first time an actor's brought a tear to my eye."



Heath Ledger's character Ennis clutches his lover's shirt in *Brokeback Mountain*.

Gena Rowlands

15 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH (The Advocate, 3/23/93, Pier Carlo Talenti)

[T]he fact-based *A Question of Love* was a straight-forward portrayal of a woman fighting to maintain custody of her son after the boy's father learns that she and the woman she lives with are lovers. It was uncommonly frank for a 1978 telefilm, and Rowlands is quick to state, "I don't think they'd make it now [1993]. I think everything practically that's going on, the hysteria, is from fear. They say people acted very peculiarly during the bubonic plague and other plagues too."...

When asked whether she has any thoughts on how one copes with a loss like that of [John] Cassavetes [Rowlands' husband, who died in 1989], Rowlands smiles.... "The same way you guys do. Just the same." A silence follows.

"You just can't complain about being alive," she adds a moment later. "It's self-indulgent to be unhappy."



Gena Rowlands (r) and Jane Alexander play lovers in 1978's *A Question of Love*.

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blaise DiStefano



Kathy Griffin

(The Advocate, 2/26/08, Corey Scholibo)

You know, my gay friends constantly complain about how the gays are so shallow and they have to stay in perfect shape and how horrible it is and these bitches will judge you in two seconds. And I'm like, yeah, not so much with me. A gay audience kind of lets a woman age. They'll let her be a woman, and they'll let her stumble and fall and hang by the crappy marriages, and you know, stick with her through David Gest.

'FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO'

A fifth grade understanding of the Bible is fine...if you're in the fifth grade

God hates fags. We've all heard it. We've all seen the protest signs. We've all shuddered at the thought of the unbridled violent hatred lying behind those words, waiting to attack. Leviticus 18:22 is at the heart of the confusion: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is *abomination*."

Such a strong word, *abomination*. But do these words indicate what so many religious conservatives assume? Is the GLBT community really a nation of iniquity, a den of sinners, doomed to eternal damnation?

Bishop Desmond Tutu, Dick Gephardt, and Orthodox Rabbi Steve Greenberg, among others, speak against interpreting the Bible as justification for persecuting gays.

"But homosexuality is an abomination," you say—or, more likely, disapproving people around you say this ad nauseum. Biblical scholars explain that "abomination" is used in a ritualistic context in the controversial Leviticus 18:22. Look further. Eating shellfish is also listed as an abomination. Wearing clothes of two contrasting textiles, like cotton and linen, could also get you offed. (What would the *Queer Eye* guys say to that?) This is ritual uncleanness, not inherent evil. As one scholar extrapolates, gay sex

was considered ritualistically punishable as it didn't promote the growth of a Jewish nation.

The lives of several homosexuals and their Christian families are examined, including Gene Robinson, the first gay man to become an ordained Episcopalian Bishop. (Robinson wore a bullet-proof vest during the ceremony out of concern for his safety.)

Former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt tells the story of standing



Openly gay Bishop Gene Robinson wore a bullet-proof vest at his ordination.



Mary Lou Wallner with her daughters Anna (l) and Becky in happier times.

proudly behind his lesbian daughter, Chrissy, during his campaign for the presidency. (A family portrait graces the cover of the DVD.)

Mary Lou Wallner laments shunning her daughter who came out to her, which eventually led to the daughter's suicide. Since then, Wallner founded Teach Ministries (To Educate About the Consequences of Homophobia) and preaches understanding and acceptance.

For the Bible Tells Me So (2007) was co-written and directed by Daniel G. Karslake. FYI: Soundtrack includes k.d. lang.

From First Run Features (www.firstrunfeatures.com).

DVD/VHS Shorts

Rock Bottom: Gay Men and Meth

As Perry Halkitis, Ph.D., explains on-screen, the problem with meth is that many users find it to be "...the most ideal drug for gay men." This unsettling documentary takes an intimate look at the lives of seven gay men hooked on the hypersexual drug. Some make it out of the addiction alive, one doesn't. • 2006. Directed by Jay Corcoran. • From Outcast Films (www.outcast-films.com). —Review: Eric A.T. Dieckman

The Bubble

In this hybrid of erotic comedy and political drama, three young Israelis share an apartment. The trio meets Ashraf,



a gay Arab on the run. The three Israelis take him under their wing, give him the more Israeli-sounding appellation, Shimi, and attempt to pass him off as one of their own. But amidst the political turmoil of their home country, how long can their charade last? • 2006. Co-written and directed by Eytan Fox. Hebrew and Arabic with English subtitles. • From Strand Releasing (www.strandreleasing.com). —Preview: E.D.

Death at a Funeral

English ensemble comedy at its funniest. Daniel's father has passed on, leaving Daniel with the grim responsibility of arranging and hosting his funeral.



Nothing seems to be going right when things get even worse. Dad's secret gay lover, a dwarf named Peter (Peter Dinklage, *The Station Agent*) arrives unannounced with some very telling photos, and threats of blackmail. Huge laughs prevail throughout this bigger-than-life comedy about death. • 2007. Directed by Frank Oz. • From MGM Home Entertainment (www.mgm.com). —Review: E.D.

Eleven Men Out

The dramedy from Iceland shows what happens when one hunky soccer player decides to live life outside the lines. When a team's most popular and sexiest →

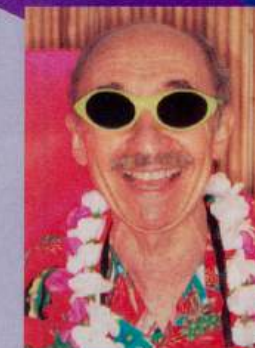
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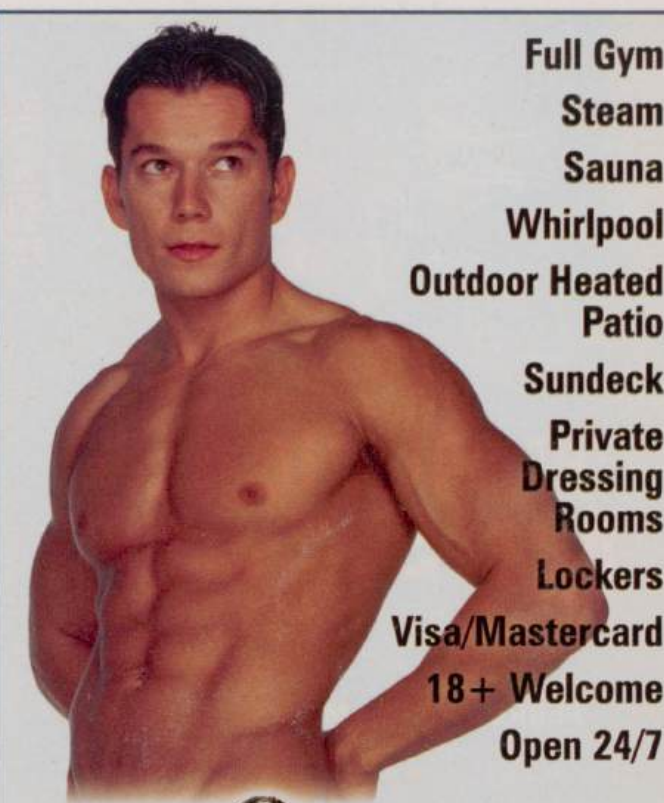
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DVD/VHS Shorts

continued from page 88



soccer star admits he is gay, the sports world is turned upside down. Immediately suspended by the team, he forms a gang of other players who have come out. What happens next? The Eleven Men Out win game after game on their way to the championship. • 2005.

Directed by Robert I. Douglas. • Available March 4 from Genius Products (www.geniusproducts.com) and here! Films (www.heretv.com). —Preview: Suzie Lynde

Surveillance 24/7



Adam has got his life just where he wants it: During the week he teaches at a private school; on the weekends he goes to London to dance, meet friends, and get laid. A casual encounter with a stranger, Jake, brings Adam to the attention of powerful unseen forces.

They rob him of his job and follow his every move on surveillance cameras. He eventually discovers that Jake was planted on him as evidence of an affair with a gay member of the Royal family. When Jake is found dead, Adam is forced to go on the run and dig deep to find the truth. • 2007. Directed by Paul Oremland. • Available March 4 from Wolfe (www.wolfevideo.com, 1-800-GET-WOLFE). —Preview: S.L.

Midnight Express



With the Turkish government trying to crack down on drugs, terrorism, and crime, Billy Hayes (Brad Davis) has the misfortune of being caught at the border with a hashish stash. At first sentenced to four years and two months for drug possession, his

prison term grows to 30 years when the prosecution's appeal finds him guilty of smuggling. Things get worse when he is sent to a detention center for the mentally unstable after he bites off a warden's tongue to prevent him from divulging his escape plans. Forced to struggle with daily violence, despair, and abuse, he finally reaches his breaking point and is willing to do almost anything to escape. Of note (other than Davis' excellent performance): homoerotic shower scene. • 1978. Directed by Alan Parker. • Winner of two Academy Awards and six Golden Globes. • From Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (www.sonypictures.com). —Preview: Troy Carrington

TV ON DVD

The DL Chronicles: The Complete First Season



...Or as I like to call it, *Awkward Gay Black Stories*. Instead of fully investigating the network of black men that keep their gay lives secret, this snoozer approaches slapstick in repetitive "Hide under the bed! My wife is outside!" situations. For a better time, head straight to Logo's addictively-bad *Noah's Arc*. • 2007. • From Genius Products (www.geniusproducts.com) and here! Networks (www.heretv.com). —Review: David Goldberg ■

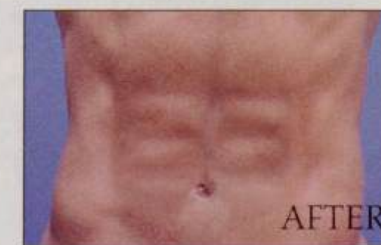
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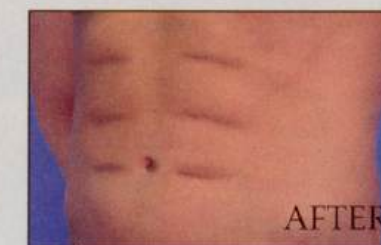
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FOOD FIGHT

Bravo's 'Top Chef' goes for four in Chicago



Chew on this: The contestants in season four of *Top Chef* include three out lesbians (from top to bottom): Lisa, Jennifer, and Zoi. What, no out gay guys?

Foodies, rejoice! Bravo TV has announced it is serving up yet another helping of its highly popular culinary competition, *Top Chef*. This time the kitchen is set in Chicago, where 16 contestants battle to determine who has the best

skills when it comes to chowtime.

OK, "chowtime" is a little garish, especially given the esteemed lineup seated at the judges' table. Series host and author Padma Lakshmi, culinary giant Tom Colicchio, *Food & Wine* magazine's Gail Simmons, and former

Queer Eye palate guy, Ted Allen, all help determine who emerges this time as queen (or king) of the TC kitchen.

According to press info, surprise celebrity chefs pop into the Windy City kitchen to share gastronomical secrets as the elimination rolls on. (Note to Paula Deen: You better bobby-pin down that wig, Sister!)

Delighting those of us who love it when "family" is represented in our basic-cable television programming, this fourth season of *TC* features three lesbians competing for first-toque honors: food service management expert Lisa, Culinary Institute of Arts grad Jennifer, and Zoi, the self-taught restaurant consultant.

All three women enjoy cooking with lamb, press info also hints. Lisa rubs hers with chili, Zoi roasts hers with artichokes. But our money is on the über-creative Jennifer, who works the little bleater into a tongue salad. *Mangia!*

Debuts March 12, 9 p.m., on Bravo. Details: www.bravotv.com.



Alma Mater Matters

Imagine spending two full weeks with 13 of your former high school classmates, and then having the whole thing broadcast on national television. Stop screaming. With *High School Reunion*, TV Land ventures into this no-man's land of pubescent thrills and chills, and even locates the presumably one lesbian to graduate from Richardson, Texas' JJ Pearce High School. • Premieres March 5, 9 p.m. Details: www.tvland.com.

Kat ("The Lesbian")



Robert Mapplethorpe (r) and his lover, Sam Wagstaff

As Different As...

Though polar opposites, punk rocker Patti Smith and A-List author Dominick Dunne were both fans and friends of controversial 20th-century photographer, Robert Mapplethorpe. In James Crump's *Black White + Gray: A Portrait of Sam Wagstaff and Robert Mapplethorpe*, Smith, Dunne, and others discuss Mapplethorpe's homoerotic work, which may never have been seen had it not been for the efforts of his lover and mentor, Wagstaff. • Airs March 7, 7:30 p.m., on Sundance Channel as part of a weeklong series on photography, which begins March 3. Details: www.sundancechannel.com.

Ben and Jerry Dave. Sweet

The *Ben and Dave Show*, hosted by Radio with a Twist DJ Ben Harvey and stand-up comic Dave Rubin, is thought to be the first TV show of its kind to feature two openly gay co-hosts, press notes say. Perhaps they've forgotten about a little variety program from the '70s called *The Sonny and Cher Show*. (Uh... S&C were gay, right?) • Airs March 14 on here! Details: www.heretv.com. ■



Ben Harvey (l) and Dave Rubin

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QUEER ALL OVER

Eleven new discs, from American standards to glam metal punk

Stephin Merritt is not one to sit still for long. Between the release of his new Magnetic Fields disc, the fittingly titled *Distortion* (Nonesuch) and the previous one ("i"), he put out both his *Showtunes* disc and one by another of his numerous bands, The Gothic Archies. During that time, the openly gay Merritt also seems to have been listening to his share of Jesus & Mary Chain, because that's what *Distortion* most resembles. Of course, it's the crunchy and distorted J&MC guitar sound as synthesized through The Magnetic Fields. How else could you get the surf rock of "Three-Way," the stinging slap of the Beach Boys antithesis "California Girls," the modern drinking song "Too Drunk to Dream," and the potentially controversial "The Nun's Litany"? The feedback feast is made more potent because of Merritt's trademark wordplay.

Renaissance man LD Beghtol was part of The Magnetic Fields line-up for the legendary 69 *Love Songs* set. On his own, like Merritt, the gay Beghtol is involved in more than one musical project, including The Moth Wranglers and Flare. *Amoral Certitudes* (Acuarela), the



The Shondes

follow-up to the 2005 *Tragic Realism*, is the new EP by LD & The New Criticism. Over the course of six irresistible and accessible tracks, Beghtol and company deliver, dare it be said, some downright radio- and iPod-friendly tunes that encourage singing along and unself-conscious dancing. Cases in point: "AKA Paradise" and "What You Will," featuring Dana Kletter.

Beghtol can also be heard performing on *Ukelear Winter* (benlerman.net), the new disc by queer comedic songwriter and ukulele player Ben Lerman. Lerman is so adept at writing parody lyrics that the Kinsey Sicks better watch their crinolined asses. Examples include "Anderson," about Anderson Cooper, sung to the tune of "Alison," the Elvis Costello classic; "Not a Cub," based on Britney Spears' "Not a Girl"; and "Asian Baby," a new approach to "Santa Baby."

On his new CD, *Night and Day* (patrickarenamusic.com), Patrick Arena divides his time, like night and day, between standards and originals. His stripped-down interpretation of the Cole Porter title tune makes it sound →

GrooveOut Shorts

Bob Mould District Line



Now that he's out, this queer Husker Du alum says his work is "much stronger." This fine new, rockin' album proves it, regardless of sexuality, especially with "Stupid Now." You can catch him at Antone's in Austin on March 20 if you're up for a road trip. ANTI-Records (www.bobmould.com). —Review: Nancy Ford

Betty Buckley Quintessence



Only months after the long-delayed release of 1967, her first recording, Buckley releases this 12-track, jazz-infused disc. Even though the arrangements don't always scan (a beboppy "Surrey With a Fringe on Top" is just silly), Buckley's performance—backed by a five-piece combo—is a reminder of what masterful singing sounds like in this lip-synch age. SONY BMG Masterworks Broadway (www.sonybmgmaster

works.com) and Playbill Records (www.playbill.com). —Review: Tim Brookover

Katie Sawicki Time Spent Lost



Traces of Lucinda Williams seep into this finely crafted collection from this queer indie folk artist. Her clear, rich guitar work and lyrical mastery explain why Sawicki's earlier CD, *Black Box*, garnered a 2005 Outmusic nomination. Available March 4. Bend Records (www.katiesawicki.com). —Review: N.F.

Missy Higgins On a Clear Night



Calling herself "not-so-straight," she may be somewhat ambiguous about her sexuality. But Higgins' music is a straightforward, unabashed delight, especially the peppy, hopeful, "Steer." Understandably, she won the 2007 ARIA Award (Australia's Grammy) for Best Female Artist. Reprise Records (www.missyhiggins.com). —Review: N.F.

The Puppini Sisters The Rise and Fall of Ruby Woo



Call them "The Andrews Sisters for the new Millennium." This sultry trio brings their big-band style to a new batch of classics, including the Bangles' "Walk Like an Egyptian" and Beyonce's "Crazy in Love." Perfect music to charm your dinner-party guests. Verve Records (www.ververecords.com). —Review: David Goldberg

Kaki King Dreaming of Revenge



King has matured considerably, musically speaking, for this, her sophomore alt-indie album. Sophisticated lyrics compliment her fingers as they fly up and down the frets, especially on "Life Being What It Is," but King's true strength likely is found in her instrumentals. Available March 4. Velour Recordings (www.velourmusic.com). —Review: N.F.

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GrooveOut continued from page 94

like a jazz lullaby. Arena ("gay, and proud of it," says his website) has a good time with "I'm Always Drunk in San Francisco" and gets the appropriate emotional mileage out of "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?" Arena gives Biello & Martin's "In My Body" a jazzy polish, and when it comes to his own compositions, "Barefoot Boy," "Belvedere," and "Where Have You Been All My Life?" are worth a listen.

Evil Beaver is crouched at the opposite end of the spectrum from Arena. Their queer punk-metal is the driving force behind *Enlightening Without Dazzling/2 Berne Live* (evilbeaver.us), a disc that combines studio tracks with a live set from a 2006 concert in Berne, Switzerland. Prepare to be rocked. Like Evil Beaver, the Toilet Boys rock hard and heavy. Led by trans vocalist Miss Guy, who sang a duet with Deborah Harry on her most recent disc, the Toilet Boys return with their own glam brand of metal-punk on the long-delayed final release, *Sex Music* (Dead City Records), best exemplified by "Drug of Choice."

Queer Klezmer punk—is it a *mitzvah* or *meshuggah*? Vote for the former and you'll be backing a winner like The Shondes. The three-quarters kosher quartet recalls Sleater-Kinney on their memorable debut disc, *The Red Sea* (shondes.com). Radical and rocking tunes such as "Let's Go," "At the Water," "What Love Is," and "The Start of Everything" are required listening.

If Pansy Division played Americana, they might sound something like queer trio The

Winsome Griffles on their folksy debut disc, *Meet the Griffles* (winsomegriffles.com). Led by Larry-bob (of Holy Titclamps fame), The Winsome Griffles focus their fierce attention on frightful entertainment and its long-lasting impact ("Birthday Party Clown"), a low time on the high seas ("Gay Cruise"), changes in friendships ("Your Stupid New Boyfriend"), a religious reality check ("Atheist Gospel Song"), bullies and willing victims ("Crush Me"), and more.

Queer rocker Ariel Aparicio has never sounded more like Bono than he does on "Heaven" from his latest album, *All These Brilliant Things* (arielaparicio.com). On the other hand, "The New World" has a distinctive David Bowie edge. In fact, throughout the disc Aparicio slips in and out of various styles like a runway model. A gay dad, Aparicio is dedicating all the proceeds from the sale of his single "I'm the One" to the Paul Chester Children's Hope Foundation. Other notable tracks include the hard rocking "Jameson & Cocaine," the Latin-tinged "Down in Tijuana," and the rhythmic "Hang Around."



Emily White



Winsome Griffles



Patrick Arena

GrooveOut Shorts continued from page 94

The Ones
The Ones
 The three that make up The Ones skillfully tap into New York City's downtown nightlife scene to record this debut electronica CD. Includes previously released Top Ten U.K. hits, "Flawless" and "Superstar." A Touch of Class/Peace Biscuit (www.peacebiscuit.com). —Preview: N.F.

Ashford & Simpson
The Warner Bros. Years: Hits, Remixes & Rarities
 The title says it all. Nick and Valerie were the undisputed royal couple of '80s-era R&B, recording for Warner Bros. before eventually achieving major success with Capitol. This double CD includes still-danceable remixes of their early work. Rhino Records (www.rhino.com). —Preview: N.F.

Original Cast Album
Forbidden Broadway: Rude Awakening
 The only thing we love more than a show tune is a show-tune parody. This CD celebrates the silver anniversary of the master of the Broadway spoof, director Gerard Alessandrini, with ditties from *Jersey Guys*, *The Be-Littled Mermaid*, and *Even More Miserables*. DRG Records (www.drgrecords.com). —Preview: N.F.

Steven Alvarado
Let It Go
 Alvarado, who released the Parisian-based Radio Dio fave *The Howl Sessions* in 2005, provides flat-out, acoustic-laced rock 'n' roll on his fourth album. Fans of Lucinda Williams and Beth Orton may enjoy this collection, especially "Get This Far" and "Blue." Mott St. Records (www.stevenalvarado.com). —Review: N.F.

The thing about the girls-with-guitars club is that it would seem that there won't be a shortage for the foreseeable future. Emily White sounds as though she's been studying the best on her terrific new CD, *12 Ways to Live* (emily-white.com). For instance, White sounds as though she's emulating Melissa Ferrick on "Believe in Me," while making her own wholly original statement. "Omaha" sounds as if it could be from the Jonatha Brooke songbook. Comparisons aside, White never fails to be captivating on this lively disc, particularly on the songs "7th & A," "Every Pulse," "Georgia," and the disc's most unshakable track, "Good Enough Reason."

"Static is reigning on the radio," Ron Morris sings in "Boyfriend," the opening track to his *Boyfriend and Other Sides of Love* (ronmorrismusic.com) EP. The retro-rooted composition makes reference to "My Boyfriend's Back," not only by weaving the line into the song but also through the girl-group shoo-bops in the background. Morris' reading of the classic "Frankie and Johnny" takes advantage of the inherent queerness suggested by the song title. A cover of "We All Sleep Alone" (a Cher hit co-penned by out singer/songwriter Desmond Child and Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora) and the original "Masterpiece of Why" maintain the vintage spirit. The disc closes with four remixes of "Boyfriend," all of which, in their own ways, find new ways of allowing the listener to experience the song.

Gregg Shapiro is a past recipient of the annual OutMusic award that recognizes contributions by non-musicians in furthering the work of GLBT performers.

Sheryl Crow
Detours
 On this rockin' CD produced by Tuesday Night Music Club wizard Bill Bottrell, Crow reflects on the environment, her victory over cancer, and even includes Arabic lyrics on "Peace Be Unto Us," a song decrying the war in Iraq. Clear space on the mantle, Sheryl; here comes another Grammy. Interscope/A&M Records (www.interscope.com). —Review: N.F.

Shauna Burns
The Moon and the Fire Circle
 If Tori Amos and Evanescence spawned a baby, she would sound like Shauna Burns. Why iTunes labels her lush piano work and natural realm-based lyrics as "rock" is anyone's guess. Rich, layered, and lovely, especially "Failed You." Red Rock Music (www.redrockmusiclabel.com). —Review: N.F.

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A Sissy From Mississippi

Kevin Sessums talks about his book 'Mississippi Sissy,' now in paperback

Kevin Sessums grew up in Forest, Mississippi. In the '60s, the town's population was about 3,500, and discrimination was the norm. Sessums talks to *OutSmart* about his book (which details his young life in the small town), the "N" word, and Sidney Poitier.

He had recently returned to Forest to do a story for *Parade* magazine on the effects of immigration on a face of a little town. It was the most time he had spent there since he was 17 years old.

Blase DiStefano: How long were you in Forest?
Kevin Sessums: Five days.

And how did that feel?

Umm. It sort of felt like any time I ever go back to Mississippi. If I stay in Mississippi more than three days, I just feel like I'm a little sissy all over again. I find it so culturally oppressive. It gets to me on a lot of levels.

But we never really leave our hometown. We carry our hometowns around in our heart. Even when we leave them, they never leave us. So no matter...I mean I grew up during the last vestiges of segregation and all that it entails. Although it was an awful time in a political sense to grow up in Mississippi, it's still the only childhood that I had.



Sissy Sessums: "For Christmas this past year my sister gave me a gift. I told her not to get me anything. She said, 'Just open it, please.' I opened it and, unbeknownst to me, she had saved...because that was my father's glove [see book cover]... she had saved that glove all this time," says author Kevin Sessums, pictured here with his dog, Archie.

Your mother seemed like such a caring person—that whole thing with you spelling out the word "sissy." I'm about tearing up just thinking about it. [His mother said, "Write down the word. S-I-S-S-Y." After he wrote it, she said, "Now, whenever anybody calls you that again you remember how pretty that looks on there. Look at the muscles those S's have. Look at the arms on that Y. Look at

the backbone that lone I has. What posture. What presence. See how proud that I is to stand there in front of you!"]

It's a book as much about maternal love as it is about the coming of age of a gay kid, and maybe those two things intersect if we're lucky.

I'm just about to go back out on tour for the paperback that comes out March 4, but when I was on tour for the hardback, I toured everywhere, and when I went to my last stop in Philadelphia, I thought, *Who's going to be that last person on line that I sit there and I'm humbled by their life story?*

There was one woman in the audience with this young man next to her. I thought, *Who is this woman? Is she a lesbian, or is she like the best friend of this guy? Is she his sister?* She's the one who lingered, and when she finally made it up for me to sign the book, she had two books with her, and she said, "Would you sign one to me?" And I said, "Sure." And she said, "Oh, by the way, this is my husband." So the guy she was with was her husband. And she said, "Would you sign one to my son?" And I said, "You don't look old enough to have a son that should be reading *Mississippi Sissy*." And she said, "Well, I have a Tennessee sissy. He's seven, and some day he will be old enough to read this book. I was reading your blog, and this was the closest we could come to hear you read. We flew up from Nashville, Tennessee, just to hear you read. I had to tell you in person what this book meant to me. It made me a better mother." She started to cry. I started to cry. →

ReadOut Shorts

An Army of Ex-Lovers: My Life at the Gay Community News
Amy Hoffman

Univ. of Massachusetts Press (www.umass.edu/umpress)

Reading Amy Hoffman's memoir is like a long conversation with an old friend. Anecdotal and episodic, Hoffman takes us to that time when a gay march on Washington was really a revolution, gay newspapers were not a business, and HIV was just getting ready to burn out so many of our best and brightest. Break out the good wine for this conversation. —Review: Angel Curtis

The Hair-Raising Adventures of Jayms Blonde
Robert W. Cabell
www.jaymsblonde.com



It's high time the spy genre was goosed a little. And while Alan Cumming's TV project failed to ever hit the airwaves, gay espionage aficionados can now giddily claim one of their own (via novel form) in Robert W. Cabell's *The Hair-Raising Adventures of Jayms Blonde*, a shamelessly fizzy tale of a gay hairdresser turned international superspy. With glam locales, unashamedly juvenile dialogue, and a cast of characters with pun-heavy names, this martini may not

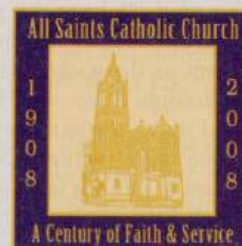
be very stirring, but it has some fabulously drunken moments. —Review: Steven Foster

Vital Signs: Essential AIDS Fiction
Richard Canning (Editor)
Carroll & Graf (www.carrollandgraf.com)



Editor Canning chose to frame this collection of fiction within the first decade of the AIDS epidemic. It is a reminder of life before combination drug therapies and as such can be, to understate, a difficult read. Mixed in with the horror, however, are heavy doses of love, humor, hope, and quite →

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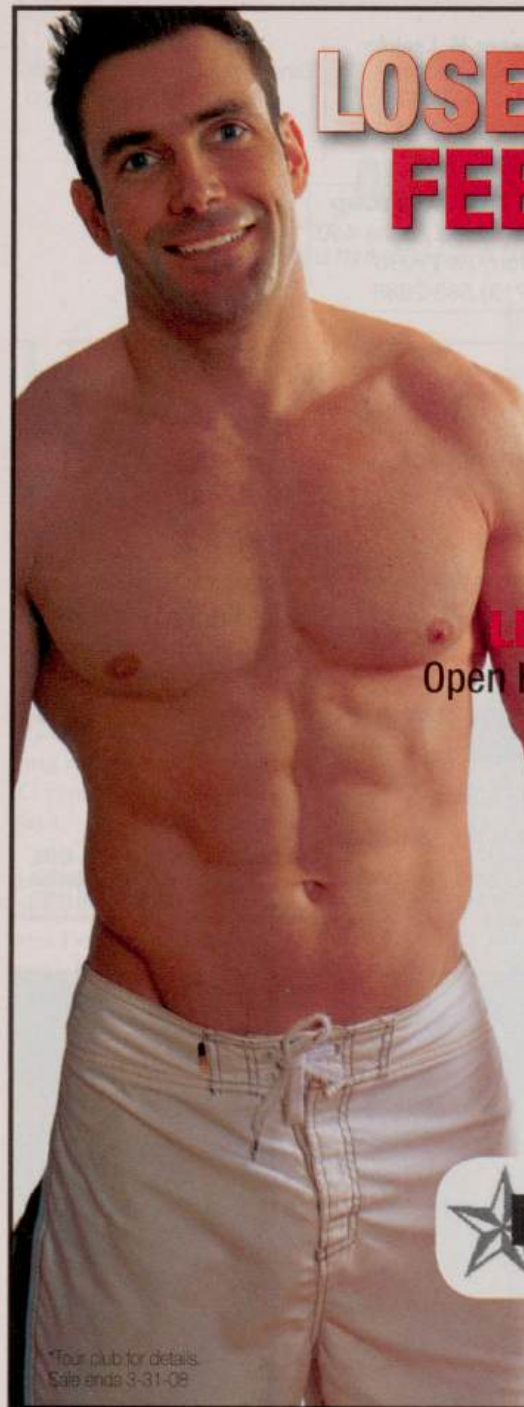
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ReadOut continued from page 98

I'm crying now.

I know. She said, "I brought you some pictures to look at." Last Halloween, her son Isaiah went as the wicked witch of the west. [In *Mississippi Sissy*, one Halloween, Kevin dressed up as the same witch.] And she showed me these pictures. Since then I've become sort of like his fairy godmother from New York City. He loves theater. He loves Betty Hutton and Ethel Merman and Marilyn Monroe and all those things. So every time I get a stack of *Playbills*, I send them down to him.

He doesn't know who the f-k I am, but that I'm his mom's friend.

But he will know.

Yes. Exactly. So it's a book about maternal love. It's a book about race as much as about the gay stuff.

And speaking of race, tell me about *Matty May*. She was the heroine of the book in a strange way in the racial aspect. She's the one who taught me not to say the "N" word.

There's a scene in the book when Sidney Poitier wins the best actor Oscar in 1963, I

ReadOut Shorts

continued from page 84

a lot of very fine writing. It's a worthy addition to any bookshelf. —Review: Neil Ellis Orts

The God Box
Alex Sanchez

Simon & Schuster (www.simonsayssteen.com)



Suspend disbelief at the teenager who does biblical exegesis like a seminarian and read *The God Box*. The Bible study work is sound and it doesn't distract (or protect) the reader from the dangers faced by Manuel, who dares to be out at his high school, and Paul, who slowly faces his feelings for Manuel. An excellent gift for any teen (or adult) who struggles with faith and sexuality, and a great volume for a church library. —Review: N.O.

The Purrfect Murder
Rita Mae Brown

Bantam Books (www.randomhouse.com)



Just when I thought these Mrs. Murphy mysteries were getting predictable, Sneaky Pie (and Rita Mae) Brown give us *The Purrfect Murder*. The wonderful sense of place and very real characters (human and animal) remain, but there is a new darkness here. Not as funny or as cozy as past offerings, the excellent plot and great writing make this one worth the money. Just don't expect the usual here. —Review: A.C. ■

guess it was for *Lilies of the Field*. She was making my bed one morning. She was our maid. And I said, "Matty May, can you believe a nigger won best actor?" And the look on her face of utter defeat and sadness and how I'd truly broken her heart just stays with me to this day.

Years later...fade out fade in...I'm sort of an Auntie Mame to my niece and nephews. When they graduate from high school, I take them out to Los Angeles for Oscar weekend. I take them to the big CAA party and to Diane von Furstenberg's picnic. So right before this book came out last year, I took my nephew to the picnic. We went to get our plates with food, and I looked over and Sidney Poitier was sitting at one of the picnic tables.

So I said, "Price, excuse me, I'm not going to let this pass." I went and knelt at his side and started to tell him the story of Matty May. I just felt like she was an angel sitting on my shoulder, like she had guided this whole thing to happen. He sat there for like 15 or 20 minutes holding my hand...he grabbed my hand at one point and started holding my hand. And when another famous person came up to say hi to him, I started to get up and leave. He said, "No, don't leave. I want to hear this." And I knelt at his feet and I told him all about Matty May. I thought, *The circle has finally been closed.*

That was quite beautiful. My next question was going to be about the "N" word. But then you've already mentioned that.

Well, if you grew up in the South around certain types of people during the time I grew up, you heard the "N" word constantly. I knew from a very early age how complicated the world was, because if you saw my grandparents in a movie spouting hatred of civil rights workers and spouting the "N" word, you would think they were the bad people. And yet they were the people who, after my parents died, took me in, loved me unconditionally, saved me. I had to look at these people and find the goodness in them.

I learned very early on that the world is not—no pun intended—black and white. It is a very complicated world.

One word: elections.

I'm a political junkie, but I don't want to turn people against the book by saying who I'm for.

[Both laugh] But would you say whether it's Democrat or Republican?

Democrat, honey.

ON THE WEB at www.OutSmartMagazine.com: Kevin Sessums talks about working at *Vanity Fair*, working with Andy Warhol, and where he was on 9/11.



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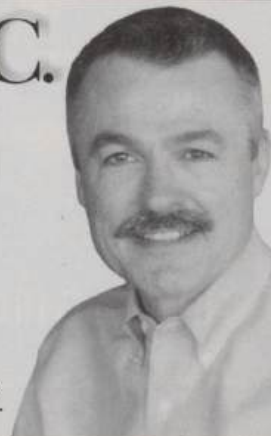
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That's what our battle for equality feels like.

We've been up. We've been down. Oregon got thrashed in 2006 with a one-man/one-woman constitutional amendment. We were down.

In '07, we pumped ourselves up and won nondiscrimination and domestic-partnership bills—signed into law by the governor

and everything. We were up.

Right-wing brutes tromped in last fall with fresh propaganda and launched a petition drive to recall our domestic-partnership law before it could take effect. Down.

We regained our strength and fought

Two thousand strong, we gathered under the cold, wet winter sky.

back, keeping them from getting enough valid signatures. Up again.

On December 28, 2007, five days before Oregon's 36 counties opened their domestic-partner registries, the villains delivered a devastating blow. They persuaded a federal court judge to put a stay on domestic partnership. Way down.

Our legal team, fueled by the greenbacks that we hustled up from every corner of our state, flexed their legal brawn and argued

back. Our power surged. We rallied outside the courthouse. Two thousand strong, we gathered under the cold, wet winter sky. Speakers urged us to keep the faith. Our rights could remain in legal limbo for months, they cautioned, so stay strong. We huddled in the freezing rain, raising our fists and our voices, determined to make them hear us.

Which, apparently, they did.

On the evening of February 1, I dragged home from working overtime, tired and hungry and hoping Wifey had made dinner.

"Hi honey, I'm homo." My standard entrance. The aroma of onions and rice on the stove greeted me.

"How's my domestic partner?" Wifey called from the back room, no doubt sprawled appealingly on the sofa. I needed to join her, to de-spool my work-week stress.

"It's been a long day." I hung up my

raincoat, kicked off my shoes, put my keys on the hook, and headed for my gal's comforting embrace.

"Haven't you heard?" Wifey's face lit up. I hadn't caught any news all day. "Heard what?"

"We won."

"Won what?" Some Ebay auction? Did our women's basketball team finally manage an offensive rebound?

"We won. We won." Wifey couldn't contain herself. "Wanna get domestic partnered on Monday?"

This took a minute to register. I had braced myself for the upcoming weeks and months until the judge made his decision. But he had ruled from the bench at the end of the hearing that very afternoon. The law would go into effect immediately. We could register first thing Monday morning.

Forget my hangdog, end-of-the-work-week exhaustion. Wifey jumped up and hugged me a good one. We hooted, hopped around the room, and shook our booties in an unrestrained victory dance. You could almost hear Popeye's hornpipe music swell. We fights to the finish.

Sally Sheklow is a multiple winner in the annual awards presented by the Houston Press Club. She and her spouse of 20 years are now officially domestic partners in their home state of Oregon.



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Time Out with OUTSMART

SPECIAL PROMOTIONS AND ADVERTISING

MARSHAL PLAN

We salute two OUTSMART contributors who are nominees for grand marshals of the 2008 GLBT Pride Parade: Kelly McCann, who writes our monthly AIDS Watch column (and is the AIDS Foundation Houston CEO), and photographer Dalton DeHart. Voting takes place throughout March (see page 20 for details).

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FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Check out these event supported by OUTSMART:

- **March 9: AIDS Walk Houston 2008**, the downtown event, benefiting AIDS Foundation Houston and other HIV/AIDS service organizations. Info: www.aidswalkhouston.org.
- **March 22: Jungle 16**, the Easter weekend events presented by Bayou City Boys Club, benefiting six HIV/AIDS service organizations, including the Pet Patrol. Info: www.junglehouston.com.
- **March 23: Bunnies on the Bayou 29**, the annual downtown Easter Sunday party, benefiting 10 organizations, including Lazarus House. Info: www.bunniesonthebayou.org.

SHOW US YOUR OUTSMART



The Houston Pride Band participated in the 25th anniversary celebration of the Lesbian & Gay Band Association at a conference held in St. Louis, Missouri, in October. Some of the members of the band pose under some "arch" thingie ... (l-r) Russell Ben Williams, Debbie Hunt, Jason Stephens, Kevin Taylor, Melissa Thompson, Lisa Mace, Casey Sherrell; (front) Trudy Allen.

A Queerer Sundance

continued from page 65

if still alive and in Park City, Tilda Swinton took a dig at the swag scene, which had all but overtaken Main Street. "Isaac and I ran the gamut of the shopping mall Sundance is," she shared. "Maybe [if Derek were here he] would be making out with a Lexus. But there would be a reason!"

Last year saw the first sparks of a backlash against swag at Sundance and the distraction it had become. This year, the "Focus on Film" protest buttons were back. Publicist firm Jeremy Walker & Associates presented clients with a sobering "swagifesto" (reading in part, "Please help us avoid letting the allure of free stuff get in the way of our work with you, your film, and its stars"). Bigger stars were reticent to visit swag suites or accept goodies.

Nonetheless, smaller names, Hollywood types (including—*quelle surprise*—the Hilton sisters), and press still flocked to the freebies. Many suites included at least one altruistic or eco-oriented cause/exhibitor. At Village at the Yard, Diesel, in a sort of swag-it-forward gesture, encouraged VIPs to select an outfit for a youth in need. Rex Lee of *Entourage* participated, enjoyed a facial at St. Ives Sensory Spa & Gallery, and contributed to the Best Pickup Lines project at the Kenneth Cole Reaction Lounge (his line: "I have no game, so I don't have a line that works on anybody."). Laurel Holloman of *The L Word* hit the Revaleskin lounge for skin-care salves and Bubble & Bee Organic Bath & Body gift packs. I scored much-needed hand lotion from the charming, out Ole Henriksen at Hollywood Life House's Sephora enclave.

• At the Outfest Queer Brunch, I ran into luminaries including Cheryl Dunye, who is developing a sequel to her 1996 lesbian classic, *The Watermelon Woman*, and documentarians Thomas Allen Harris (*That's My Face*) and Yvonne Welton (*Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100*, founder of the Sisters in Cinema project). Both said they are working on new projects. Besides shoptalk, we shared and laughed about new queer terminology, including doppelbangers (a couple that looks the same), futch (a femme butch), flip my rainbow (what you want to do when you're turned on by someone of the opposite sex), and lesbros (a straight man who hangs out with lesbians).

Lawrence Ferber, the New York-based entertainment journalist, reports each year from the Sundance Film Festival for OutSmart. His interview with k.d. lang also appears in this issue.

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Calendar of Events

by Eric A.T. Dieckman

MARCH

Deadline for *OutSmart's* April issue is 5 p.m., Friday, March 7.

Daily (Mon.-Fri.)

HIV Testing. HCHD Thomas Street Clinic is offering HIV testing free to the public, 9 am-1 pm. There is no need to establish eligibility ("gold-card"), no donation will be asked of the person seeking testing, and the test is free. Thomas Street Clinic, 2015 Thomas, 713/873-4157 or 713/873-4026.

Daily (Sun.-Fri.)

HIV Testing. Legacy Community Health Services offers free confidential rapid HIV testing using the OraQuick-Advance collection method with results available within 20 minutes at the following community-based locations: **611 HYDE PARK PUB**, 611 Hyde Park, Tues. 4-8pm; **ALL STAR NEWS AND VIDEO EMPORIUM**, 3415 Katy Freeway & Studewood, Thurs. 4-8pm; **BRAZOS RIVER BOTTOM**, 2400 Brazos, Thurs. 8pm-12am; **CLUB 1415**, 1415 California, Thurs. 10pm-1am; **CLUB HOUSTON**, 2205 Fannin, Tues. & Wed. 8pm-12am; **COUSIN'S**, 817 Fairview, Thurs. 8pm-12am; **DECADES**, 1205 Richmond, Wed. 6-10pm; **EJ's**, 2517 Ralph, Wed. & Fri. 10pm-1am; **EROS 1207 BOUTIQUE**, 7330 Southwest Frwy, Wed. 3-7pm; **GEORGE SPORTS BAR**, 617 Fairview, Mon. 6-10pm; **IN & OUT**, 1537 N. Shepherd, Thurs. 4-8pm; **MARY'S, NATURALLY**, 1022 Westheimer, Wed. 4-8pm; **MICHAEL'S OUTPOST**, 1419 Richmond, Tues. 4-8pm; **MIDTOWN SPA**, 3100 Fannin, Tues. 4-8pm & Fri. 10pm-1am; **RIPCORD**, 715 Fairview, Wed. 9pm-12am; **TONY'S CORNER POCKET**, 817 W. Dallas, Thurs. 8pm-12am. • A complete listing of locations is also available by calling 713/830-3070. Free confidential syphilis testing is also offered. HIV & syphilis testing is offered at the main clinic located at 215 Westheimer, Mon.-Thurs. 11am-7pm and Fri. 11am-5pm.

Daily (Sun.-Fri.)

HIV Testing. Planned Parenthood offers free anonymous or confidential testing at clinic locations throughout the area. To speak with an HIV counselor: 1-800-230-PLAN, Dickinson: 281/337-7725, Fannin: 713/831-6543, FM1960: 281/587-8081, Greenspoint: 281/445-4553, Huntsville: 936/295-6396, Lufkin: 936/634-8446 x223, Rosenberg: 281/342-3950, Stafford: 281/494-9848.

Weekly (Mondays)

TG Support Group. The transgender support group, "HTGA," is open to any transgender-identifying individual, friend, or family member. Free. 7-9 pm at the Haven's Center, 1827 W. Alabama. More info: 713/526-0027 x 228 (ask for Cristian) or www.transhouston.com.

Weekly (Mondays)

Grab Yer Partner, Doh-Si-Doh. The rhythmically awkward are welcome here. Have some fun gittin' fit with non-strenuous aerobic square dancing. No partner required. Casual dress. \$5. 7-9 pm at Eldridge Park Community Center, 2511 Eldridge Rd., Sugar Land. Call ahead to verify time and place: Jan, 281/498-5301. Info: sugarsquares@hotmail.com.

Weekly (Thursdays)

TG Potluck Social. The "Transgender Potluck Social" offers friendship, support, fellowship, and a hot meal to transgender-identifying individuals, friends, and family. Please remember to bring food to share. Free. 7-9 pm, at the GLBT Community Center, 3400 Montrose, Ste. 207. More info: 713/526-0027 x 228 (ask for Cristian) or www.transhouston.com.

Weekly (Thursdays)

Depression & Bipolar Support Group. Don't let depression or bipolar disorder dig its bleak claws into what little hope you've managed to hide from the shadows. Bering Support Network helps those in need to connect with others who are learning to cope. You are not alone and can benefit from the experience of others. GLBT friendly. Free. Groups meet at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold, Room 232, 7:15-8:30 pm. Info: 713/526-1018.

Weekly (Sun., Wed., Sat.)

Love and Rackets. Tennis players and enthusiasts of all levels are invited to join the Houston Tennis Club at Memorial Park tennis center. The club gathers Sundays from 9 am-noon, Wednesdays from 7:30-9 pm, and offers clinics every Saturday from 9-10:30 am. There are also social activities throughout the year. Annual membership \$30, court fees \$3 per session. More info: www.houstontennisclub.org

INFO NEEDED FOR YOUR EVENT LISTING:

a few lines of info about your event; date/time; cost; location/address; organization name; AND two phone numbers—one for *OutSmart* to reach you for questions and one for *OutSmart* readers to get more info on your event. **MAIL INFO TO:** *OutSmart* Magazine, 3406 Audubon Place, Houston, TX 77006. **FAX INFO TO:** 713/522-3275.

E-MAIL INFO TO: calendar@outsmartmagazine.com.

NO LISTINGS CAN BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE DEADLINE DATE—FRIDAY, MARCH 7.

Semi-monthly (Wednesdays)

The D Word (Dinner). Come for a meal, stay for the camaraderie. The Lesbian Dinner Group welcomes womyn to build new friendships, enjoy conversation, network, and have a few laughs over an appetizing repast. Singles/couples welcome. 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month, 7:30 pm, at Café Express, 1422 West Gray. More information: Lesbian. Dinner.Group@gmail.com.

Monthly (Every 4th Saturday)

FTM TG Support Group. The Female-To-Male transgender support group, "STAG," welcomes all female-to-male transgender-identifying individuals, friends, and family members. All new attendees must first contact Georges prior to attending. Free. 5-6 pm. More information (including location): 713/526-0027 x 228 (ask for Georges) or www.transhouston.com.

Monthly (Every 4th Saturday)

TG Support Group. TS Support Group. The transsexual support group, "TATS," welcomes all transsexual-identifying individuals, friends, and family members. All new attendees must first contact the Cristian prior to attending. Free. 4 to 5 pm. More information (including location): 713/526-0027 x 228 (ask for Cristian) or www.transhouston.com.

Monthly (Saturdays)

Second Saturdays at Winter St. Studios. It's open-door policy at Winter St. Studios every second Saturday of the month. This is a great way to meet and hang with the varied artists working in many different media and styles in their studios.

Participating artists have a large red dot on or near the door of their studio. All are welcome between 1 and 6 pm. Winter St. Studios, 2101 Winter St. More info: 713/862-0082 or www.winterstreetstudios.net.

Monthly (Saturdays)

Danseparc. Things get hairy as DJ's Michael, Shoe, and Stacey (the latter two being openly gay) host a "Wolf Shirt Night" themed danseparc. Come for the eclectic, exhilarating mix of punk and post-punk, electro-pop, new wave and indie, and more; stay to howl at the moon. March 8, 9:30 pm-2 am at Numbers, 300 Westheimer. \$6, \$4 until 11 pm. \$1.50 draft beers and \$3.25 wells all night. More info: www.myspace.com/danseparc.

Monthly (Sundays)

Read On. Want to spend at least one afternoon each month sharing with other titillating women like yourself? The Exchange meets the first Sunday of each month, 2 p.m. at Baba Yaga Restaurant. Bring your favorite nonfiction and/or fiction to this new book club to ruminate, and even cogitate, in public. Details: ycnightheron@gmail.com.

Monthly (Tuesdays)

The Houston SPCA Pet Loss Support Group provides a professionally facilitated, supportive, and safe environment for people to grieve the loss of a beloved companion. Free. First Tuesday of the month, 7 pm, at the Houston SPCA, 900 Portway Dr. Info: 713/869-7722, ext. 127, or www.houstonspca.org.

8 & 9 (Sat. & Sun.)

With Global Warming, Environmentalism Is Cool. The global warming documentary *Everything's Cool* tracks a group of global-warming messengers on a high-stakes quest to finally create the political will to move the United States from its reliance on fossil fuels to the new clean energy economy. As part of an incentive to encourage alternative transportation methods, the first 50 patrons to each screening that bike, walk, carpool, or take public transit will receive complimentary gift bags with eco-friendly rewards from Whole Foods Market, Green Mountain Energy, Clif Bars, and Seventh Generation. \$6. 8 pm Saturday and 3 pm Sunday at Aurora Picture Show, 800 Aurora St. Info/reservations: 713/868-2101 or www.aurorapictureshow.org.

9 (Sun.)

So Percussion. The entire family is invited to feel the rhythm (it is gonna get you anyway, after all) of this interactive percussion group. Young minds are introduced to percussion instruments via short classical and contemporary pieces and Q&A with the musicians. Free. 3 pm at The Jewish Community Center, 5601 Braeswood. More info: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

9 (Sun.)

Arias from Messiah. Several Dancers Core presents an artistic collaboration between its dance company, CORE Performance Company, and Mercury Baroque. The melding of contemporary

dance and Baroque music results in a reflective work particularly appropriate for the Easter season. A reception follows the performance where the audience will have a chance to have champagne/coffee and dessert with the artists. \$25, \$20 for students, seniors, and working artists. 7 pm at the Historic Magnolia Ballroom, 715 Franklin at Milam. Info/reservations: 713/862-5530 or www.severaldancerscore.org.

15 (Sat.)

Poesia Para Los Gentes. The Flamenco Poets Society presents *The Poetry of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Lucha Corpi*, a reading in English and Spanish by Julietta Parra Ducote. Free. 4 pm at the Freed Montrose Public Library, 4100 Montrose Blvd. More info: 713/520-9364 or www.theflamencopoets-society.org.

15 (and May 3) (Sat.)

Meals on Wheels. The Bayou City Outdoors' Farmers Market Ride not only advocates a healthy lifestyle through cycling, but by also encouraging the purchase of fresh, locally grown produce. Grab your bike, snap on your helmet, strap on your backpack, roll with the gang to three or five area farmers markets, and stuff your rucksack with all sorts of goodies. The tour uses side streets, trails, and residential roads for this approximately 15-mile, three-hour ride including generous stops. Tour begins at 8 am with coffee at Onion Creek, 3106 White Oak Blvd. More info: 713/524-3567, Kelly@BayouCityOutdoors.com, or www.BayouCityOutdoors.com.

19 (Sun.)

Crush AIDS Underfoot. AIDS Foundation Houston (AFH), Inc. encourages you to lace up those kicks and hoof it at the 19th Annual AIDS Walk Houston. AFH hopes to raise \$1 million at this year's Walk. Check-in at 8 am, opening ceremonies at 9 am, and the walk begins at 10 am, all at Sam Houston Park, 1000 Bagby St. Info: 713/403-WALK (9255) or www.AIDSWalkHouston.org.

27 (Thur.)

Tux & Tennies. The Clutch City Foundation hosts its annual Tux & Tennies Charity Gala, benefiting the Dikembe Mutombo Foundation. Proceeds will help build Phase II of the Biamba Marie Mutombo Hospital, located in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire). Join members of the Rockets, coaches, and members of the executive management team in a night of fine dining, dancing, live and silent auction, and a tribute to 1960s Motown. 6:30 pm at the Toyota Center, 1510 Polk St. Information and reservations: 713/758-7302 or www.rockets.com.

28 (Fri.)

Modern Musical Pieces for Classic Peace. The Foundation for Modern Music (FMM) joins the Musicians' Alliance for Peace in observation of Music for Peace weekend with a provocative evening of modern chamber music. Pianist and FMM artistic

director Adam Tendler (who is openly gay) premieres his piece, "Autumn Lines" for amplified pianist, in which he recites the works of poet Li Po. Among the other composers is John Cage, who also led an intriguing gay life. Expect a night of deep reflection befitting of the Rothko Chapel's minimalist design. Free. 7:30 pm at Rothko Chapel, 1406 Sul Ross at Yupon. More info: 713/524-9839 or www.rothkochapel.org.

29 (Sat.)

Rome If You Want to Rome Around the World. Ars Lyrica Houston presents "When in Rome," the music of rarely heard 17th-century Roman composers in collaboration with the Moores School of Music Collegium Musicum. The evening features Giacomo Carissimi's vivid oratorio on the story of Jonah and the whale. \$25, \$20 for seniors, \$15 for students/groups. 7:30 pm at St. Philip Presbyterian Church. Info/reservations: www.arslyricahouston.org.

29 (Sat.)

An Evening With Leonard Pitts. If you are a regular reader of his column in the *Houston Chronicle*, you know that the three words "By Leonard Pitts" are invariably followed by some of the most thought-provoking commentary in modern journalism. In awarding him its 2004 Prize for Commentary, the Pulitzer Board said that "his fresh, vibrant columns speak, with both passion and compassion, to ordinary people on often diverse issues." In addition to his syndicated column, Pitts is also the author of the bestselling book *Becoming Dad: Black Men and the Journey to Fatherhood*. 7 pm at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 S. Main. Ticket info: www.firstuu.org or 713/526-5200.

29 (Sat.)

Assertive But Not Threatening? Licensed professional counselor/therapist Denise O'Doherty, LPC, LMFT, LCDC, RN, leads "Assert Yourself—Personal Boundaries and Effective Confrontation," a two-hour workshop guiding you through effectively navigating your way through confrontations without feeling overly aggressive or manipulated. \$30. 10 am-noon, at Unitarian Universalist Church, 1900 Bering Dr. Info/reservations: 713/529-4414 or www.llu.com.

29 & 30 (Sat. & Sun.)

Li'l Indiana Jones and His Wee Raiders of the Lost Ark. In 1981, three 12-year-old friends saw *Raiders of the Lost Ark* together. So moved by their cinematic experience, the three pals decided to reshoot it themselves, shot-for-shot. Six years later, they were done. What amazes viewers is their ability to do just that. The huge rolling boulder is there, live snakes writhe in one scene, characters refer to an actual 1936 copy of *Life* magazine, a truck is set ablaze... Granted a puppy fills in for a monkey in one scene, but you get the idea. 6 pm Saturday and 3 pm Sunday at Aurora Picture Show, 800 Aurora St. Info/reservations: 713/868-2101 or www.aurorapictureshow.org. →

WEEKEND WARRIORS

For the party-minded, Easter weekend every year means a marathon of revels that are massive in size and powerfully effective in raising funds for the fight against AIDS and other GLBT causes. First comes Jungle (left, photo from the 2007 event), a weekend of circuit parties hosted by Bayou City Boys Club. The Jungle dance-fests raise money for HIV/AIDS service organizations, which this year includes Bering Omega Community Services. Over the past 15 years, BCBC has raked in more than \$840,000 for the cause.

The long weekend of uninhibited dance and altruism takes place at Meteor, Warehouse Live, Next, and South Beach. March 20-23. Tickets: \$50 in advance general admission (\$60

at the door); \$130-\$230 weekend pass. Details, reservations: www.junglehouston.com.

Bunnies on the Bayou, which picks up on Easter Sunday afternoon, began in 1979 as a small gathering at a Montrose apartment complex. The huge afternoon cocktail party (photo from 2007, right) now takes place downtown on the outdoor plaza adjacent to Wortham Center. Beneficiary organizations for 2008 include Lazarus House. Bunnies has raised \$550,000 for the community to date. March 23. Tickets: \$25 general admission; \$125 VIPeep. Details, reservations: www.bunniesonthebayou.org.

OutSmart is a media sponsor for Jungle 16 and Bunnies on the Bayou 29.



LOOK OUT

BALLS AND BATS

Calling all women, age 40 and older, who are interested in playing softball: Join the HAS-BIANS Yahoo group, which posts information regarding a new recreational women's softball group for the "mature" set. Details: <http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/HAS-BIANS/>.

CALLING ALL ARTISTS

Montrose Gallery, a new artists coop at 716 West Alabama, is seeking artists. All media, including paintings, jewelry, ceramics, sculpture, and photography are welcomed. Interested artists may contact Joe Watts, the Theatre New West artistic director, who is also assisting with this venture. Details: 713/522-2204.

SURE, IT'S FUNNY NOW

Following a not-so-humorous brush with death, out comedian Slim Bloodworth spends a couple of weeks on local comedy club stages this month. Catch Bloodworth ("Funny Business," September 2002 *OutSmart*) March 6-9 at the Laff Spot Willowbrook (17776 Tomball Parkway, 281/955-9200, www.laffspot.com). She then appears in Houston, March 26-29, at the Laff Stop (526 Waugh Dr. 713/524-2333, www.laffstop.com).



Sergio Santos' Premeditated reflection

PRETTY PICTURES

Transformed Permanence, an exhibition that is part of the FotoFest photography biennial (www.fotofest.org), combines the art furniture of designer Kelly Gale Amen and the work of photographer Sergio Santos. March 7-April 20, Historic Magnolia Brewery (715 Franklin). An artists' reception is scheduled for March 13, 6-9 p.m. Details: info@kellygaleamen.com.

COME HELL OR HIGH WATER

On March 8, AssistHers presents its annual recreational co-ed softball tournament, which was delayed multiple times in 2007 by rain, on Memorial

Park Fields 2 and 3. Brown bags and coolers are permitted (no glass containers, please). A victory party at Meteor follows the championship game. Details: www.assisthers.org.

CLIK THIS

Fresh from their '07 True Colors tour with Cyndi Lauper and a December performance at FitzGerald's, the queer band The Kliks have been nominated for a Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation award. The band ("GrooveOut," December 2007 *OutSmart*) is coming to Houston for a one-night-only show on March 12 at Chances. That's right, Chances. Check www.chancesbar.com for details.

HIGH DRAMA, HIGH ROLLERS

Join Stage Door Inc. theater company for a day trip to Couthatta Casino and Resort. On March 15, a chartered bus leaves at 6:30 a.m. from the San Jacinto College Central northwest parking lot and returns at 7 p.m. that evening. \$20 for a bus seat; individuals are responsible for all other expenditures. Proceeds benefit the theater's building fund. Details: www.stagedoorinc.com.

PITTS STOP

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston and St. Paul's United Methodist Church present an evening with Pulitzer Prize-winning *Miami Herald* columnist Leonard J. Pitts Jr., whose work is syndicated nationally in 150 newspapers, including the *Houston Chronicle*. Pitts is not a gay man, but through his work he has frequently called for full equal rights for GLBT Americans. March 29, 7 p.m., St. Paul's United Methodist Church (5501 S. Main.) Details: 713/526-5200.

RECYCLED INSPIRATION

April 6 is the submission deadline for Artists for the Red Bull Art of Can, a traveling juried exhibition featuring works inspired by Red Bull cans. See it in The Galleria, July 11-25. Details: www.redbullartofcan.com.

UPCOMING

The annual Kindred Spirits Celebration, an evening that recalls the heyday of the famed '80s-era women's bar, benefits local women's charities, including Lesbian Health Initiative. April 26, 8 p.m.-1 a.m., Edwin R. Hornberger Center. Details: www.kindredspirits-houston.org.



The art of Christopher Olivier

ISLAND ART

Native Houstonian Christopher Olivier uses circuit boards from discarded computers, televisions, and electronic devices to create urban landscapes. His work was included in exhibitions at the Houston Art League and his honorable mention fellowship exhibition at Houston Center for Photography. The openly gay artist was featured in *OutSmart*'s July 2007 issue ("Light Bright"). The exhibit runs through April 6 at the Galveston Arts Center, in conjunction with FotoFest 2008. GAC exhibitions are free and open to the public. Details: 409/763-2403 • www.galvestonartscenter.org.

OUT IN AUSTIN

Gay films making their world premieres at Austin's South by Southwest Film Festival are *Bi the Way* and *The Lost Coast*. Jonathan Caouette (Tarnation), his son, and his ex-wife are featured in the film. This documentary looks at recent statistics, real-life stories, and more to paint a picture of the growing acceptance of bisexuality in America. *The Lost Coast* is the story of high-school friends who reunite for Halloween in San Francisco: Mark (who is now gay) and Jasper (who is straight and soon to be married) are forced to confront their unspoken sexual history in this look at the subtleties of sexuality, friendship, and loneliness. Details: www.bithewaymovie.com, www.lost-coastmovie.com, or www.sxsw.com/film. FYI: Caouette and his son Josh will attend the first screening of *Bi the Way* on Saturday, March 8. ■

PLANNING AHEAD

APRIL

April 2 (Wed.)

The High School for the Performing and Visual Arts Big Band. The workaday schedule of life can sometimes get the best of you. Battle the blahs of mundanity with a little musical inspiration, courtesy of Da Camera's lunchtime performance series, *A Little Day Music*. Grab some lunch-to-go and observe Jazz Appreciation Month with HSPVA's talented band. And stick around to win tickets to an upcoming Da Camera concert. Free. Noon in the Grand Foyer, Wortham Theater Center, Texas at Smith. More info: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

RADIO

♦ **After Hours.** Sunday mornings, 1-4 a.m. Featuring the QMZ (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Carper. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-5738.

♦ **Queer Voices.** Mondays, 8-10 p.m. Features, news, music, interviews, reviews, and commentary. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-4000.

♦ **Reach Out in the Darkness.** Houston's only transgender radio host and her partner present selected music from the '60s, played like it was in the '60s, exclusively from vinyl pressings. Every Wednesday morning, 3-6 a.m., KPFT Pacifica radio (90.1 FM).

PERFORMING ARTS

♦ **The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee.** Six young awkward pubescent and a group of childish adults learn that winning isn't everything and that losing doesn't mean you're a loser. This Tony Award-winning musical comedy offers willing audience members the opportunity to become part of the action as on-stage spellers. \$29-\$93. March 25-April 6 at the Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. Info/reservations: 713/558-8887, 888/558-3882, or www.tuts.com.

♦ **Arias from Messiah.** Several Dancers Core presents an artistic collaboration between its dance company, CORE Performance Company, and Mercury Baroque with George Frideric Handel's master work to create an intimate and passionate performance. A reception follows where the audience may join the artists for champagne, coffee, and dessert. \$25, \$20 for students, seniors, and working artists. March 9, 7 p.m., at the Historic Magnolia Ballroom, 715 Franklin at Milam. Info/reservations: 713/862-5530, 800/838-3006, or www.severaldancerscore.org.

♦ **Bayou City Art Festival Memorial Park.** Over 300 visual and performing artists transform the park into a world of art and beauty. Look for a pianist courtesy of Broadway Across America performing selections from *Sweeney Todd* and *The Wedding Singer*. And don't forget to treat the kids to the on-site "Creative Zone," an interactive area where kids and fans can participate in mask-making, face-painting, mini art-car building, and more. And then there are the endless refreshment stands. \$10, free for children 12 and under. March 28-30, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at Memorial Park. Info: 713/521-0133 or www.bayoucityartfestival.com.

♦ **Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company.** Dramatic lighting effects, spoken word, song, and, mainly, dance pervade Jones' stunning recital. Three haunting stories are pieced together in this impassioned piece. March 28, 8 p.m., at Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St. Info/reservations: 713/227-4772 or www.spahouston.org. See interview with Jones on page 77.

♦ **Chris Botti.** The trumpeter/composer fills downtown Houston with his sensual, atmospheric treatment of standards like "When I Fall in Love" and "Funny Valentine." \$28-\$106. March 20-22, 8 p.m., at Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St. Info/reservations: 713/224-7575 or www.houstonsymphony.org.

♦ **Cinderella.** In Stanton Welch's take on the classic, our beloved heroine is no underdog, but a strong-willed tomboy who takes no guff from her stepsisters and stepmother. And when she finds love, this tough broad holds on with both hands. Oh, and she dances, too. The production features lavish scenery and spectacular costumes by the New Zealand designer Kristian Fredrikson. March 6, 8, 14, and 15 at 7:30 p.m. and March 9, 15, and 16 at 2 p.m. at the Wortham's Brown Theater, 501 Texas Ave. at Smith. Info/reservations: 713/227-2787, 800/828-2787, or www.houstonballet.org.

♦ **Crossroads.** Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show's train derailed just outside a sleepy Texas town. Wake up and smell the wackiness in this new musical. Through March 23 at Clear Creek Community Theatre, 18091 Upper Bay Rd. in the Nassau Bay Shopping Village. Reservations/info: 281/335-5228 or www.ClearCreekCountryTheatre.org. →

Houston Area HIV Services Ryan White Planning Council

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2008

March 13, 2008

April 10, 2008

May 8, 2008

June 12, 2008

July 10, 2008

August 14, 2008

September 11, 2008

October 9, 2008

November 13, 2008

December 11, 2008

Attend a Meeting... Apply for Membership... Be a Participant...

Meetings are open to the general public and although only Council members are allowed to vote, public comment is always welcome. The Council meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 11:30 a.m. at our offices located between Westheimer and San Felipe in the Galleria area.

Call to put your name on the list for public comment, to request a calendar or membership application or for more information.

The calendar of all Council & Committee meetings and a wealth of other information is available on our website: www.rwpc.org. Check the calendar regularly for topics of specific interest to you.

We hope to see you soon!

Houston Area HIV Services Ryan White Planning Council

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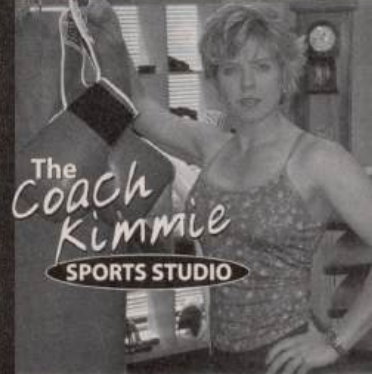
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◆ **Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Block-Head.** Whatever became of Charlie Brown after Snoopy died? Did Peppermint Patty really grow up lesbian? Is Linus controlled by OCD? This irreverent look at the classic Peanuts characters envisions the gang as young adults. \$20. Through March 22 at Silver House Theatre, 1107 Chartres St. Info/reservations: 281/312-9379 or www.u-p.org.

◆ **Exiles in Paris, Part 2: Les Noces and Ballet Mécanique.** The follow-up to February's *La Belle Époque*, at Zilkha Hall, the second part of this two-part mini-fete celebrates the melding of media, music, literature, and art as contributed by the many talented artists who took residence in Paris from 1900-1939. Among the brilliant minds celebrated in this production is the turn-of-the-century lesbian author/poet Gertrude Stein. Works on the roster include: *Les Noces* (scored for four pianos, chorus, and percussion), *Ballet Mécanique*, which puts sirens, airplane propellers, and electric bells on stage with pianos and percussion instruments, and Stravinsky's *Four Russian Peasant Songs and Concerto* for two pianos. \$22, \$32, and \$38. March 14, 8 pm, at Cullen Theater, 500 Texas at Smith. Info/reservations: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

◆ **Hello, Dolly!** It's so nice to have this musical back where it belongs. Leslie Uggams stars as Dolly. \$29-\$93. Through March 9 at the Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. Info/reservations: 713/558-8887, 888/558-3882, or www.tuts.com. Go to www.OutSmartMagazine.com for an interview with openly gay Randy Slovec, Hello, Dolly's choreographer.

◆ **Jigu—Thunder Drums of China.** These propulsive drummers, percussionists, and musicians from the Shanxi Province of China meld traditional and modern musical and visual elements with high-tech lighting and stunning special effects. Free. March 22, 7:30 pm, at Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park, 100 Concert Dr. More info: www.milleroutdoortheatre.com.

◆ **Last Acts (A Musical Play in Three Parts).** Putting the fun back in dysfunctional, an actress and mother named Madeline struggles to figure out and love her two grown children. Through March 15, 8 pm (March 2 and 9 at 2:30 pm) at the Cullen Theater, 500 Texas Ave. Info/reservations: 713/228-6737 or www.houstongrandopera.org.

◆ **McCoy Tyner Trio.** The legendary pianist McCoy Tyner has released nearly 80 albums under his name, earned four Grammy Awards and was awarded Jazz Master from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2002. A member of John Coltrane's great 1960s quartet, McCoy Tyner's blues-based piano style, replete with sophisticated chords and an explosively percussive left hand, has transcended conventional styles to become one of the most identifiable sounds in improvised music. His harmonic contributions and dramatic rhythmic devices form the vocabulary of a majority of jazz pianists. \$26.50-\$45. March 29, 8 pm, at Cullen Theater, 500 Texas at Smith. Info/reservations: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

◆ **Missa Commemorationis U.S. premiere performed by Mercury Baroque.** In celebration of the Easter season, Mercury Baroque hosts Matthew White and Canadian singing group Les Voix Baroques for the U.S. premiere of Caldara's *Missa Commemorationis*. The evening begins with early Baroque masters Monteverdi, Cavalli, and Schütz and works its way to the title piece. \$22-\$49. March 28, 8 pm, at the Cullen Theater, 501 Texas Ave. Info/reservations: 832/251-0706 or www.mercurybaroque.org.

◆ **The Musical of Musicals (The Musical!).** A hilarious musical love-letter to musicals, a single story takes form in five distinctive musical incarnations. The plot is simple: A charming ingenue can't pay her rent. Menaced by an evil landlord, her only hope lies with a dashing young suitor she believes will come to her rescue and with a helpful older friend who offers her advice and wisdom along the way. The styles in which it is told are Rodgers and Hammerstein, Stephen Sondheim, Jerry Herman, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and Kander and Ebb. Parody has never been so tuneful. \$25, \$20 for students/seniors. Through March 15 at East-end theatre, 2001 Postoffice Street, Galveston. Info/reservations: 409/762-3556 or 877/762-3556.

◆ **Noche Caliente.** The Diaz Music Institute ushers in this evening of sizzling Latin sounds, featuring Jimmy Bosch, trombonist and musical director for Marc Anthony, and leading exponent of "salsa dura" (hard salsa). Free. March 29, 8 pm, at Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park, 100 Concert Dr. More info: www.milleroutdoortheatre.com.

◆ **Othello.** Two of Shakespeare's most complex characters, Othello and Iago, inhabit this tale of suspicion and envy. Not for the faint of heart, this staging involves violence and sexual situations. Tickets start at \$21. March 7-30 at the Alley Theatre's Hubbard Stage, 615 Texas Ave. Info/reservations: 713/220-5700 or www.alleytheatre.org.

◆ **The Rat Pack—Live at the Sands.** Travel back in time to an audience in the early 1960s, where The Rat Pack legend was born when Frank and Dean spontaneously joined Sammy on

stage and, to the surprise and delight of the audience, playfully interrupted his act. On subsequent nights, the three of them were on stage together. There were hi-jinks and horseplay. They crooned, they quipped, and they rolled out the gags right along with their on-stage liquor cart. Swing it with old faves like "My Kinda Town," "Everybody Loves Somebody Sometime," and "New York, New York." \$27-\$73. March 11-23 at the Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. Info/reservations: 713/629-3700, 888/451-5986, houstongroups@livenation.com, www.BroadwayAcrossAmerica.com, or www.TheRatPackLiveFromLasVegas.com.

◆ **Regrets Only.** Paul Rudnick's comedy, fresh from its New York debut at the Manhattan Theatre Club, asks what might happen if a good friend was asked to help President Bush write a constitutional amendment against gay marriages. It also comically postulates the conditions of a New York City without any gays (would that be like Clute, Texas?). Through March 15, 8 pm, March 2 at 3 pm, at Theatre Southwest, 8944 Clarkcrest. Info/reservations: 713/661-9505.

◆ **Spring Soiree: An Intimate House Concert.** The Muku "Arts for AIDS" Series showcases world-class performances and art to raise funds and awareness for this critical health issue. All proceeds will be matched by the National AIDS Fund benefiting HIV education programs in Houston. This month, Kenneth Gayle, tenor, sings to the accompaniment of Rodney Waters, piano. \$75 in advance, \$85 at the door. March 14, 6:30 pm, at the home of Lester Sorsby. Info/directions/reservations: 713/623-6796, ext. 278 or www.muku.org.

◆ **Suicide Kings: In Spite of Everything.** It's the day after a school shooting somewhere in America. Police and school administrators ask themselves, "What went wrong?" Welcome to the latest entry into the emerging genre of hip-hop theater, the dynamic spoken word collective known as Suicide Kings. \$15, \$10 students, \$8 seniors. March 14-15, 8 pm, at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy. Info/reservations: 713/335-3445 or www.diverseworks.org.

◆ **Tosca.** In Puccini's popular thriller opera, Tosca is faced with a choice, submit to the overbearing Scarpia, or kill him and kill him good. Oh, those dramatic Italians. \$31-\$45, \$28 for seniors on Thursday and Fridays. March 27-April 5, 7:30 pm, at Opera in the Heights, 1703 Heights Blvd. Info/reservations: 713/861-5303 or www.operaintheheights.org.

◆ **Translations.** Set in 1833 in a rural community in Ireland, a detachment of the Royal Engineers working on the first British maps of the area are recording the local Gaelic place names and rendering them into English. This simple bureaucratic action of the colonizers has far-reaching personal and cultural effects on the locals. \$10-\$35. Through March 23 at Main Street Theater-Rice Village, 2540 Times Blvd. Info/reservations: 713/524-6706, www.mainstreettheater.com, or www.ticketweb.com.

◆ **Young and Fertile.** A class reunion sends members of the Fertle family reminiscing through their favorite moments of the '70s. \$22. Through May 10 at Radio Music Theatre, 2623 Colquitt. More info: 713/522-7722 or www.radiomusictheatre.com.

PERFORMING ARTS

For Young People

◆ **Dan Zanes and Friends.** Dan and his pals step off the screen of Playhouse Disney and fill the stage with their grown-up friendly mix of sea shanties, Broadway tunes, and West Indian folk music. March 8, 11 am and 2 pm, at Cullen Theater, 500 Texas Ave. Info/reservations: 713/227-4772 or www.spahouston.org.

◆ **Goodnight Moon.** Published in 1947, *Goodnight Moon* is the classic bedtime story that has become part of our common vernacular ("...cow jumping over the moon"). See part of the collective unconscious come to life on the stage with this visually stunning production. \$11, \$9 for children/students. March 8-April 5 at Main Street Theater—Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose. Info/reservations: 713/524-6706, www.mainstreettheater.com, or www.ticketweb.com.

◆ **The Merchant of Venice.** Main Street Theater's Youth Theater Program stages this contemporary version of Shakespeare's tale of Portia, Bassanio, and the infamous, scheming Shylock. \$20, \$16 for students/seniors. Through April 11 at Main Street Theater—Rice Village, 2540 Times Blvd. Info/reservations: 713/524-6706, www.mainstreettheater.com, or www.ticketweb.com.

◆ **Peter and the Wolf.** A.D. Players presents a new musical-theater version of the classic fairy tale with an eclectic score inspired by the famous Prokofiev symphony. Free. March 26-27, 11 am, at Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park, 100 Concert Dr. More info: www.milleroutdoortheatre.com.

ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

◆ **Design Life Now: National Design Triennial.** This exhibit presents innovative American designs in a variety of fields,

including product design, architecture, furniture, film, graphics, new technologies, animation, science, medicine, and fashion. Through April 20 at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose Blvd. More info: 713/284-8257, 713/284-8250, or www.camh.org.

◆ **Form, Color, Illumination: Suzan Frecon Painting.** Approximately 10 oil paintings and 30 watercolors ranging from the '90s to now demonstrate the prowess of this oft-overlooked artist. March 7-May 11 at the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. More info: 713/525-9400 or www.menil.org.

◆ **Lucy's Legacy: The Hidden Treasures of Ethiopia.** Meet Lucy, or at least what's left of her. The original fossilized remains of this 3.2 million-year-old hominid visit Houston. With 40 percent of her skeleton intact, Lucy's remains remain the oldest and most complete adult human ancestor fully retrieved from African soil. Over 100 artifacts illuminate the rich heritage of Lucy's homeland, including fossils, historical manuscripts, and implements of daily use to name a few. \$20 adults; \$12 kids (3-11)/seniors (62+)/college students. Through April 20 at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle. More info: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org.

◆ **Making the Unfamiliar Familiar: A Program for High School Students.** Twenty students who participated in an ongoing education program at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, are now featured artists themselves. The participating students worked in a studio space at the MFAH. Dominating the exhibition are canine portraits inspired by *Best in Show: The Dog in Art* and geometric compositions inspired by the work of Brazilian artist Helio Oiticica. \$7, \$3.50 for kids 6-18/students/seniors. Through June 29 at the Audrey Jones Beck Building of the Museum of Fine Arts, 5601 Main St. Info/reservations: 713/639-7300, (en español:) 713/639-7379, (TDD/TTY for the hearing impaired) 713/639-7390, or www.mfah.org.

◆ **Morena Moderna: Virgin de Guadalupe.** Practically everyone knows her image. Some have seen it in person, most have seen it on clothing, tattoos, art, and the tailgates of pickups. Through a comprehensive collection of photographic images, see the reverence, expression, and emotion she evokes in so many people. \$9 adults; \$7 kids 3-11, seniors, and college students. Through April 23 at Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle. Info: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org.

◆ **The Poetry of Process: A Celebration of Drawing.** Some of the greatest drawings at the Menil commingle with a selection of exceptional works from private collections. Look for works from the likes of Jasper Johns, Mark Rothko, Cy Twombly, Georgia O'Keeffe, among others. Through May 25 at the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. Info: 713/525-9400 or www.menil.org.

◆ **Pompeii: Tales from an Eruption.** In their final terrifying hours on August 24 and 25, A.D. 79, residents of Pompeii and the nearby coastal resort towns of Herculaneum, Oplontis, and Terzigno in southern Italy gathered objects precious to them and tried to escape the fury of Mount Vesuvius. The thriving, prosperous communities lay buried—silenced and forgotten for 1,700 years. The exhibit's bronze and marble sculptures, large-scale frescoes, jewelry, tools, table silver, armor, coins, skeletons, and plaster casts of the bodies of the victims now tell the stories of life at the Bay of Naples in the days of the early Roman Empire. March 2-June 22 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's Caroline Wiess Law Building, 1001 Bissonnet St. Information: 713/639-7300 or www.mfah.org (en Español: 713/639-7379, TDD/TTY for the hearing impaired, call 713/639-7390).

◆ **Strange and New.** *Strange Loops* by Bart Exposito and *New Works* by Stuart Allen and Rebecca Niederlander—the paintings, photography, and sculpture of these three artists fill the walls and space of this gallery. Through April 5 at Finesilver Gallery, 3913 Main St. More info: 713/524-3733, gallery@finesilver.com, or www.finesilver.com.

◆ **Vivid Vernacular: Walker Evans, William Christenberry, and William Eggleston.** These three pioneers of the medium of fine art photography transformed ordinary places along the American landscape into entrancing imagery. Through April 20 at the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. More info: 713/525-9400 or www.menil.org.

◆ **Yale Street Arts Market** is an exciting Heights market created for local artists to display and sell original works of art. Local musicians entertain all day. It's a mini art festival in the Heights! Every month on the 1st Saturday at 548 West 19th at Wind Water Gallery's parking lot. Info: www.YaleStreetMarket.com. Be sure to visit The Artful Corner at 3423 White Oak Blvd., 713/426-4ART. ■

CALENDAR DEADLINE
for the April issue: Friday, March 7, 5 p.m.

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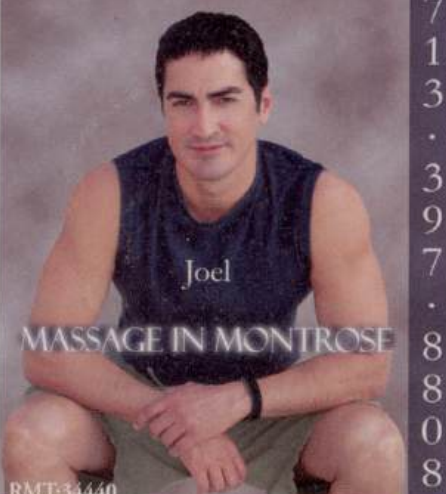
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Business News

by Nancy Ford

NEW PARTNERS Local attorneys Mitchell Katine and John Nechman recently announced the formation of their new law firm, Katine & Nechman, LLP.

Katine, most recently a partner in the firm Williams, Birnberg, and Anderson, LLP, was the local attorney for John Lawrence and the late Tyrone Garner, the petitioners in the landmark *Lawrence v. Texas* case, in which the Supreme Court overturned the sodomy laws in the United States. Katine's primary area of practice is civil law, including estate planning. Nechman, one of the original partners in the firm then known as Nechman, Simoneaux and Frye, PLLC (now Simoneaux, Frye and Thomason) focuses on immigration and criminal law.

Offices for the new firm, which opens this month, are located at 1111 North Loop West, Suite 180, inside Loop 610 between the Shepherd and Ella Blvd. (The phone number was not available by press deadline.)

NEW LOCATION Massage therapist and hair stylist David Tritico is celebrating the opening of his own studio, Olympian Therapeutic Massage and Barber Shop, with a grand opening on March

20, 6 p.m. "Not only is David a great barber, but he also gives the best deep tissue and sports massages in town," says one client, Nelson Vergel, the author and community HIV advocate. Tritico also offers body wraps, facials, and non-surgical facelifts.

The new salon is located at 3400 Montrose, Suite 435. Details: 832/274-3853, www.barbershopcentral.com.



David Tritico

IT'S LEGAL NOW Gina and Cory San Miguel have announced the opening of The Pleasure Chateau. Located at 1550 Westheimer, the new boutique offers an extensive line of lingerie, candles, Kama Sutra supplies, and adult novelties (including dildos, the sale of which the Fifth Circuit Court

of Appeals recently ruled was constitutional) for the "discriminating adult." Set in a French-style shop decorated with chandeliers, The Pleasure Chateau also books in-home "pleasure parties." Details: 713/520-6222, www.thepleasurechateau.com.

DOG SPA NEWS Urban Tails, "where all tails have happy endings," continues to celebrate the opening of its new Bow Wow Beach Club.

The indoor dog pool and expanded playground is a first for Houston, owners say. Urban Tails is located at 1618 Webster at Jackson. Details: 713/658-0900, www.urbantails.cc.



Houston Gym trainer Joe Simmons assists client Samantha Lopez.

NO MORE UGLY FURNITURE

In a campaign to rid humanity of the blight of unsightly furniture, BoConcept, the furniture retailer and designer, has launched PrettyUglyFurniture.com. The retailer urges consumers to upload photos of their most unappealing piece of furniture for a chance to win a grand prize (a BoConcept gift card worth \$7,000) and other prizes. Details: www.prettyuglyfurniture.com.

Bo Concept is located at 4302 Westheimer. The phone number is 713/877-1900, and the website is www.boconcept.com.

MUSCLE MAKEOVER Boasting "the friendliest gym staff in town," Houston Gym (1501 Durham) hosts a spring open house on March 26. The public is invited to tour the newly remodeled facility, sample special fitness classes, and enjoy music and refreshments.

Details: 713/880-9191, www.houstongym.com.

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AIDS Foundation Houston
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bayoucityperformingarts.org 713/521-7464
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..... epah.org
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Recent events photos on the website:

BAR & CLUB GUIDE

HOUSTON

LA ACADEMIA

One of this southwest salsa club's biggest draws (other than welcoming patrons 18 and up) is Throb Fridays, helmed by DJ Rocky B. It attracts some of the hottest women in town. 5829 S. Gessner • 713/334-5422 • www.myspace.com/laacademiaclub.

BARTINI

This club near the Westheimer curve now features a second ladies' nights, Passionate Sundays on the second and fourth Sunday, in addition to the Exquisite Wednesdays ladies' night. 1318 Westheimer • 713/526-2271.

BELLA AIDA GARDENS

Lady Barbara and MC Zip (of Bartini fame) host True Unity parties in this southwest Houston club every Saturday night for "everyone in the community," the women say. "We welcome lesbians, gays, transgenders, and bisexuals of all ethnic backgrounds." 9371 Richmond • 832/230-3739.

BLUR

This multi-level dance club features an upstairs lounge, balconies, and expansive patio. Wednesday is ladies night and Thursday is college night. No cover Friday through Sunday. 710 Pacific • www.blurbar.com.

BOCADOS

Each Wednesday, women pack this Mexican restaurant for dancing and socializing preceded by open mic sessions on last Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m. Sunday brunch starts at 11 a.m. and lasts 'til 3 p.m. 1312 W. Alabama • 713/523-5230.

BOOM BOOM ROOM

Manager/chef Kat Mims says business at this new Heights-area lounge is going great (even booming?), but "something was missing." So they introduced "Gay Night" on Tuesdays, with drink specials and tasty munchies. 2518 Yale • 713/868-3740.

BRAZOS RIVER BOTTOM

The BRB, Houston's leading gay country-western bar, is located in Midtown, just outside Montrose. Expect to see some fast and fancy two-stepping. Southern Country dance club offers lessons on Thursday night. 2400 Brazos • 713/528-9192.

CHANCES/THE NEW BARN/G-SPOT

Houston lesbians and those who love them enjoy three separate clubs under one roof, satisfying their C&W, urban dance, and live chick-music needs. Last year's fire resulted in hot upgrades including expanded and renovated bars, multiple video screens, banquet seating, and more. 1100 Westheimer • 713/523-7217 • www.chancesbar.com.

CLUB 2020

Located downtown near the Toyota Center, this plush dance-and-more nightclub is a natural for après Comets games. Its 6,400 square feet offer theater-sized viewing screens and VIP rooms. 2020 Leeland • 713/227-9667 • www.club2020houston.com.

CLUB CRYSTAL

If you miss the now-closed Inergy, you'll find many of its former staff, management and décor at this two-room Latin/hip-hop club. Sunday evening drag shows rule the roost. 6680 Southwest Fwy. next to Colorado. www.crystaltheclub.com • 713-278-2582.

BEHIND THE BAR

WHO: Reina Martinez, owner, and Mela Contreras, general mgr.

WHERE: Peacock International, 2324 Crocker St.



WHAT'S UP: The lively Latin club goes crustacean for its first annual Crawfish Festival, scheduled March 23.

The upstairs martini bar offers a quiet retreat. 2517 Ralph • 713/527-9071 • www.ejsbar.com.

GUAVA LAMP

The club left Shepherd Plaza and reopened with a larger space near Allen Parkway. Guava Lamp presents karaoke nights on Sunday and Wednesday and offers a free happy hour buffet on Friday. 570 Waugh • 713/524-3359.

GEORGE

Regulars rule at this comfortable neighborhood country/western sports bar where entertainment is provided via televised games, a jukebox, and

urday spot has a 15-ft. video screen, dance floor, and pool tables. DJ Kenny Jammz hosts karaoke night on Wednesday. 5742 Chimney Rock • 713/666-7472.

MARY'S, NATURALLY

The oldest gay club in Houston, this is a legendary nightspot, though not as notorious as in days past. Mary's hosts many community fundraisers, including the Imperial Court of Houston's Jukebox Wednesdays event. 1022 Westheimer • 713/527-9669.

METEOR

This posh yet comfy lounge on the downtown edge of Montrose has reopened to the glee of the martini crowd. Updates to the spacious double-roomed bar include the addition of numerous plasma video screens and a new and improved smokers' patio. The lovely and talented Tad Dvorak spins on the weekends. 2306 Genesee • 713/521-0123 • www.meteorlounge.com.

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

This neighborhood hangout has become a sing-along piano bar. A regular roster of keyboardists, including Phil Hooper and Lauri Gage, performs nightly, Tuesday-Saturday. 1419 Richmond • 713/520-8446.

MO MONG

Every Wednesday night, the guys and gals pack this Vietnamese restaurant to enjoy the martini specials. 1201 Westheimer #B • 713/524-5664.

MONTROSE MINING COMPANY

Study male dancers bump and grind every night at this leather/denim spot. The two-tier back patio bar provides a perch for viewing the Pacific Street scenery. 806 Pacific • 713/529-7488.

ORBIT 1

Sunday night is "family night" for "mature" gays and lesbians at this southeast neighborhood bar off Scott Street, offering a free buffet, door prizes, and drink set-ups for your own bottle. 3901 Lookhart St.

THE PEACOCK INTERNATIONAL

Following a brief period as a piano bar and other incarnations, this comfy neighborhood spot is helmed by local Latina legend, Mela Contreras. The musical theme is Tejano, of course, in addition to classic Latin favorites. 2324 Crocker St.

PRIVÉ

The patio at this second-floor spot overlooks the lively Westheimer/Montrose intersection. The mixed crowd includes smartly dressed gays as well as non-gays. 910 Westheimer • 713/522-2542.

PÜR

Party promoter Lauren Vogel takes over Poshoo each Wednesday night at 9 p.m., turning the upscale venue located directly behind George R. Brown Convention Center into an "ultra lesbian lounge."

the occasional drag fundraiser. Sports Saturdays offer dart tournaments at 3 and 5 p.m., followed by a pool tournament at 8 p.m. 617 Fairview • 713/528-8102.

HOUSTON MOSAIC/ROCBAR

The boys meet on Sunday evenings for a deck party at this spacious downtown Bayou Place location for dancing, drinking, and people watching. Occasionally, the soirée benefits or promotes a community charity. 503 Texas Ave. • www.mosaicdx.com.

IN-N-OUT

Heights residents appreciate this nearby alternative to Montrose haunts with state-of-the-art large digital displays, Internet jukebox, comfy seating, and daily drink specials. 1537 N. Shepherd Dr. • 713/589-9780.

JR'S BAR & GRILL

With house emcee Kofi, OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest reigning drag champion, this Montrose standard offers shows Sunday through Wednesday, as well as pool tables, go-go boys, and karaoke. 808 Pacific St. • 713/521-2519.

MANGO VIDEO LOUNGE

Located next to Club Inergy, this Wednesday-Sat-

YVONNE FEECE

Gorgeous women, no cover. 2010 McKinney Ave. 713/344-0305 • www.myspace.com/pureposhoo

RAINBOW ROOM

Every Thursday, Heather Moon hosts karaoke at this north Houston club. DJ Kenny supplies music on Friday and Saturday. 527 Barren Springs • 281/872-0215 • www.therainbowroombar.com.

RIPCORD

Named best place to show off your leather in the 2005 Gayest & Greatest poll, The Black Hawk Leather shop is located inside the club. Another big draw is the Houston Big Men's Club's bi-weekly hamburger BBQ fundraiser. 715 Fairview • 713/521-2792 • www.theripcord.com.

THE 611

This neighborhood club is a popular spot with pool sharks. On Friday and Saturday, the 611 dishes up buffet dinners. Features include a garden-style patio. 611 Hyde Park • 713/526-7070.

SOCIAL ROOM

Open Wednesdays and Sundays, featuring R&B, hip-hop, soul, and pop music. DJs on Wednesdays w/happy hour pricing 5-7 p.m.; women get in free 'til 9 p.m. Live music with no cover. Sundays. 1417 Westheimer.

SOUTH BEACH

This expansive, ultra chic dance club is a frequent winner of OutSmart's Gayest & Greatest awards with DJ Jimmy Skinner, local spin legends, DJ Rocky B, spins for Goddess Wednesdays. The club also offers frequent high-production-value drag shows. 810 Pacific • 713/529-SOBE • www.southbeachthenightclub.com.

TONY'S CORNER POCKET

Includes "Booze & Cruise Night" on Thursday, when "shirtless, in-shape guys" enjoy \$1 well drinks. Sunday Brunch starts at 11 a.m. 817 W. Dallas • www.tonyscornerpocket.com.

VIVIANA'S

This club, in a new location, appeals to fans of Latino music and drag alike. 4624 Dacoma • 713/681-4104.

Spring

RANCH HILL SALOON

The gayest spot on the north side has a new owner, a new website, and a new storefront for your GLBT gift-giving needs. With its two pool tables, 52-inch plasma televisions, and large dance floor, the club still also accommodates private parties, holy unions, and receptions. 24704 I-45 N, Suite 103 • 281/298-9035 • www.ranchhill.com • www.myspace.com/theranchhillsaloon.

Humble

WHISPERS

Northerly GLBTs meet at this comfy neighborhood bar that offers pool, darts, video games, karaoke Thursday, dancing to the Internet jukebox and live DJ on Friday and Saturday, and Steak night on Sunday. 226 First St. • 281/359-2900 • www.whispersbar.com.

Galveston

3RD COAST BEACH BAR

OutSmart readers voted this Seawall spot the island bar with the best happy hour in the 2005 Gayest & Greatest poll. Thursday is karaoke night, with cabaret/Variety shows on Friday and Saturday nights. 31st and Seawall Blvd. • 409/765-6911 • www.3rdcoastbeachbar.com.

GROOVE

Located in the purple building that was formerly a carriage house, Groove boasts a 5,000 square-foot dance floor, with live DJs and male and female dancers on the weekends. 2416 Postoffice St. • 409/766-7771.

THE PINK DOLPHIN

Opened by Eldridge Langlinos, formerly the Paradise Guest House proprietor, this club in the former 3rd Coast Beach Bar location offers an expansive Gulf view. 9th and Seawall Boulevard • 409/621-1808.

ROBERT'S LAFITTE

A neighborhood bar, the island institution attracts a colorful crowd of regulars and travelers. The private patio includes a swimming pool. On Saturday and Sunday nights, the Ladies of Lafitte show takes the stage. 2501 Avenue Q (at 25th) • 409/765-9092.

THE TREMONT HOUSE

Smart Island visitors stop by the atrium bar in the Strand district hotel to enjoy cabaret music at the grand piano. 2300 Ship's Mechanic Row • 409/763-0300.

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THE HOUSTON REGIONAL HIV/AIDS RESOURCE GROUP
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If you would like a Blue Book mailed to you, please call 713-572-3724.

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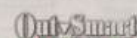
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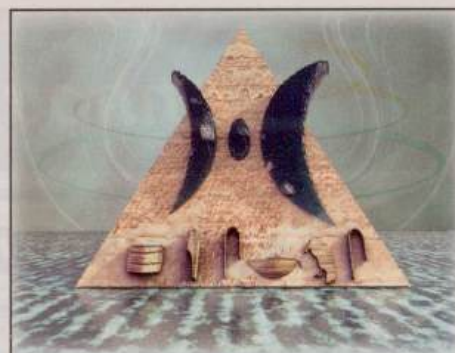
We seem to be back on track with fairly good aspects in the sky for the whole month. And we have finally moved out of the long period of serial retrogrades that began in June 2007. Get those projects started and move forward. We don't have another Mercury retrograde until May 23. • The New Moon this month is in Pisces, and this is the time to consider where you fit in and your destiny on the planet. You might want to give that some thought. The Full Moon on the 21st is a rather tense day. Emotions and warlike actions will be right on the surface. • The Sun begins the month in Pisces and enters Aries, on the 20th, the first day of Spring, the Vernal Equinox. Mercury is direct in Aquarius and slips into Pisces on the 14th. Venus follows almost the same path, starting in Aquarius and easing into Pisces on the 12th. Mars finishes his journey in Gemini on the 4th as he enters Cancer and heats up the water. Jupiter remains in Capricorn, Saturn in Virgo retrograde, Uranus in Pisces, Neptune in Aquarius, and Pluto in Capricorn.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). As the month begins, you are in an open and friendly time. You are glad to have friends around you and even gladder if they are old friends from your past. For business, this is a great time to market yourself or your company's products. Getting involved in business groups or organizations will really advance your career goals. If you are interested in looking for a new work position, this is an excellent time to start that process, especially after the new Moon on the 7th. Around mid-month, take some time to yourself and have a bit of a retreat. You have been very busy and, for many of you, overscheduled as well. Focus on home and family and use your energy there.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). Now that Mercury is no longer retrograde in your career sector, you can act on what you were thinking about last month when you should have noticed what is really wrong at work. This is the time to take action to fix those things or to be looking for another place where you are more appreciated. You will find plenty of allies if you want to make some changes in that area. Relationships are running along smoother. You can initiate some new connections if you are interested. By mid-month, you are more relaxed and more in touch with the flow of nature.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). There is much career focus this month. You are really working on making decisions, and you don't want to waste time or money on things that will not pay off in the future. If you are not happy at your current employer, a problem this month could be the last straw. If you are satisfied, you can expect a promotion or some increase in responsibility. Make sure that you want it, since a lot more work will be involved. You need some new projects so you don't get more bored. Travel can be good for you. An out-of-town experience, at least, would really help you to relax.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). With Mars, planet of action and confrontation, moving back into your sign for a 45-day visit, you are going to be more direct than usual. Don't be surprised that you can't keep those emotions hidden behind that crab shell



PISCES (February 19–March 20). Happy Birthday/Solar Return to all the Mermaids and Mermen. This is the time of the year that you are ending your yearly cycle and preparing to start a new one. You should take some time to consider what you hoped to accomplish and how well you did. Then you should take time to institute some new directions for this upcoming birthday year. After mid-month, you will feel very self-indulgent. Make sure that someone throws you a birthday bash. Your romantic magnet will be turned on. Make sure you have an extra large dance card for the month.

of yours. This is a great time to take some risks, have an adventure, or have some adventurous sex. You will find that you are not as patient as usual and may even have a bit of a time sleeping. If you are having relationship problems, they will come to the surface quickly, so that they won't have time to build up. If you are single, this is the best time to put yourself out there. At work, you are doing well, and there could be some opportunities for you to step out as a leader. Have a good time this month.

LEO (July 23–August 22). Relationships are at the top of your list. This last month, Mercury was retrograde in your partnership sector, and you couldn't avoid anything. Now you are ready to move forward and find solutions or move out and find a new partner. You are just so clear about not wasting your time with anyone that doesn't appreciate you. This goes double for work. You are really interested in speaking the truth. So-called "hidden" agendas in others make you be even more direct. Watch that you don't let yourself get taken advantage of at work. Keep your boundaries and schedules clear.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). Improving those work boundaries with co-workers and taking better care of your health is the theme of the month. Now that your ruler is direct, it is time to implement those changes at your workplace that you considered all through February. Since you are not taking as much malarkey off people as you did in the past, people are experiencing you as grumpier. But you are just maintaining better boundaries. This is the month to start that exercise and diet regimen that you said you wanted to start at the New Year. By mid-month, you will be more focused on relationships and want to have someone close.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). You are in a creative mood for the month. This will serve you well, because after the 4th, you will be strongly motivated in the career arena. If you are happy with your current place of employment, then this is the

time for you to take a leadership role and inject your agenda into the company's progress. If you are unhappy, then this is the time when you will have some problems and/or look for a new place of employment. But things will not remain the same. Relationships can be a bit testy, especially around the end of the month. By mid-month, you are more focused on your health.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). Now is the time for you to focus on your family and your home. You may have been doing some repairs or renovating or redecorating in the last month. Now you are ready to open your home to your friends and invite them into your fortress of solitude. For some of you, you will be in more contact with your nuclear family, which will need your help to establish some stability. By mid-month, you are more playful and want to take life as it comes. You are not so interested in being in as much control as you normally like. At work, you are ready for some new routines, ideas, or projects. Share some. You are more creative now.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). Finally, you can say the words that have been floating around in your brain. All last month, your tongue may have seemed to be tied. You are now clearer than you have been in a while. Some of your focus and direction is making your home more warm and comfortable. Some of you are considering moving. This is more of a major change than just some new furniture. Make some contacts with family members. They will be especially happy to hear from you. Watch your spending, particularly after mid-month. Continue working to enhance your career path.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). I know y'all are busier than you have been in a while. Now your relationship sector needs some attention. Relationships could be saucy, bratty, demanding, or just mean if they aren't getting more than their fair share. Life is going along fairly well as long as you are not born on December 21. For those of you born on that day, your life is topsy-turvy. Don't worry: It's supposed to be that way. For all of you, keep a handle on your spending. Your buying impulse is very strong. Your communication skills are good this month. You can convince others to do what you want without much cajoling. By the end of the month, you are working on strengthening your foundation.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). As this month opens, you are in much better spirits. Mercury, which was retrograde in your sign, is finally direct. You are able to speak again, move without bumping your head or your hand, and rid yourself of the frustration you were feeling. This month you are supposed to focus on yourself, your needs, and anything that just makes your world better. Indulge yourself. You have earned it. By mid-month, you are feeling the need to put your plans into action and generally get better organized. This is a great time for diet or exercise programs.

Read Lilly Roddy's annual forecast for 2008, which appeared in our January issue ("The Planets Say"), at www.outsmartmagazine.com. Roddy recently launched a new podcast, "City of Ladies," at www.lillyroddy.com.



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OUT IN HOUSTON

1 Sol Lara rocks out at the ActOUT performance of *Love, Janis*, benefiting AssistHers, January 24 at the Alley Theatre.

2 Octavio Moreno (l-r), **Caitlin Lynch**, and **Joelle Harvey** were winners of the 19th annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers, presented by Houston Grand Opera on February 8 at the Wortham Center.

3 Jim Fox (r) and **James Barrett** (l) congratulate **Fiona Dawson** on becoming a U.S. citizen at a celebration held January 9 at Salud! Winery.

4 Tom Long (l), Robert's LaFitte bartender **Joel Hickman** (c), and **Corey Schleifer** at the Krewe of Banners Party held at Galveston's Balinese Room, January 25.

5 Alexa Ramirez (l) celebrated her January 27 birthday with **Angie Panzica** at Crystal Nightclub.

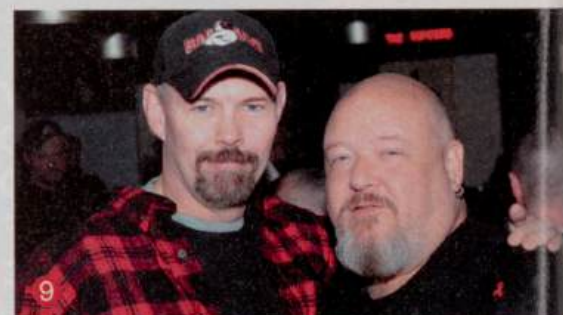
6 Singer Jimmy James (l) performed at EJ's on January 27. He's pictured here with EJ's owner, **Ed Moniger**.

7 John Painter (l-r), **Fred Walters**, **Thelma Miller**, **Sherry Serio**, and **Hanna Woodrow** at a fundraiser held for Houston Buyers Club at the Chocolate Bar, February 7.

8 Joyce Gabiola (l-r), **Joyal Kaku**, **Annie Ramirez**, and **Karen Le** celebrate Joyal's January 11 birthday at Meteor.

9 Laur van Valkenburg (l) and **Loyd Powell** celebrate The Ripcord's 30th anniversary, held last month at the club.

10 Enthusiastic vocalists from Team Houston sang their hearts out at a "Clash of the Choirs" event held February 7 at Guava Lamp. Proceeds from the concert benefited Bread of Life, Inc.



PHOTOS: 1,3,4,6,10: DALTON DEHART; 2: KIM COFFMAN; 5,7,8: YVONNE FEECE; 9: THOMAS CHELENA



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