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About the cover:

Ryan Phillippe (l) and Channing Tatum star in *Stop-Loss*, the new film from out director Kimberly Peirce. See page 40.

PHOTO: Paramount Pictures
COVER DESIGN: Blase DiStefano

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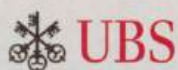
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Letters

KEEPING UP WITH JONES

Great article on Bill T. Jones ["Just Our Bill," March]! As a choreographer, dancer, teacher, and advocate in the Houston dance community, I see, read about, and participate in a lot of dance. It's refreshing to read such intimate background material not only on the company, but also on the work we are about to see. I am sure it will heighten my experience at the show. I'm linking this article to my newsletter that reaches over 500 Houston dance community members.

Toni Valle

Project Director, Dance Source Houston

CLINTON AFFAIR?

I can only be hopeful that Wayne Besen has taken time to wipe the foam from his mouth after reading his recent hate-filled diatribe about Republicans ["LeftOut," March]. While he has not come to terms with Bill Clinton's impeachment, perhaps it bears repeating that Clinton lied under oath in a court of law in a sexual harassment case that involved a subordinate, Monica Lewinski. A Federal judge found him guilty and took away his law license. Again, he lied under oath, Wayne. And you cannot revise this history.

Your love affair with the Clintons is embarrassing. Their failures began when Clinton went back on his middle-class tax cut campaign promise, claiming he "had never worked so hard in his life" to try to make it happen. While our government is up to its armpits in entitlement spending, Clinton promised National Health Care and failed miserably—even when Democrats controlled both Houses of Congress. Republicans opposed it, but Clinton did not even win Democrat votes for it. It did not seem to bother you that the White House travel office firings allowed Clinton to replace the office with their own cronies; or that he used the Lincoln bedroom for those who donated money to his campaigns. Wayne, the Clintons earned Republican bullying!

Your desire to vote strictly Democrat for president demonstrates your inherent self-interest about the role of a president. A president is not supposed to "give" things the citizenry. A president ought to challenge and inspire Americans. Obama has made more promises of more federal programs than FDR. More entitlements and yet with baby boomers set to retire, have you any idea what the costs are to fund expanded entitlements? We're now paying almost 40 percent of the federal budget to Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare. But I suppose it's easy to say yes if the money is not coming from your wallet. Perhaps you should share with your readers that the top 5 percent income earners already pay about 67 percent of all income taxes to the federal government. Is that enough, Wayne?

May I suggest, Wayne, the next time you have a doctor's appointment, go knock on all of your neighbors' doors and ask for \$10 each from all of them. Tell them they have to pay for your visit. Hey, it's what you want Obama to do for you. Why not just do it yourself right now?

Confidently and with no element of hatred,

Mike Crowe

Houston

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- Be taken with or without food
- Reduce viral load and increase CD4 cell count

Ask your doctor if TRUVADA can be part of a complete once a day regimen.


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TRUVADA is the #1 Prescribed HIV Med*

TRUVADA does not cure HIV infection or prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

USE OF TRUVADA:

TRUVADA is indicated in combination with other antiretroviral agents (such as non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors or protease inhibitors) for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in adults.

TRUVADA must be used as part of combination therapy. TRUVADA should not be used with ATRIPLA® (efavirenz 600 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate [DF] 300 mg), VIREAD® (tenofovir DF), EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine), Combivir® (lamivudine/zidovudine), Epivir® or Epivir-HBV® (lamivudine), Epzicom® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), or Trizivir® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine).

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

Contact your healthcare provider right away if you experience any of the following side effects or conditions while taking TRUVADA:

- Nausea, vomiting, unusual muscle pain, and/or weakness. These may be signs of a buildup of acid in the blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious medical condition
- Light colored stools, dark colored urine, and/or if your skin or the whites of your eyes turn yellow. These may be signs of serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity), with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly), and fat in the liver (steatosis)
- If you have HIV and hepatitis B virus (HBV) and stop taking TRUVADA, your liver disease may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking TRUVADA unless directed by your healthcare provider

- If you have had kidney problems or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys
- It is not known whether long-term use of TRUVADA causes damage to your bones. If you have had bone problems in the past, talk to your healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA

Changes in body fat have been seen in some people taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV medicines.

The most common side effects of the medicines in TRUVADA when taken with other anti-HIV medicines are dizziness, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, headache, rash, and gas. Skin discoloration (spots and freckles) may also occur.

Discuss all medicines you take with your healthcare provider and be aware:

- Your healthcare provider may need to follow you more closely or adjust your therapy if you are taking Videx® or Videx® EC (didanosine), Reyataz® (atazanavir sulfate), or Kaletra® (lopinavir/ritonavir) with TRUVADA

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Patient Information on next page, including "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"

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*Based on data from PHAST retail monthly data: September 2005–January 2008; Wolters Kluwer Health.

Patient Information

TRUVADA® (tru-VAH-dah) Tablets

Generic name: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate
(em tri SIT uh bean and te NOE' to veer dye soe PROX il FYOU mar ate)

Read the Patient Information that comes with TRUVADA before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking to your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment. You should stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA. **Do not change or stop your medicine without first talking with your healthcare provider.** Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions about TRUVADA.

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?

- Some people who have taken medicine like TRUVADA (nucleoside analogs) have developed a serious condition called **lactic acidosis** (build up of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of lactic acidosis.**
 - You feel very weak or tired.
 - You have unusual (not normal) muscle pain.
 - You have trouble breathing.
 - You have stomach pain with nausea and vomiting.
 - You feel cold, especially in your arms and legs.
 - You feel dizzy or lightheaded.
 - You have a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- Some people who have taken medicines like TRUVADA have developed serious liver problems called **hepatotoxicity**, with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of liver problems.**
 - Your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice).
 - Your urine turns dark.
 - Your bowel movements (stools) turn light in color.
 - You don't feel like eating food for several days or longer.
 - You feel sick to your stomach (nausea).
 - You have lower stomach area (abdominal) pain.
- You may be more likely to get **lactic acidosis or liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking nucleoside analog medicines, like TRUVADA, for a long time.
- If you are also infected with the **Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)**, you need close medical follow-up for several months after stopping treatment with TRUVADA. Follow-up includes medical exams and blood tests to check for HBV that could be getting worse. **Patients with Hepatitis B Virus infection, who take TRUVADA and then stop it, may get "flare-ups" of their hepatitis. A "flare-up" is when the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before.**

What is TRUVADA?

TRUVADA is a type of medicine called an HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI). TRUVADA contains 2 medicines, EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine) and VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, or tenofovir DF) combined in one pill. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people with HIV infection. TRUVADA is for adults age 18 and older. TRUVADA has not been studied in children under age 18 or adults over age 65.

HIV infection destroys CD4 (T) cells, which are important to the immune system. The immune system helps fight infection. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

TRUVADA helps block HIV reverse transcriptase, a chemical in your body (enzyme) that is needed for HIV to multiply. TRUVADA lowers the amount of HIV in the blood (viral load). TRUVADA may also help to increase the number of T cells (CD4 cells). Lowering the amount of HIV in the blood lowers the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

TRUVADA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of TRUVADA are not known at this time. People taking TRUVADA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection. Opportunistic infections are infections that develop because the immune system is weak. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infection. **It is very important that you see your healthcare provider regularly while taking TRUVADA.**

TRUVADA does not lower your chance of passing HIV to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood. For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood. Never use or share dirty needles.

Who should not take TRUVADA?

- Do not take TRUVADA if you are allergic to TRUVADA or any of its ingredients. The active ingredients of TRUVADA are emtricitabine and tenofovir DF. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients.
- Do not take TRUVADA if you are already taking ATRIPLA™, Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA, EpiVir or EpiVir-HBV (lamivudine), Epizcom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD because these medicines contain the same or similar active ingredients.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. We do not know if TRUVADA can harm your unborn child. You and your healthcare provider will need to decide if TRUVADA is right for you. If you use TRUVADA while you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about how you can be on the TRUVADA Antiviral Pregnancy Registry.
- are breast-feeding. You should not breast feed if you are HIV-positive because of the chance of passing the HIV virus to your baby. Also, it is not known if TRUVADA can pass into your breast milk and if it can harm your baby. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.
- have kidney problems or are undergoing kidney dialysis treatment.
- have bone problems.
- have liver problems including Hepatitis B Virus infection.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take:

- Videx, Videx EC (didanosine). Tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) may increase the amount of Videx in your blood. You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Videx together. Also, the dose of didanosine may need to be reduced.
- Reyataz (atazanavir sulfate) or Kaletra (lopinavir/ritonavir). These medicines may increase the amount of tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) in your blood, which could result in more side effects. You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz or Kaletra together. TRUVADA may decrease the amount of Reyataz in your blood. If you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz together, you should also be taking Norvir (ritonavir).

Keep a complete list of all the medicines that you take. Make a new list when medicines are added or stopped. Give copies of this list to all of your healthcare providers and pharmacist every time you visit your healthcare provider or fill a prescription.

How should I take TRUVADA?

- Take TRUVADA exactly as your healthcare provider prescribed it. Follow the directions from your healthcare provider, exactly as written on the label.
- The usual dose of TRUVADA is 1 tablet once a day. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV medicines. If you have kidney problems, you may need to take TRUVADA less often.
- TRUVADA may be taken with or without a meal. Food does not affect how TRUVADA works. Take TRUVADA at the same time each day.
- If you forget to take TRUVADA, take it as soon as you remember that day. Do not take more than 1 dose of TRUVADA in a day. Do not take 2 doses at the same time. Call your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you are not sure what to do. **It is important that you do not miss any doses of TRUVADA or your anti-HIV medicines.**
- When your TRUVADA supply starts to run low, get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to TRUVADA and become harder to treat.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking TRUVADA without first talking with your healthcare provider. Stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA.
- If you take too much TRUVADA, call your local poison control center or emergency room right away.

What should I avoid while taking TRUVADA?

- Do not breast-feed. See "What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?"
- Avoid doing things that can spread HIV infection since TRUVADA does not stop you from passing the HIV infection to others.
 - Do not share needles or other injection equipment.
 - Do not share personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes or razor blades.
 - Do not have any kind of sex without protection. Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to reduce the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.
- ATRIPLA, Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA, EpiVir or EpiVir-HBV (lamivudine), Epizcom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD. TRUVADA should not be used with these medicines.

What are the possible side effects of TRUVADA?

TRUVADA may cause the following serious side effects (see "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"):

- **Lactic acidosis** (buildup of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your doctor right away if you get signs of lactic acidosis.** (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")
- **Serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity)**, with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any signs of liver problems. (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")
- **"Flare-ups" of Hepatitis B Virus infection**, in which the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before, can occur if you stop taking TRUVADA. Your healthcare provider will monitor your condition for several months after stopping TRUVADA if you have both HIV and HBV infection. TRUVADA is not approved for the treatment of Hepatitis B Virus infection.
- **Kidney problems.** If you have had kidney problems in the past or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys.

- **Changes in bone mineral density (thinning bones).** It is not known whether long-term use of TRUVADA will cause damage to your bones. If you have had bone problems in the past, your healthcare provider may need to do tests to check your bone mineral density or may prescribe medicines to help your bone mineral density.

Other side effects with TRUVADA when used with other anti-HIV medicines include:

- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV medicines. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the main part of your body (trunk). Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effect of these conditions are not known at this time.

The most common side effects of EMTRIVA or VIREAD when used with other anti-HIV medicines are: dizziness, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, headache, rash, and gas. Skin discoloration (small spots or freckles) may also happen with TRUVADA.

These are not all the side effects of TRUVADA. This list of side effects with TRUVADA is not complete at this time because TRUVADA is still being studied. If you have questions about side effects, ask your healthcare provider. Report any new or continuing symptoms to your healthcare provider right away. Your healthcare provider may be able to help you manage these side effects.

How do I store TRUVADA?

- Keep TRUVADA and all other medicines out of reach of children.
- Store TRUVADA at room temperature 77 °F (25 °C).
- Keep TRUVADA in its original container and keep the container tightly closed.
- Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. If you throw any medicines away make sure that children will not find them.

General information about TRUVADA:

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use TRUVADA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give TRUVADA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about TRUVADA. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for information about TRUVADA that is written for health professionals. For more information, you may also call 1-800-GILEAD-5 or access the TRUVADA website at www.TRUVADA.com.

Do not use TRUVADA if seal over bottle opening is broken or missing.

What are the ingredients of TRUVADA?

Active Ingredients: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate

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May 2007

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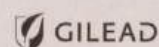
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SISTERS IN THE SPIRIT

When Kindred Spirits, a bar "for women and their friends," first opened in 1980, it became a haven not only for drinking and dancing, but also for community fundraisers, political organizing, and even blood drives. The popular spot closed in 1990, but not before the "kindred spirit"—the desire to "give back to the community," as founder Marion Coleman explains it—had instilled itself in its many patrons. • Spearheaded by Coleman, annual Kindred Spirits celebrations have for seven years raised more than \$80,000 for women's health programs, while simultaneously giving former patrons (and those who wish they could have been) a great excuse to party together. This year's party is April 26, 8 p.m.-1 p.m., at the Edwin R. Hornberger Center, with Terry Flores of Bocados spinning the dance music. • Members of the organizing committee, including (pictured, l-r) Michelle Free, Coleman, Sol Lara, and Renee Tappe, have been hawking \$20 advance tickets at community events, including the March 8 AssistHers Softball Tournament, where this photo was taken. Tickets are available at Acadian Bakers, Bocados, DaCapo's in the Heights, and Houston Buyer's Club. • AssistHers, Bering Support Network, Houston Buyer's Club and Lesbian Health Initiative-Houston share in the proceeds. Admission is \$25 at the door. Details: www.kindredspiritshouston.org.

Photographed by Henry Yau



LOCAL GLBT POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS SPLIT ON PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENTS

Prior to Texas' March 4 Democratic presidential primary, Houston Area Stonewall Democrats announced the GLBT political group's endorsement of Senator Hillary Clinton in the Democratic presidential primary.

Representing five of the region's counties, Houston Area Stonewall Democrats is the largest GLBT Democratic organization in southeast Texas. The vote of HASD's executive board was decisive with four members voting for Sen. Clinton and one member abstaining.

"For us, the choice was clear," said Teresa Herrin, Stonewall Democrats president. "Hillary Clinton is the candidate best qualified and most prepared to bring about the changes sought by our community. We knew Sen. Clinton has been our ally in the fight for our equal rights, but we were genuinely surprised by her passion about us becoming full American citizens under the law," continued Herrin.

During a pre-primary, 20-minute phone conversation with representatives from Houston Stonewall Democrats, Sen. Clinton committed to making immediate priorities of her administration on such key issues as passing a completely inclusive ENDA, passing a completely inclusive Hate Crimes bill, and eliminating "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

"Instead of marginalizing us, Sen. Clinton actually asked us to help her create the solutions our country needs. To a 76-year-old lesbian in Houston, that is very, very powerful," said Pat Gandy, Stonewall Democrats' treasurer.

Senator Barack Obama received the endorsement from the Houston's GLBT Political Caucus after conferring with its representatives, though he chose not to interact with the Stonewall group. The caucus board's vote was close, with three members supporting Sen. Obama, two members supporting Sen. Clinton, and one member abstaining.

"When we invited the two senators to seek our endorsement, we never truly believed we would be forced to make such a difficult decision," said Jenifer Pool, president of the caucus, which held interviews with both candidates in late February. "After historic conversations with both Sen. Clinton and Sen. Obama, the caucus board engaged in thoughtful deliberations and were proud to get behind Sen. Obama."

Ultimately, Sen. Clinton won Texas' democratic presidential primary's popular vote, with Sen. Obama receiving the majority of Texas' Democratic Party's super delegates.

Houston Vice Mayor Pro Tem Sue Lovell, who supports Hillary Clinton, is a super delegate and the only Texas GLBT member on the Democratic National Committee.

Details: www.HoustonAreaStonewallDemocrats.com • www.thecaucus.org.

HOUSTON EQUAL RIGHTS ALLIANCE TEAMS UP WITH EQUALITY TEXAS

In its goal to build alliances with other GLBT and progressive organizations, the Houston Equal Rights Alliance and Equality Texas have announced that the two organizations have integrated.

"Equality Texas' programmatic and advocacy work across the state has mirrored HERA's in the greater Houston metropolitan area," observed HERA vice-chair, Tammi Wallace. "Equality Texas has been a longtime alliance partner of the Houston Equal Rights Alliance and we are proud of our collaborative and successful efforts."

HERA's board of directors began a dialogue in 2007 with Equality Texas about how the two organizations could best achieve common goals and objectives in the Houston metro area. Following positive feedback from supporters of both, the partnership was approved.



Martha L. Oestreich

Equality Texas Names New Officers to Prepare for 2009 Legislative Session

The boards of directors of Equality Texas and Equality Texas Foundation have announced they have elected officers to lead the organizations through a comprehensive strategic planning process and to prepare for the 2009 legislative session.

Vice-chair of the lobbying group in 2007, Martha L. Oestreich of Kyle, Texas, was elected as chair. Chair of the Collin County Gay & Lesbian Alliance's Victory Committee, Dawnetta Miller of Plano, was elected as vice-chair. Recipient of numerous awards promoting GLBT equality, Marsha Warren of San Antonio, was elected as treasurer. Equality Texas board member, Reed Bogle of Dallas, was re-elected as secretary.

Details: www.equalitytexas.org.

"This is a 'win-win' situation, because Equality Texas will benefit from the infrastructure that HERA has developed through the years," said HERA president, Rob Scamado, "and the Houston community wins because we will have a larger presence with our statewide organization."

"We need Equality Texas to be successful, not just for Houston but for the place we all call home: Texas," Scamado continued. "The HERA board is working to make this integration successful, and we will continue to work with and support Equality Texas until the day when the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community is no longer treated as second-class citizens."

Details: www.equalitytexas.org.

GLBT POLITICAL CAUCUS ENDORSE TWO IN APRIL RUNOFF

Houston's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Political Caucus Political Action Committee has announced endorsement for the April 8 runoff election in Houston. The PAC endorsed railroad commissioner candidate, Dale Henry, based on his pledge to protect Texas' environment, develop Texas' alternative energy sources, and include the GLBT community in his office.

Larry Weiman, returning candidate for civil judge in District 80, has proven "excellent on GLBT issues," according to the HGLBT PAC.

Early voting for the runoff ends Friday, April 4; the election itself is Tuesday, April 8.

Details: www.thecaucus.org.

GALVESTON MAYOR ASSURED REELECTION IN NOVEMBER

Voters in the March 4 primary election decided that Galveston Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas will run unopposed for the island's highest office in the November election.

Mayor Thomas, whom Galveston's *OutSmart* readers voted as their "favorite politician," told the *Galveston Daily News* that she considers having no opponent in the mayor's race "a vote of confidence" by her constituents.

"I do want to be the best mayor," she told the *News*, "and I want to do what I can for the city I love and the citizens I hold in such high regard."

Thomas has been Galveston's mayor since the 2004 general election.

LOCAL LOG CABIN REPUBLICAN LEADER LEAVES GOP

The most recent president of Log Cabin Republicans-Houston, Noel Freeman, has announced his resignation from that office.

"I can assure you this decision did not come easily," Freeman said in a public statement. Freeman said his decision was based in part on local GOP and Republican leaders' disinterest in dialoguing with LCR. →

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News Briefs

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"County Judge Ed Emmett showed some promise when he expressed interest in meeting with LCR, but my requests to take him up on his offer were ignored," Freeman continued in the statement.

According to Freeman, none of 42 questionnaires sent to Republican candidates inviting them to screen with LCR-Houston for the March 4 primary were returned. "Likewise, invitations were extended to numerous prominent Republican leaders and candidates to speak to LCR. All were similarly ignored."

Freeman concluded his statement by asking local GLBT Republicans "to continue to be passionate and continue to make your case to the GOP that there is much more to being Republican than being straight."

Freeman, who made an unsuccessful bid for a seat on Houston's city council in 2007, said he is supporting Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election.

IMMIGRATION LAWYERS PRESENT 'CITIZENSHIP DAY'

In collaboration with Congressman Al Green and Bank of America, the American Immigration Lawyers Association Texas Chapter presents Citizenship Day for persons seeking to apply for U.S. citizenship.

Among the basic requirements for naturalization, the applicant must be a lawful, permanent resident (or a green-card holder) of the U.S., be at least 18 years old, possess good moral character, pass English and U.S. history and civics exams, and take a loyalty oath.

"Those who are not U.S. citizens and eligible for naturalization... may be able to receive free help in applying for naturalization," said John Nechman, a partner with Katine & Nechman LLP. "You will likely have to pay U.S. CIS filing fees and biometrics costs of \$675, but you will save attorney fees."

The forum is set for Saturday, April 19, 9 a.m. 'til 2 p.m. at Fondren Middle School, 6333 South Braeswood Blvd. Details: Rosa Cruz, 713/333-3333, ext. 218.

SWOOPES LEAVES HOUSTON COMETS, SIGNS WITH SEATTLE STORM

Houston Comets star player, Sheryl Swoopes, announced in early March that she is leaving the team to join the Seattle Storm.

Swoopes wore a Comets jersey from 1997 through 2007, though she sat out the 2001 season with a knee injury. A consistent scorer, she helped the Comets snare the WNBA's first four championships.

A strained lower back caused the three-time WNBA Most Valuable Player to miss all but three games in the Comets' 2007 season.

Following a high-profile announcement that she is a lesbian, Swoopes signed on as a spokeswoman for Olivia, which produces lesbian-themed cruises and events.

HOLLYFIELD FOUNDATION OPENS GRANT APPLICATIONS, ANNOUNCES OFFICERS

In keeping with its mission to help fund organizations that support GLBT equality and healthcare, the Hollyfield Foundation is now accepting grant proposals from GLBT and HIV/AIDS organizations, with all requests for funding due April 30.

Reviewing the applications are grants committee co-chairs for 2008, directors Mary Ann McBee and Coy Tow. Additional recently elected officers for the foundation are Mark Wood, chair; Todd G. Amdor, vice-chair; Kerri J. Dorman, secretary; and Mary Ann McBee, treasurer.

Applications for grants are available at the foundation's website. Details: 713/523-6900 • www.hollyfield.org.

LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS PARTICIPATE IN GLSEN'S NATIONAL DAY OF SILENCE

Sponsored annually by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Educators Network (GLSEN), the National Day of Silence brings attention to anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying, and harassment in schools. →

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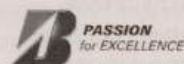
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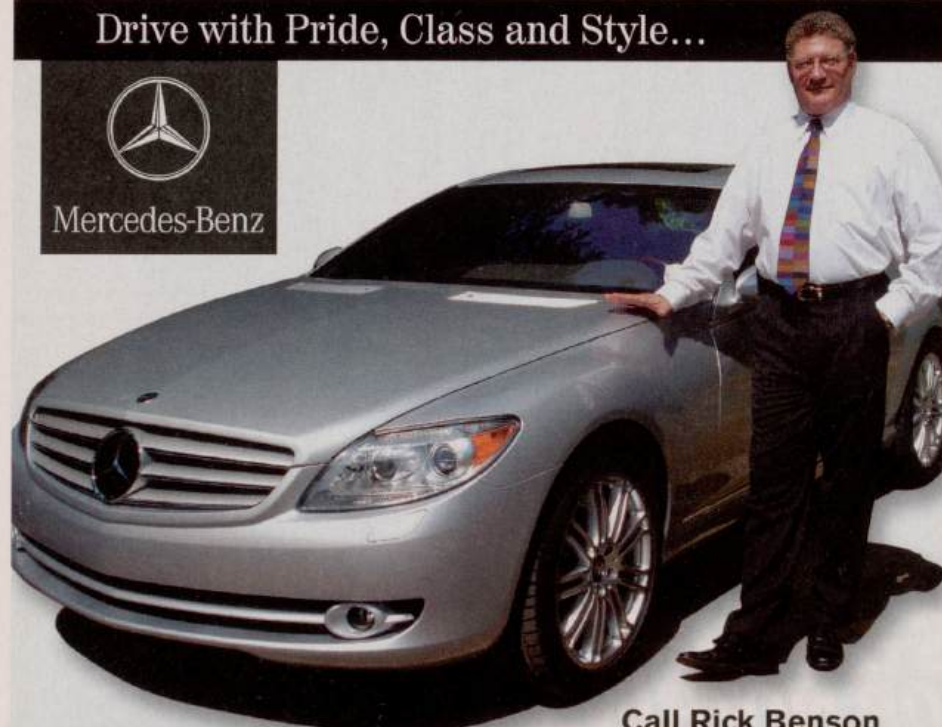
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This year's event was held April 25 in high schools throughout the U.S. in memory of Lawrence King. King, a California eighth-grader, was shot and killed Feb. 12 by a classmate because of his sexual orientation and gender expression.

Students from approximately 12 Houston-area high schools participated in the observance, including Bellaire, Cypress Springs, Episcopal, Furr, Hightower, Kempner, Kingwood, Northbrook, Sharpstown, and Westside high schools, as well as The High School for Health Professionals, and The Kinkaid School.

GLSEN's 2003 National School Climate Survey found that more than four out of five GLBT students report verbal, sexual, or physical harassment at school, and 29 percent report missing at least a day of school per month, fearing for their personal safety.

Details: www.glsen.org.

TEXAS GOVERNOR SLAMS GAY SCOUTS

In February 24's *The New York Times Magazine*, Texas Governor Rick Perry stated that allowing gay members and leaders to participate in the Boy Scouts of America would subject boys to "a crash course in sexual orientation."

"Scouting ought to be about building character, not about sex. Period," Gov. Perry told the magazine. "Precious few parents enroll their boys in the Scouts to get a crash course in sexual orientation."

When asked whether he believed that gay youth might also be interested in the character-building aspects of scouting, Perry replied, "The argument that gets made is that homosexuality is about sex."

Paul Scott, executive director of Equality Texas agreed with Gov. Perry in that the focus for Boy Scouts of America is building character.

"But Governor Perry seems to be the one confused that being gay is just about sex. He fails to realize that the characteristics of being a Scout—trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent—are all characteristics that can define a gay Scout member or a gay Scout leader."

Scott stressed that discrimination based on sexual orientation is not character-building, adding that implying that being gay is a defect in character is inaccurate and offensive.

"Governor Perry's perpetuation of stereotypes and falsehoods is the complete antithesis of good character," he said.

Jodie Eldridge, executive director of Atticus Circle, agreed. "In our country, there are millions of gay folks who are excellent parents, teachers, and caregivers for our kids," Eldridge said. "I am sure they would also make excellent Scoutmasters, if only given the chance."

Equality Texas and Atticus Circle representatives hoped to demonstrate to the governor that the principles of scouting are beneficial to heterosexual and homosexual Texans by inviting current and former gay Boy Scouts to attend bookstore readings of Governor Perry's new book, *On My Honor: Why The American Values of the Boy Scouts Are Worth Fighting For*.

continued on page 105

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THE MAN IN MY LIFE

Sometimes you have to go there to discover that's not where you belong

It was a Monday morning like most others. Rainy, kind of steamy. I was plowing through my de rigueur 200+ daily pieces of spam, separating the wheat from the chafe.

No, thanks, I don't need a prescription of Cialis at discount prices. No, thanks, I've already seen more never-before-seen photos of Britney Spears than I'll ever need to see.

And as for you, Prince Abuertspn-bepcir of Tanjsbagtania, I couldn't be sorrier that you are being forced to live in exile, but you'll just have to find your way back to your rightful throne without benefit of my bank account number.

I was almost finished delete-delete-deleting when I came upon another spammish-looking e-mail.

It was from my ex-husband.

No typo. You read that correctly.

Those of you who have been faithful WAW readers for these past 20 years know that, yes indeed, for a brief, crampy period in the '70s, I was married.

To a man.

With a penis.

During that period of wedded less-than-bliss, I discovered unequivocally that I am a lesbian. After the ensuing ballyhoo, we divorced, I left Ohio for Texas, and last I'd heard, he'd enlisted in the Air Force. That was 1980.

And now here's an e-mail with his not-very-common name in the subject line. Nawww—couldn't be, after not hearing hide nor het hair from him in 28 years.

This is one skillful spammer, I thought. Whoever sent this blast has definitely done their homework.

Curious, I opened the message. Sure 'nough.

"Nancy - I will be in Houston this

Sunday and Monday at the Convention Center as part of an equipment demo that my employer is putting on. I thought we could get together for coffee and catch up. Let me know if you are interested."

Am I "interested?"

If "freaked out," "slack-jawed," and maybe even a little "frightened" are similes for the word "interested," then yes, you could say I was "interested."

Other than the many jokes it inevita-

Kutcher haircut has been replaced by a standard-issue corporate 'do. He's a little grayer, he's a little heavier—aren't we all? But he was still as good-looking as ever. White collar. Two cell phones. He assured me that the heart of a hippie still beats under his now-corporate demeanor.

Politics, philosophy, music, religion—X and I talked about nearly everything except how different our lives would have been if we had not divorced.

Who would I be today if X and I had stuck it out to celebrate our 32nd anniversary last month? Who would I be if I had never found my way to a gay nightclub stage to strum my angst away on, or to a gay rag to deposit my rantings in? Who would I be? Would I even be *at all*?

I could easily have been doomed to spend these past 30ish years sublimating my true self to be a wife, and probably a mother. How many other women of

that era married men, not knowing they were lesbians, and sublimated away their entire lives?

I thought about those women as X and I said our goodbyes. I also thought about how very, very fortunate I am to have married a man who, chaotic as our divorce was at the time, let me go on to live my life without trying to beat the hetero back into me. Or worse.

Funny, I didn't know X and I had any peace we needed to make; I'd never felt the need for closure, per se. But walking out of the restaurant that increasingly sunny Monday gave me a renewed sense of faith in—I don't know—in *something*.

Maybe it was just comforting to be reminded why I had married this man in the first place: He was a nice guy. Funny. Smart. Decent values. Loving. Great hair.

Who knows? If he hadn't been born so straight, so vaginally challenged, maybe we'd still be together this very day. ■

Politics, philosophy, music, religion—X and I talked about nearly everything except how different our lives would have been if we had not divorced.

bly spawned in my early stand-up career, my hetero marriage is a part of my life that I have since compartmentalized into a seldom-visited corner of my memory. When I do think of it, it is in a frame, bordered like a TV screen, like I am watching a sitcom of the story of someone else's life.

X and I were married back in the day when all the boys and many of the girls sported haircuts we see on *That '70s Show* reruns. A gallon of gasoline was barely a dollar. I drank scotch and voted Republican. I wore pantyhose. It was a much different time.

Curiosity being a strong motivator, I suggested we meet at Baba Yega, high noon, for lunch. I wanted to be on my home turf, some familiar place where, if I suddenly shouted "Gun!", wait staff (knowing I'm a decent tipper) might jump to my defense.

Nearly three decades later, X's Ashton

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THE ARCH-BUTCHER OF NIGERIA

Archbishop Peter Akinola is more intent on war than worship

When openly gay Gene Robinson was elected Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003, the Nigerian archbishop, Peter J. Akinola, called the event "Satanic." However, after reading the latest issue of *Atlantic Magazine*, it appears that Akinola is the one whose behavior is modeled on the devil.

According to the article, Muslim fanatics attacked Christian worshippers in the Nigerian town of Yelwa in February 2004. They set fire to a church and murdered anyone who tried to escape, leaving 78 people dead. In retaliation, members of the Christian Association of Nigeria, led at the time by Akinola, surrounded the town. The vigilantes murdered 660 Muslims while torching 12 mosques and 300 houses.

In a state that lacks law and order, it is somewhat understandable that the Christians might take matters into their own hands as they certainly have a right to defend themselves. What is unconscionable,

however, is the gratuitous cruelty and downright evil that occurred on Akinola's watch. Far from Christian, one might equate the ghastly reprisals in Yelwa with a tyrant like Saddam Hussein, not an Anglican bishop.

Were Akinola's "Christian" warriors exemplifying the love of Jesus while raping pregnant Muslim women in the village? Were these thugs asking, "What would Jesus do?" when they forced Muslims to eat pork and dog meat, while washing it down with forbidden alcohol? Was it somehow "spiritual" to burn corpses in the street? And, how "holy" was it to hack to death children as young as nine with machetes, then put the bloody pieces in a rubber tire and set fire to it? This was not simply retaliation, but terrorism. It was demonic behavior in the name of religion that had nothing to do with self-defense.

According to Human Rights Watch, there is no "smoking gun" definitively showing that

the archbishop ordered the massacre. However, he was clearly in charge of the group implicated and could barely hide his glee in the *Atlantic* article. When asked point-blank about the incident, Akinola said, "No comment," while he grinned. He went on to add, "No Christian would pray for violence, but it would be utterly naïve to sweep this issue of Islam under the carpet. I'm not out to combat anybody. I'm only doing what the Holy Spirit tells me to do. I'm living my faith, practicing and preaching that Jesus Christ is the one and only way to God.... I've said before: Let no Muslim think they have the monopoly on violence."

Clearly, Akinola is unrepentant and sounds more like a warlord than a leader of worship. As a result of the slaughter, the archbishop lost his bid to continue heading the Christian Association of Nigeria. However, he is still the primate of the Anglican Church of Nigeria and a powerful

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GAY RIGHTS AND GUN RIGHTS

Defending the practical matter of self-defense

Though it's gotten very little attention in the gay press, an important case affecting the lives of gays and lesbians is now pending in the Supreme Court. The case challenges the constitutionality of the District of Columbia's unusually strict gun-control law, which bans handguns and effectively prevents people from possessing firearms for self-defense in their own homes.

A brief filed in the case, on which I offered some counsel, argues that the law is especially harmful to gay Americans. The brief joins a large coalition of groups, including the National Rifle Association, arguing for individual rights under the Second Amendment.

The brief was filed on behalf of Pink Pistols and Gays and Lesbians for Individual Liberty (GLIL). Pink Pistols is an international group formed a few years ago with the basic mission of advocating gun ownership and training in the proper use of firearms by gay people. GLIL is a libertarian gay group

that consistently defends individual rights.

The gay gun-rights brief argues that the D.C. gun-control law violates the Second Amendment, long the forgotten and some say most "embarrassing" part of the Bill of Rights. The Second Amendment says: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Many people have long argued that the reference to "a well-regulated militia" means that the right is limited to citizens serving collectively in a modern-day military force, like the National Guard. Under this interpretation, the amendment would not protect any individual right to bear arms outside the militia context, meaning that the government can entirely ban private gun ownership, even guns needed for self-defense in the home.

However, as even many liberal scholars now acknowledge, that interpretation makes

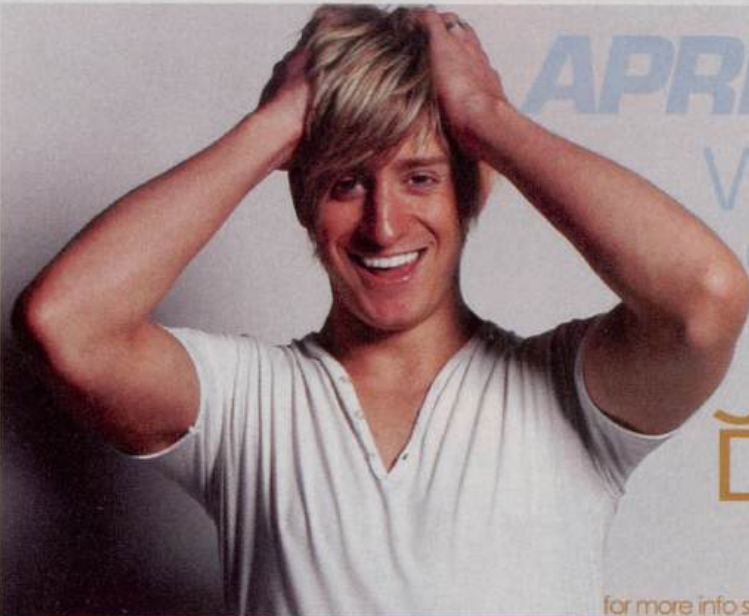
little sense of the text and history of the amendment and of the Bill of Rights generally, which contains a series of individual rights.

The gay gun-rights brief adds an important perspective to this argument. It makes several points about the connection between firearms, gay rights, and the practical self-defense needs of gay Americans.

First, the brief argues that the right to keep and bear arms is especially instrumental for a population at once subject to pervasive hate violence and inadequate police protection.

From 1995 to 2005, according to the FBI, more than 13,000 incidents of antigay hate violence were reported by law enforcement agencies. When you consider that fewer than half of all violent crimes are reported, it is certain that even this number seriously underestimates the problem.

Worse still, gays are often afraid to report antigay crimes. There is a sorry history of



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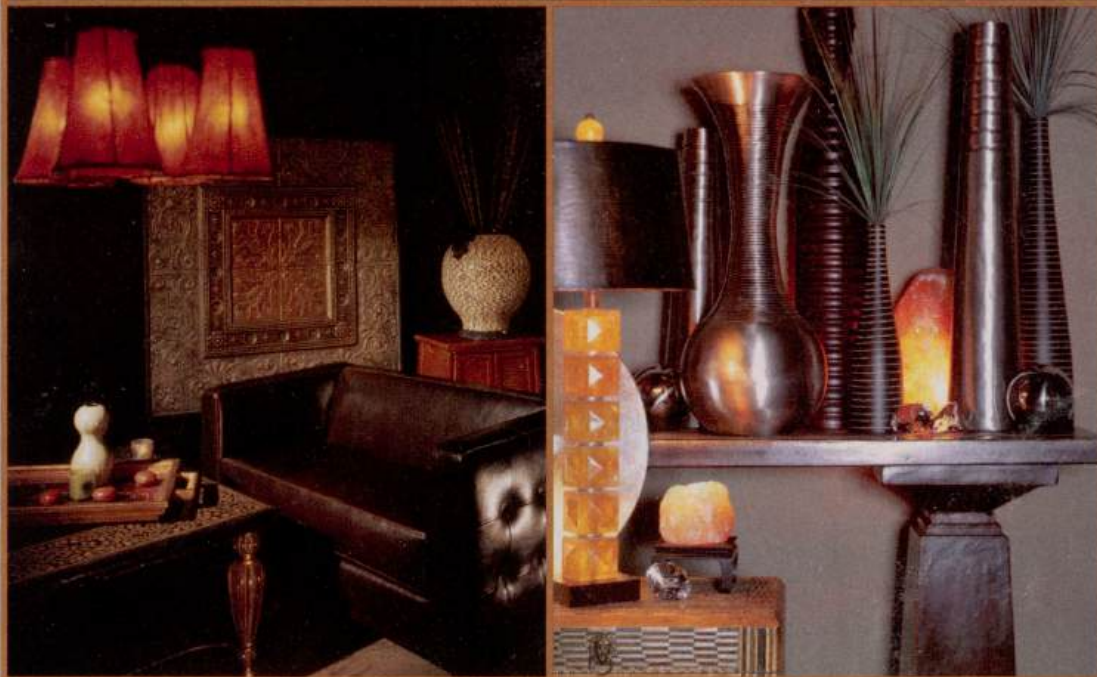
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LeftOut continued from page 24

voice in condemning homosexuality across the globe.

Indeed, while Akinola is soft on his preferred sin of murder, he never turns the other cheek on gay rights. He has provocatively called Europe "a spiritual desert" and chastised the Church of England for failing to oppose civil partnership laws, which, he said, give "the appearance of evil." I suppose that once one masters genuine evil, the mere appearance is no longer satisfying.

In 2006, Akinola supported a proposed Draconian law in Nigeria that would have effectively banned the "promotion" of homosexuality, punishing violators with up to five years imprisonment. Tragically, while the archbishop is fixated on gay people, Nigeria remains one of the poorest and most corrupted nations on earth (minus the elite who profit from oil). According to Human Rights Watch, up to \$8 billion is embezzled annually, while nearly half the population lives on less than \$1 a day. You would think these issues might interest a Christian leader, but Akinola ignores them in favor of jet-setting antigay junkets to America and Europe.

With such a contemptible record, one would expect Anglican Church leaders to marginalize Akinola. It seems, however, the church would rather coddle this butcher, because they care more about membership than morality. Most appalling are the American churches that have left the Episcopal Church to align themselves with the Church of Nigeria. It doesn't seem to bother them that they are this madman's enablers. As such, these "conservatives" should be held accountable for any future atrocities committed by Akinola.

If Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury, had any guts, he'd use every tool at his disposal to make Akinola an international pariah. All bishops with a conscience should also refuse to take Holy Communion with Akinola and he should be prohibited from attending major conferences.

In a recent Democratic debate, Hillary Clinton said that Barack Obama should not just denounce, but reject the Nation of Islam's Louis Farrakhan. Obama wisely did both. Likewise, Anglican leaders must denounce and reject Akinola if they want to regain their moral authority. The only appropriate place for Akinola on the International stage is The Hague—where he should be tried for crimes against humanity.

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 continued from page 25

hostile or skeptical police response, public disclosure of the victim's sexual orientation, and even physical abuse by the police themselves. Investigative bias and lack of police training further complicate the picture. The upshot is that gays must be responsible for their own defense; they cannot rely solely on law enforcement for it.

Antigay hate crimes share several other characteristics that make the use of firearms for self-defense especially significant. Such crimes are unusually brutal, often involving multiple and vicious attacks. They are highly likely to involve multiple assailants. Attackers themselves often use guns, making anything short of a like defense almost completely ineffective.

Surprisingly, almost one-third of antigay bias crimes occur in the home, the precise location where the D.C. gun law forbids the effective possession of firearms for self-protection.

It's true that gun possession does not guarantee protection from violent crime. The gun may be incompetently used, for example. But where the Constitution itself protects an individual right, it is not for the government to say the citizen may not enjoy the right simply because she may not make effective use of it.

Second, the gay gun-rights brief points out that unless the Second Amendment protects an individual right to possess firearms, gay Americans are effectively disqualified from any exercise of the right. That's because under the current prevailing interpretation of the Constitution, the government may entirely exclude gays and lesbians from military service ("the militia").

If the Second Amendment protects only the collective right of a state's citizens to possess arms within a militia, and if gays may be excluded from that militia, then the Second Amendment is a dead letter for gay Americans. They have no rights on the subject the government is bound to respect.

I do not own a gun. Frankly, I don't much like them and have never felt I needed one for protection. But for many other gay people, especially the ones living on the margins of life in crime-prone or antigay areas, owning a gun is one important part of a comprehensive plan for protecting life and property.

Gun ownership might at the very least give them peace of mind. And widespread knowledge that many gays are packing might give their would-be attackers second thoughts. Gun rights are gay rights.

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

CRITIQUING THE CAUCUSES

A little confusion in the short term yields big benefits in the long term

The long lines at Democratic precinct conventions provoked tempers and frustration for some, and confusion for most. But for old hands like me who have worked in and through the Texas precinct convention process for decades, it was an uplifting and gratifying night. Oh, I was frustrated too, and I complained about the lack of adequate accommodations for the numbers of both voters and caucusers. But if you turned off the audio and looked at the sea of smiling faces, how could anyone be less than elated at democracy in action?

Now, I know that some of the conventions were more contentious, and I fault both the Obama and Clinton campaigns for stirring some of that. Both campaigns warned their followers that "those horrible people in the other camp" would try to cheat them. Partisans were urged to go and "take over" the conventions.

If Democrats hadn't had so few participants over the past few elections, there would have been more experienced hands on deck, but, rhetoric aside, the rules are actually pretty straightforward and were applied

The controversial and confusing Texas two-step Democratic primary system actually had a rational genesis and some really useful elements.

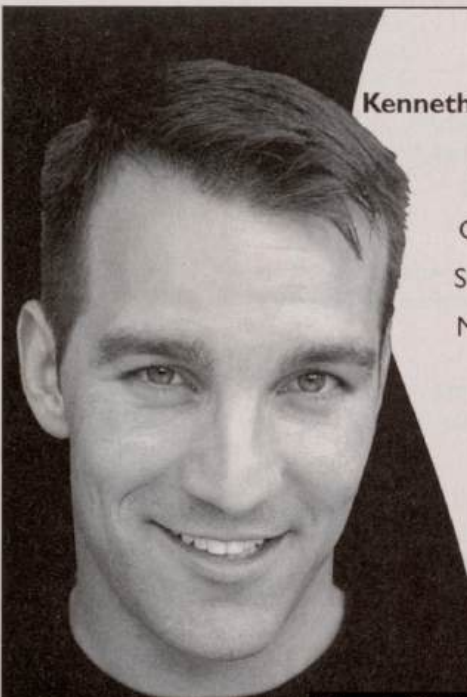
fairly in most places. I hope that those who are now complaining about a process that they never bothered with before will invest in improving it.

At my precinct, we were queued up for hours in the dark in a line that wrapped

around the block. But the weather was good, and the evening took on something of the air of a block party as neighbors got to know each other. We were split about 60/40. I've seen more negative rivalry at a Texas/OU weekend. Once those in line found out that they could actually sign in and leave, the crowd really relaxed. And once the temporary chair decided that using the honor system was the best way to move the process along, rather than looking up each voter without proof, things picked up. Hopefully, the party would catch cheaters at the next level. And after all, we all knew that we'd see each other again at the

grocery store and in our front yards. It was peer pressure at work.

The controversial and confusing Texas two-step Democratic primary system actually had a rational genesis and some really useful elements, although it is unique →



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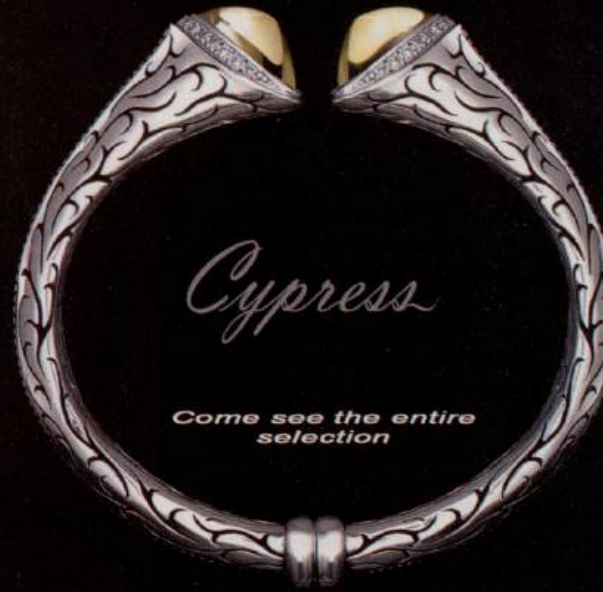
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among primary methods. It allows those who get swept up in the fervor of the popular vote to cast their ballots and award delegates to a surging candidate. It reserves some of the delegates and a mechanism for electing the state party leadership and defining the state platform (governing principles of the state party) for the party faithful willing and able to come back and caucus face-to-face with their fellow Democrats.

So many Texans and Americans finally feel their vote makes a real difference. Countless people are incredibly excited about the presidential election. Hundreds of thousands of new voters turned out. That in itself represents great progress in a country where winners often represent only a small minority of adults in the district/state/country.

Voters marched out to make their vote count and endured long waits to make the great American system work. At last we can answer the question about why election turnout in America is often so dismal: When there are candidates or issues that motivate us, we will come. And when we care enough about those candidates, we will come back and wait in long lines!

Let us hope and insist that the wave of enthusiasm is accompanied by genuine engagement in the future of our country.

Casting one vote is never enough, and no one candidate has all the answers.

Iranian Investments

The Treasury Division of the Controller's Office has reviewed the city's \$2.3 billion investment portfolio and found we have no investments with any ties to Iran. In keeping with my previous request regarding investment in Sudan, I have urged the Houston Municipal Employees Pension System, the Houston Police Officers Pension System, and the Houston Firefighters Retirement and Relief Fund to conduct similar reviews and follow the lead of other cities and states that have already divested.

Houston, It's Worth It

What do you call Houston? Bayou City? Space City? City of Trees?

Which slogan did you like? "Houston, it's haute"? "Houston, a space of infinite possibilities"? "Houston, the new Texas"?

Maybe Houston can't be summed up in a word or phrase. To many of us, it's just home sweet home, and we love it for its friendliness, entrepreneurial spirit, incredible diversity, world-class fine arts, variety of restaurants, and low cost of living. OK, it's hot, flat, and humid, and getting stuck in traffic, especially if it's hot and humid, makes you want to book a flight to Alaska or Hawaii, which is

easy and cheap because we're such an airline hub. And, yes, we have mosquitoes the size of sparrows and cockroaches big enough to wear those fuzzy Chihuahua sweaters, but it is still a very cool place to live. It's one of the few things I've ever felt about as if I knew a secret before anyone else. Like finding out the suddenly trendy restaurant has been your hangout for years.

As you might know, I adore my hometown. So I was quite excited when I opened a new book recently with the intriguing title, *Houston. It's Worth It. (HIWI)* (www.houston-itsworthit.com). It's a beautiful photo book that dares to show Houston's underbelly, too. And it's an unusual marketing campaign that's attracting national attention. The book and campaign will be the subject of my next *Money Matters* TV show, which will be back on the air in April on HTV (Comcast channel 16), formerly the Municipal Channel.

Annie 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 email to cicely.wynne@cityofhouston.net.

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A TALE OF TWO MATTS

Just when we thought the 'Gay=AIDS' debate had been proven wrong...

In February, Matt Foreman, the departing executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, took the gay community to task (forgive the pun) for causing the AIDS epidemic in our country. That's right, Mr. Foreman asserted that high-risk homosexual behaviors are chiefly to blame for the spread of HIV in the United States. He stated, "...we cannot deny that AIDS is a gay disease. We have to own that and face up to that."

OK, first things first. I disagree with the philosophy of labeling AIDS (or any infectious illness) as a gay disease. It is a dangerous tactic that could cause heterosexuals (or persons who engage in homosexual sex but don't identify as gay) to once again believe they are not at risk for HIV. And we all know, any human being can contract HIV, because what makes you susceptible is not *who you are* or *how you identify*. It is *what you do* that puts you at risk.

This brings me to my next point. If we examine the behaviors that can lead to HIV infection, we must acknowledge that unprotected anal sex is by far the riskiest sexual behavior. Either partner (receptive or insertive) can contract HIV via unprotected anal sex, through exposure to rectal mucosa, blood, and/or semen. However, the partner receiving the semen is at greater risk.

The delicate tissues of the anus can be torn during intercourse. Those tears create openings that could serve as portals of entry for HIV when one's partner ejaculates into the anus. Moreover, the walls of the rectum are thin with a rich blood supply, so the semen deposited there can actually be absorbed into the blood stream even without tears being present. It's the same mechanism that allows suppositories to work. And that's why using a condom every time is absolutely essential.

But let's get back to Mr. Foreman's declaration that AIDS is a gay disease. While I refuse to agree with that statement on principle, I must concede that HIV infection still constitutes a major health crisis among gay men. According to the September 2007 issue of the journal, *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, more than one half of the new HIV infections in the United States in 2005 were among gay men! Moreover, that same report estimated that as many as one in five gay men living in U.S. cities may be HIV positive! Even in our fair city, 54 percent of the HIV infections since 1999 have been seen in men who have sex with men.

One hypothesis for the high rates of HIV infection among gay men has to do with unprotected anal sex. Again, it is not about being gay, it is about engaging in risky sexual behaviors. Since gay men have more unprotected anal sex than do heterosexuals, or lesbians for that matter, it may not

be surprising that we see higher rates of HIV infection.

Obviously, I am greatly concerned about the HIV epidemic in the gay community. It's the reason I got into HIV work in the first place. However, I'm almost equally worried about the potentially negative impact the labeling of AIDS as a gay disease could have upon the gay rights movement.

As expected, the Christian Right jumped on the "AIDS is a gay disease" comment, with both (freshly washed and perfumed) feet, thus seizing the opportunity to demonize gay sex and gay men. Matt Barber, policy director for cultural issues for the ultra-conservative Concerned Women for America, stressed the need for gay activists to discourage homosexuals from engaging in high-risk behaviors, namely anal sex. Moreover, he admonished the National Education Agency for their deceptive political agenda which takes a stance against discrimination and endorses safe schools for all students, including those who are gay, lesbian, or transgender.

According to Mr. Barber, there are "undeniable perils" and "potentially deadly consequences" associated with the gay lifestyle. He's right. Homosexuals do face added dangers because of their sexual orientation: gay bashings and other hate crimes, discrimination in housing and employment, and, of course, greater risks for certain health issues, including AIDS.

But I can also cite studies showing higher rates of depression and substance abuse among homosexuals compared to heteros. I can quote statistics about lesbians and their increased risks for breast, ovarian, and endometrial cancers. But Mr. Barber doesn't care about these. He's fixated on HIV and male-on-male anal sex. (Don't you know he's got a rich fantasy life?!)

According to Barber, gays are bad because they cause AIDS. Given the relatively low rates of HIV infection among women who have sex with women, it follows that Barber must think lesbians are the "chosen people." As such, Barber and his minion should put us lesbians up on a pedestal, elevating us to our rightful position in society.

While I'm not *entirely* opposed to this, practicality dictates otherwise. So, I guess we lesbians will have to settle for placement atop a sturdy stepladder and a feeling of superiority over Matt Barber and his hateful ilk.

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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Been There

Continuing violence against GLBT people keeps Judy Shepard in the fight for equality

by Nancy Ford

Photo by Jemal Countess/WireImage

It's all too familiar. Judy Shepard was "deeply saddened" by the news of the shooting in February of California teen Lawrence King. "My prayers go out to all of Lawrence's friends and family," she said. "This terrible incident underscores the fact that we cannot let hate go unchecked in our schools and communities. Our young people need our direction and guidance to prevent this type of crime from happening. I urge all parents and teachers to educate their children and students about acceptance, understanding, and compassion."

Before Shepard arrives in Houston to address both the Human Rights Campaign annual Houston gala on April 12, and GLOBAL, the GLBT student group at Rice University, she talked to *OutSmart* about these violently trying times, the upcoming presidential election, and her work to make sure her son didn't die in vain.

Nancy Ford: It's hard to believe that 10 years have passed already since your son's death.

Judy Shepard: It is.

You have said you developed the Matthew Shepherd Foundation to provide individuals with tools and resources they need to amplify their voice and to turn the tide on hate in America. Ten years later, can you give us your impression on how high or low that tide is?

Well, you know, we can only compare it to what it used to be. When I speak at colleges and high schools, the look in the students' eyes, and not just the gay students, but all the students, is one of fear and apprehension and trepidation in their future, because this hate is once again rearing its ugly head.

But now what I see is a lot of confidence, and a sense of entitlement, which they absolutely should have, a willingness to be who they are all the time, and make a difference. It's this generation that's going to change everything.

I agree with you in that respect. Do you speak to a lot of high schools and colleges?

I do a lot of colleges. High schools are a little more tricky to get into. I don't get a lot of invitations from high schools. It's still a hot-button issue in a lot of areas in the country. Private high schools, I've done quite a few, but not public.

It would be wonderful if that could change, especially given what happened in California recently. You're probably one of the few people who can give any consolation or words of advice to Lawrence King's family. What would you share with the families of victims like Lawrence that might give them some kind of comfort or perspective in their grief?

That's an interesting question, because it doesn't have an answer. Even after having gone through that myself and, even with members of our family, there just are no right words to say. There just never are. It's a horrible thing to happen, and you can empathize and sympathize and listen, →



Excellence in motherhood: Excellence in Media Award recipient Judy Shepard is flanked by her son Logan (l) and Neil Giuliano, GLAAD president, at the 19th Annual GLAAD Media Awards, held March 17 at New York City's Marriott Marquis.

Turn the Tide of Hate

Trying times, these. This month on April 25, as the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network launches its nationwide 12th Day of Silence calling attention to bullying and harassment against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students, evangelical leaders are encouraging Christian parents to keep their children home from school.

"Social activism does not belong in the classroom," Peter LaBarbera of the group Americans for Truth said in a press statement. "Students would be far better served by reading a good book at home—perhaps even the Bible—rather than being subjected to pro-'gay' indoctrination."

Last month, after calling "the homosexual agenda" a bigger threat to the United States than terrorism, Oklahoma state representative Sally Kern, rather than apologizing to her GLBT constituents, released the following statement: "To put this simply, as a Christian I believe homosexuality is not moral. Obviously, you have the right as an American to choose that lifestyle, but I also have the right to express my views and my fellow Oklahomans have the right to debate these issues..."

Mere weeks before Kern's antigay address at a meeting of Oklahoma Republicans, 15-year-old Lawrence King was murdered in California on February 12, shot in the back of the head by a fellow student whom Lawrence had asked to be his Valentine. On February 22, a 17-year-old transgender man named Simmie Williams Jr. was murdered in Fort Lauderdale, only days after the antigay verbal assault and beating of a gay man outside a 24-hour diner in that Florida city.

These not-so-isolated incidents, along with hundreds of others that are unreported or ignored by media, indicate that Judy Shepard has much, much work to do. As a cornerstone of their quest to not let hate go unchecked, Judy and her husband Dennis Shepard founded MatthewsPlace.com, a companion website to matthewshepard.org. It's the Internet home of their Matthew Shepard Foundation, of which Judy is executive director. MatthewsPlace.com is more, though, than a memorial to their son; it is a clearinghouse and a referral resource for all things anti-hate.

It was 10 years ago this year that Matthew Shepard was left hanging on a Wyoming fencepost to die because he was gay.

"In the past 10 years since my son's death, I have spoken to over one million people who are searching for a way to help us in our mission to erase hate," Judy Shepard says. "We developed this campaign with that goal in mind and are eager to provide individuals with the tools and resources needed to amplify their voice and begin to turn the tide on hate in America."

Been There continued from page 34

but coming up with the right words or even advice just isn't—it just isn't possible.

When we were first going through Matt's stuff, and the process of learning how to cope and deal and realizing we were now one short in our family, the last thing I wanted was some complete stranger coming in to tell me, "I know exactly what you're going through. I've been there myself."

No, you haven't. Not at all, you haven't. Even in the situation where you've lost a child to a hate crime or a murder, every family's situation is different. It's just not possible to make things better for them. It just isn't.



No laughing matter: Comedian Kate Clinton (r) presents Judy Shepard, executive director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation, with the Excellence in Media Award at the 19th Annual GLAAD Media Awards in New York City, March 17.

Last year here in Houston, a gay man, Kenneth Cummings Jr., was murdered by a man who believed he was the prophet Elijah and was acting on command of God. Do you have anything to say to our community—to gay men, in particular—that might help us be a little more wary of the danger that lurks out there?

We just need to pay attention to our surroundings. It's a very sad thing that we have people in our society that are unbalanced. But they don't only affect the gay community. They affect everybody. It's a tragedy, for sure. And I'm not sure that we can even say that the religious right who preaches, essentially, hate against the gay community, how much responsibility they hold for what happens to the gay community.

Society in general is responsible for allowing anybody to say those things about the gay community or allow those myths to perpetuate. It's more than just one person

who is unbalanced who attacks a gay man. It's the person who is unbalanced who attacks anybody. We need to address this situation of hate, even in mental illness, as a group, as a nation.

That's a really good point, Judy. Going back to the foundation itself, what are some of the tools that you've found most effective in your work at the foundation to combat the attitudes that lead to this kind of violence?

Well, there are a couple of things: We try to engage our allies more actively and more effectively. And we've also created a website, www.MatthewsPlace.com, that lists a lot of resources for direct service providers, places people can go—in particular, young

people—to feel safe, to be safe, to get the help they need and places to go if they're on the street. Things they need to be aware of.

These are kids who are on the streets who, most, aren't prepared to be on the street. They didn't choose to be there. They don't have the coping skills to be there, a lot of them.

We need a society to watch out for that, and do something about it.

Luckily, there have been studies done recently. The National Gay Lesbian Task Force did a wonderful study two years ago, I think, listing the statistics of gay kids on the streets and how our hands are tied, really, to help them because of, once again, the myths that society believes about the gay community.

You mentioned working with the foundation's allies has been a good tool. We know that folks in PFLAG and GLSEN and the Task Force are going to be behind your efforts 100 percent, but have there been any that have stepped up that have surprised you?

Well, those organizations come to mind, certainly, but also individuals. Certainly, once parents of gay kids and parents whose children have friends who are gay hear



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Been There continued from page 36

the stories of members of the community, or even Matt's story, they are moved to do something. Sometimes it takes a personal event to raise awareness and move people to action, but I am amazed at how frequently it's happening now. And a lot of it is in relation to *The Laramie Project* [the 2001 theater piece by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project]. People who participate or go watch it are transformed.

I've noticed TLP productions aren't being picketed as much as they were at one time. Maybe things are getting a little better in that respect.

Exactly. Well, you know they used to protest because it "promoted the gay lifestyle." You know they haven't read the play if that's what they're saying.

That's usually the case with matters concerning censorship.

Again, speaking in terms of allies, what are your feelings about the presidential race? Which presidential candidate, in your mind, would be most sympathetic to hate-crimes legislation?

Well, it [the Matthew Shepard Act, formerly known as the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act] did pass through both houses this time. The problem was, it was jerked in committee. We did it healthily with a big majority in both houses, which is why I'm hoping they'll do it again before the election. It would be so time-consuming to reeducate new people about what the hate crime bill is.

I'm not allowed to endorse a candidate, but we pretty much know that the Democratic Party is more favorable to the gay community.

We've got it going. We just have to keep it active. Whether or not President Bush will actually sign it is another question. So there's a good and a bad there.

And the candidates, all three of them, McCain included, I think, are not opposed to hate-crime legislation. Technically, I'm not allowed to endorse a candidate, but we pretty much know that, as a party, the Democratic Party is more favorable to the gay community than the Republican Party as a whole, even though we have great friends on both sides of the aisle in

Congress. As a party, taken as a group, the Republican Party is a little more difficult to educate and move along the right direction.

But I think both Clinton and Obama would be excellent on our issues.

Judy Shepard is the keynote speaker for the Human Rights Campaign Houston gala, set for Saturday, April 12, 6 p.m., at the Hilton Americas. Joe Solmonese, national HRC president, also speaks at the event, introduced by Houston mayor Bill White. Ross Mathews, the openly gay television personality best known as Ross the Intern on The Tonight Show with Jay

Leno, serves as emcee. Tickets: \$175-\$500. Details: www.hrchouston.org.

At the annual HRC dinners in other cities this year, some transgender individuals and organizations have staged protests against HRC for its support of an Employment Non-Discrimination Act with language that did not include gender identity and expression as well as sexual orientation. Observers expect some type of protest in Houston by local trans activists and allies, though plans had not been disclosed at press time. ■

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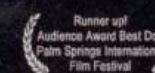
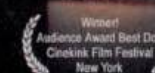
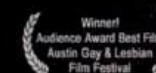
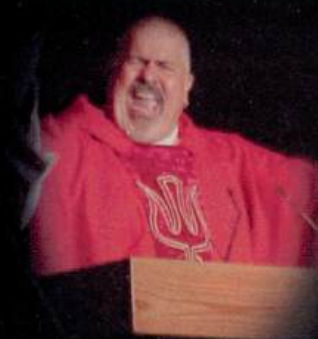
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Fine print: *Boys Don't Cry* producer, writer, and director Kimberly Peirce (left and facing) sets a shot with Academy Award nominee Ryan Phillippe (right) in *Stop-Loss*. Phillippe stars in the drama of a soldier's resistance to a policy created by Congress following the Vietnam War that returns enlistees to active duty beyond their expected term of military service. According to a report in *TheHill.com*, the Army was retaining as many as 8,000 soldiers under the stop-loss policy at the end of 2007.

At a Loss

As the death toll for American service members fighting in Iraq tops 4,000, out lesbian writer/director Kimberly Peirce gets personal with 'Stop-Loss'

by Lawrence Ferber

In her latest film, out director Kimberly Peirce (*Boys Don't Cry*) dramatically asks and tells about an unjust U.S. military policy—but not the one you might assume. *Stop-Loss* derives its title from a policy that allows the military to retain, and send back into action, soldiers whose required term of service has already been completed. While unsuccessful legal challenges against stop-loss have been mounted by soldiers and their families, and thousands of young service members have gone AWOL to evade a re-deployment to Iraq, the troubling issue and its sometimes tragic fallout powerfully comes to light in Peirce's gripping, and quite personal, follow-up to 1999's *Boys Don't Cry*. →





For the other boys: In Kimberly Peirce's *Stop-Loss*, fighting men (l-r) Steve Shriver (Channing Tatum), Brandon King (Ryan Phillippe), Shorty (Alex Frost), Tommy Burgess (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), and Isaac Butler (Rob Brown) enjoy a moment of respite between battles.

At a Loss

continued from previous page

Ryan Phillippe plays Staff Sgt. Brandon King, an all-American Texan who returns home following a brutal Iraq tour. But just as he's about to get out, the military pulls him back in via stop-loss. Enraged, Brandon goes AWOL, bringing his close friend Michele (Abbie Cornish) on a road trip to Washington, D.C., where a senator acquaintance may be able to pull strings. Along the way, he encounters fellow patriots on the lam, a Coyote who offers passage to Canada, and at least one member of his former unit assigned to apprehend Brandon. Joseph Gordon-Levitt, who played a gay hustler in *Mysterious Skin*, rising star Channing Tatum (*Step Up*), and Victor Rasuk (*Lords of Dogtown*) play Brandon's brothers-in-arms, while Timothy Olyphant (*Broken Hearts Club*) makes an appearance as a lieutenant colonel.

For Peirce, there was a strong personal connection to *Stop-Loss*: Her own younger brother served in the military and was almost stop-lossed. Luckily, a combat-related medical discharge ultimately spared

him. "Most of his unit was stop-lossed," she shares, "and he would've been had he not gotten out [on that discharge]."

Peirce made a huge impact with her feature debut, 1999's *Boys Don't Cry*. Based on the real-life story and murder of Nebraskan transgender Brandon Teena, it snagged Hilary Swank a best-actress Oscar, a supporting-actress nomination for co-star Chloe Sevigny, and brought mainstream attention to the plight of transgendered youth. It also resulted in two "first-look" deals for Peirce at studios DreamWorks and New Line, and a film in development, entitled *Silent Star*, about the murder of silent-film director William Desmond Taylor. "The murder was covered up by Hollywood and the government to protect Hollywood and America's innocence," she explains of the story. "I wrote a script and had cast Annette Bening, Hugh Jackman, Evan Rachel Wood, and Ben Kingsley."

In 2003, *Silent Star's* development was halted due to a clash over budget with the studio. But the seeds had been planted for another project—her 18-year-old brother signed up to fight in the budding war against terror. "We had a grandfather

fight in WWII, so there were war stories in the family, and to have the youngest child sign up was really dramatic," she shares. "But there was no changing his mind. I knew I needed to make a movie about the soldiers."

Peirce's first step was to travel around the country interviewing soldiers about their experiences fighting this new war against Bin Laden and terrorism. She discovered that many had shot and edited their own videos while deployed—"with the camera set on sandbags, inside a Humvee, or on the ground during firefights"—and were willing to share these burgeoning YouTube-era glimpses behind the lines. Peirce made a short trailer incorporating these videos, completed a script, and took her pitch package around Hollywood on a Friday in 2005. By Monday, four studios and financiers had offers prepared. It was an instant greenlight.

Peirce says that most soldiers she met enlisted for patriotic reasons like protecting their home, country, and family. Once in action, they experienced a profound sense of connection and responsibility to their fellow soldiers. Yet something

Peirce also found plenty of was discontent regarding the war. Many soldiers were going AWOL, as illuminated in a 2005 *Harper's Magazine* article by Kathie Dobie, "AWOL in America." (The article estimated that 9,500 soldiers had gone AWOL by then, and Peirce says that number has likely swelled to around 12,000 today.)

Of course, there was also the contentious stop-loss policy, which she learned of when her brother's friend (and most of his former unit) was stop-lossed. Ironically, stop-loss is occurring at a time when patriotic, talented, and qualified GLBT soldiers who are more than happy to serve continue to be discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

"I talked to gay soldiers, and most of them don't want to use the gay card to get out, they want to serve their country," she says. "It's also at a time when [the military] is lowering the standards [for enlistees] because they don't have enough people signing up. It's a huge frustration for a lot of gay soldiers."

While there are no overtly gay characters in the film, *Stop-Loss* does feature plenty to look at amongst its cast. "The boys are beautiful," Peirce gushes. "I said when I hired them, 'You have to be studs, because all these soldiers I'm interviewing are studs!' They'd get to set, and Channing would take off his shirt and come up to me and say, 'Are you happy?' I think the gay boys will be thrilled. It was a dream cast."

Within the largely male cast, Peirce was regarded as one of the boys, and the screen ripples with a masculine POV and testosterone—a fact Peirce is quite proud of. "That's awesome and it's funny," she shares, excitedly. "A couple of articles talk about all-male schools, particularly military schools, and how they don't want to let women in because they feel it interrupts the sharing of masculinity and

bonding and ruggedness. Maybe in a way I'm able to check at the door a certain thing that threatens the guys. I have a tomboy quality. I like to race cars and shoot guns. I understood the rough-and-tumble things they were doing, and I felt there was no hesitation about letting me into the club. So maybe in some way being queer gave me that access. I also think about the insider-outsider perspective."

Happily, Peirce doesn't have to be stop-lossed into making another film soon. She's working on several projects including an as-yet-untitled queer romantic comedy, an intense, personal drama titled *Sex, Secrets and Taboo in America*, and, of course, *Silent Star*. Meanwhile, she hopes all audiences, civilian and otherwise, find that *Stop-Loss* asks questions and tells answers about not just the military's policies (in January, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates called for Stop-Loss use to be minimized), but the soldiers and today's generation as a whole.

A lot of people do have strong reactions to the military," she acknowledges. "I think my friends have one I do, of curiosity. If people are signing up and living to the code of the military, I want to understand it. That's the attitude of my movie. And nearly all signed up for patriotic reasons, but that's not what matters at all when you're over there. What matters is survival, protecting the guy or girl to your left, your right, and being willing to die for them, and that made them feel good. That says something to me about what people in our culture are craving—a deeper sense of community, camaraderie, and maybe there's a way to provide that without them having to kill innocent people and put their lives in danger."

Lawrence Ferber, a New York-based entertainment journalist, frequently contributes to OutSmart magazine. His interview with k.d. lang appeared in our March issue.

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Seeing & Believing

through Jennifer Boylan's Eyes

**Noted
trans author
to keynote
Unity Banquet**

by Joyce Gabiola
Photo by James Bowdoin



Portrait of Jenny: Jennifer Finney Boylan, who speaks at the Houston Transgender Unity Banquet on April 26, made news in 2003 with the release of her memoir, *She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders*, perhaps the first bestselling book by a transgender author. Her latest work, *I'm Looking Through You: Growing Up Haunted—A Memoir*, was released earlier this year. Copies of Boylan's book will be available for purchase at the banquet. Details: www.htuc.org.

I'm looking through you, where did you go?
I thought I knew you, what did I know?
You don't look different, but you have changed,
I'm looking through you, you're not the same.

—John Lennon/Paul McCartney

The meaning and inspiration behind the Beatles song, "I'm Looking Through You," differs from that of Jennifer Finney Boylan's latest memoir of the same title, but one notion is shared: the idea of looking back at the past and questioning, so that you can move forward, understanding and making peace.

Certainly we've all felt haunted at some point in our lives, whether it be by a mass of gray mist floating down the hallway, mistakes we might have made in our past, or by a heavy, unsettling feeling that lingers for a significant period of time within our bodies and our minds, alerting us that something just isn't right. Jennifer Finney Boylan, professor of English at Colby College, parent of two bright boys, Paddy and Luke, lover of her spouse, Grace, and author of the critically acclaimed memoir, *She's Not There* (2003), invites you to indulge in her new memoir, *I'm Looking Through You*, which was released earlier this year.

The book largely centers around Boylan, as a young James, living in her family's dilapidated Victorian mansion in Philadelphia, haunted by a secret with which she was uncertain how to deal. Like the peculiar house of her childhood, Boylan was haunted by spirits. In particular, a female spirit—her own in a boy's body. At the heart of the book, she says, is the notion that all of us change over time. She poses: How do we make peace with the people we have been? How do we see our lives as one story, rather than a series of sub-stories, or as a Before, and an After?

Boylan is a thoughtful storyteller. Her stories read as though she's your favorite aunt, worldly and brimming with character. Instead of homemade cherry pie, Boylan serves a warm, generous slice of Transgender American culture in an honest, emotional, and lighthearted setting. She consistently writes with grace and humor.

Boylan wrote some of the stories in →

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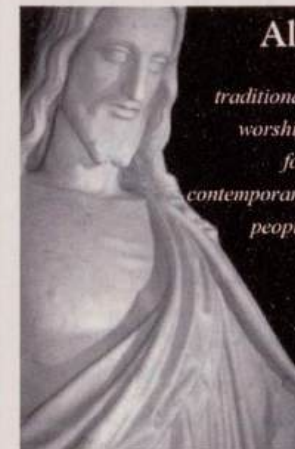
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Seeing & Believing continued from previous page

I'm Looking Through You years ago, but she couldn't publish them because they would have outed her, and that just wasn't part of the plan at the time. "The rest of it I wrote in a summer house during a cold winter," she shares. Charming, is it not?

She points out that there aren't many professional writers who are writing about transgender issues or stories. "I was less interested, originally, in writing about gender theory than in tale-telling," she confesses, "although over time, the story has become the theory." She considers it a strategy, believing people tend to understand more rapidly hearing stories than they do from "long harangues about the binary."

The truth is, it's not only heterosexuals who tend not to understand the binary of which Boylan refers, but also very much the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community. Being transgender is not an issue of sexuality. Rather, it is one of identity. So if it's an issue of identity, why is it often grouped with homosexuality and bisexuality? Boylan jokes, "I wasn't around when the groups were being formed."

On a serious note, she continues, "There is some question as to whether it makes sense for us all to sail beneath the same flag. Until the debacle with HRC and the Employment Non-Discrimination bill last fall, there was the sense that we were all allies because we all had a common goal, and that we'd watch each other's backs. Now it's less clear, although I for one am hopeful we'll all somehow find a way of fighting together, and moving forward."

Boylan shares a little about her transition, noting that it was always about femaleness, rather than femininity. It was about the female body parts: breasts, a vagina, and a clitoris. "It was less about clothes, or behavior, or any of the other socially constructed forms of femininity."

Early in her transition, she went through a second adolescence, as she calls it, trying to figure out what behaviors reflected her gender identity. Most trans people in transition go through a phase like this, she says, and it's not pretty. She claims to have the same luxury that non-trans people do. She asserts, "If you're not trans in this culture, you're largely free from having to think about what gender you are in, the same way that if you're white, you're free from having to think about what race you are."

Besides the obvious, is there a difference between a woman and a transgender woman? Rather, should there be a differ-

ence? For Boylan, the short answer is her history and 40 years of male socialization.

"The fact that I didn't want that privilege, or that socialization, is perhaps not the important thing," Boylan says. "I had it. And that has affected who I have become. And so, I would suggest that trans women need to own up to this—it does make us different."

Boylan continues by asserting that that difference is not a bad thing—that it is something to accept and be proud of. "On a good day, I feel that this history is a gift; it has surely enabled me to see things most other men—and women—don't get to see."

The best thing about Boylan's writing is her earnestness. Expect her to paint truths to the best of her recollection, but there exists an added quality of intimacy that creates an air of trust between the reader and Boylan, not regarding only her writing, but of emotion—hers and yours. She reveals, "It is hard to be different in this culture, and there are times when I do kind of wish I were like everyone else. That makes me blue. And then it passes."

When Boylan was a child, she wanted to be like her idol, James Thurber, praised American humorist and cartoonist who experienced an unfortunate accident in childhood that eventually led to his complete blindness. At age 49, Boylan's wish had been granted. "Like Thurber, I can hardly see."

Note to Ms. Boylan: On the contrary, you can see what we cannot, and write to what we can only aspire.

Boylan in Houston

Jennifer Finney Boylan, a professor of English at Colby College in Waterville, Maine, is the keynote speaker for the 2008 Houston Transgender Unity Banquet. Presented by the Houston Transgender Unity Committee, a consortium of area trans organizations, the April 26 dinner will be held at Sheraton Houston Brookhollow, 3000 North Loop West.

Tickets are \$50 in advance (\$60 at the door) and may be purchased through Ticketweb via the Unity Committee website. Tickets are also available at Vanity: A Trans-formation Studio (1442 Yale, 832/767-3252). Proceeds from ticket sales support the Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship Fund, which for the third year will award scholarships to trans-identified students pursuing higher education. Details: www.htuc.org.

Joyce Gabiola contributed to OutSmart's 2008 People To Watch spotlight in January, interviewing musician Evrim Baykal.

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Call Him Colt

Rudd Scholarship winner rolls with the punches of transitioning

by Joyce Gabiola
Photo by Yvonne Feece



Big man on campus: Stacey "Colt" Meier, who received the Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship last year, is now working toward a graduate degree in clinical psychology. He plans to establish a gender clinic in the future. "If I can do it and make the world a better place, I want to do it," Meier says. The Houston Transgender Unity Committee will award the 2008 scholarship at the annual Unity Banquet on April 26.

Last year's recipient of the Houston Transgender Unity Committee's Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship Fund is blue-eyed Stacey "Colt" Meier of Beaumont, Texas. Meier graduated from Rice University, summa cum laude, with a B.A. in psychology and is currently pursuing a master's degree in clinical psychology at the University of Houston, where his research efforts (as well as his social activism) are centered on gender identity disorder. He hopes to eventually establish a gender clinic where he will serve as psychologist and family medicine physician. "Come in and we will treat you as a human being," he says. "If I can do it and make the world a better place, I want to do it."

Meier's positive attitude seems rooted in his privileged childhood. Though his parents are conservative Catholics, living in a small, conservative Texas city, their genuine devotion to God and their scientific, humanitarian backgrounds (his father a psychologist and his mother an Ob-Gyn) produced an only-child upbringing that Meier remembers as loving and nurturing.

He recalls watching *Alvin and the Chipmunks* with his mother one day while his father was videotaping them. His father said, "When you grow up and have kids one day and you're a mom, you'll show this to your kids."

Meier whined, "I don't wanna be a mom. I'm not gonna be a mother, I'm gonna be a father."

"Tell me more about that," encouraged his psychologist father. At the time, no one in his family knew the full extent of the gender identity issues.

When his father said, "You know what, Stacey. If you work hard, you can do anything you want. You can be anyone you want to be," Stacey responded, "I am going to be a father one day."

"My parents are freakin' amazing," Meier says today. He recalls a situation involving a school uniform, complete with a black-and-red plaid skirt: "Gross." Constructively, he informed his mother that he did not want to wear the required uniform, to which his mother responded by discussing the situation with the school principal. "As long as the same material is used," the principal conceded.

And voila! Meier attended his Catholic school wearing black-and-red plaid overalls, which his mother spent days making. "I didn't feel different; I felt special and unique," he says. "I didn't feel like an outcast. No one ever came up to me with, 'You have a disorder' or 'There's something wrong with you.'"

Such comments and related disappointments didn't surface until many years later.

Tae Kwon Don't

A fifth-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do, Meier began his martial arts training at age 8, and at age 12 began teaching at his martial arts school. When Meier revealed his decision for gender transition to his instructor, the response was: "If you're going to come, you're going to come as a female, Miss Meier. There are kids here. This is a business."

Having taught at the school for 12 years and having earned respect as a highly ranked martial artist in Texas, you would think it would be heart-breaking to be delivered a "put on hold until further notice" sort of deal in regards to continuing training as a female-to-male transsexual. As the spirited, forward-thinker Meier explains the situation, he remains positive and hopeful about it. "He doesn't want others to hurt me. He's worried about the adult men; he can't control them. And he's worried about

the children, as if being a transsexual is bad for them or something."

Presently, Meier and his instructor, whom he holds in high regard and thinks of as a sort of second father, are still in conversation about his future with the school. Meier mentions he is medically required to live as a man. "All I want to do is train. I love Tae Kwon Do. It is part of my spirit. I can't be mad at them because we have such good relationships. I think they're doing the best they can with a difficult situation."

Like a Transgender Virgin

Meier experienced his first feelings of sexual attraction at age 21 when he kissed his best friend at the time, a girl he had met at a Catholic youth group. Despite the mutual spark, the two did not consummate their yearnings.

Meier, a devout Catholic, claims it was easy to remain a virgin throughout adolescence because he wasn't sexually attracted to his boyfriends. No one expected ulterior reasons for not being sexually-charged because, as a proper Catholic schoolgirl, he held up the "no sex before marriage" card. But it wasn't a ruse. Saving himself has always been important to him because of how he grew up.

"What a great gift would that be for my spouse on our wedding night! 'Here you go, you can have something no one else has ever had from me.' It's not the easiest thing in the world, especially when you're on testosterone and you know you're going to get married to your current partner."

His fiancée, Ame, a 20-year-old art student at Rice University and daughter of two astrophysicists/professors at the same institution, has identified as a lesbian since she was 12 years old. According to Meier, "She's very

continued on page 121

*Since 2005, the Houston Transgender Unity Committee has been awarding the Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship Fund to outstanding transgender individuals who are continuing their education. Dr. Peggy Rudd, after whom the fund was named, is author of two notable books, *My Husband Wears My Clothes* and *Crossdressing with Dignity*. In OutSmart's June 2004 issue, Rudd explained that when scholarship applicants identify themselves as transgender, they frequently discover they lose their opportunity. The scholarship aims to heighten transgender individuals' academic pursuits so that they can achieve their career goals.*

Beyond Buffy

Amber Benson talks about love and marriage
and our 'screwed-up, backwoods society'

by Joyce Gabiola



The L words: Amber Benson wrote, produced, and directed *Lovers, Liars and Lunatics* (2006), a film she describes as a "dark, screwball comedy about a neurotic suburban family that gets held hostage in their home by two inept burglars."

Actress and bookworm Amber Benson is probably best known for her role as Tara Maclay in the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Since *Buffy* she has delved further into her acting career and emerged as a filmmaker and writer. Benson has signed a book deal with a publishing powerhouse to write a series of three books, which she describes as *The Devil Wears Prada* mixed with a Neal Gaiman-esque sort of reality. She will be in Houston in early May for a screening of her second film (as writer/producer/director), *Lovers, Liars and Lunatics* (2006). Alongside her many talents, Amber Benson leaves an impression of being quite a grand advocate for GLBT rights. →

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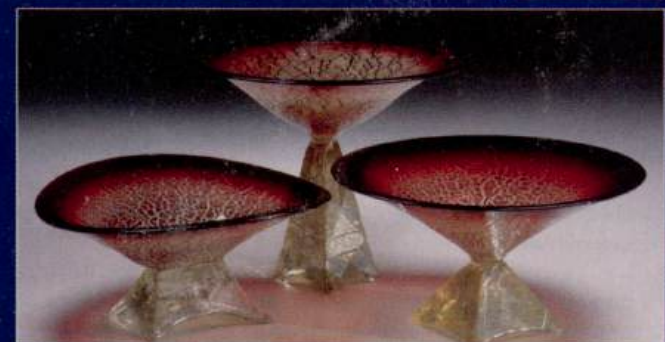
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Beyond Buffy continued from page 50

It's ridiculous. It's like the '60s. It's like African Americans trying to be treated as equals. We're doing the same thing to the gay community this country did to the blacks. I mean, my f-king excuse-my-French god. When the Republicans are running their political machine to get people to get out and vote because they're putting up antigay marriage on the platform—come and vote because you want not to have gay people get married—I mean, come on, what the f-k is that about? I'm a straight woman and I get upset. Their civil liberties, their rights to be human beings are being taken away from them. When a couple—someone's sick and they go to the hospital and the other person isn't allowed to go into their room because they're not their partner by marriage...come on. ... I'll get off my soapbox.

No, Amber. Please proceed.

Joyce Gabiolo: Do you believe producers of any type of television show have been considering sexuality as a factor for drama?

Amber Benson: I think things are changing in Hollywood. I think things that were taboo 10 years ago aren't, whether it's two women kissing each other on network television or kids dealing with transgender issues or having a female or an African-American president on 24. It's all changing. It's becoming a multi-cultural place. But it's a slow process, because you're fighting people who are closed-minded.

In the creative community as a whole, they're not worried about the bottom line when they're not worried about what middle America's going to think—they're very open, they'll let you try lots of different things. It's just when you start cutting into their profit margin that they're like: *Wait a minute. Should we really have the lesbians kissing? We might offend somebody....* It is changing, and it's getting better, and people are more open than they used to be. There are a lot of people who don't tell people that they're gay. They're playing straight roles as actors, and they don't talk about their sexuality, because they don't want to lose parts, and I can't fault them for it. It's not their fault we live in a screwed-up backwoods society.

Why do you think people "come out" as opposed to just letting others find out through casual conversation?

I think people want to own their sexuality. Whether you're a straight woman or a gay woman, who you are as a sexual entity is

a big chunk of who you are as a whole, so when you say *I am this*, you are owning that, you are controlling it. When straight women had the sexual revolution and they said, "Hey, I'm in charge of my own sexuality. I can have sex and enjoy sex," they all did. Men couldn't take it away from them. And the gay community, when you say, *I am gay*, you own it. No one can take it away from you.

I support people coming out, because I think you set a good example for the rest of the community, to other people, to young



Muhney is from Mars: Amber Benson's *Lovers, Liars, and Lunatics* costar, Michael Muhney, portrayed Sheriff Don Lamb for a three-season run on the television crime drama, *Veronica Mars*.

people especially, to say it's OK to be gay. I can't fault people for being scared. Fear is a big motivator. If someone's frightened about how they're going to be perceived or if they're going to get attacked and killed, who am I to say? *Stand up for what you believe in, regardless?* We're all human. But I think being open...if you own it, you control it.

In your opinion, why do you think *Buffy* had such a strong gay following?

It's very well-written. It's very political without being up on a soapbox. Then you have the campiness factor, and I think that's an appeal. And then you have the first lesbian long-term couple on network television, and I think that was a big pull. People really responded to that, men and women, lesbians especially. But Alyson [Hannigan] and I would get letters from young gay men and they're like: *I didn't kill myself because of this relationship. I saw that it was OK. I'm from some little tiny town where no one knows what the word "gay" means, and I watch this television show and know that I'm not abnormal. I know that I am a normal person.* And, you know, that's the appeal. It didn't sensationalize this relationship. It was just about two people who both happened to be women who were in love with each other. But I definitely think it was the campiness factor. This young woman is running around kicking ass.

What amuses you?

You know what I like to watch—and this is terrible—the serial killer programs on TV. I love that stuff. I don't know why—there's something wrong with me. That, and food programs on TV. Those things go together. I think it might be research, because I'm interested in why people do the horrible things they do. So I assume it's research-oriented. I haven't had the inclination to go hurt anybody, so it's not influencing me in a negative way. I just find it fascinating

what people will do. Maybe "amuse" isn't quite the word for that. A good book amuses me.

What do you tend to read?

I'll read anything. I'll read the back of a cereal box. I love literature. I love mysteries and science fiction.

Do you have a particular title that you would recommend?

There's a wonderful Russian writer named Boris Akunin. He writes really great spy-detective books. They're super famous in the former Soviet Union. They started to come over here—they're really good.

What are the appealing characteristics of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama?

You got me right on the day after all the craziness, huh? We did call-banking for Obama to remind people to go out and vote. We called Texas, actually. My boyfriend got [a person who] had to be Republican because he called him a f-ker. He said he hoped there would never be a black president.

I like Barack Obama about wanting things to change, wanting to have a clean slate, wanting to work on a bipartisan platform so that we're not just a mono-government culture. He wants to bring everybody together, and I think he really has a chance of doing that; whereas she's a little bit more divisive. But I also think she's very strong, very bright, and very capable, and I would be very happy with either of them. I just feel a little more connection to Barack Obama, personally. But I like her, I don't dislike her. I think she's a fine candidate. And it's cool that she's a woman. It's awesome that the next president quite possibly is gonna be African American or a woman. It's f-king cool.

What comes to mind when you think of vampires?

I guess I have to go with Lestat because he's the perennial sexpot. When you say

the word "vampire," I think of him. Even though he's not Tom Cruise, goddammit. Not the vision I had in my head. No offense to Tom Cruise.

So you are dating Adam Busch, right? Yes.

And he's in a band called Common Rotation, is that correct?

Yes, yes he is. And I made a video for them!

In Alaska!

In Alaska of all places. It was awesome. What a great place.

Do you want to get married?

I don't know. Sometimes it looks so pretty—all those dresses. Other times it looks absolutely terrifying, especially when everyone is getting married and then five years later getting divorced. I think most people are going to stop giving gifts at weddings. I don't know. I'm lucky to have the opportunity to get married if I want to get married. Not everybody does.

I have one last question for you. If you had to go gay, for whom would it be and why?

Oh, I've always had a little crush on Angelina Jolie; she's just so darn pretty. She's just pretty, what can I say? You know who I have a big girl crush on? I did this movie called *One-Eyed Monster*. It's a farce that's set in the porn industry. This woman, Veronica Hart, is in it—she was a porn star and now she's a producer and a director. She is awesome. She is probably one of the sexiest people I've ever met. I have a girl crush on her. She's the nicest person and she's hot!

Read more of this conversation with Amber Benson at www.OutSmartMagazine.com.

Writer/director Amber Benson's most recent film, *Lovers, Liars and Lunatics*, screens at Rice Cinema, under the sponsorship of Southwest Media Project (SWAMP) on Saturday, May 3, followed by a Q & A with Benson. Women in Film and Television hosts a reception following the Q & A. Tickets are \$10 (\$8 for SWAMP members and students). Purchase tickets online at swamp.org/exhibition. Find information on location and parking at ricecinema.rice.edu/directions.cfm.

Joyce Gabiolo also wrote two articles for this issue, "Seeing & Believing through Jennifer Boylan's Eyes" on page 44 and "Call Him Colt" on page 48.

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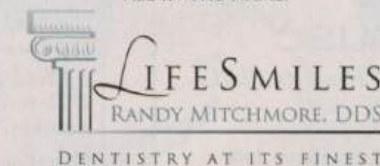
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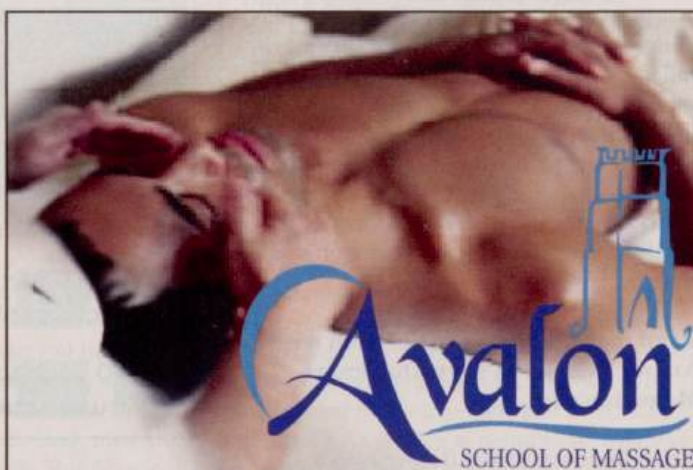
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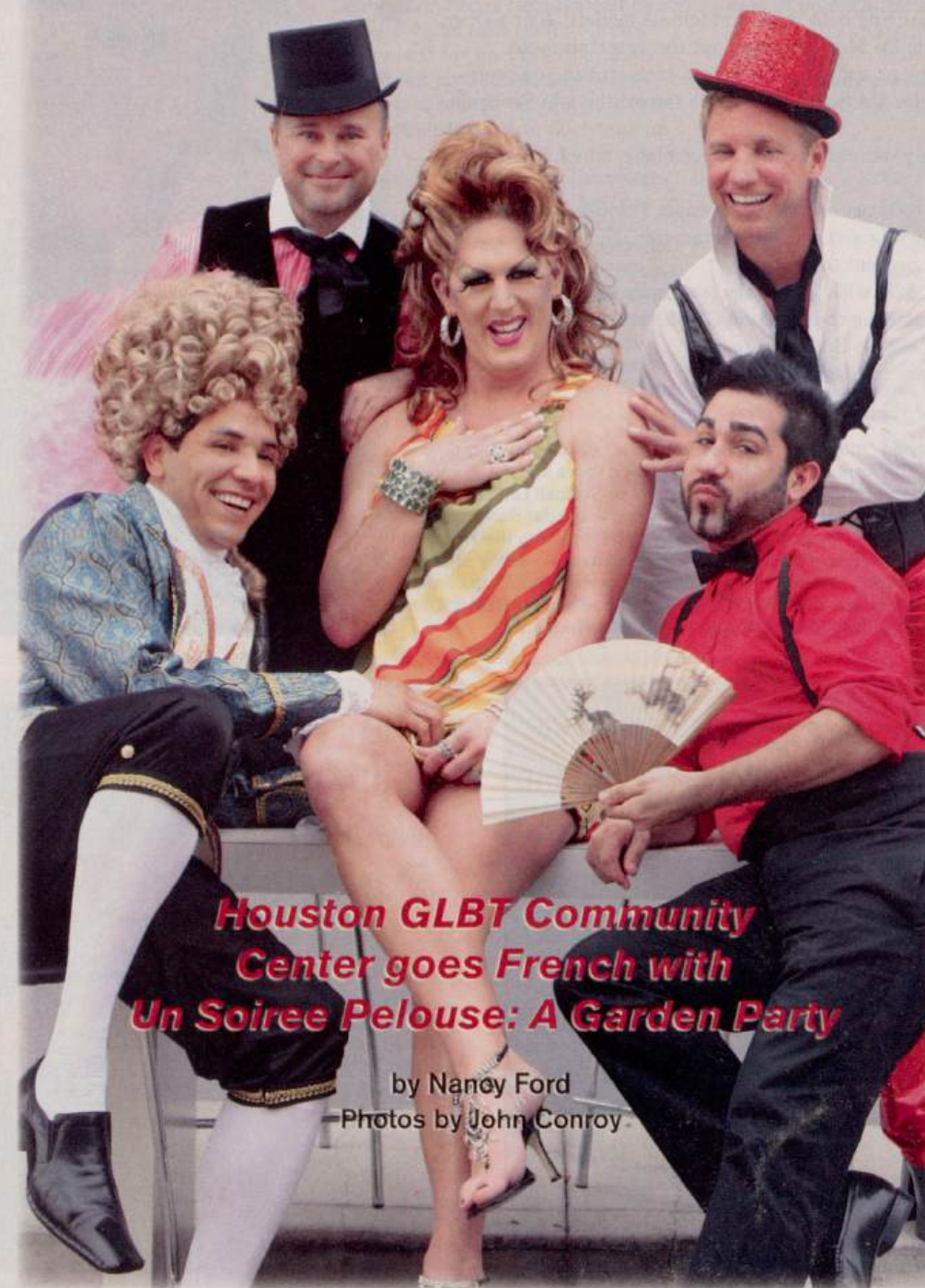
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Oooh La La!



Houston GLBT Community Center goes French with Un Soiree Pelouse: A Garden Party

by Nancy Ford
Photos by John Conroy

Voulez-vous?: Marc Garcia (clockwise from bottom left), Kelly Murray, Tom Baker, Dominick Soliz, and Anita Bump (center) roll out the French finery for Un Soiree Pelouse: A Garden Party.

If you are one of those people who eats Freedom Fries or drinks only domestic Bordeaux, go ahead and turn to the next story, please. There's nothing for you on this page.

But if you are a fan of all things French, you'll love Un Soiree Pelouse: A Garden Party, a campy gala fundraising event set for April 20 at Rich's.

Granted, the name Un Soiree Pelouse: A Garden Party sounds similar to the annual très gay Garden

Party fundraiser of days gone by. But the two events are in no way connected, Houston GLBT Community Center board member, Marc Garcia, says.

"The idea for Un Soiree Pelouse sprung from our desire to do a signature fundraising event for the programs of the community center, one that was really diverse and would get everybody involved," Garcia says.

Garcia, who co-chairs the event with Tom Baker, hopes the →

Oooh La La! continued from previous page

soiree will eventually enable the center to fund a scholarship program for GLBT students.

In addition to complimentary well drinks and non-stop dance music, Soireers can expect to be treated to the hilarious antics of emcee Anita Bump and special guest entertainer, Bernadette. Additionally, M2M Fashion Lounge provides an "out of this world" runway fashion show with a sexy French twist, featuring both male and female models. Jenna Drey, Eric Alan, and XM Radio DJ Mark D round out the entertainment.

Even if it's something as simple as sticking a croissant in your bonnet, the *required* attire for Un Soiree Pelouse is something à la Français, Garcia insists.

"Or they could simply wear something red or black, which are our theme colors," he adds.

As if all this *voulez-vous* action weren't enough, Pelouse partiers are eligible to win a free Norwegian Cruise Line vacation, compliments of AquaFest; you must be present to win.

Admission starts at \$25, with VIP packages ranging from \$100 to \$250, with proceeds benefiting the Houston GLBT Community Center. April 20, 2-6 p.m. Rich's, 2401 San Jacinto St.

Details: www.myspace.com/agardenparty.

Spring queen: The self-styled "mouthy, smart-ass, hilarious" diva Anita Bump, who emcees Un Soiree Pelouse on April 20, made her debut seven years ago at the annual Pranksters In Pumps fundraiser show presented by Montrose Softball League (which this year takes place on April 5, 6-9 p.m., at Rich's, featuring a special Bump performance). In addition to Un Soiree Pelouse, presented by and benefiting the Houston GLBT Community Center, Anita Bump's activities include hosting a weekly show at Rich's on Saturdays at midnight. Her content-rich website, www.anitabump.com, is no doubt one of the few drag-queen sites that features new food and cocktail recipes every month—for April, Apple-Pear Crisp and Sparkling Mint Lemonade.



How Does Your Garden Drag?

OUTSMART's guide to choosing a drag name

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Like most people who find themselves deeply ensconced in the GLBT culture, *OutSmart* staffers frequently find our daily conversations to be peppered with poten-

tial stage names.

And why not? Queer folk have been doing drag for centuries, perhaps even as long ago as when Adam first noticed Eve's fig leaf and decided that color of green would look great for his big exit-from-the-Garden-of-Eden production number.

As you prepare your costume for Soiree Pelouse, whether you opt to duct tape up

that manly chest of yours to fashion some faux décolletage or you duct-tape down your more feminine front to convey the illusion of pees, *OutSmart* wants to help.

We offer these potential monikers to you, hoping each name will be adopted by a fledgling performer and come to life in a Celine Dion medley on a gay stage near you.

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What Buyers Want

Today, home's features can make or break the sale

By Vicky Katz Whitaker
COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

If your house, condo, or townhome doesn't have central air, an oversized garage, or a walk-in closet in the master bedroom, you may have a long wait finding a buyer.

That's the reality of today's buyer-driven marketplace, according to a new report on buyer preferences compiled by the National Association of Realtors. The findings are based on responses to a random survey of 40,000 buyers around the country who purchased a home from late 2005 through early 2007. About 2,800 home buyers participated in the survey, a 6.7 percent return that is about double the amount normally obtained in professional polling, an association spokesman says.

The survey was weighted according to each state's share of home sales in 2006. While there are regional, age of buyer, and type of housing

differences in what home purchasers are looking for, the survey shows that some amenities such as central air-conditioning translate into a quicker sale while others, like a tennis court, can make a home languish on the market.

It's especially true for those who are looking to sell homes in and below the \$205,000 national average. They've been hardest hit by the

According to a report on buyer preferences compiled by the National Association of Realtors, the top three features today's buyers are looking for are central air-conditioning, a walk-in closet in the master bedroom and an oversized garage to meet their storage needs.

nation's current economic woes, the subprime lending crunch, tighter credit, and a marketplace glutted by foreclosed homes. Sellers of high-end homes in coveted locations have not been as affected by the economic crunch as have others in the market, says economist Paul Bishop, managing director of the National Association of

Realtors Survey Research and National Center for Real Estate Research in Washington, D.C.

"The vast majority of homes on the upper end have been more resistant to the changes in the last 18 months," Bishop points out.

Well-heeled buyers still plunk down thousands more for waterfront properties and upscale amenities like hardwood floors and high-end kitchen appliances, features that are not as likely to be found in less-expensive homes.

"For a cul-de-sac lot and proximity to shopping or public transportation, those buyers with above median-priced homes were willing to pay almost twice as much as those with homes below the median price," the NAR study found.

What helps sell an average or low-cost home besides central air-conditioning? Those buying a home, even if it's for the first time, want big garages with space for two or more vehicles, cable

continued on page 62

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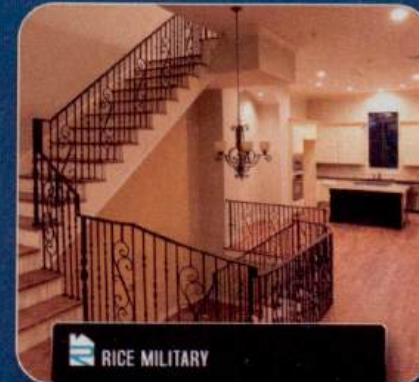
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What Buyer's Want

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television/satellite hookups, high-speed Internet connections, and a backyard or play area above all else. If you want to sell a house that's new or just a few years old, you're in luck. All groups preferred a house less than 10 years old.

With the cost of fuel skyrocketing, nearly half of recent buyers (46 percent) said energy efficiency was "very important" when they searched for a home, says the NAR report. A home's energy efficiency was of greater concern to older house-hunters experienced in homeownership than younger people buying a home for the first time. It was also significantly more important to those purchasing new homes than those who bought previously owned homes.

Eighty-two percent of the home buyers surveyed for the report looked for a detached single-family home, the NAR says, the pattern fairly consistent no matter what their age. Even though they represent a smaller segment of the home-buying market, 18- to 24-years-olds and those 75 or older constitute the largest segment of those who purchase townhomes or condos in multiunit complexes.

Nearly three-fourths of those surveyed choose a single-family house in a suburban set-

ting, a suburban subdivision, or a small town.

As might be expected, although they share some preferences in shopping for a house, townhome, or condo, younger home buyers look for some amenities less important to their older counterparts, including extra-wide doorways, hardwood floors, a backyard or play area, fencing, or being close to work, schools, recreation, cultural activities, public transportation, and shopping. Seniors 75 and older are more likely to look for a home on a lot with few trees, skylights, a kitchen island, granite countertops, and a whirlpool bath.

Not that they get what they want.

"Home buyers rate many features as important when searching for a home, but they sometimes need to compromise when purchasing their home," the NAR study points out. "Repeat buyers are more likely to purchase a home with most of their preferred features including many luxury items. Compared to first-time buyers, they compromised most on neighborhood features such as proximity to work, a park or playground, and public transportation. Buyers of new homes more often made compromises on neighborhood features such as proximity to cultural activities." ■

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Mortgage Matters

Subprime meltdown changes home refinance climate

By Vicky Katz Whitaker
Copley News Service

When interest rates start to drop, financially savvy homeowners usually head straight for their banker or mortgage lender.

They know the time may be ripe to refinance that higher interest rate fixed mortgage or renegotiate terms of an adjustable-rate mortgage.

But in the wake of the subprime meltdown and today's turbulent economy, it's gotten tougher to get what you want. Before approving refinancing, lenders are scrutinizing credit scores, the amount of equity that the homeowner has accrued, even employment and payment patterns.

What does this mean to you?

Plenty, if you're stuck with a high mortgage payment and a house that has taken a double-digit plunge in value over the past year. If you put nothing down when you bought your house,

made a small down payment, or have little equity, you may find it impossible to take advantage of lower interest rates. If you have less than 5 percent equity in your home or a credit score below 680, you may not be able to qualify for refinancing or refinancing cash-out packages that

To really benefit, you need to keep your home long enough to pay the costs of the refinancing process, which can run several thousand dollars, depending on how much you borrow.

in the past could have provided you with a lower mortgage rate and money over the value of your home to pay off credit cards, finance a major purchase, even pay for your child's education.

Even if you can find a lender willing to refinance your existing mortgage, a poor credit history and lack of equity could leave you facing additional fees and rates higher than what is offered to better credit risks. That could undermine

any benefit derived from refinancing your mortgage now.

If you are in good financial shape, when does it make sense to seek refinancing?

When rates drop by one-half to one point, provided you stay in your home for at least five years to recoup the closing costs.

"In some cases, you may be able to do that in a year or two," says American Bankers Association spokesman John Hall. To really benefit, you need to keep your home long enough to pay

the costs of the refinancing process, which can run several thousand dollars, depending on how much you borrow.

For a homeowner with an adjustable-rate mortgage and good credit, refinancing to a fixed-rate loan can guarantee that the interest rate will be fixed for the life of the loan. If you want to stick with an adjustable-rate mortgage, refinancing may let you negotiate for a better rate and

payment cap than what you have now. By converting to a shorter-term loan, refinancing also can allow some homeowners to build up equity more quickly.

Mortgage experts offer these other suggestions:

- If you're thinking about refinancing, make the first stop the lending institution that gave you your existing mortgage. Since you have a track record with them and they with you, it can work to your advantage. But if you're not satisfied with the service or the package they are offering, shop around. "It's a very competitive market," the ABA's Hall points out.
- Don't have your property appraised in advance of sitting down with the lender. As a result of the problems with the subprime market and an almost nationwide dive in real estate values, financial institutions are less inclined to accept appraisals submitted by a property owner. Expect to pay for the services of an appraiser selected by the lender as part of the refinancing process.
- Don't seek cash-out mortgage refinancing to pay for intangibles like a vacation or a big-screen television set. Instead, use the money to make repairs or upgrades that add value to your home.
- A cash-out mortgage refinancing can be a lifesaver if you're deep in credit card debt. Use the money to pay off high-interest credit card bills. Just make sure that once those bills have been paid, you don't run up others.
- If you can't qualify for refinancing but still need to reduce your carrying charges, there are other alternatives, industry officials say. They recommend that you approach the lender that gave you your existing mortgage and ask if they can modify the terms. Today, most lenders would rather rework terms if you don't qualify for refinancing than get stuck with one more house that's in foreclosure.
- Despite some sites that are scams, legitimate and attractive mortgage refinancing offers can be found online. But you may be viewed as a one-time customer. Working with a local lender can let you build a long-term financial relationship. ■

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Making an Impression

In a buyer's market, owners focus on curb appeal

By Frank Wagner
Copley News Service

As the saying goes, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. In real estate parlance, that first impression is called curb appeal, and it has taken on an increased importance in the current buyer's market.

In its annual "Cost vs. Value Report," *Remodeling* magazine suggested homeowners wanting to sell should concentrate improvements on exterior upgrades. That's a switch from recent years' focus of rehab resources on kitchen and bath improvements.

According to National Association of Home Builders surveys, kitchen remodeling, bathroom remodeling, room additions, and whole house remodeling had been the top choices for

homeowners. But shifting market conditions appear to have changed home improvements' focus and return on investment.

Of the six projects cited by the "Cost vs. Value

Report" where national recovery rates exceeded 80 percent, only one was strictly an inside job, a minor kitchen remodel. Findings were based on 2007 surveys for the National Association of Realtors of real estate appraisers, sales associates, and brokers in 65 markets.

it may indicate that with more options for buyers to choose from in much of the country, curb appeal and making a good first impression are even more important."

Remodeling magazine suggested homeowners wanting to sell should concentrate improvements on exterior upgrades.

"We don't have any hard data behind the shift," says NAR spokesman Walter Molony. "But

Nationally, the improvements that netted more than 80 percent recovery were:

- Upscale siding replacement using fiber cement materials (88.1 percent).
- Wood deck addition (85.4 percent).
- Midrange vinyl siding replacement (83.2 percent).
- Minor kitchen remodel (83 percent).
- Midrange wood window replacement (81.2 percent).
- Upscale vinyl window replacement (81 percent).

continued on page 68



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SPECIAL ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

Making an Impression

continued from page 66

According to the report: "In a typical real estate transaction, the 'cost recouped' for a given remodeling project depends on a variety of unpredictable factors, many of which are more important than the construction cost. These factors include the condition of the rest of the house, the value of similar homes nearby, and the rate at which property values are changing in the surrounding area. A home's urban, suburban, or rural setting also affects its value, as does the availability and cost of new and existing homes in the immediate vicinity."

While no project broke the 90 percent mark nationally, there were regional variations. In the Pacific region, Realtors estimate cost recovery of more than 100 percent for these projects.

"Consumers are spending less on their homes and are taking more time to sign on for large remodels," observes Kelly Mack of NAHB Remodelers. "Part of it may be decreasing available home equity, but it also seems just tightening on household spending." Even so, NAHB estimates that Americans spent \$235 billion in home remodeling in 2007—up from 2006's \$233 billion.

"Our most recent consumer survey shows 55 percent of sellers remodeled or made improvements within three months of placing their home on the market, spending a median of nearly \$3,000," says the NAR's Molony.

What is spent and how much is recouped depend on a number of things: condition of the rest of the house, value of nearby homes, and the urban, suburban, or rural setting of the house. There are also a number of regional variations. A bathroom remodel that recovered 85 percent of its value in the South only recouped 63 percent in the Midwest, according to the report.

"On most projects, the value of remodeling trended down in 2007 compared with 2006," observes the magazine. Even so, as the NAHB's Mack observes, "some value-increasing projects can be relatively small and inexpensive."

Molony concurs. "Historically, the biggest bang for the buck is simply taking care of cosmetics—painting, cleaning out clutter, trimming the landscaping, etc." he notes.

"Bringing a home that is substandard up to neighborhood norm generally provides a good return," says Molony. "However, overimproving a home to make it one of the most expensive in the neighborhood generally is counter productive—you won't receive a proportionate return."

Complete city data from the *Remodeling* 2007 "Cost vs. Value Report" can be downloaded for free at www.costvalue remodelingmagazine.com. ■

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

Helpful Real Estate Tips

DON'T BE A VICTIM

Freddie Mac is turning to YouTube, a video-sharing Internet site, to educate homeowners about the dangers of losing their dwellings in foreclosure scams.

Freddie Mac, one of the largest U.S. investors in residential mortgages, recently produced a two-minute video to dramatize some of the deceptive practices that are used to commit foreclosure fraud.

The cautionary tale begins with the question, "Are you the potential victim of a foreclosure scam?" It features an actor playing a foreclosure consultant who offers to help homeowners who have fallen behind on their mortgage payments. The problem is that the "consultant" has no intention of paying off debts or renegotiating the terms of delinquent mortgages. Instead, he pockets the homeowners' money.

Dishonest foreclosure consultants often charge large upfront fees and do little or nothing to renegotiate loans. They sometimes ask homeowners to sign over the deeds to their homes on the false promise that they can continue living there as renters and eventually regain ownership.

"If you're having mortgage trouble, talk to your lender," the narrator of the video states. "Avoid foreclosure heroes who want the deed to your house. They may be trying to steal your home, even if they promise to rent it back to you."

Because foreclosure fraud reports are rising, "we are using every communication channel out there to warn borrowers about these fraudsters and urge borrowers to call their lenders when they fall behind on their mortgage," says Ingrid Beckles, Freddie Mac's vice president of servicing and asset management.

The video can be found online at youtube.com/AvoidFraud.

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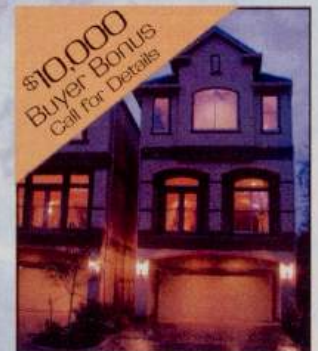
Designer Sabrina Soto, star of the HGTV series *Get It Sold*, knows a thing or two about staging your home to attract buyers and bring in quick offers. Here are 10 of her best staging tricks and tips for getting your home off the market fast.

• Make room for the buyers. You always want at least three feet of walk space so buyers can walk around freely. Take out unnecessary furni-

continued on page 70

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Real Estate Tips

continued from page 69

- ture to free up space.
- Never have more than two kitchen appliances on your countertops. You don't want to hide them.
- Remove any area rugs on top of your carpets; buyers sometimes assume you are hiding a stain.
- Make sure to remove all papers and photos from the refrigerator.
- Turn on all lights for the open house, even if it's during the day. Also make sure your shades or blinds are open. The more light, the better.
- Do not cook anything in the house a few hours before a showing and do not smoke indoors while your house is on the market.
- Closets should always look spacious. Pack up seasonal clothing and organize the rest. Your never want your closets to look full, so less is more.
- Fresh flowers displayed at the open house make your home feel inviting.
- Make sure your bills are hidden and not in the mail tray and cleaning supplies are put away. It may seem silly, but you don't want buyers to think your home is expensive or difficult to maintain. Give them a sense of harmony during a showing.
- Change out dated light fixtures. They don't have to be expensive, and will give your entire house an updated look.

WOMEN RULE

Recognizing that women exert strong influence over most home purchases, author Tara-Nicholle Nelson has written a book designed to guide them through the house-hunting process.

"Women hold the purse strings when it comes to these major home-buying decisions, and this book will make them better educated, more confident consumers," says Nelson, the author of *Trillion Dollar Women* (BuilderBooks.com, \$24.95).

According to a recent Harvard University study, women control 91 percent of home buying or remodeling decisions. Nelson, an attorney and a real estate investor, holds a master's degree in psychology. She says women think about housing in different ways than men.

Men tend to focus on one goal at a time, but women approach the search for a home like putting together a complex puzzle. Every aspect of the dwelling matters to them. She compares it to sorting through information while surfing the Internet.

"I have done a fairly extensive amount of research into the psychology of how women think about purchases," Nelson says. "Women have a hypertext mind. You click on one thing in their head and all these other things open up. Women take a 360-degree perspective on how every single element of the home will affect everyone in their lives."

A half-century ago, married women typically accompanied their husbands to view model homes and focused their attention primarily on kitchens and family rooms, Nelson says. Today they are involved in all aspects of home buying and remodeling.

Although it was written for female consumers, the book could be a resource for housing professionals, she adds.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Disneyland is bringing back its House of the Future with a decidedly present-day bent. Taylor Morrison, a noted home builder, is constructing a \$15 million, 5,000-square-foot house inside Tomorrowland's Innoventions building, original home to the Carousel of Progress show.

But unlike Monsanto's all-plastic, futuristic house that graced the entrance to Tomorrowland from 1957 to 1967, the "Innoventions Dream Home" will carry a contemporary design inside the wood-and-steel structure when it opens in May.

And the contents, from Microsoft Corp., Hewlett-Packard Co., and software maker LifeWare, are mostly available currently, just over the horizon, or as Disney spokesman Dave Miller says, with "Disney magic thrown in."

"Our goal is for the guests to walk in and feel exactly like [this is] the home they or their neighbors could own," Miller says.

Under a five-year agreement with the corporate sponsors, the Dream Home for a family of six (Disney cast members plus an offstage dog) will display how the real world will interact with the digital universe by means of wireless connections and TV screens.

Visitors will be able to test some of the systems and walk away with a password key that allows them to design their own dream home using the high-tech products.

"One of the things that's really critical in the concept is that we keep it updated and fresh," Miller says. "We've built in cycle time to update the software and modifications as we move forward in the project to ensure we keep it fresh and up-to-date."

For a look back at the 1950s House of the Future, visit yesterland.com/futurehouse.html or check out an online clip from a vintage Monsanto movie about the house at David Oneal's Extinct Attractions Club website. ■

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Foreclosure Fraud

Scams target vulnerable homeowners, offer false hope

By Vicky Katz Whitaker
Copley News Service

Your mortgage payment is overdue—really overdue. You think nobody knows it, but you're wrong. Scam operators, calling themselves "foreclosure rescue consultants," are about to knock on your door, contact you by phone, or inundate you with advertisements for their services.

If you take the bait, it could cost you a lot more than your home, legal and home mortgage experts warn.

Information about property in foreclosure or pre-foreclosure (where a homeowner falls behind in mortgage payments) is a matter of public record. Once difficult and time-consuming to compile and access, foreclosure and pre-foreclosure lists are now available online. While these services are of great value to individuals, institutions and industries with a legitimate need for the information, it has also made it easy for scam artists to target homeowners about to lose their homes.

There are several types of foreclosure "rescue" scams, says the nonprofit Boston-based National Consumer Law Center, which developed a consumer guide on the subject, "Dreams Foreclosed: The Rampant Theft of Americans' Homes Through Equity Stopping Foreclosure 'Rescue' Scams." The most common are:

- Phantom help: In exchange for a high fee that must be paid in advance, the "rescuer" makes a few perfunctory telephone calls and fills out paperwork that homeowners could have done themselves. Instead of vigorously working on behalf of the client, the scammer "essentially abandons the homeowner to a fate that might well have been prevented with better intervention," the NCLC says.
- Bailout: Homeowners transfer title to their house to the "rescuer" after being assured that they can continue to live in their home, paying rent until they can buy it back in a few years. "Homeowners are sometimes told that surrendering title is necessary so that someone with a better credit rating can secure new financing to prevent the loss of the home. But the terms of these

deals are almost invariably so onerous that the buyback becomes impossible," the NCLC says.

- Bait and switch: Targeting homeowners in pre-foreclosure, the "rescuer" offers to get them a new loan to make their mortgage current. Stressed-out homeowners believe they're putting their signatures on a loan document, more often than not, one with blank sections that can be altered later to make it appear that the scammer now owns the home.

If you're headed into foreclosure, you can avoid becoming a scam victim by:

- Learning more about the foreclosure process, including deadlines for responding to documents from the court and lenders.
- Fending off high-pressure tactics designed to make you immediately sign a contract or hand the "rescuer" a quitclaim deed to your home. Talk to your lawyer first.
- Paying the lender directly even if the scammer promises to pass payments along to the bank or mortgage company.

The NCLC consumer guide is available online at www.consumerlaw.org. ■

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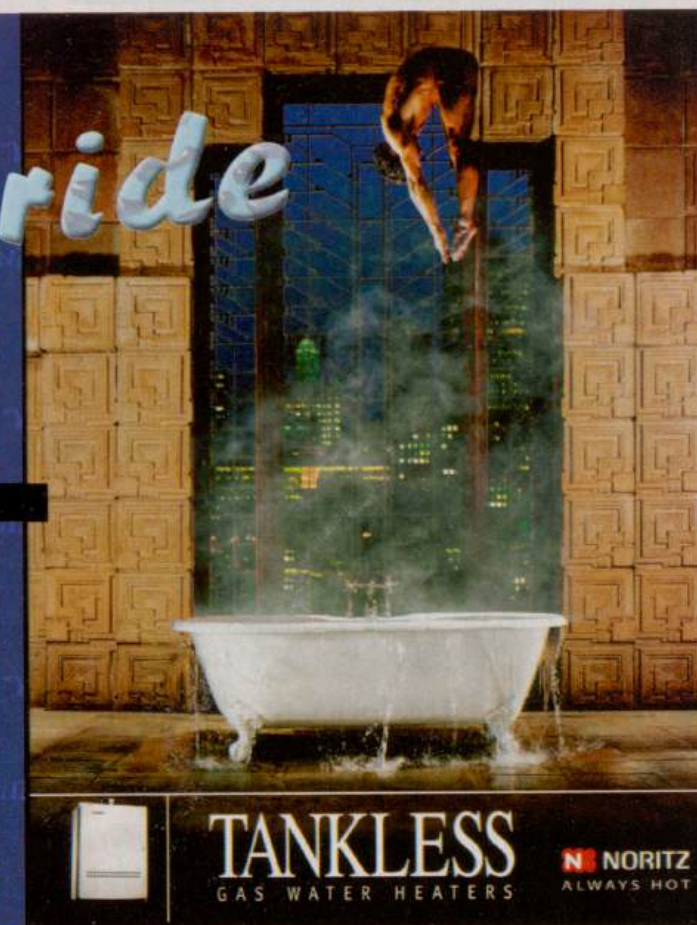
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SPECIAL ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

Aging in Place

**Baby boomers find the best
is yet to be — at home**

By Tim Torres
Copley News Service

Go west, young man, and grow with the nation, it was once said. But where do we go when our pioneer days are behind us and we start thinking of the trail's end? Enough of all this moving around... it's better to age in place.

To some extent, and not a big surprise, that's true in today's home market: People—mostly baby boomers—are trading in their "McMansions" for smaller, single-level homes to grow old in. That's something to consider if you're going to be selling your home soon or are thinking about buying a new one.

According to an AARP survey, more than 80 percent of respondents age 45 and older said they would like to stay where they are for as long as possible, and 70 percent of those able to make changes have made at least one modification to make their homes easier to live in.

If you take a look at most senior communities around the nation, most of these upscale planned communities primarily offer single-family homes that either incorporate "universal design" or are ready to have it brought in, says Victor Regnier, professor of architecture and gerontology at University of Southern California. People are thinking about safety and accessibility: "That is probably the first thing they think about, and they don't want a two-story house."

Research varies in all of this, he says. Some baby boomers are keeping their large homes and are ready to install elevators, for instance. "This generation has the resources and they are willing to pay for what they want," Regnier says. Others are ready to trade down and take it easy.

One thing for certain is that universal design, or accessible design, makes life a lot easier for seniors and the wheelchair-bound by incorporating design elements such as grab bars in the bathroom, non-slip floors in the kitchen, or "eye level" stoves and microwaves.

"In the age 50-plus segment of home buyers, there is more demand for universal design," says Richard Duncan, executive director of housing works of the Universal Design Institute in Florida.

But think a bit before you tear out your custom shower for a roll-in,



**A curbless shower increases
bathroom accessibility without
giving it an institutional feel.**

wheelchair-accessible type. "Universal design can be a two-edged sword," Regnier says. It can make your home look "institutional." It might be better to add some elements, such as a non-slip floor, but point out where other elements can be installed quickly, such as identifying anchor points for a grab bar in the bathroom. "You could spend a lot of money and it might not really be that helpful."

Or even better, advises Duncan, is to wait until a home remodeling comes around so you can incorporate universal design into it. "Then, you can then add these features for little or no cost."

Both experts say universal design is the smart way to go no matter your age. "It's good for everyone," says Regnier. "I don't care if you're 12 or 82."

Two schools of thought are going on with the aging baby boomers, he says. The younger boomers, say from early 50s to late 60s, "think they will never get old." They are determined to stay in their home until the end and are embracing accessible design.

The older segment, "those north of 75, often recognize how vulnerable they are," Regnier says. This group realizes no matter what they do, they may need to move one day to get personal care in assisted living or a nursing environment.

Maybe one day America will copy the European model, where housing is not only built for aging in place, but also incorporates "care and repair" programs that allow older people to stay in their homes until they die, he says.

These programs combine home assessment and repair with home-delivered personal and health care. Thus residents can truly age in place without worrying about moving as they become more frail and unable to take care of themselves.

UNIVERSAL APPEAL

Some areas to look at if you want to add universal design to your home:

- The bathroom, called the most dangerous room in the house for seniors, needs grab-bar anchor points, a curbless shower and maybe a "step-in" tub.
- The house needs at least one entrance that is step-free.
- The microwave should be counter level.
- Think pocket doors wherever practical, and make sure they have a high quality double-roller suspension.
- A front-loading and front-control washer and dryer make clothes transfer easy.
- Doorknobs and faucet handles should be lever type.
- Non-slip flooring where possible.
- Light switches and thermostat should be easily reached.
- Add lots of lighting, especially in stairways. ■

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Home Warranties

A potential benefit for both buyers and sellers alike

The market for homes across the nation has never been more challenging for homeowners trying to sell, nor more mind-boggling for buyers shopping among the historically overwhelming inventory of discounted listings.

But beyond the initial sale of a home, legitimate buyer concerns arise regarding the condition of the home—and whether it will continue to provide a problem-free experience after the keys change hands.

One resource to add to your credibility toolbox is a home warranty. While these insurance policies are often overlooked or underrated, they can easily pay for themselves by boosting confidence, ensuring quality, and calming the emotions of nervous and cost-conscious buyers.

The way a home warranty works is that it covers basic components of a home such as appliances and furnaces for a period of time, allowing the homeowner to market property with an added security blanket. Buyers get the assurance that things will work as they are supposed to, which

can often make or break a fragile sales transaction. Many also cover your home the entire time you have it listed, so that last-minute breakdowns don't threaten to kill an otherwise flawless deal.

When moving into a new home, most consumers are cash poor, thanks to an inordinate amount of expenses such as new furniture, interior decorating, and moving van costs. That fact is only intensified and accelerated by today's high gas prices and fears of an economic recession, so sellers who offer a home warranty generally get a solid return on their investment by giving buyers a reliable and predictable outlook. That's because if items that are covered need to be repaired or replaced during the warranty period, it won't add a financial burden.

The policies can be bought by the buyer or the seller, and sometimes are thrown in by real estate agents as an added bonus or housewarming present. Especially for sellers trying to market an older home in today's highly competitive market, a home warranty can be an attractive yet affordable perk. Warranties are fairly inexpensive, typically

ranging in price from \$250 to \$500, depending upon what is covered. It is also possible to find discounted policies when insurers offer specials, seasonal sales, or enhanced coverage for the "regular" price. Policy premiums are paid up front, and the period of coverage can run from a few months to more than a year, depending upon the specific terms and whether the holder decides to renew the policy or not. Homeowners making a claim may sometimes have to pay a service-call fee, but those are usually nominal.

Details of the coverage are critical, and differ from policy to policy, so it is important to read the fine print and understand any and all restrictions. Whether or not the policy is transferable depends on the company, and this can be an important feature if you plan to sell and don't want to remain responsible for handling potential claims.

Policies generally cover items including:

- Air conditioning and heating systems
- Ductwork and ceiling fans
- Dishwashers and garbage disposals
- Doorbells and telephone wiring

- Water heaters and plumbing clogs inside the home
- Electrical systems
- Cooking ranges and ovens

But warranties normally will not cover repairs of items outside, such as outdoor lights, sprinkler systems, garage-door openers, hot tubs, and swimming pools. Individual policies may or may not cover washers, dryers, and refrigerators, so it is important to read the actual policy carefully, not just the colorful marketing brochures. Sometimes you can add items that are generally excluded by paying a little more and adding extended coverage to the generic policy. In any case, as with any kind of insurance, your claim could be denied if you fail to follow proper building codes, perform routine maintenance, or use certified professionals to do your equipment installations.

Insurance varies from state to state, so if you had a warranty in your former home but moved out of state, check your new policy to make sure it meets your needs. If you luck out, it may include coverage you didn't have at your former address. ■

Jeff Hammerberg is the president of www.GayRealEstate.com, a network of agents and lenders committed to serving the GLBT community with fairness and professional excellence. He can be reached at 888/420-6683.



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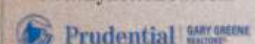
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The Color of Money

Green might be the key to getting your home sold

By Ven Griva
Copley News Service

While many segments of the real estate industry are feeling the negative effects of the ongoing subprime mortgage crisis, demand continues to grow for homes or condominiums built with the environment in mind.

That's a fact you might want to keep in mind if you are planning on selling your home.

A number of market forces are contributing to this eco-friendly trend: The aging baby boom population is turning toward smaller, easier-to-maintain homes; builders are purchasing more green materials; and manufacturers are producing more green building materials, which drives down prices.

That's the assessment of Rhys Stucker, director of the VISION House Series, a sequence of showcase homes being built nationwide by the National Association of Home Builders to dem-

onstrate the benefits of sustainable design, construction techniques, and products.

"The green market is the only one that's up this year," Stucker says, quoting a study by McGraw-Hill construction and the National Association of Home Builders. "This year could be the tipping point. More than half of home builders are going green."

Stucker ticks off four things that make a green home:

- The use of sustainable products in construction.
- Efficient use of resources such as water and energy.
- A healthy indoor environment free of allergens and mold.
- Durable products that can, over time, pay for their additional cost.

If the home you wish to sell is built with any or all of these features, your next step is to market them aggressively.

But be careful, real estate marketing experts say. The people looking for green homes aren't necessarily worried so much about Mother Nature as they are about their pocketbooks and quality of life.

Brooke Warrick, president of market research and consulting firm American Lives in Carmel Valley, Calif., says that's a good approach.

"Selling green features is like telling a child to eat his vegetables," quips Warrick. "If you try to sell it based on the virtue of green, you've lost the battle to begin with."

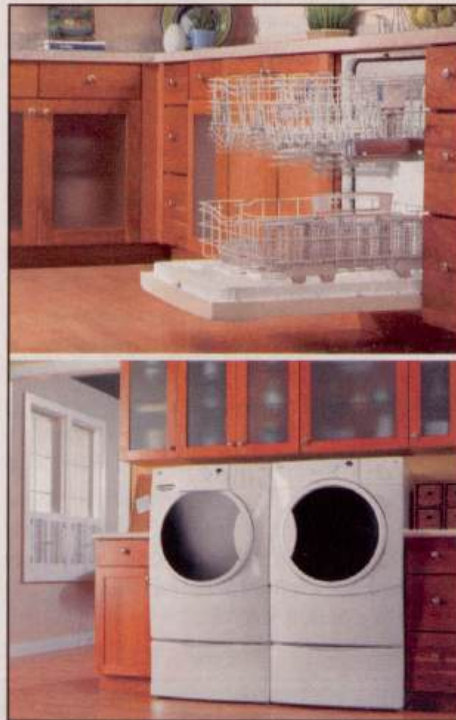
The best way to market your home is to tell potential buyers they'll save a bundle if they buy an energy-efficient home and that their green home will reap higher resale prices.

If you are working with a real estate agent, make sure he or she is aware of the green features your home may have. Emphasize that green doesn't necessarily cost more and generally saves money in the long run.

It doesn't matter how well-built, or how green your home is, if you or your agent fail to communicate the value of green to your potential buyers. Include the information in your home listings, brokerage websites, or brochures put together to market your home.

Most green building products were developed to do something better than their conventional counterparts—they may be stronger, last longer, use resources more efficiently, or manufactured in an environmentally sound manner.

The high cost of energy is one concern for



Experts say if you want to appeal to buyers looking for an environmentally friendly home, it's best to play up money-saving features like high-efficiency appliances that use less energy and water.

home buyers, and comfort drives high energy use. When it gets hot or cold, people turn on the air conditioning or furnace. By emphasizing the systems your home features from the start, you can offer potential buyers greater comfort while reducing their utility bills.

The same can be said of appliances. If your home comes with a new, efficient water heater or refrigerator, those are things you want to emphasize to potential buyers.

Finally, the public health community has identified homes as one of the most significant threats to child health. When preparing your home for market, you might want to take a long look at the products you put to use.

Consider using the following when sprucing up your home:

- Paints and adhesives that are low in or exclude volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
- Building products with low or no formaldehyde emissions.
- Water-based, low-VOC wood finishes.
- High-quality air filters on heating/cooling unit. ■

Under Pressure

How to move your house from "For Sale" to "Sold"

By Diane Schlindwein
Copley News Service

Sellers who want or need to sell their homes quickly should take serious action. It's a buyer's market, so homeowners have to work even harder to get their house noticed and sold.

In Springfield, Ill., where the Capital Area Association of Realtors reports 2007 was the third most successful home sales year in history, Realtor Barb Krueger offers some insight. "People need to sell quickly for a variety of reasons," she says. "Sometimes they are in distress and don't want to hurt their credit rating by not being able to make payments."



Sellers who want or need to sell their homes quickly should take serious action. It's a buyer's market, so homeowners have to work even harder to get their house noticed and sold.

"Sometimes it is due to a job relocation or a divorce," says Krueger, who is associated with Re/Max Professionals. "Sometimes it is a health crisis. Sometimes it is simply due to an expanding family."

Krueger believes friends and family members mean well, but usually can't offer the best advice. "Avoid listening to everyone at the office, relatives,

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Under Pressure

continued from page 79

and friends who are very well-intentioned but often confuse the seller," she says. "Take the advice of your Realtor, your attorney, or your banker—those who are knowledgeable and deal with this every day."

Homeowners who are in financial trouble really need to act quickly, Krueger says. "My best advice is to call a Realtor immediately, especially one who is experienced, so they get the best help possible. Many people hide their head in the sand until it is too late to help them."

"In Illinois, for example, it takes approximately one year for foreclosure to be done. If they call their banker and their Realtor immediately, we can usually help them sell their home instead of ending up in foreclosure."

Krueger instructs sellers to have a Realtor prepare a comprehensive market analysis on their home—or to pay for a licensed appraisal. "Second, have a Realtor or a professional home stager walk through the house to get it in the best showable condition without spending too much money."

Finally, ask your Realtor for a list of ways to improve your home and prepare it for selling.

"Go over the list and then do it," Krueger says. "Get family and friends to help, hire teenagers,

hire professionals. Just do whatever it takes to get it ready to show. Above all, price it right since it is not 'location, location, location' anymore, but now 'price, price, price.'"

Sellers aren't obligated to accept any offer, but they should never ignore one that is placed through a real estate agent. "Do not be insulted at a low offer," says Krueger. "Always make a counter offer, even if it is just to show them to get serious and you will respond better."

Indianapolis Realtor Mary Hession agrees. "Even if an offer is low, it is certainly worth looking at," says Hession, who is an agent with Century 21 1st Choice. "I don't think you should write off any offer. The people may be testing the waters."

No matter what reason a seller has for selling, it is best not to have any house on the market for months on end. "If a house is on the market for too long, buyers begin to get nervous," says Aspen Real Estate Realtor Linda Green, who is also based in Springfield. "Usually they begin to wonder why the house hasn't sold."

Krueger says a seller's best move is to take a professional's advice and then take action.

"I give advice to sellers all the time. If they take the advice, in our market they move," Krueger concludes. "In the end, it is still price, condition, location, and marketing that must be in alignment for the sale to happen quickly." ■



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By Marene Gustin

BB's No need to head to NOLA for that Cajun fix. BB's (2710 Montrose Blvd., 713/524-4499, www.thebetterbite.com) may look small—it's wedged into a Montrose strip between a drycleaner and a gas station—but it's huge on authentic taste. From the Crazy Cajun Chips to the Bedtime in the Bayou fried Gulf Coast shrimp po-boys, this place is packed with authentic Cajun goodness. A lot of menu items are called Maw Maw's, and not only are they owner Brooks Bassler's Grammy's recipes, she even came over to train the kitchen staff herself! Breakfast (think beignets and fried catfish) is served all day and the joint is open late nights (until 4 a.m. Friday and Saturday). The perfect spot to chow down on good cookin' to sop up a night's libations.

Open City Does Midtown need another über chic bar/eatery? It does when it's Open City (2416 Brazos St., 713/522-0118, www.ochouston.com). Chef Tamir and wife Nadine Aly bring their restaurant experience to Houston with this trendy spot named for Roberto Rossellini's artistic 1946 flick *Open City*. Expect lots of arty décor, a rooftop bar with a divine view, and American comfort food with a fashionable flair. Mac and Gruyere cheese and Not Your Mother's Meat Loaf are ingredient-driven twists on classic dishes. Even the Wonton Ravioli nods to regional flavor with a touch of butternut squash. Wash it down with a pitcher of Texas Ruby Red sangria or a signature cocktail like the Pop-Rocks Martini. And, no, it won't explode in your tummy like the urban legend of Mikey, but it will leave you with a pleasant fizz in the mouth.

Bells & Whistles New this year to the Minute Maid Park explosion—and in keeping with the whole train theme there—is Bells & Whistles Café (1501 Texas Ave., 713/224-1501). It's down-home dining for the downtown lunch set. The café is open 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. "Diners appreciate that they can come in, enjoy a good lunch, and be back in their offices without wasting a lot of time," manager Rome Hickey says. Plus, the smallest of the three dining areas offers audio-visual equipment, and the whole place has free Wi-Fi, making it perfect for business meetings. Fruit smoothies and fresh

coffee are the drinks of choice here, which pair well with the daily specials of Americana classics. Think pan-fried pork chops, and blackened tilapia, rib eyes and fried catfish, and good ol' fashioned burgers. Finish lunch with a slice of made-from-scratch coconut meringue pie and you'll never want to head back to the office.

The Grove Discovery Green, our new downtown park, is a jewel in itself, but now that The Grove (1611 Lamar St., 713/337-7321, www.grovehouston.com) is open, it's also the city's newest must-see restaurant destination. Lonnie Schiller and legendary chef Robert Del Grande (of Cafe Annie fame) teamed up to create this eco-friendly, super trendy spot with a rooftop tequila bar—the view at night is astounding—and a downstairs with floor-to-ceiling windows looking over the park's



Cheers: In its cozy, rustic-style Montrose home, Salud! Winery now offers a lunch and dinner menu in addition to its wine bar and the vintages that patrons can make. Kyle Turney is the new chef.

lake. Visually astounding and the food is nothing less than you would expect. Del Grande created the menu, but it's chef Ryan Pera (recently of Alden's 17) who is winning acclaim as master of the open kitchen domain. Food here is unpretentious with just the right mix of local flavors, fresh ingredients, and culinary quirks. What Pera does to a deviled egg puts grandma's church potluck appetizers to shame. If you only visit one new restaurant this year, it must be The Grove.

Hotel Icon's Voice There's a new voice in Houston's culinary world and it's singing loud and clear. The \$4 million first floor makeover of the Hotel Icon has given birth to Voice (220 Main St., 713/224-4266, www.hotelicon.com). The shades of amber, crimson, and taupe with accents of black and bronze, offset by two rows of white

Doric columns, create an inviting atmosphere where chef Michael Kramer holds court with a menu of straightforward American cuisine, kicked up just a notch.

"I'm truly ingredient-driven," Kramer says. "Simple, clean, layered flavors." Check out his Mushroom Soup Cappuccino with Truffle Foam for starters. You can eat it with a spoon or just sip right from the cup. It's a fun starter, but the meal gets serious with his Coffee-Rubbed Filet of Beef. Kramer uses South Texas venison and beef, local honey and cheeses, and the freshest Gulf Coast seafood for his creations. Come hungry.

Salud! Winery Our fave little Montrose winery now has a full lunch and dinner menu. Salud! Winery (3939 Montrose Blvd., 713/522-8282, www.saludwinery.com) has been a trendy sipping bar since it opened its doors—and its vats where patrons make their own vino—but now it's also a super place to eat while you sip. Chef Kyle Turney has a lunch and dinner menu of Italian treats that work just right with the Italian piazza atmosphere here. Simple hearty foods from appetizers, salads, and artisan pizzas to crostinis and desserts. For some heavy imbibing try the Italian Pizza full of meaty prosciutto, Genoa salami and pepperoni. At \$14 it's a steal. Plus it will leave you with enough pocket change for a hunk of Double Chocolate Chunk Brownie with ice cream and hot fudge.

SoVino SoVino Wine Bar and Bistro (507 Westheimer Road, 713/524-1000, www.sovinowines.com) isn't just another wine bar-cum-café. This chic, 3,000-square-foot locale designed by architect Ferenc Dreif is the brainchild of longtime restaurateur Manfred Jachmich and Elizabeth Abraham of the Abraham's Oriental Rugs family. The duo hooked up after Abraham gave up a career in law for one in food. Late last year they opened SoVino on Lower Westheimer to rave reviews. With an extensive wine list concentrating on Southern Hemisphere wines and some fabulous foods like Shiraz-braised short ribs with Gruyere polenta and grape leaf-wrapped salmon, this spot is a real foodies' delight.

Beaver's Ice House No, this isn't like the iconic West Alabama Ice House where the extent of food comes when someone brings a grill in for weekend burgers and dogs to go with the cold ones. The resurrected Beaver's Ice House (2310 Decatur St., 713/864-2328, www.beavershouston.com) is the latest culinary child of chef Monica Pope and Andrea Lazar of t'faia fame. They've retained the bare bones building, although spiffed up the place and added a barbecue pit out back. And while the menu is pure country, the ingredients are top notch. The Harris Ranch all-natural beef brisket is mouth watering, but come early. Once the smoked meats are gone, there are no more until the pit master fires it up the next day. Which means you'll just have to make do with some Texas Cheddar Beer Dip, and Gabey-Baby's Fried Pickles, hardly a hardship. ■

That's some tasty philanthropy!

Join Tila's in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

During *Dining Out For Life* on Thursday, April 24, Tila's will contribute 33% of all sales to the AIDS Foundation Houston. Last year, this citywide event raised nearly \$50,000 for adults and children living with HIV/AIDS.



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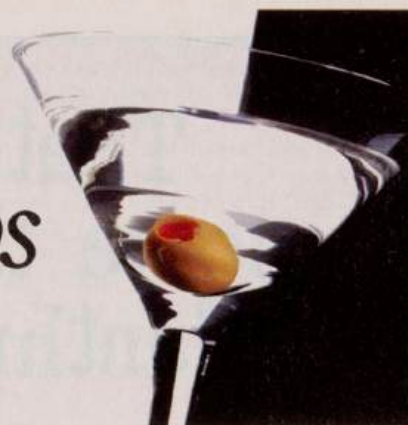
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Spring Sips

By Marene Gustin



Ah, when spring is in the air, there's nothing better than a chilled glass of vino. We asked Brad Odom, co-owner of Salud! Winery, what he likes for warmer weather. His choice, Salud! new whites: Salud! Woodbridge Reserve Chardonnay, with just a hint of oak blended with citrus; Salud! Harris Ranch Semillon with pear and grass notes; and Salud! Harris Ranch Pinot Grigio.

"They're all slightly fruity, summer wines," Odom says. "We also have a white Merlot that's very popular. It's a great, fruity wine for sitting on the patio by the pool."

They also bottle wine cooler-style wines. Not the candy-flavored stuff that you bought at the grocery store in the '80s, but a real drink with real fruit. They make it the same as their other wines, then add a fruit juice pack at the end. At just \$15 a bottle—and with four percent less alcohol—you can imbibe the afternoon away with concoctions such as Peach Apricot Chardonnay, Green Apple Riesling, Black Raspberry Merlot, and Exotic Fruit White Zinfandel.

Odom says that Houstonians don't switch from reds to whites just because of the weather. "I think it's pretty well split all year long. It's not like Chicago here where you can't drink a white in the winter."

Brother and partner, Charles, agrees: "It was 32 degrees at Easter here last year, so you can certainly justify drinking a red in the spring. Basically, whatever you like is what you should drink."

But do keep reds, as well as whites, in the fridge or a wine cooler prior to serving, and don't let them sit in the sun. It's the ultraviolet light, not the heat, which causes spoilage. Make sure and take the reds out so they can warm up a bit before serving. And if the red versus white debate is too much for you, there's always bubbly.

"I think champagne is good anytime of the year!" Odom says. And, yes, they make fruit-infused champagnes and sparkling wines in the spring and summer, too.

Or, if you prefer something with more of a kick, try a cocktail. Everything old is new

again, including the preponderance of dark liquors (vodka is so passé). Here are two recipes from the new bar at Hotel Icon. Both are kicked up versions of cocktail classics.

Iconic Sidecar

2 oz. Remy XO
1 oz. 150-year-old Grand Marnier
1/2 oz. Lemon Sweet and Sour

*Shake all ingredients with ice.
Strain into martini glass.*

The sidecar uses 150-year-old Grand Marnier rather than Triple Sec and Remy XO rather than a stock cognac to make it a modern luxe drink. Originally invented in the early 1920s, it is an indulgence at \$40 but worth it for a special occasion.

Scarlett O'Hara

2 oz. Southern Comfort
2 each of blueberries, cherries, raspberries,
and blackberries.
2 oz. Lime Sweet and Sour

Muddle all berries, then add all remaining ingredients in a shaker with ice, strain. Shake and pour into glass.

Icon modernizes the Scarlett O'Hara by using a mixture of berries muddled together rather than just cranberry juice. A garnish of pineapple soaked in grenadine then dried in the oven accents the scarlet color of the drink invented in 1939 as a tribute to that iconic movie *Gone with the Wind*. Fiddle-dee-dee!

Marene Gustin contributed to OutSmart's January 2008 People To Watch spotlight, interviewing foodie Carlos Meltzer and activist Steven Haynes.

—RECIPES—



Siete Quesos Spinach and Crab Dip

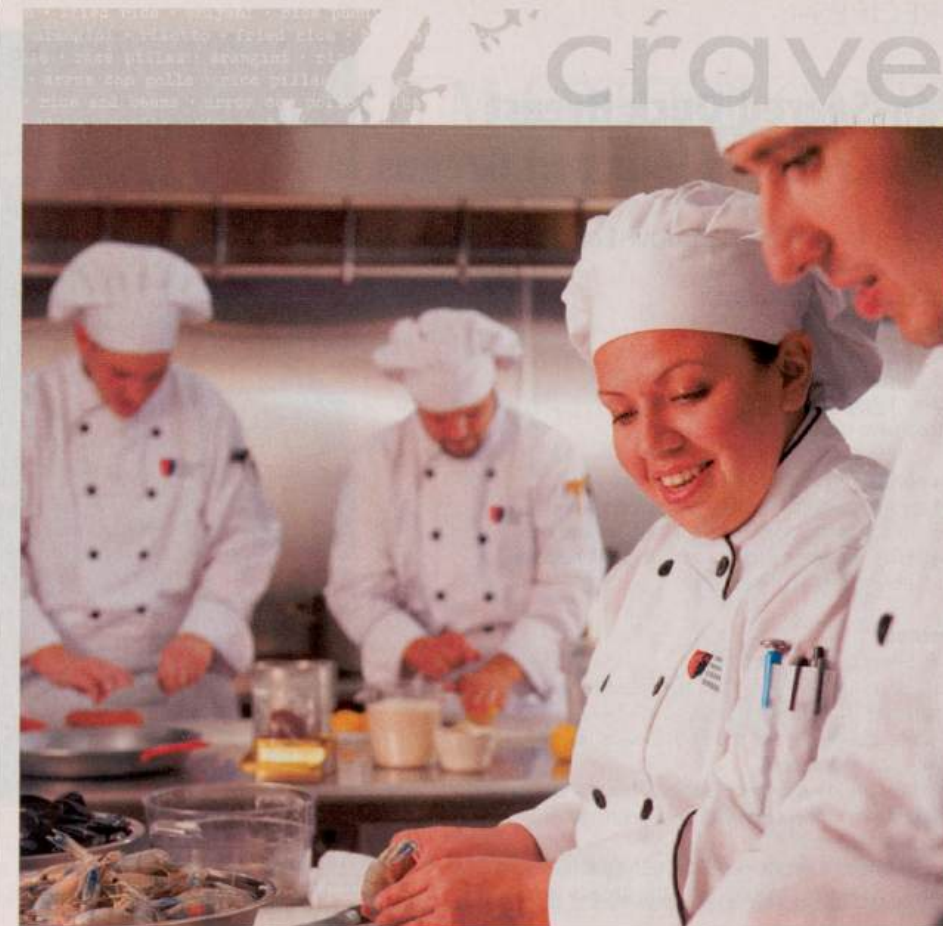
Recipe from El Tiempo Cantina, Houston

Ingredients:

3 oz. shredded cheddar cheese
3 oz. shredded mozzarella cheese
2 oz. Parmesan cheese
3 oz. blue cheese
3 oz. chile con queso (melted Velveeta)
5 oz. fresh spinach
5 oz. jumbo lump crab meat
4 tbsp finely diced jalapenos
4 tbsp finely diced onion
6 tbsp chopped tomatoes
1 clove fresh minced garlic
4 oz. bread crumbs

Preparation:

1. Layer the cheddar and mozzarella cheese into a small microwave-safe dish.
2. Layer the blue cheese, chile con queso, and Parmesan cheese on top.
3. Microwave until completely melted. Stir until smooth consistency.
4. Layer the spinach and jumbo lump crab meat on top of cheese.
5. Evenly spread the diced jalapenos, onions, and garlic over the entire dish.
6. Layer the fresh tomatoes on top.
7. Pile the bread crumbs over everything and place in a toaster oven until the bread crumbs are golden.
8. Remove from toaster oven and serve with warm chips and salsa.



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Pan-Seared Duck Breast and Creamed Mustard Greens

Recipe from The Rainbow Lodge, Houston

Pan Seared Duck Breast

Serves 4

4 6-8 oz. boneless duck breasts, skin on
Kosher salt and black pepper
2 tbsp olive oil

Preparing the duck breasts:

Pat the duck breasts dry with paper towels and score the skin (being sure to cut the skin and not the flesh) in a crosshatch pattern. This will help the duck breast cook more evenly.

Method

1. Pre-heat oven to 400°.
2. Place a large stainless steel non-reactive sauté pan over medium-high heat.
3. Season both sides of the duck breasts liberally with salt and pepper.
4. Add in the oil and place the duck breasts skin side down in the sauté pan being sure not to crowd the pan.
5. Sear until the skin releases from the pan easily about two-three minutes. Turn the breasts over

- and sear on the flesh side for about one minute and then turn back over onto the skin side and place the pan in the oven.
6. Bake for six to seven minutes for medium-rare and then remove from oven.
7. Place the duck breasts on a warm plate lined with paper towels and let rest for four to five minutes. Slice just before serving to retain juices.

Creamed Mustard Greens

Serves 4

2 bunches mustard greens, stems removed, washed well, and thinly slice
1 pint heavy cream
2 shallots, finely diced
3 cloves roasted garlic, fork mashed or sliced
Kosher salt and pepper to taste

Method

1. Remove stems from the mustard greens and wash well in several changes of water to remove grit.
2. Roll the greens up and slice thinly.
3. Mix with shallots, garlic, cream, salt, and pepper. Place in a baking pan.
4. Cover with aluminum foil and cook for 1 1/2 hrs at 350°.
5. Remove from oven and adjust seasonings with salt and pepper.
6. Reserve & keep warm until needed.

Serve with your favorite creamy polenta, mashed potatoes, or three-cheese pasta for a comfort dinner with a twist. ■



RAINBOW LODGE



Tofu Quiche Salad

Recipe from Field of Greens, Houston

Ingredients

16 oz. soft tofu
16 oz. hard tofu
2 oz. soy ham
2 oz. diced Shitake mushrooms
(If using dried mushrooms, soak for 48 hours, cook 15 minutes and bake for three minutes to remove excess moisture.)
3 oz. diced celery
1/2 cup nutritional yeast flakes
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

Method

Combine the ingredients by folding together the soft tofu, hard tofu, soy ham, diced Shitake mushrooms, diced celery, nutritional yeast flakes, and olive oil.

Fill Pam-sprayed muffin tin with mixture to two-thirds full. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes or until muffins test done. Cool for two hours; remove from pan to wire rack. ■

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The Rainbow Lodge presents...

Donette Hansen, the owner of The Rainbow Lodge, presents two major events this month in her century-old log cabin restaurant located near the Heights. On Friday, April 4, the restaurant will host A Spring Sip and Stroll, a benefit for the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and Bering Omega Community Services. The 5:30-7:30 p.m. event will feature some of the eatery's signature food and wine at three stations on the patio and in the gardens that surround the cabin. Tickets are \$29 per person. Tickets: 713/861-8666.

Then on Sunday, April 20, The Rainbow Lodge will host its 15th annual Spring Grand Food and Wine Pairing. The 4:30-6 p.m. event this year will feature Australian wines and music by Moodafaruka. Tickets are \$49 per person.

"This is a casual Sunday afternoon gathering with friends," Hansen says. "We will have food and wine stations inside the restaurant and outside in our gardens—a beautiful backdrop for sipping wine."

Also at The Rainbow Lodge, Hansen continues to offer casual Sunday Suppers, which she calls "comfort food specials" (\$15) available after 5 p.m. On Sundays, the restaurant serves a Sunday brunch, and diners can order wine by the glass at half price.

The Rainbow Lodge, 2011 Ella Blvd., 713/861-8666, www.rainbow-lodge.com.

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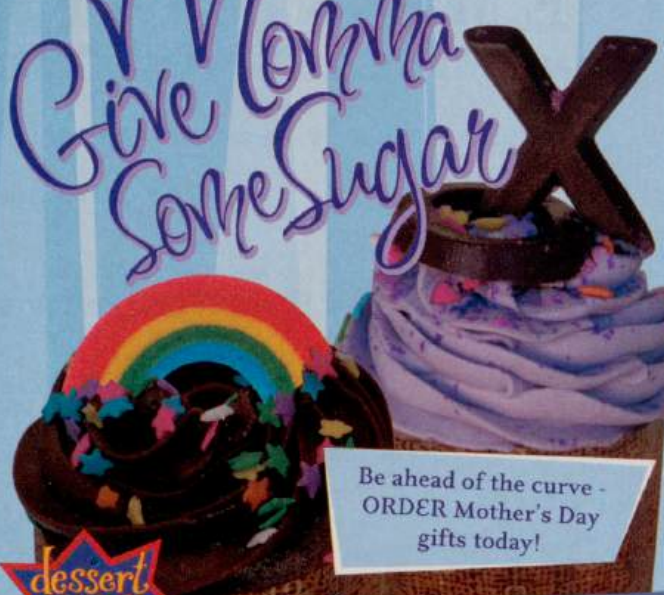
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Local Restaurants Serve up Compassion with Dining Out for Life on April 24, 2008

By Nancy Ford

It's a brilliantly simple idea, and the slogan says it all: "Dine out. Fight AIDS."

On Thursday, April 24, restaurants throughout Houston are uniting in the fight against HIV and AIDS by donating a portion of their day's receipts as part of AIDS Foundation Houston's Dining Out for Life.

"Houston is a restaurant town—we eat out virtually more than any other city in the country," AFH chief executive officer, Kelly McCann says. "In this process, we're asking people to do what they do routinely: Go out and eat at our participating restaurants."

Internationally, more than 2,800 restaurants donate a portion of their proceeds each year from this one day to the licensed agency in their city, culminating in a \$3 million-dollar donation to

support the missions of AIDS agencies throughout North America.

The "dining for dollars" concept has been staged several times in Houston in the past to benefit local AIDS organizations. But AFH applied for and obtained the license to present the official event in Houston, McCann said, beginning in 2007. That year, the eating extravaganza paid off more than \$30,000 to support AFH's programs, with 30 restaurants participating.

"We at AFH seized this opportunity to bring Dining Out for Life back to our city, because we saw it as a benefit to AFH in our service to those living with HIV/AIDS," said McCann. "But we also believe it's a benefit to Houston's restaurant community. We can partner with them to raise AIDS awareness while helping to publicize and hopefully encourage people to dine at their restaurants."

With Subaru as its national sponsor and Fiesta Food Marts as its local sponsor, more than 40 area restaurants are participating in AIDS Foundation Houston's Dining Out for Life on April 24.

Most participating restaurants are donating one-third of their bills, but others are donating 100 percent of the day's proceeds. To see where to get the biggest bang for your donated dollar, log on to www.diningoutforlife.org.

Bon appetit! ■

Dining Out for Life Participating Restaurants*

Baby Barnaby's 602 Fairview Ave. 713/522-4229	Carter & Cooley Company 375 W. 19th St. 713/864-3354	Julia's Bistro 3722 Main St. 713/807-0090	Pink's Pizza 1403 Heights Blvd. 713/864-7465
Barnaby's Cafe 414 W. Gray St. 713/522-8898	Cookie Jar 1846 Westheimer Rd. 713/874-0877	Just Dinner 1915 Dunlavy St. 713/807-0077	Rivas Restaurant 1117 Missouri St. 713/529-3450
Barnaby's Cafe 1701 S. Shepherd 713/520-5131	Crapitto's 2400 Mid Lane 713/961-1161	La Strada 322 Westheimer Rd. 713/523-1014	Salud! Winery 3939 Montrose Blvd. 713/522-8282
Barnaby's Cafe 604 Fairview Ave. 713/522-0106	The Daily Review Cafe 3412 W. Lamar St. 713/520-9217	Les Givral's Kahve 801 Congress St. 713/547-0444	r'afia lounge 3701 Travis St. 713/524-6922
BB's Kitchen 2710 Montrose Blvd. 713/524-4499	Dragon Bowl Asian Bistro 1221 W. 11th Street 713/426-2750	Little Bitty Burger Barn 5503 Pinemont Dr. 713/683-6700	Tacos A Go-Go 3704 Main St. 713/807-8226
Be-Wiched Bistro 1844 Westheimer Rd. 713/520-5300	El Chile Relleno 14545 Memorial Dr. 281/493-9511	Max's Wine Dive 4720 Washington Ave. 713/880-8737	Tart Cafe 4411 Montrose Blvd. 713/526-8278
The Bells & Whistles Cafe 1501 Texas Ave. 713/224-1501	Firkin & Phoenix 1915 Westheimer Rd. 713-526-3100	Mingalone Italian Grill 540 Texas Ave. 713/223-0088	The Tasting Room 1101-18 Uptown Park 713/993-9800
Bice 5175 Westheimer Rd. 713/622-2423	Fratelli's 10989 NW Freeway 713/957-1150	Mint Cafe 2800 Sage Rd. 713/622-3434	Thai Spice 460 W. 19th St. 713/880-9992
Bocados 1312 W. Alabama St. 713/523-5230	Hungry's Cafe & Bistro 2356 Rice Blvd. 713/523-8652	Mockingbird Wine Bistro 1985 Welch St. 713/523-0200	Tilla's on the Curve 1111 S. Shepherd Dr. 713/522-7654
The Boom Boom Room 2518 Yale St. 713/868-3740	Inversion Coffee 1953 Montrose Blvd. 713/523-4866	Niko Niko's 2520 Montrose Blvd. 713/528-4976	Urban Chef 2809 Palm St. 713/504-1700
Camelo's 14795 Memorial Dr. 281/531-0696	Isla Coqui 1801 Durham Dr. 713/861-1000	Path of Tea 2340 W. Alabama St. 713/252-4473	Wellby's 14520 Memorial Dr. 281/556-8514

*List as of March 23, 2008. Details: www.DiningOutforLife.org

-RECIPES-

Bacon, Potato, and Three-Cheese Flautas

Recipe from Daily Review Restaurant, Houston

Ingredients

- 20 corn tortillas
- 6 cups mashed potatoes
- 1 large red bell pepper (diced)
- 1 cup bacon (cooked and diced)
- ½ cup white cheddar cheese (shredded)
- ¼ cup Cotija cheese (shredded)
- ½ cup parmesan cheese (shredded)
- ¼ cup fresh herbs of your choice...
cilantro and thyme are terrific (chopped)
- 2 eggs (beaten)
- Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

Method

This recipe works best with a deep fryer, but can be done in a deep frying pan full of oil as well. Make sure that the oil you are using, whether it be in a deep fryer or frying pan, is good and hot before you begin, so the flautas fry up crisp, not soggy.

1. In a large bowl, mix all of the ingredients except for the tortillas.
2. Place the tortillas in the hot oil for just a moment or two to soften them for rolling.
3. Spoon the potato-cheese mixture onto the softened tortilla.
4. Roll the tortilla to about 1" around. Skewer the flautas to keep them from unwrapping.
5. Fry until golden brown and crispy. Remove skewers and serve. ■

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Wanda Sykes

(The Ellen DeGeneres Show, 3/12/08)

Re: homophobic rant by Oklahoma state representative Sally Kern. I think she ought to move up in government. If she thinks that homosexuals are a bigger threat than terrorists, she ought to pull our soldiers out of Iraq and invade West Hollywood.

Daniel Day-Lewis

(80th Annual Academy Awards, 2/25/08)

Daniel Day-Lewis explains why he kissed George Clooney on his way to the podium to accept his Oscar:

George has always been there for me. Because George was the nearest fellow nominee and, I have to say—and I didn't say it at the time—that I was very proud to be included in that group of actors on this occasion. But also, George is just so incredibly generous. He's just a great guy. I had to kiss someone. I kissed my wife, and in the interest of parity, I kissed George!

Judith on Judy

(USA Today, 3/11/08, Craig Wilson)

"This sweet, gentle, quiet woman [Judy Shepard] who never wanted anything but anonymity suddenly became the public personification of the desperate desire we all have to end hatred and violence," says Judith Light, the activist and actress who sits on the board of the Matthew Shepard Foundation (MatthewShepard.org). "She doesn't pay attention to what she wants to do; she simply devotes herself to doing what needs to be done."

[EDITOR'S NOTE: See interview with Judy Shepard on page 34.]

Missy Higgins

(2/08, Peter Galvin)

Peter Galvin: I know that journalists have pointed out that you don't use male or female pronouns when describing relationships in your songs, and you've said that you believe sexuality is a very fluid thing.

Missy Higgins: I've never been comfortable being put in a box or having a label put on me. As far as my sexuality is concerned, I've never forced myself to decide one way or the other. I leave it up to the universe and how I feel at any moment in time. The inspiration for my songs comes from the relationships I've had with both genders. I don't fit into any category, and it's not because I'm ashamed. I don't want to call myself one thing just because I'm expected to.

5 YEARS AGO
THIS MONTH

Joel and Colin

(Interview, 4/03, Joel Schumacher)

Joel Schumacher [openly gay director, *The Phantom of the Opera*]: You've worked with some really big stars now, like Al Pacino and Tom Cruise, Keifer Sutherland and Forest Whitaker—do you ever think back to when you were a kid in Dublin and watched those people in movies?

Colin Farrell: Yeah. I remember having a huge love for videos. Your movie *The Lost Boys* [1987] was the first video I ever bought, and that was with—

—That's the only reason I ever hired you [to star in *Phone Booth*]. That and the blow job! [Laughs]

Bette Midler

(The Advocate, 3/25/08, Anne Stockwell)

Anne Stockwell: Let's talk about same-sex marriage. How are you feeling about the issue now? Because there have been hurt feelings—people feeling you weren't on their side.

Bette Midler: It's interesting. I have some gay friends who are for it, some gay friends who are against it. And I just feel like it's evolving and it's probably going to come to fruition, and it's probably going to be just fine.... I think people should be able to commit themselves to the people that they love. I have no problem with it whatsoever....

Bette Midler (seen here in 1991's *For the Boys*): Has she finally stopped living in the past?

What you're saying is going to be greeted with a lot of happiness, because in that interview with Larry King [in 2003], you had to think it over. You were conflicted.

I did have to think it over. These are enormous, just gigantic seismic shifts.... I'm not so quick. I'm still singing songs from the f-kin' '40s!



Compiled by
Blase DiStefano

Chris March

Chris March (seen here from *Project Runway*): Now that the series is over, is he still getting a licking?

Tyra and Mike

(The Tyra Banks Show, 2/29/08)

Tyra Banks: I know that you are a preacher—do you believe that homosexuality is immoral?

Mike Huckabee (Arizona governor): Well, I think a lot of things in our lives are missing the mark. The word "sin" means missing the mark. It doesn't mean that a person has committed murder. I miss the mark if I don't tell the whole truth.... I think that we were created to have relationships with someone of the opposite gender—that's how we reproduce, that's how we live our lives.

So I think sometimes if you say, "Is it a sin or immoral," and people think you're making these terrible statements about somebody. I've had people who are gay that worked on my staff. It's not like I'm some homophobe. If you ask me, "Is it the normal pathway?" I don't think so....

(AfterElton.com, 3/2/08, John@NewNowNext)

AfterElton.com: ...[D]o you think *Project Runway* positively furthers the image of gay people on TV?

Chris March: Absolutely. I think one of the greatest things about *Project Runway*, and about a lot of the Bravo shows, is that they just put gay people on television. They don't talk about it, they don't make a big deal about it. You are there like everyone else is there. And if you talk about being gay it's fine, if you don't talk about being gay it's fine. It's like the real world should be. And I was definitely made to feel comfortable, and just to be however I wanted to be....

What's been the craziest fan moment you've experienced?

Well, I don't know if I can say... I will say that I've been shocked by the amount of e-mails I've gotten from men who want to go out with me! And who think I'm really cute and who want to lick me from head to toe.

DVD/VHS

by Aaron Coleman

GAY & BLACK & HOMOPHOBIA & RACISM

'Tongues Untied' at 20

Tongues Untied is the late Marlon Riggs' acclaimed and award-winning documentary film, now on DVD, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the film's production. It tells the story of racism and homophobia and the rites of passage of gay black men in America, through images, narration, and the eloquent and poignant poetry of Riggs' collaborator, the late Essex Hemphill.

In the film, a college student is depicted left bleeding on the sidewalk after a gay bashing, and a drag queen ponders feelings of loneliness and isolation. Riggs explores the transition from his early "gay initiations" (coming out to the white gay world of San Fran-



cisco in the '80s) to years later with his self-awareness and pride as a gay black man in America.

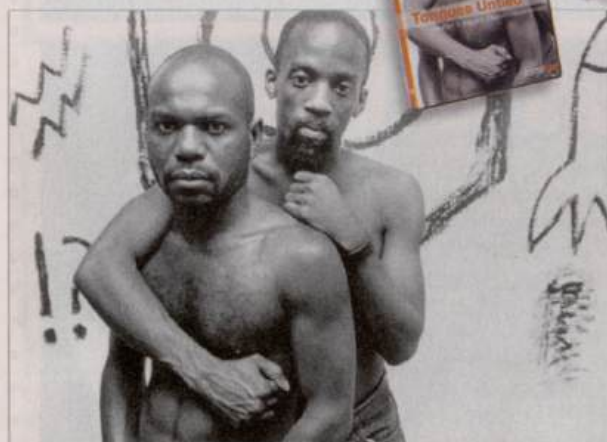
Tongues Untied could have been a stage production for its use of theatrics, dance, movement, and lighting. Controversial in its concept, the film occasionally employs nudity as art, with a backdrop of music from Billie Holiday to disco.

There is a sequence dedicated to "snap," the visible and enigmatic language of "snap divas," who, when there are no words to express immediate and passionate emotion, use it to illustrate a point. "Snap" was introduced into popular culture through a reoccurring segment on the hit television show, *In Living Color*. The snap segment alone is worth the price of the DVD.

Alice Walker, author of *The Color Purple*, wrote, "A black male warrior fighting for the right to love other black men, Marlon Riggs affirms what was nearly lost, newly found: the certainty that black male lives are utterly precious."

The *Tongues Untied* DVD contains numerous special features, including a 1991 interview with director Marlon Riggs, and interviews with filmmaker Isaac Julien, AIDS activist Phill Wilson, spoken word and rap artist Juba Kalamka, and cultural critic Herman Gray.

From Frameline (www.frameline.org).



Not camera shy: Marlon T. Riggs has his eyes on a Pride parade in the above photo, and goes shirtless at left with poet Essex Hemphill (r), who is featured in Riggs' award-winning documentary, *Tongues Untied*. The DVD includes an interview with Riggs, among many others.

DVD/VHS Shorts

Nina's Heavenly Delights

As cuisine-centered cinema goes, this motion picture dish is delish. It has the familial affection and conflict of *Eat Drink Man Woman*; the sensuality of *Like Water for Chocolate*; the quirky characters of *Tampopo*; and the high-stakes cooking competition-cum-drama of *Iron Chef*. But what this cinematic samosa also brings to the table are three distinctive ingredients. One, the film is set in the Indian community of Glasgow, Scotland (South Asians with Scottish accents can be hilarious—at least for the first 20 minutes—to American eyes and ears). Two, there are touching moments when Nina's recently deceased father, who appears from time to time, unseen to all, looks upon his daughter with

pride and acceptance. And, moreover, three, the forbidden lesbian love Nina feels for her friend and kitchen accomplice, Lisa. • 2006. Co-written and directed by Pratibha Parmar. • From Genius Products, Inc. (www.geniusproducts.com). —Review: Eric A.T. Dieckman

Soul Maid

Moses' chronic seizures take the form of religious visions, a goddess named Glintentica. But when Moses meets David, the vengeful goddess attempts to come between the two, possess David's soul, and bring about the extinction of gays forever. Can a way to defeat Ginny's evil scheme be found? • 2007. Co-directed by Jeffrey Maccubbin, Jeffrey Thomas McHale, Dan Mohr, and Josef Steiff. • From Ariztital Entertainment (www.ariztital.com). —Preview: E.D.

Running Deep

Loss is never easy and always painful. After the death of his wife, a man struggles to overcome the heartache of her departure, while trying to reconnect with his two sons. • 2007. Co-written and directed by Mark Kokkoros. • From Ariztital Entertainment (www.ariztital.com). —Preview: E.D.

Looking for Cheyenne

Cheyenne is a Parisian journalist who has just been cut off from her welfare payments. Upon deciding to leave for the countryside to lead a simplified life, Cheyenne must also deal with the rejection of her partner, Sonia, who refuses to leave her modern life behind. How →

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DVD/VHS Shorts continued from page 92

do you leave the one you love? • 2005. Co-written and directed by Valérie Minetto. French with English subtitles. • From Genius Products, Inc. (www.geniusproducts.com). —Preview: E.D.

Tick Tock Lullaby



Set in hip, progressive London, cartoonist Sasha (writer/director Lisa Gornick) and her partner Maya feel their biological clocks ticking. Will they hit the snooze button? As they debate the topic and shop for possible donors, the couple encounters other wannabe mums and the many challenges of gay parenthood. • 2007. Written and directed by Lisa Gornick. • From Wolfe Video (www.WolfeVideo.com). —Preview: E.D.

Bonnie and Clyde



Did you know the real Clyde (Clyde Barrow) of the infamous crime duo was purported to be bi? There's a good bit of evidence that not only was he bisexual, but that some members of the Barrow gang may have also hit a 3 on the Kinsey scale. Although actor Warren Beatty was willing to play Clyde as bi, the portrayal of the character's sexuality was jettisoned in pre-production. Instead, the director talked him into playing the original gangster as impotent. • 1967. Directed by Arthur Penn. • From Warner Home Video (www.warnerhomevideo.com). —Preview: E.D.

Forbidden Hollywood Collection, Volume 2



Hardcore classic movie addicts can thank TCM Archives for *Forbidden Hollywood, Volume 2*, a three-disc wallow in those raw and racy films made before the Production Code was enforced in 1934. This edition includes *The Divorcee*, *A Free Soul*, *Three on a Match*, *Female*, and *Night Nurse*, all released between 1930 and 1933, and featuring such stars as Norma Shearer, Bette Davis, Barbara Stanwyck, and Clark Gable. We also get the new featurette *Thou Shalt Not: Sex, Sin and Censorship in Pre-Code Hollywood*, a fascinating look at the sin, vice, corruption, and, yes, sexual perversion, moviegoers enjoyed before censorship bared its lethal fangs. Warner Home Video (www.warnerbros.com). —Review: Jack Varsi

The Joan Crawford Collection, Volume 2



Volume 2, in stores now, doesn't quite soar to the heights (depths?) of Volume 1, but it does resurrect *Sadie McKee* (1934), *Strange Cargo* (1940), *A Woman's Face* (1941), *Flamingo Road* (1949), and *Torch Song* (1953). All of these, of course, are highly recommended, but for something really different you might want to begin with *Strange Cargo*, Crawford's eighth and final film with Clark Gable. In this one a truly odd assortment of characters escape into the deadly jungle surrounding a French penal colony. One of the fugitives is Jesus. No kidding! Warner Home Video (www.warnerbros.com). —Review: J.V.

TV DVD

The Love Boat, Season One, Volume One



LaWanda Page, Kristy McNichol, Robert Reed, Charo, Jim Nabors, Tab Hunter, Milton Berle, Eva Gabor, Dick Sargent, Will Geer, and many, many more gay and gayish icons were passengers on ABC's *The Love Boat* in just 12 episodes of the first year. Since Captain Stubing and the gang sailed 10 full seasons, expect this three-disc release to be just the beginning of a collection that's gayer than an RSVP cruise. CBS DVD (www.paramount.com/homeentertainment). —Preview: Nancy Ford

Comedic Control

Suzanne Westenhoefer is at her best with 'A Bottom on Top'

Sure, she does the cruises and the Dinah and the breast-cancer banquets and the festivals and all those lesbian gigs lesbian comics do. But unlike most other lesbian comics, Suzanne Westenhoefer is also enjoying credibility and respect in the non-gay show biz world. (Hmmm—is that concept an oxymoron?)

In February, Suzanne, a former bartender who once made her living here in Houston slinging drinks at Hoolihan's on Post Oak, took part in The History Channel's *History of the Jake*. The highly rated, semi-serious documentary hosted by Lewis Black prominently featured her alongside top comics like George Carlin, Robin Williams,



Kathy Griffin, and others considered leaders in their field.

Best of all, she wasn't even singled out as the token gay.

Welcome to the top, Suzanne.

Appropriately, she's just released her fifth and possibly best DVD, titled *A Bottom on Top*.

Filmed last year at Indianapolis' Indiana Roof Ballroom, some of the funnies the 1000-member audience seemed to enjoy most included Suzanne's rants on *The L Word*, Thanksgiving with the family, the difference between Olivia and RSVP cruises, and her and her partner Jenn's discovery of (engage reverb) THE GREATEST INVENTION EVER!

Logo, that all-gay-all-the-time cable TV network, has been airing the concert for a couple of months now. But the DVD contains extras unseen on Logo, including an oddly fascinating segment spotlighting Suzanne and Jenn's pre-concert limo trip.

By the way, Jenn looks enough like Suzanne to give them something to talk about with a couples' counselor for years. Maybe we'll hear about that on her sixth DVD.

Ariztical Entertainment (www.ariztical.com). —Review: N.F. ■

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FUNNY GUY

Jason Stuart makes it to the middle



Jason Stuart is one of those actors who shows up in film and on TV more often than we are aware of. Remember his 1998 portrayal of a young Angelina Jolie's bookie in *Gia*? Didn't think so.

Nonetheless, Stuart has been seen in more than 100 of those guest spots, including roles in *My Wife & Kids*, *Everybody Hates Chris*, and a number of indie films like *10 Attitudes* and *Coffee Date*. It's no wonder he now spends little time on the comedy club circuit where

he first gained acclaim as the country's first openly gay guy comedian.

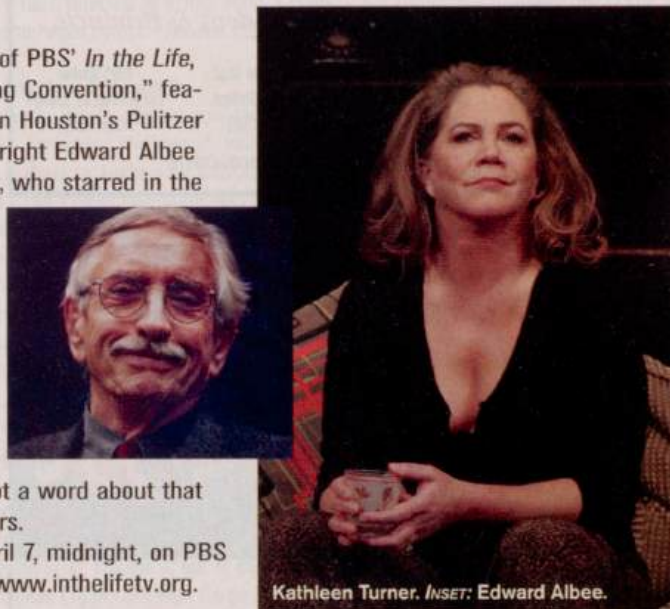
This month Stuart honors his stand-up roots, bringing his rapid-fire act to here! TV. *Making It to the Middle* not only offers Stuart in all his cocktail-through-the-nose-spraying glory, but also provides a poignant look at the comic as he approaches both the middle of his career as well as the middle of his life.

Airs through April 24 on here! TV. Details: www.heretv.com.

In the Life

The April episode of PBS' *In the Life*, titled "Challenging Convention," features a chat between Houston's Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Edward Albee and Kathleen Turner, who starred in the 2005 Broadway revival of his *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* The two discuss censorship, writing gay, and the insouciant commercialization of Broadway—but not a word about that bizarre accent of hers.

Airs Monday, April 7, midnight, on PBS Channel 8. Details: www.inthelife.org.



Kathleen Turner. Inset: Edward Albee.

Na Kamalei: Men of Hula

Is that pineapple under your skirt or are you just happy to see me? Director Lisette Kaualea Flanary follows Hula master Robert Cazimero and six male high school students as they compete in the traditionally female-dominated Merrie Monarch Hula Festival, aka the Super Bowl of Hula.

Airs May 6, 9:30 p.m. on PBS' *Independent Lens*. Details: www.pbs.org.



Men of Hula

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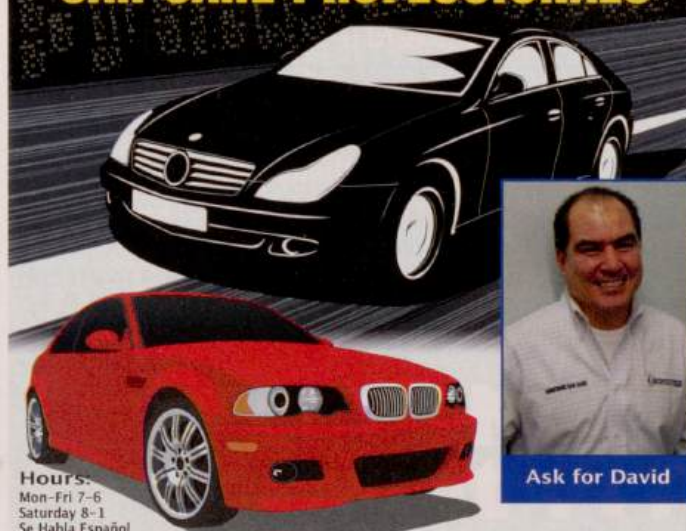
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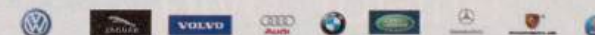
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GRITTY IN PINK

Scott Free's tough, masterful 'Pink Album' speaks for a generation

Over the course of his first three albums, queer musician Scott Free demonstrated his musical versatility, setting our heads spinning with forays into punk, modern rock, and hip-hop. But, it's safe to say that nothing could have prepared us for his masterwork, *The Pink Album (A Pop Opera)* (Leather/Western). Venturing into new and potentially risky territory, including cabaret and pure pop, Free emerges unscathed and all the better for it. *The Pink Album* is a virtual mini-musical history of gay culture—from childhood to adulthood and from the mid-20th century to the present, touching on themes that will surely resonate with many listeners.

Free took time out of his busy schedule, which includes booking the twice-monthly Homolatte performance series at Big Chicks/Tweet and lining up talent for his annual



My pink life: "The idea for the concept album grew out of the song 'Like a Girl,'" says Scott Free of *The Pink Album*, "which was literally written immediately after talking to an old friend about his horrible public school experience."

Alt-Q concert event at the Old Town School of Folk Music (both in Chicago), to answer a few questions about *The Pink Album*.

Gregg Shapiro: Your new disc *The Pink Album* is subtitled "a pop opera." Did the concept come first, or did the songs come first, leading you to then put them together in this format?

Scott Free: The idea for the concept album grew out of the song "Like a Girl," which was literally written immediately after talking to an old friend about his horrible public school experience. Originally, the concept was just "growing up gay" songs, but I then extended it to living in the newly formed gay community, through AIDS, and up to today. I decided to use the term pop opera because I wanted to make it clear this was not autobiographical—these are stories from many different sources.

In the liner notes for *The Pink Album*, you make reference to being asked, during a radio interview, why you are so angry. Was it a GLBT radio program or a mainstream program? →

GrooveOut Shorts

Original Soundtrack Recording
Loving Annabelle

The movie about transgenerational lesbian love won all kinds of festival awards, but oddly none for the rich score by Aurah's Marc Dold and Judith Martin who describe their music as "organic electronica." Especially alluring is "All Over Me," featuring Lindsey Harper. Massive Music America (www.aurah.com). —Review: Nancy Ford

Janet Jackson
Discipline

Looking more lithe than ever and sounding just as lovely, Miss Jackson (because I'm nasty) says she considers the concept of discipline a blessing, not a burden. Either way, her 10th studio album's title cut, *Discipline*, is likely to become a favorite among National Leather Association members. Steamy and intense, especially Missy Elliott's guest shout on "The 1." Island Records (www.islandrecords.com). —Review: N.F.

Michael Jackson
Thriller 25



That's right, a quarter-century has passed since The Gloved One birthed the world's biggest-selling album (engage reverb) OF ALL TIME. Kanye West, Fergie, and others appear in new MJ collaborations on this reissue of the mega-platinum original, plus a DVD with three versions of the Thriller short film, footage from Motown 25, the previously unreleased "For All Time," and more. What indecency-with-a-minor lawsuits? Legacy/Epic (www.legacyrecordings.com, www.epicrecords.com). —Preview: N.F.

k. d. lang
Watershed



Singer/songwriter k.d. lang now adds producer to her long list of accomplishments. The reflective compositions on *Watershed* are fused with country, vintage pop, and Brazilian styles. Each performance brilliantly captures a sentimental magic and intimacy with the audience. Beautifully arranged,

definitely one of her finest works. Nonesuch Records (www.nonesuch.com). More: www.kdlang.com.

—Review: Andrea Rodricks

Dame Shirley Bassey
Get the Party Started



Does the world need a Bassey version of the Pink hit? Probably not, but it isn't bad. The superior tracks from this 70th-birthday-celebration disc are remixes by top London DJs and producers of Bassey classics and a new recording of "The Living Tree" by the hip UK duo Never the Bride. Decca Records (www.deccalabelgroup.com). —Review: Tim Brookover

Keram (Malicki-Sanchez)
Box



He sings, he acts, he writes, he produces—he does it all. This Polish-Ecuadorian Renaissance man presents an unassuming and thoroughly enjoyable acoustic collection of tunes; the quirky, haunting "In the Mourning" stands out. We're not sure if he is, though. →

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GrooveOut continued from page 98

It was an LGBT program, and I won't name names because it sounds like I'm being critical of them, and I happen to respect them greatly. But it was such a shock for me as an opening question. It is possible that it was generational. This person is much younger than I am, and was too young to feel the full impact of the AIDS crisis.

You address the religious persecution and oppression of GLBT people in the liner notes, as well as in the song "The Boy in the Last Pew." At this point in time, would you say that you have an affiliation with any religious community?

No, I'm not religious at all, although I do tell my husband that I think angels are out there looking over me. I've had too good of a life! [Laughs] The song "The Boy in the Last Pew" isn't about any one particular person. It's a growing-up-in-church experience that I've heard from many of my friends. If you are young and you've already figured out that you are gay, and here the church is telling you that you are evil and going to hell, you can't help but think of suicide. The church's teachings are the equivalent of child abuse.

Religion also comes up in "Mom Dad I," a song about coming out to parents, in which you not only make mention of the way the narrator's parents will be treated by their church friends but also the way God made him. Do you think there will ever come a time when the sexuality of a child will not be an issue for a parent, whether or not they consider themselves to be religious? "Mom Dad I" is one of the few songs on the CD that is totally me. I had planned and

planned what I was going to say to my parents when I finally came out to them. And that was my biggest concern: What were their church friends going to think of them? Would they themselves think they had failed as parents? It horrified me. I actually have performed that song with my parents in the audience. And this is the first CD that I've given to my parents. My previous CDs always had raunchy punk songs on them, and I knew they couldn't handle that! [Laughs] My mother just says that "Mom Dad I" is a very sad song. My dad doesn't comment. It's been a very long process for them, but they couldn't be better now. My dad is a gay-marriage advocate!

We still have a long way to go as far as the general public's understanding of sexuality [is concerned]. Obviously, it's the suppression of education that makes this issue continue from generation to generation. Maybe around the time of the first openly gay president of the United States, we will be over it.

The songs "Alone," "Better," and "Two Great Dads" find you dabbling in cabaret, while the wordplay of "GRID" can only be described as Sondheim-esque.

There's no doubt that "GRID" is total Sondheim. I was well into the idea of pop opera when I wrote that song. And somehow "Alone" turned into French cabaret, which is so perfect for its lyric—a little over-dramatic. "Alone" is also completely me. When I was about 15 years old, I had this concept of how my adult gay life would be—solitary, urban, and promiscuous. But it was only until seeing the film *Celluloid Closet* years later that I understood where my ideas came from. It was the only way gays were portrayed in films of that period.

GrooveOut Shorts

continued from page 98

Out, that is. Constant Change Music (www.keramsongs.com). —Review: N.F.

Erykah Badu New Amerykah (Part I)



If this Grammy-winning former Dallasite's new album is as sweet and sassy as its first single, "Honey" (as well as its accompanying video that pays satirical tribute to classic R&B album covers), she's got another hot hit. Universal Records (www.universalrecords.com). More: www.erykahbadu.com. —Preview: N.F.

Diane Schuur Some Other Time

A playful, relaxed style has always distinguished Schuur's work, a quality that is showcased on this salute to her jazz roots. A swinging version of the great Ger-



shwin tune "Night Work If You Can Get It" kicks off this 13-track set, which includes singular takes on "Blue Skies" and other standards. Concord Jazz (www.concordmusicgroup.com). —Review: T.B.

Supreme Beings of Leisure 11i



The 11 tracks of the gayish SBOL's sophomore electronica album expounds on such weighty themes as quantum physics and devastating global changes prophesized by some spiritual disciplines in the year 2012. Trippy, but very listenable. Rykodisc (www.sbleisure.com). —Review: N.F.

Dianne Reeves When You Know

This premier jazz vocalist has won an unprecedented four Grammy awards, including one for her musical contribu-

I had a hard time deciding whether to put "Better" on the CD or leave it off. A good friend tells me it's the saddest song that he's ever heard. It is hard to listen to. But I didn't want to address AIDS only from the political side. I had to personalize it. I was with my ex-lover the last two weeks of his life. I dedicated the CD to him. "Better" is a synopsis of the last conversations I had with him. In the song "Death Toll," he is the only true named person—the rest of the names are changed or made up, although the stories are ones I was aware of at the time—dying on the Greyhound bus, throwing the body on the White House lawn. I do feel like I should have put a warning sticker on the CD: "Contains honest language."

I felt it was equally important to include songs about how far we've come, and how beautiful our lives can be. "Equal" is one of those songs, as is "Two Great Dads"—another me song. I'm afraid I wouldn't be much of a gay parent. I'd be way too busy being a kid with my kid. Whenever we are at my husband's family events, I spend all my time playing with the children. The big joke is that even though I'm white, and my husband is black, to them, I'm Uncle Scott, and he is Uncle Scott's friend. [Laughs]

"Death Toll," which has a roll-call quality that made me think of Jim Carroll's "People Who Died" crossed with the reading of the names at a showing of the NAMES Project Quilt, is set to a dance-hall reggae beat, and I was wondering, because of the ongoing homophobia and suggestion of antigay violence in reggae, if that was why you chose to set it in that musical framework. The concept of the song from the beginning was a long list of names. I was trying to →



tion to *Good Night and Good Luck*. With her re-do of stellar standards by Minnie Riperton, among others, she's likely to get a fifth. Available April 15. Blue Note Records (www.bluenote.com). —Preview: N.F.

Comedy CD Todd Barry From Heaven



The dry, wry Barry explains in one track that a friend of his responded to a classified ad for a roommate that mentioned "must not be homophobic," only to be shown a one-bedroom apartment with two beds, side by side. The potential roomie then explained he was a gay prostitute. "I hope you're not homophobic, because I'll be having sex with strange men, all the time, just a few feet away from you, for money." Comedy Central Records (www.ComedyCentral.com). —Preview: Eric A.T. Dieckman ■

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GrooveOut

continued from previous page

get across what it was like in the late 1980s—everyone you knew was dying. It was so horrifying that it's hard to believe it today. And yes, I immediately thought of the Jim Carroll song. So I went back and listened to that song, because I didn't want it to be too similar. It turns out that song used a standard blues riff, so basically I just made sure my song was as far away from that as possible—hence, the modern world/dance-hall beat.

Listening to "Act Up Fight Back" made me wonder why someone hadn't transformed these chants of protest and empowerment into an anthem, in the way that you did, sooner.

I was struggling for so long on how to include ACT UP in this album. They were too important to our history to leave them out. I was trying to personalize it, but as I was doing my web research, I found a site that had put up recordings of ACT UP protests. I just took slogans from their entire history and strung them together. As I first started recording it, I knew I was on to something. I felt like I had invented the first literal protest song. And yet, it's pure musical theater.

The Pink Album closes with "My Generation," which provides a sort of queer-eyed update to the classic Who song. In fact, the album as a whole, speaks with the voice of a generation, many of whom died too young and too soon. Was it your intention with this album, and with the three that preceded it, to be that voice?

I think that's always been my goal—to be the voice of a generation or at least a segment of a generation that has been completely ignored in popular music. I never had the exposure that a major label provides, which is obviously step number one in being the voice of a generation. But I'm OK with that. For many years now, my only goal has been to write the best songs I possibly can, the most honest songs that I possibly can. And I feel I've succeeded on this album, maybe for the very first time. I'm not saying that this is my final CD, but right now it feels like it, and if I never make another one, I feel like I've accomplished my goals. This was the CD that took a lifetime to make—the one that I believe I was meant to make.

ON THE WEB: Read more of this interview at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

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

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ANOTHER KIND OF FAMILY

The tale of a white lesbian couple and black youngsters who enter their lives

It sounded like a heartwarming, interesting read when I picked up the book and read the back-cover blurb: A white, Philadelphia Quaker, middle-aged lesbian couple offer a place to live, and even legal guardianship, to a couple of Black Muslim teenagers who are threatened with losing custody of their triplets. The government welfare establishment, in its compartmentalized wisdom, finds the teenagers economically and emotionally incapable of caring for the babies. The punchline: This is not fiction.

In *Walk With Us: Triplet Boys, Their Teen Parents, & Two White Women Who Tagged Along* (Crandall, Dostie & Douglass), Elizabeth Gordon and her partner, Kaki Nelson, are at an age where coming out is an almost-distant memory. But like most starry-eyed lovers, the acts of consummating passion include sharing life histories while lying in one another's arms. Kaki's history includes being subjected to a classic intervention (of the type usually employed with alcoholics and drug addicts) arranged by her loving, prosperous, middle-class parents to save their only child from making the life-destroying "choice" of living a lesbian lifestyle. Elizabeth's experience with her working-class Irish family, riddled with alcoholism and abuse, is more direct, manifesting as



Author Elizabeth K. Gordon: "I saw that publishing the book was not an end but a beginning, and that ongoing revelation has a sort of companion principle—ongoing accountability. I was reminded that as a white person trying to write about race, racism, and one black family's suffering and triumphs, history had handed me a grave responsibility: first, to do no new harm, and then, if possible, to say only what was true, useful, and loving."

name-calling and predictions of hellfire and damnation.

The blush is still on the rose of new-found love for Elizabeth (the author of the memoir) and Kaki when Lamarr, the black teenager Kaki met through volunteer

work, shows up at their door asking for the use of their shower and, incidentally, a temporary shelter for his 14-year-old pregnant girlfriend. It is an almost casual beginning for the intensely challenging time that is ahead for their relationship.

The pair plunge themselves into a culture about which they know nothing. In the course of their association with the young black couple, they get a first-hand appreciation of a world where people expect to spend more time standing in line for services than receiving services, where people expect to be treated with bored disregard, where people expect to be defined by what they don't have and can't do. Like most family groups bound together by mutual need and caring, the serendipitous family of two middle-aged white lesbians, two black teenagers, and three growing babies explodes into pieces of hurt and misunderstanding, suffers the pain of humility learned, then reassembles in a form more supportive of the people they have become through the experience. Gordon quotes Hannah Arendt: "The only power we can have over the past is forgiveness."

One of the themes that colors this narrative is that long-term racism does not remain one-sided, but bifurcates into a two-way mistrust, creating a balance that erects a wall between human beings. This is no doubt true of all in-group/out-group circumstances. In the GLBT community we see a gay/straight polarization that is felt by many. Straights yell "faggot" and →

ReadOut Shorts

Nightlight

Janine Avril

Alyson Books (www.alyson.com)



Avril tells her family's story—and secrets—with a prose style that is very plain, almost dry. She lets the facts of the story land the many and considerable emotional punches, avoiding any easy tabloid sensationalism. A mother's death from a rare cancer, a father's death from AIDS, and the lies surrounding both make this a page-turner of a memoir. —Review: Neil Ellis Orts

Sex for America: Politically Inspired Erotica

Edited by Stephen Elliott

Harper Perennial (www.harperperennial.com)



As Bill Clinton reminded us, sex and politics is a powerful combination. In *Sex for America*, several very good writers tell us superb stories based on the headlines of today. Not hot, but truly hilarious, this one is just what we all need to give us some perspective on current events. Besides, how can you not enjoy a book that starts "I did not mean to sodomize Dick Cheney"? —Review: Angel Curtis

Gentleman Jigger

Richard Bruce Nugent

Da Capo Press (www.dacapopress.com)



Nugent was a participant in the Harlem Renaissance. This book, written in 1928, is now posthumously published for the first time. As a novel, it's a bit of a mess, showing cracks from being assembled from multiple unfinished manuscripts. It is also a fascinating document, one of the few to deal forthrightly with the sexual politics of the era, making it a worthwhile read more for historical than aesthetic reasons. —Review: N.O. →

News Briefs

continued from page 20

GLAAD CONGRATULATES OSCAR WINNER FOR FILM DOCUMENTING LESBIAN COUPLE

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation has officially congratulated director-producer Cynthia Wade on her Oscar win for her short documentary, *Freeheld*. The award was presented at the 80th Annual Academy Awards, held February 24 at the Kodak Theater in Los Angeles.

Freeheld documents the 2006 struggle of New Jersey Detective Lt. Laurel Hester in her effort to transfer her pension to her domestic partner, Stacie Andree, in the months leading up to Hester's death.

"We are thrilled that this powerful film, one that has the potential to change hearts and minds concerning fairness for gay couples, has been honored tonight with a well-deserved Academy Award," said GLAAD President Neil G. Giuliano.

FORD MOTOR COMPANY DENIES SUCCESS OF ANTIGAY BOYCOTT

Despite a claim of victory by the American Family Association, the Ford Motor Company has denied a boycott of Ford products by the AFA has proven successful.

Ford spokesman Jim Cain said "financial difficulties" were to blame for a system-wide scaling-back of Ford's philanthropic donations. "We've been in real financial difficulties," Cain told Portfolio.com. "There's been reduced spending in lots of areas."

"I have some good news for you!" AFA chairman Donald E. Wildmon wrote in an early-March message to members. "AFA is suspending its two-year boycott of Ford Motor Company. The conditions of the original agreement presented in fall 2005 have been met."

Wildmon and AFA had demanded that Ford stop advertising in gay-focused media outlets and stop donating to organizations that support gay equality.

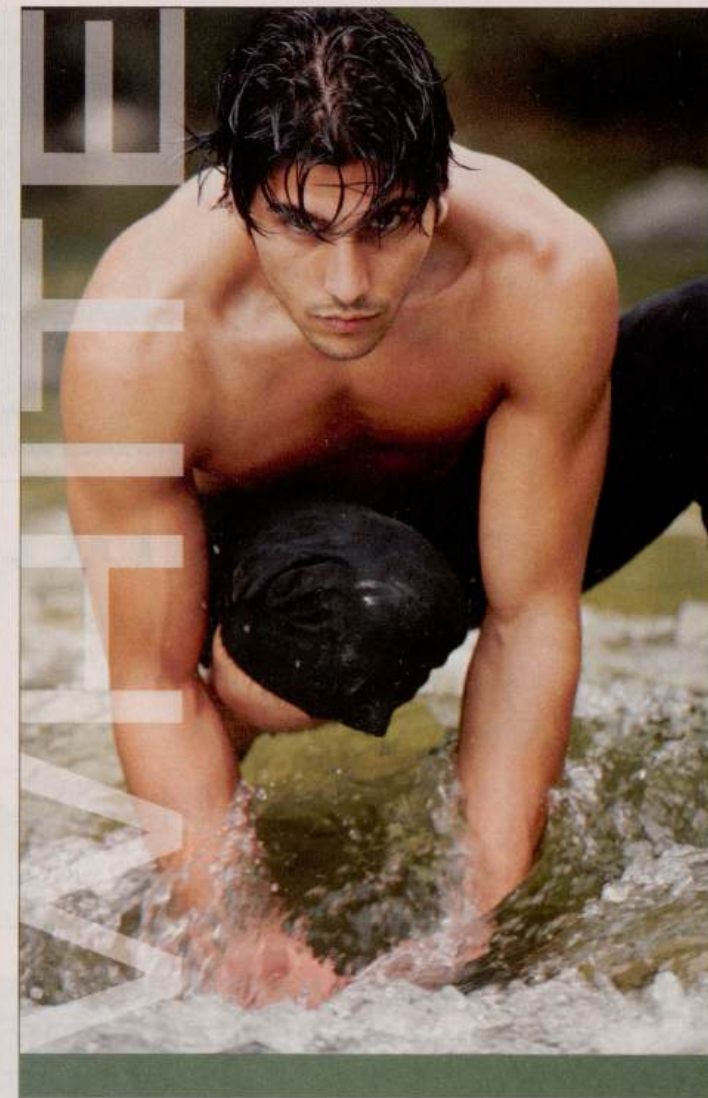
Cain added that no settlement had been reached with AFA. "I can tell you there was not a negotiated settlement to this boycott," Ford continues to support GLBT-affirmative groups, including PFLAG and Human Rights Campaign. ■

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ReadOut continued from page 104

gays yell "breeders," each reducing the other to less-than-human sexual organs. It is the gender version of "nigger" and "honky."

In *Walk with Us*, seven people lay themselves bare to show us how this works and point us in a better direction. I had expected a story about the difficulties of being lesbian and the problems of cultural differences. I was blind-sided by a story of love and hope and excruciating, debilitating racism. For anyone who wants to understand cultural differences, who wants to understand the roots of poverty, ignorance and bigotry, Elizabeth Gordon has given us a window into that world. She shares her acquired wisdom (and continuing feeling of insufficiency) with palpable honesty and elegant metaphor. She sees her young charges as "caught by accident under the bell jar of her misery" and as "a nail head under the hammer of minimum wage." Gordon is a writer who thinks visually and paints with her pen, and she has created a classic work on racism.

Janis Stensrude frequently contributes to *OutSmart* as a writer and editor. She was editor of *Health & Spirit*, a magazine previously published by the *OutSmart* parent company, *Up & Out Communications*.

ReadOut Shorts

continued from page 104

Clark Gable: Tormented Star

David Bret

Carroll & Graf (www.dacapopress.com)



Though written in a somewhat "tabloid-y" style, *Clark Gable* contains a wealth of information about the bisexual American legend that you've probably not seen before. As long as you're not expecting superb writing, you'll enjoy this eye-opening look at the macho "gay-for-pay" star of *Gone with the Wind* and *The Misfits*. —Review: Troy Carrington

Beyond (Straight and Gay) Marriage

Nancy D. Polikoff

Beacon Press (www.beaconqueerideas.com)



One of my problems with the whole "gay marriage" argument is that it doesn't go far enough. If we are going to radically reform the social partnership norm, we should include all sorts of families, not just the ones that "kind of" look like heterosexual marriage.

This book provides effective arguments that we should be able to marry if it suits our cultural needs, but that marriage should not be necessary to achieve such legal consequences as inheritance rights, the ability to sponsor a partner for immigration, and survivors' benefits. —Review: A.C.

Dancing with Tina: A Memoir of Co-dependency

Terry Oldes

STARbooks Press (www.starbookspress.com)



"Write yourself sane" is a standard therapeutic tool. Oldes' use of the tool gives us this book: part memoir, part journal, part therapy. We get a real look at his life with methamphetamine and the friends who helped save him. We don't get a sense of how the struggle with the drug changed him. You'll find reading this is like listening in on someone else's therapy—fascinating or embarrassing, depending on your particular sense of dirty linen as small talk. —Review: A.C.

The Summer Book 2008

Edited by Sarah Gish

Gish Creative (www.gishcreative.com)



All kinds of day camps are being offered in Houston this summer, including a "Mad Hatter Arts Camp"; video-game design camps; journalism and architecture camps for teens; surfing, chess, and even manners camps. This guide includes over 200 camps and classes, which are organized alphabetically, by category, by age group, by length, by indoor or outdoor facilities, by scholarships offered, and by camp dates. For a complete list of retailers, go to www.thesummerbook.com. —Preview: Suzie Lynde ■

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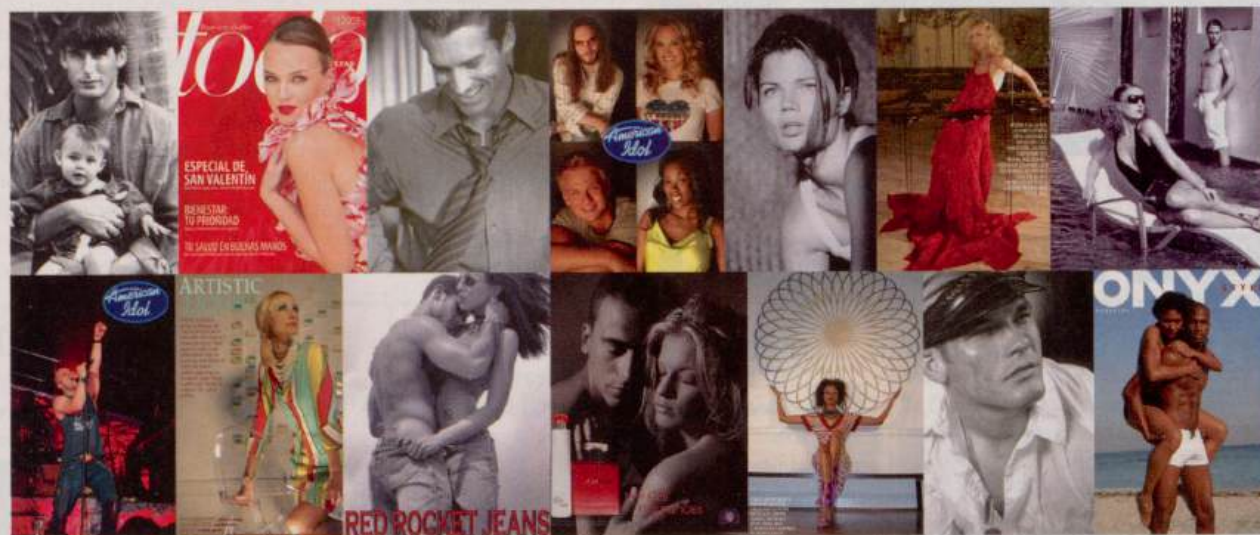
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I DO DECLARE

Sally and Wifey are domestically partnered at last

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Our local daily's FOR THE RECORD page—right in there with DEATHS, BLOOD BANK DONORS NEEDED, and DISSOLUTIONS OF MARRIAGE—now features a new listing: DECLARATIONS OF DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP. Yes, indeed. The self-same newspaper that refused to print marriage announcements during the brief era in 2004 of issuing licenses to same-sex couples (and to this day has yet to print birth announcements of babies born to same-sex parents) is now providing us space in the public record and advancing our foray into legitimacy. We're here. We're queer. Read all about it.

The names of two-man and two-woman couples printed in our local rag every day is a momentous shift. Now, just as undeniably as Lewis and Clark, Steve Prefontaine, and the KKK, Oregon's homos are at last being woven into the historic fabric of the Beaver State (don't go there).

Other than entering history's annals (don't go there, either), what does domestic partnership really mean? I guess the biggest difference is that we're legal. We don't have to worry if anyone should dare challenge our entitlement to accompany each other into the ER, make end-of-life decisions, or dispose of our mate's remains. Fabulous, or what?

My Domestic Partner and I have been advised that we now need to add a codicil to our wills affirming that we, being of sound body and mind (no jokes here, please), do hereby attest that we meant what we said and intend for our partner to inherit our worldly goods, real property, and, just for the romance of it, debts.

The thousand-some couples who have only this month been allowed by law a smattering of state rights and protections are still a bit giddy, even though most of us have been doing it for years. And by "it," I mean sharing an address, expenses, and cat care.

Take Wifey and me, for example. Since 1987, we've loved, honored, and tidied up after each other—fairly domestic and clearly partnered. This winter when a mysterious illness struck our dear Pussy (not her real name), Wifey and I jointly rushed her to the emergency vet. We love our cat, but if we could bring her back to life without having to re-hock our house, we would do what we had to. So we teamed up as home health nurses to administer injections, force-feed concentrated nutrients, and drip in 200 mls of subcutaneous fluids per day. Funny, during that whole month-long ordeal of reviving dear Pussy, we never once were asked to show anyone proof of our domestic partnership.

I'm not unhappy with our new status, but "Declarations of Domestic Partnership" does sound kind of weird, partly because those words strike me as such an odd combo. Is it just me, or does the phrase "Declarations of Domestic Partnership" conjure a kooky

Southern belle/housekeeper/cowpoke—as in *I do de-clay-ah, where's the Pine Sol, pahd'ner?* Any other domestic partners out there having a titch of identity crisis?

Don't get me wrong. Gaining legal rights at long last is a good thing, for sure. A definite step toward justice for all. But now that the paper is printing names—along with our ages, as many of us pretending to be younger than we are have been somewhat shocked to discover—we're also newly exposed to all manner of nut jobs who might be inclined to pray for our hell-bound souls, or worse. This newsprint roster has been deemed by one not-necessarily-paranoid friend as the Gay Hit List.

Not that the closet door was ever bullet-proof, but you would think in exchange for the additional risk, we could at least collect one another's Social Security or cross state lines without losing our rights. No such luck.

That's OK, though. We're headed in the right direction. With so many queer Oregonians publicly declaring our domestic partnerships, once-homophobic folks will surely come to see that the sky isn't falling and the sanctity of their marriage is no more questionable than it ever was. Then maybe we can lift this whole silly cloud of inequality and get on with life.

Sally Sheklow is a multiple winner in the annual awards presented by the Houston Press Club.



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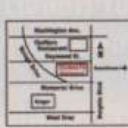
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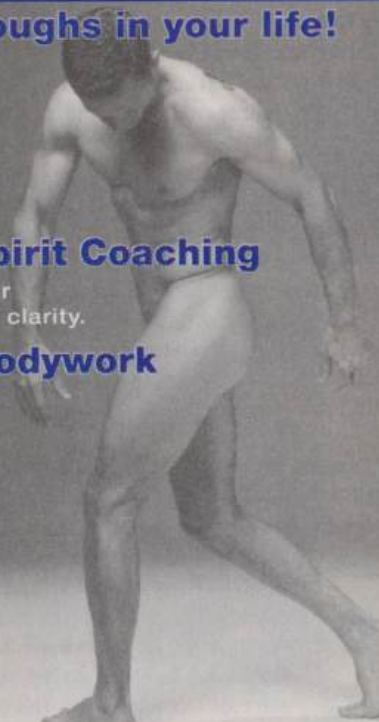



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Calendar of Events

by Sheri Taylor Bockelman

APRIL

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. 4-8 pm; **ALL STAR NEWS AND VIDEO EMPORIUM**, 3415 Katy Freeway & Studewood, Thurs. 4-8 pm; **BRAZOS RIVER BOTTOM**, 2400 Brazos, Thurs. 8 pm-12 am; **CLUB 1415**, 1415 California, Thurs. 10 pm-1 am; **CLUB HOUSTON**, 2205 Fannin, Tues. & Wed. 8 pm-12 am; **COUSIN'S**, 817 Fairview, Thurs. 8 pm-12 am; **DECADES**, 1205 Richmond, Wed. 6-10 pm; **EJ'S**, 2517 Ralph, Wed. & Fri. 10 pm-1 am; **EROS 1207 BOUTIQUE**, 7330 Southwest Frwy, Wed. 3-7 pm; **GEORGE SPORTS BAR**, 617 Fairview, Mon. 6-10 pm; **IN & OUT**, 1537 N. Shepherd, Thurs. 4-8 pm; **MARY'S, NATURALLY**, 1022 Westheimer, Wed. 4-8 pm; **MICHAEL'S OUTPOST**, 1419 Richmond, Tues. 4-8 pm; **MIDTOWN SPA**, 3100 Fannin, Tues. 4-8 pm & Fri. 10 pm-1 am; **RIPCORD**, 715 Fairview, Wed. 9 pm-12 am; **TONY'S CORNER POCKET**, 817 W. Dallas, Thurs. 8 pm-12 am. • 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. 11 am-7 pm and Fri. 11 am-5 pm.

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.

Deadline for *OutSmart's* May issue is 5 p.m., Friday, April 9.

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: 713/526-0555 x 228 (ask for Cristian) or www.transhouston.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: 713/526-0555 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.

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): 713/526-0555 x 228 (ask for Georges) or www.transhouston.com.

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, APRIL 9.

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): 713/526-0555 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 (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

THE B WORD

Bitch and The Exciting Conclusion to rock out at Chances



Bitch comes to Houston.

Thirty shows in less than two months is an incredibly grueling road schedule. The specter of bad food, unpredictable wintry weather, and sleeping in a different bed nearly every night is more than enough to render even the most calloused performer...well, bitchy.

Fortunately, in this case, it's simply good PR.

Presented by the Athena Art Project, Bitch blows into Houston on April 24, 8 p.m. to play Chances Bar (1100 Westheimer).

On this go-round, Bitch is sans Animal, with whom she performed and recorded in the late '90s through early '00s. But the "musical beat poet multi-instrumentalist" is by no means a solo act these days. Drummer Lee Free and psychedelic instrumentalist Gabriel K have signed on to form Bitch and The Exciting Conclusion.

B+TEC recorded new tracks this past winter in New York City for the group's upcoming LP, conveniently produced by Bitch's own brand-new label, Short Story Records.

Not so incidentally, Short Story's first release is *Boulder* from indie folk legend, Ferron. Dropping May 6, it features performances by The Indigo Girls, Ani DiFranco, and Le Tigre's JD Samson, among others.

B+TEC joins a list of upscale lesbian acts booked at Chances recently, like The Cliks and God-des & She. Hats off to owner Nick Vastakis and staff for transforming the club into the Gulf Coast's answer to The Planet (you know—where *The L Word* girls hang out). Without the food service and uppity coffee, of course.

If we're lucky, maybe Bitch's girlfriend Daniela Sea (*The L Word*'s Max Sweeney), who sometimes performs with B-TEC, will tag along for the Chances show. Bitchin'!

Tickets: \$15 at the door, or \$10+ online. Details: www.hwfestival.org.

Tuesday of the month, 7 pm, at the Houston SPCA, 900 Portway Dr. Info: 713/869-7722, ext. 127, or www.houstonspca.org.

1 (Tues.)

Center for AIDS Benefit Recital by Jean-Yves Thibaudet at the Houston Symphony. The world-renowned and Grammy-nominated musician will perform a recital to benefit the Center for AIDS in Houston. The Center for AIDS (CFA) advocates both locally and nationally for better treatments and better access to care for persons living with HIV/AIDS. 8 pm, by invitation only. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St. Info/tickets: classics@centerforaids.org.

Explore Modern Views on Spirituality. Dr. Steven Spidell presents a five-part series of classes that will address the paradigm shift in scientific, theological, and spiritual perspectives on the nature of reality and faith. Topics include viewpoints of quantum physics, complex adaptive systems, and process theology, covering a wide range of reality-based Christian issues. Classes begin Tuesday, April 1, 6:30-7:30 pm. To register: info@stpaulshouston.org or 713/528-0527. Recommended \$20 donation per person in cash or checks, accepted at the first session. St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St. More info: www.stpaulshouston.org.

2 (Wed.)

Jazz up Lunch with The High School for the Performing and Visual Arts Big Band. Grab lunch and enjoy talented musicians from HSPVA, courtesy of Da Camera's lunchtime performance series, A Little Day Music. Stay after for a chance 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.

3 (Thurs.)

Meditation and Prayer. Labyrinth inside St. Paul's. The movable Labyrinth at St. Paul's United Methodist Church will be set up in the church's Activity Center, which is on the second floor of the Sanctuary Building. Found in many religious traditions in various forms around the world, the labyrinth is an archetype of the journey of a spiritual seeker, a symbol of unity and wholeness. Come anytime 3-7 pm. St. Paul's UMC, 5501 Main Street. www.stpaulshouston.org.

4 (Fri.)

Wind Down with Sip & Stroll Wine Tasting. Benefiting Bering & HRC, Rainbow Lodge serves South American wines in a casual atmosphere, 5:30 pm. \$29. Information: 713/861-8666.

2008 Houston Heights Tour Candlelight Dinner & Auction. Emcee John Blass leads the live auction which includes the event's cover art, a brilliant watercolor by local artist Yu Cha Pak, and a collaborative piece by artists John Palmer and Chris Silkwood. SPIST Lodge, 1435 Beall, 8-11 pm, preceded by a private tour of the homes (no shuttles on Friday evening). Tickets \$100 each/\$1,000 reserved table for 10. Seating limited to 450; advanced purchase is required. Silent auction includes luxurious spa packages, local art work, antiques, fine wine, fun travel packages, and more! Info/tickets: www.houstonheights.org or 713/861-4002, ext. 3.

5 & 6 (Sat. & Sun.)

Get a Fresh Perspective at the 2008 Historic Houston Heights Home and Garden Tour. Six must-see homes include a two-story Victorian celebrating its 100th year, a 1920s bungalow renovated with sustainable materials including bamboo cabinets, a 1930s bungalow created for entertaining by its architect owner, a 1925 bungalow whose new addition is designed around two shady sycamores, a 1994 Greek Revival modeled after a home in the New Orleans Garden District, and a recently built home showcasing the owners' diverse art collection. Featured family homes: Vandewalker, 2035 Rutland; Newberry, 705 East 19th; Standridge, 1509 Oxford; Dawson, 1021 Harvard; Thayer-Gayle, 533 Cortland; and Schooley, 807 Rutland. Stroll Heights' area antique shops, art galleries, eclectic boutiques, restaurants, and more, plus don't miss the Third Annual HHA Youth Art Show at the Heights Fire Station. Noon-6 pm. Advance tickets, \$17; available at Another Place in Time, The Artful Corner, Buchanan's Native Plants, Eclectic Home, Harold's in the Heights, Jubilee, and Karen Derr & Associates. Day of tour, \$20. Ticket includes all six homes and bus shuttle. Individual homes: \$5 each. Parking/shuttle-boarding at the Heights Fire Station, Yale and 12th Street. Info: www.houstonheights.org or 713-861-4002, ext. 3.

H-E-B Houston Children's Festival celebrates its 20th year as Houston's favorite family outing, presented by Baker Hughes, to-date benefiting over \$3,680,000 for Child Advocates, Inc. and the abused and neglected children it serves. Six stages of excitement and entertainment, featuring Corbin Bleu, star of *High School Musical* and *Jump In*; plus SpongeBob SquarePants and Patrick, presented by Hilton Furniture; and the Houston Comets' pureNRG, presented by TeamKid Town. Fun and fascinating Family Adventure Zones include H-E-B Kid's Kingdom, Baker Hughes Circus Town, EarthZone by Shell & Motiva, with Flumpa & Friends LIVE!; Wells Fargo Great American Barnyard Zone; YMCA's Healthy Kid Zone, and Texas Children's Hospital & the Health Museum. All held around City Hall, Tranquility Park and Sam Houston Park in downtown Houston. 10:30 am-6:30 pm. Admission: \$5 per person with one H-E-B grocery receipt (one receipt accepted per ticket); \$8 at the

'TEA' WITH JOANNE

'Charlie Wilson's War' heroine Joanne King Herring has 'Tea with Mussolini'

When one of *OutSmart's* favorite cover girls, Lily Tomlin, came to town to raise some cash for Houston Area Women's Center, she told an enrapt group of journalists, including our own Blase DiStefano, that she'd been asked to play a lesbian in a new movie loosely based on the life of director Franco Zeffereilli. The down side, Lily said, was that she'd have to leave her animals while she lived in Florence for three months while filming. DiStefano urged her to do the role, even offering to take care of Lily's furry ones.

That was 10 years ago. The film in question? Zeffereilli's *Tea with Mussolini*. Good call, Blase! We guess Jane Wagner provided kennel duties.

Screening as part of Museum of Fine Arts Houston's popular "Movies Houstonians Love" series, *Tea*, it turns out, is a fave of *Charlie Wilson's War* heroine, Joanne King Herring.

Funny—we assumed Joanne would have preferred something starring Julia Roberts.

April 28, 7 p.m. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Details: www.mfah.org. —Nancy Ford



Lily Tomlin (pictured) stars with Cher, Maggie Smith, Judi Dench, and Joan Plowright in *Tea with Mussolini* at the MFAH.

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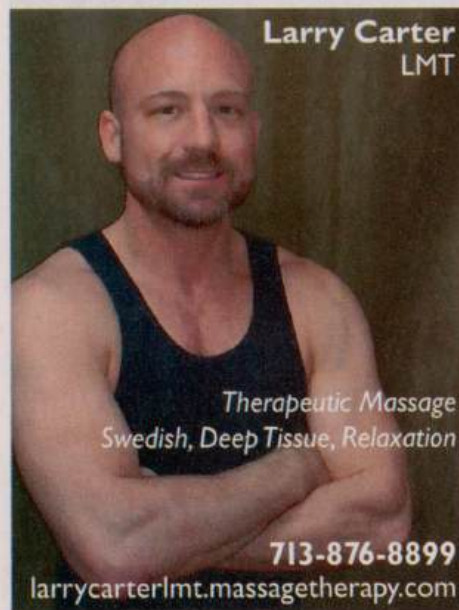
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Japan: The Past, Present, and Future. The 15th Annual Houston Japan Festival is alive with colorful cultural events as the Japanese Garden at Hermann Park is transformed into an authentic Japanese village. Celebrate with food, crafts, and entertainment, including Japanese art, music, dance, technology, and martial arts. Hear the spiritually healing music of Taisho-Koto, featuring Wakanaikai, a noted group from Houston's sister city of Chiba, Japan. Listen to the unique folk sounds of Tsugaru Shamisen, its name derived from the quaint three-stringed redwood lute which is played. The Japanese Garden in Hermann Park, Fannin St. and Sunset Blvd. (nearest intersection). Free. 10 am-6 pm. More info: www.jashouston.org or call the Japan-America Society of Houston at 713/963-0121.

8 (Tues.)

Opening Performance: All in the Timing. See this critically acclaimed evening of comedy shorts that combines wit, intellect, satire, and just plain fun, by David Ives. Eccentric personalities usher the audience through a dizzying and absurd exploration of the English language. Free. 8 pm. Following will be a cast party cafe. Hamman Hall, Rice University, 6100 Main St. Entrance 21 (off Rice Blvd). Info: www.arts.rice.edu.

11 (Fri.)

He's Cool and Oh, So Hot! Meet Andrew Christian, designer of innovative, urban-inspired underwear that has everybody taking a second look. Models will show off some of his collections. All guests will receive an Undy Game Ticket and enjoy complimentary drinks. Male Uwear, 7-9 pm. Come early to shop. Afterward, at Meteor see more steamy designs at the Andrew Christian Fashion Show, 10 pm.

12 (Sat.)

Healthy, Long-term Relationships can happen to you! Step out of that same old cycle, and learn how to build trust and intimacy with your partner. Whatever your history, now is the time to learn from the past and go forward to find and keep love and passion alive in your life. Licensed professional counselor/therapist Denise O'Doherty explains the essentials of a healthy relationship, skills to achieve the breakthrough rather than the breakup, and how to manage differences in personality styles. (What to do when what attracted you in the beginning bothers you now.) Class presented by Leisure Learning Unlimited. \$30. 10 am-noon. Unitarian Universalist Church, 1900 Bering Drive. Register at www.illu.com or call 713/529-4414.

Meet Artists and tour their studios. Twenty-four local artists invite the public to view/purchase their work directly from them. Part of the 10th Midtown Visions Cultural Arts Tour. Noon-5 pm. Art Square Studios, 2711 Main Street at Dennis. More info: Vikki Trammel at 713/652-5028 or Alan Hurwitz at 713/825-8198 or e-mail artsupply@swbell.net to receive e-vite.

13 (Sun.)

Beautiful Voices: St. Paul's Choral Scholars Sing Evensong Service. The service of Evensong, also known as evening prayer, is remarkable both for the centuries-old liturgical tradition it represents and for the atmosphere of contemplative devotion that enables it to remain deeply meaningful for worshippers today. The distinguished choir comprised of advanced high-school vocalists selected through a rigorous audition process, presents the sacred liturgy. 4 pm in the sanctuary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church,

5501 Main. More info: www.stpaulshouston.org.

Horn Concerto by Houston Art Cars. Celebrate the historic opening of Discovery Green, Houston's new urban park located near the George R. Brown Convention Center, with the sounds of car horns as the Horn Concerto returns to Houston for another free performance. Composed by Mitchell Center 2005 visiting artist Stephen Montague, this piece will be presented by Houston Art Cars. About noon. Directions/info: www.discoverygreen.com or 713/333-1161.

17 (Thurs.)

Ecology and Nature take center stage as the internationally acclaimed CORE Performance Company of Several Dancers Core interpret artist John Alexander's work. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, invites the public to *John Alexander: A Requiem to Loss*, a CORE dance event in tribute to the exhibition *John Alexander: An Elegy to Nature*. Reception afterward. Register for a chance to win great giveaways from KUHF 88.7 FM and the MFAH. Admission is free for "Artful Thursday," April 17, 6:30 pm. Brown Auditorium Theater, The Caroline Wiess Law Building, 1001 Bissonnet St. Info: www.mfah.org or 713/639-7300.

18 (Fri.)

Free Concerts at lunchtime to kick off the 2008 Houston International Festival, Out of Africa, in the area around City Hall between 11 am-1:30 pm.

19 (Sat.)

Earth Day pot recycling and ecological advice. The Houston Arboretum has teamed up with Gulf Coast Recycling and Avangard Innovative in celebration of Earth Day. Bring the family from 10 am-4 pm. Free. Are you among the 70 million U.S. households who plant flowers or garden every year? Help keep thousands of plastic pots out of the landfill by dropping off dirt-free, stacked and unbagged plastic garden pots and trays at the Arboretum for recycling during April. Houston Arboretum, 4501 Woodway Drive. More info: www.HoustonArboretum.org or 713/681-8433.

Race in for \$1 Deals at Buffalo Exchange and help Lonesome George, the last Pinta tortoise ever. You can make a difference this Earth Day to help restore the ecosystem of George's home and bring closely related Espanola tortoises back to Pinta Island in the Galapagos Islands. Buffalo Exchange works to protect the environment by reusing and recycling clothing—find unique vintage and nearly-new items from jewelry to jeans and designer wear. All \$1 sale items during Buffalo Exchange's Dollar Day Sale benefits Galapagos Conservancy to fund a project to repopulate Pinta Island with giant saddleback tortoises. The conservancy, partnered with the Charles Darwin Foundation, is the only U.S.-based organization focused exclusively on conservation of Galapagos. Buffalo Exchange also donates to local nonprofit agencies in the community through its Tokens for Bags program; take a token instead of a bag for purchases, and Buffalo Exchange will donate five cents to your favorite charity. For info: www.buffaloexchange.com and www.galapagos.org.

19 & 20 (Sat. & Sun.)

Dream Destinations await you at Escape! Second Home Expo. Explore all your options during a two-day extravaganza featuring second, vacation, and retirement home opportunities in locations from Austin to Australia. Check out views from beaches to the scenic Texas Hill Country, the spectacular Rockies to the Smoky Mountains, and hot sites south of the border. There will be speakers,



Tara Mateik as Billie Jean King (r) and as Bobby Riggs in *Putting the Balls Away* at Aurora Picture Show.

DINNER AND BOWLING

Jewish Community Center Gay and Lesbian Social Group of Houston presents a Pot Luck Shabbat Dinner at the home of Jereme Scott. President of The Foundation for AIDS Israel, Scott will present a short informative talk about his work. Friday, April 4, at 7 p.m. The group goes bowling on May 2, 7:30 p.m. at Palace Lanes, 4191 Bellaire Blvd. Details: Danny Kallen, 281/773-6002 or dannyrk@sbcglobal.net.

PITCH 'N' PUMP

The Montrose Softball League's Pranksters In Pumps is an evening of "drinking, drag, and debauchery." April 5, 6 p.m., with show at 7 p.m. Rich's, 2401 San Jacinto. Tickets: \$15-\$20. Benefits Legacy Community Health Center, Houston GLBT Community Center, and the MSL. Details: www.montrosetsoftball-league.com.

FOR THE CHILDREN

Houston Pride Band conductor emeritus Andy Mills leads the band in a free concert, for families and children of all ages, entitled Celebrating Families. Part of the band's 30th anniversary Season of Celebration!, the performance is a whimsical introduction to the fascinating world of concert music, with an instrumental "petting zoo" where children will have the opportunity to meet the HPB musicians. April 12, 1 p.m. Spotts Park, 401 South Heights Blvd. Details: www.houstonprideband.org.

LOOK OUT

◀ IT TAKES BALLS

When Aurora Picture Show presents its fifth annual *Media Archeology* festival April 17-19, a likely stand-out of the *Live and Televised* series will be Tara Mateik's *Putting the Balls Away*. Staged at DiverseWorks ArtSpace April 19, 8 p.m., *Balls* weaves together pre-recorded video and audio as well as live performance to retell the story of the historic 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" tennis showdown in Houston's Astrodome between Bobby Riggs and Billie Jean King. And get this: Mateik plays both roles. Aurora, the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art and Rice University host additional performances for the three-day festival. Details: www.aurora-pictureshow.org.

WET ONES

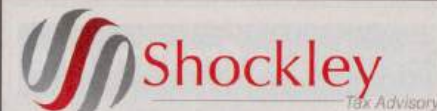
Laura Villagran, owner of *Gay Yellow Pages* and www.gayislander.com, has announced a weekend-long party on Galveston Island. "Wet Galveston," scheduled April 25-27, begins with a kickoff party at the Pink Dolphin featuring DJ Chris Allen. Entertainers Marsha Mellow, KRBE DJ Special K, Josh Duffy, Laurel & The Edge, Paige Lewis, and Whitney Ann MacCray perform at the Balinese Room for the Saturday afternoon beach party; a dance party at Groove Bar follows. Sunday Funday begins at 11 a.m. at 3rd Coast Beach Bar. The event concludes with a Galveston cruise, April 28 through May 4. Details: www.wetgalveston.com.

FOR THE HAVES AND THE HAVE-NOTS

Theatre New West director Joe Watts is mounting concurrent presentations of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* (with an all-male-to-female trans cast) and Thomas O. Yewell's *The Penis Chronicles*. Weekends, May 2-31, with benefit previews on May 1 and 8. Theatre New West's The Loft, 436 Hawthorne. Details: 713/522-2204.

THERE WILL BE HATS

The Mr. and Miss Mint Julep Pageant, held each July, is one of Legacy Community Health Services' campiest fundraisers. This year, organizers jumpstart the julep season with its kickoff party, on Kentucky Derby Day, complete with mint juleps, a hat contest, and watching the ponies on the big screen. May 3, 2-6 p.m. EJ's, 2517 Ralph. Details: Sonna Alton, 713/830-3015. ■



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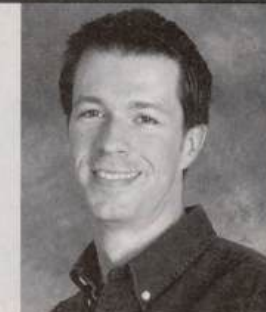
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Go Safari in Out of Africa: The Three Journeys. The 37th annual Houston International Festival, highlighting the rich history and cultural influences of Africa, will feature hundreds of internationally acclaimed artists on 10 stages throughout downtown, while entertainment zones showcase a world of cultures, cuisines, and customs. Venues include the National Dance Theatre of Ethiopia; Chicago blues guitar hero Buddy Guy; the Neville Brothers; and more. Six themed entertainment zones stretch across downtown parks and streets including City Hall, Bagby Street, and Tranquility and Sam Houston Parks. WaMu Out of Africa, the cultural heart of this year's Festival, spans from City Hall to Upper Sam Houston Park; International Zone, featuring the Bud Light World Music Stage hosting many of the festival's top performers; Target Kids Zone filled with family-friendly fun, including a "Mad Science Exhibit," and "Around the World" miniature golf; Louisiana Zone: food and music from cajun, zydeco, blues, rock, gospel, and New Orleans jazz performers; Jamaica Zone features a Black Pirates of the Caribbean exhibit, puppeteers, steel drummers, and belly dancers; Latin Zone includes its own on-stage festival of regional rock en español performers, plus salsa, merengue, mariachi, and traditional conjunto. Saturdays, April 19 & 26, noon-10 pm; Sundays April 20 & 27, noon-8 pm. Early-bird tickets: \$8.50 until April 16; advance tickets: \$12.50 April 16-27; \$15 at the gate; Target Kids Free: 12 years and under. Tickets: H-E-B stores or www.hfest.org.

22 (Tues.)

Picture the Weather at The John C. Freeman Weather Museum. The nation's first and only museum of its kind will open its new exhibition, *City on the Bayou: Houston's History through Floods*, with a grant from the Houston Arts Alliance and with sponsorship from Weatherford. The exhibition features vintage photographs of past historic Houston floods from the museum's collection and contemporary weather photographs taken by local photographers to demonstrate how weather, specifically the Houston-area bayous' propensity for flooding, has shaped Houston's history and development as a community. Free. 10 am-4 pm. 5104 Caroline Street in the Museum District. More info: www.wxresearch.org.

23 (Wed.)

Danceology 101. The Houston Metropolitan Dance Company struts the stage in an energetic presentation of the history of popular dance, from the 1920s Charleston to today's hip hop. 11 am. Free; no tickets necessary; seating is first-come, first-served. Miller Outdoor Theatre, Hermann Park, 100 Concert Dr. Info: www.milleroutdoortheatre.com or 713/533-3276.

Singer Johnny Mathis has captured hearts and imaginations with his silky, suave voice. This openly gay musician is one of only five recording artists to have Top 40 Hits spanning four decades and 10 consecutive years on the Billboard Top Albums chart. Hear favorites like "Chances Are," "Too Much, Too Little, Too Late," and "Gina." \$35-\$115. 8 pm at Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St. Tickets/info: www.houstonsymphony.org or 713/224-7575

24 (Thurs.)

Cadillac Primavera featuring Simon Fashion Now is in full bloom for spring at The Galleria on the 24th through Sun., May 4. The lavish 11-day event will feature dramatic floral displays, runway fashion shows, and live mannequin modeling. See the hottest new looks in brilliant spring colors, stunning fabrics, lace and floral designs by Anne Fontaine, Carolina Herrera, Ann Taylor, Brooks Brothers Men and Women, Betsey Johnson, Saks Fifth Avenue, Guess, Marciano, Macy's, Jimmy Choo, and many more. Public invited to view all runway shows from common areas around Polar Ice Galleria. Runway Fashion Show at Polar Ice Galleria, The Galleria, Thurs., April 24, 8 pm. Houston Symphony League and The Galleria hosts a fashion show luncheon benefiting The Houston Symphony, plus Neiman Marcus presents an exclusive fashion show on the ice rink, Fri., April 25, 11:30 am. Macy's springs forward with an exclusive runway fashion show in the Galleria IV, Nordstrom wing on the street level, following a cocktail reception, on Fri., April 25 at 6 pm. The public will enjoy additional fashion shows throughout the event in celebration of spring's sizzling new arrivals. Cadillac Primavera is taking bids. This incredible silent auction benefits the Simon Youth Foundation (SYF) Scholarship Fund. Simon Youth Foundation focuses on at-risk youth through educational, career, and life skills programs and initiatives. Auction includes items from distinctive fashion retailers such as Ferragamo and Saks Fifth Avenue. The Galleria, April 24-May 4. For info, call The Galleria, 713/622-0663.

A Delicious Proposition: Dining Out for Life to fight HIV. More than 35 of Houston's best restaurants open their doors for

the 2nd annual fundraiser benefiting AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc. (AFH). Dine out for breakfast, lunch, or dinner at restaurants in the Houston area including Daily Review Café, Hungry's in the Village, Max's Wine Dive, Mingalona, and Riva's, and they will donate one-third of their proceeds on April 24 to fight HIV. All funds raised through "Dining Out for Life" in Houston will help support AFH's prevention education programs and the nearly 5,000 clients served annually through its 43 client-based programs. Eat out to fight HIV on the 24th during the entire operating hours of each participating restaurant. Restaurant list and more info: www.diningoutforlife.com or call Angela Dispensa at AFH, 713/623-6796 ext. 258.

25 (Fri.)

Enjoy Free Concerts at lunchtime to celebrate the 2008 Houston International Festival, Out of Africa, in the area around City Hall between 11 am-1:30 pm.

26 (Sat.)

Dance of Asian America presents *East Meets West VI*, a choreographic journey uniting new and award-winning authentic Chinese classical and folk dances from China's renowned choreographers with the newest modern jazz and hip-hop works by Houston choreographers. Free; tickets required for covered seating. 8 pm. Miller Outdoor Theatre, Hermann Park, 100 Concert Dr. Info/tickets: www.milleroutdoortheatre.com or 713/533-3276.

26 & 27 (Sat. & Sun.)

Out of Africa: The Three Journeys. The 37th annual Houston International Festival continues, celebrating the cultural heritage of Africa. See April 19 & 20 for more details.

The Salt Grass Potters Guild Spring Sale. Approximately 25 artists show off their craftsmanship in handmade pottery work. Choose from a beautiful array of functional and decorative dishware, sculptures, and more. 10 am-5 pm. Clear Lake Park Meeting Room, 5001 NASA Parkway, Clear Lake. More info: www.saltgrasspotters.com or call Eileen at 713/306-0051.

PLANNING AHEAD

After Einstein: Music and the Relativity of Time. Albert Einstein won the Nobel Prize for his groundbreaking, visionary studies of time, but he was also a passionate amateur violinist, who played Mozart's chamber works throughout his life. Da Camera's 20th anniversary season finale program presents the great scientist's beloved Mozart, represented by the *Quintet for clarinet and strings in A Major, K. 581*, alongside Olivier Messiaen, whose monumental *Quartet for the End of Time* transports the audience to a spiritual dimension far beyond ordinary time. Saturday, May 3, 8 pm. \$22-\$38/students and seniors half price with ID. Cullen Theater at Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. at Smith St. Tickets/info: www.dacamera.com, Da Camera Music Center at 1427 Branard, or 713/524-5050.

Unleash Your Inner Power to build confidence and self-esteem from Denise O'Doherty, licensed professional counselor/therapist. Does your lack of self-esteem sabotage your success in life? How you feel about yourself is directly related to your health, relationships, work performance, and attitude toward others. Discover ideas, tools, and coping skills that create confidence and lead to success and personal well-being. Presented by Leisure Learning Unlimited. \$30. Saturday, May 3, 10 am-noon. Unitarian Universalist Church, 1900 Bering Drive. Info: www.llu.com or 713/529-4414.

Free Cultural, Musical, and Theatrical Entertainment is always on stage at Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park. One-hour daytime performances specially geared toward children offer an excellent opportunity to expose youngsters to the delights of performing arts. 11 am. No tickets necessary; seating first-come, first-served. Evening shows are family-friendly. Admission is free for all performances, but some evening shows require tickets for covered seating. For those performances, reserved tickets available on the day of performance only between 11:30 am and 1 pm at the Miller Theatre box office; any remaining tickets released one hour before curtain. Society for Performing Arts presents: Ritmo Latino, featuring the Spanish Harlem Orchestra, a Grammy Award-winning 13-member salsa and Latin music band. Free. Friday, May 2, 8 pm. The Asian Pacific American Heritage Association invites you to the APAAHA Heritage Festival all afternoon on Saturday, May 3, followed by a free evening concert. On Sunday, May 4, join Comité Patriótico Mexicano de Houston for Cinco de Mayo festivities, with artists from Mexico, mariachis, folkloric dances, and more. The classic fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty* comes to life in an adaptation from the Tchaikovsky ballet score in this enchanting opera for young people, where a Winter Fairy appears and puts all of Russia in a snowy sleep. Free. Monday, May 5-Friday, May 9, 11 am. For more info: www.milleroutdoortheatre.com or 281/373-3386.

A Little Day Music features the Fischer Duo. Da Camera's free lunchtime series in May includes drawings for tickets to an upcoming Da Camera concert. Grab lunch to-go and enjoy live music in the Grand Foyer at Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. at Smith St. Wednesday, May 7, noon. More info: www.dacamera.com or 713/524-5050.

FOR THE SUMMER

Camp Xplorations Summer Science Adventures. Conquer the summer blahs with science, fun, and fantasy during weekly camps offered children ages 5-12 by the youth education department at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. This year's themes will excite their imagination and creativity: campers will design radio remote-controlled Battlebot, race and battle their own "Bot" on the robot battlefield; create speedy motion machines such as cars, boats, and planes during Fast and Furious; create their own coat of arms, build a castle, and learn what it takes to defend it in Science of the Round Table; think like Harry Potter and go beyond Hogwarts to learn the real science behind the card of wizard pets, Herpetology, herpetology, and the chemistry behind magical potions in Hogwarts Science Academy; and much more. Camps are available weekly, June 2-Aug. 15, at The Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Drive. Also available are two suburban satellite Xploration Summer Adventures locations: Woodlands Xplorations Station, The Woodlands Mall, 1201 Lake Woodland Drive, near Barnes & Noble on the lower level; in Fort Bend County at Christ United Methodist Church, 3300 Austin Parkway, Sugar Land. Registration is now available online at www.hmns.org. More info: e-mail xplorations@hmns.org or call 713/639-4629.

The Houston Museum of Natural Science is a centerpiece of the Houston Museum District. With four floors of permanent exhibit halls, and the Wortham IMAX Theatre, Cockrell Butterfly Center, Burke Baker Planetarium, and George Observatory, and as host to world-class and ever-changing touring exhibitions, there's something to delight every age group. One Hermann Circle Drive. For exhibits, hours, and ticket info: www.hmns.org or 713/639-4629.

Hike Amid Birds and Butterflies. The Houston Arboretum & Nature Center is home to more than 160 species of birds and 33 kinds of butterflies, where you can explore five miles of trees, botanicals, and native wildlife along walking trails. Located in Memorial Park, 4501 Woodway Dr. Hours: Arboretum grounds open to the public, 7 am-7 pm (except major holidays); The Nature Center hours 9 am-5 pm; The Discovery Room houses interactive educational exhibits such as aquariums, touch screens, a 15-ft. model learning tree, and microscopes with video monitor displays, open 10 am-4 pm (closed Mondays). Free admission; donations appreciated. Info: www.houstonarboretum.org or 713-681-8433.

RADIO

After Hours. Sunday mornings, 1-4 am. Featuring the QM2 (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Carper. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-5738.

Queer Voices. Mondays, 8-10 pm. 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 am, KPFT Pacifica radio (90.1 FM).

PERFORMING ARTS

All in the Timing. David Ives humorously explores a variety of complex situations experienced through an assortment of unusual characters, from awkward singles to philosophizing chimpanzees. The eccentric personalities usher the audience through a dizzying and absurd exploration of the English language. \$5. Tues.-Sat., April 8-12, 8 pm; Sun., April 13, 2 pm. Hamman Hall, Rice University, 6100 Main St., entrance 21 (off Rice Blvd). Info/tickets: www.arts.rice.edu or 713-348-PLAY.

Benjamin Britten's Billy Budd. Hermann Melville's nautical allegory, adapted by E. M. Forster and Eric Crozier, of murder and mayhem at sea. *Billy Budd* tells a timeless story of human inner conflict between personal morality and public duty. Last performed at HGO in 1998, the play returns to the Wortham Theater Center with Australian director Neil Armfield's acclaimed version. The powerful all-male cast stars baritone Daniel Belcher as Billy; baritone Liam Bonner as Redburn, and bass-baritone Ryan McKinny as Flint. British tenor Andrew Kennedy sings Captain Vere and Canadian bass Phillip Ens as black-hearted John Claggart. Performed in English with English supertitles. \$25-\$205. Opens Fri., April 25, 7:30 pm; Sun., April 27, 2 pm. Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. Tickets/info: www.houstongrandopera.org or 713-228-OPERA (6737).

Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Jean-Yves Thibaudet. The performance of the *Seventh Symphony* was one of Beethoven's most successful concerts. Hopefully awaiting a victory over Napoleon's 1805 and 1809 occupation, Viennese audiences embraced the symphony's energy and beauty. *The Allegretto*, one of the world's best-loved pieces of music, has evoked inspiration

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Classical Superstars: Mozart & Haydn. Pianist Dominique Launey joins the orchestra's artistic director and pianist Michael Lowe in W. A. Mozart's *Concerto for Two Pianos in E-flat Major*. Launey performs chamber music in her hometown of Wilmington, North Carolina, and has appeared with the Wilmington Symphony. The concert concludes with Franz Joseph Haydn's *Symphony No. 98 in B-flat Major*. \$30; \$10 for students; 20% discount for seniors/KUHF members. Mon., April 28 at Zilkha Hall, The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 800 Bagby. Tickets/info: www.uniquelyhouston.org or 713/315-2525.

Barrueco... Cuban guitarist Manuel Barrueco and Mexican string quartet Cuarteto Latinoamericano with an impassioned program that showcases works for solo guitar, compositions for string quartet, and the combination of the two. Latin American works include those by composers Silvestre Revueltas and Astor Piazzolla, a Houston premiere by American composer Gabriela Lena Frank, and a classical piece by Luigi Boccherini. \$22-\$38. Sat., April 12, 8 pm. Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. at Smith St. Tickets/info: www.dacamera.com, Da Camera Music Center at 1427 Branard, or 713/524-5050.

DanceBrazil from Bahia in Ritmo. The rhythmic beats of Africa and the mastery and skill of the martial arts of Asia meet the color, spice, and sensuality of Latin America and the urban invention of American break-dancing. Perfectly honed bodies perform a fusion of African and modern dance and capoeira, the Afro-Brazilian martial art, to live music played on traditional instruments. An IV Marks Dance Series presented by the Society for the Performing Arts. \$20-\$50. Thurs., April 10, 8 pm. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. Tickets/info: www.spahouston.org or 713/227-45PA.

Elliott Carter and Late Beethoven. In celebration of American composer Elliott Carter's 100th birthday, Da Camera presents his complete string quartets over three days. Carter's *Quartet No. 7*—composed 11 years after Bartók's last quartet—started a cycle that is now recognized as one of the great post-war achievements in American music. Hear the brilliant Pacifica Quartet, winner of a prestigious 2006 Avery Fisher Career Grant. String Quartet No. 1 is free; seating limited. Sun., April 13, 3 pm at Cy Twombly Gallery. String Quartets Numbers 2 and 3 and Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major, Op. 110, Sarah Rothenberg on piano. \$30. Mon., April 14, 7:30 pm. String Quartets Numbers 4 and 5 and Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 11. \$30. Tues., April 15, 7:30 pm. The Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. Tickets/info: www.dacamera.com, 713/524-5050, or Da Camera Music Center, 1427 Branard. Students/senior citizens are half price with ID.

Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy Spring Performance. The gifted young artists of the Houston Ballet's professional training wing cap their studies with two stunning performances. Fri., April 18, 7 pm; Sat., April 19, 2:30 pm. Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. Tickets/info: www.houstonballet.org or 713/227-2787.

Itzhak Perlman, award-winning violinist. Undeniably the reigning virtuoso of the violin, Israeli-born Itzhak Perlman enjoys superstar status rarely afforded a classical musician, having received four Emmy and 15 Grammy awards. President Reagan granted him a "Medal of Liberty" in 1986, and President Clinton awarded him the "National Medal of Arts" in 2000. His heartrending violin solos in the John Williams soundtrack score for *Schindler's List* is one of Perlman's own proudest achievements. \$25-\$70. Thurs., April 24, 8 pm. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. Tickets/info: www.spahouston.org or 713/227-45PA.

Johnny Mathis thrills audiences with his smooth, expressive voice. Openly gay, he is one of only five musicians to have Top 40 Hits spanning four decades and 10 consecutive years on the Billboard Top Albums chart. Hear all your favorites like "Chances Are" and "Gina." \$35-\$115. Wed., April 23, 8 pm at Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. Tickets/info: www.houstonsymphony.org or 713/224-7575.

Love/Reflection/Protest: Julia Bronkhorst. Don't miss the special engagement featuring this renowned soprano, who makes her first Houston appearance. Julia Bronkhorst invokes the cultures of The Netherlands and South Africa through thought-provoking song. She will perform in Dutch, Afrikaans, English, and French. Thurs., April 10, 7:30 pm at DiverseWorks, 117 East Frwy. Tickets/info: www.modernmusic.org/www.diverseworks.org or 713/223-8346.

Motown's Greatest Hits. Go back to the golden age of groups like The Four Tops, The Temptations, and Smokey Robinson & The Miracles. Remember songs such as "My Girl," "I Heard It

Through the Grapevine," and "Just My Imagination." Join the Houston Symphony and vocal quartet Spectrum to enjoy Motown's soulful sounds, smooth harmony, and fancy footwork. \$29-\$106. 8 pm, Fri. and Sat., April 11-12; 7:30 pm on Sun., April 13. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. Tickets/info: www.houstonsymphony.org or 713/224-7575.

Moving Pictures, a dance performance. UH's AURA Contemporary Ensemble teams with ENSEMBLE, the university's pre-professional dance company, for an evening of live music and dance. Featuring work from special guest choreographer Jennifer Wood, artistic director of Suchu Dance in Houston, as well as that of composers Jennifer Higdon, Peter Sculthorpe, Don Grantham, Bill Ryan, Ken Booker, and David Lang. \$15. April 11, 7:30 pm at Moore's Opera House, Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts at the University of Houston. Tickets/info: 713/745-2929.

Pianist Vijay Iyer makes Houston debut. Dubbed one of the "new stars of jazz" by *U.S. News & World Report*, Vijay Iyer is a forceful, rhythmically invigorating performer who weds a cutting-edge sensibility to a unique sense for compositional balance. He draws from African, Asian, and European musical lineages to create fresh, original music in the American creative tradition. \$26.50-\$45; seniors/students half-price with ID. Sat., April 26, 8 pm, at Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. Tickets/info: www.dacamera.com, Da Camera Music Center at 1427 Branard, or 713/524-5050.

Puccini: La bohème. Love and heartbreak meet on the Left Bank of Paris, as four young bohemians test the boundaries of friendship and art. Ana Maria Martínez and Garrett Sorenson take the stage in James Robinson's enchanting setting of Puccini's verismo tour-de-force, a co-production of Houston Grand Opera, The New York City Opera, and Glimmerglass Opera. Sung in Italian with English surtitles. \$25-\$205. April 11-May 3; evenings 7:30 pm; Sun. matinee, 2 pm. Brown Theater in Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. Schedule/tickets/info: www.houstongrandopera.org or 713-228-OPERA (6737).

Sam Dinkins III Sextet family concert, first in the free concert series Stop, Look and Listen! Combine a visit to the Menil museum with an interactive and informative musical experience. The program consists of jazz, blues, and spirituals and is presented in conjunction with The Menil Collection's exhibition *Vivid Vernacular*, which features photographs of the American South by William Christenberry, William Eggleston, and Walker Evans. Presented by Da Camera of Houston and The Menil Collection, the concert is for all ages. Free. Sat., April 19, 3 pm. The Rothko Chapel, 3900 Yupon at Sul Ross.

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. Six young awkward pubescents 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. Through April 6 at the Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. Info: 713/558-8887, 888/558-3882, or www.tuts.com.

Visual Music by the Grammy Award-winning Kronos Quartet. Expect the unexpected when this celebrated and influential ensemble returns to Houston with its ingenious multimedia performance. Featuring the music of Reich, Zorn, Penderecki, Hermann, Nancarrow, Grey, and others, *Visual Music* incorporates video projections that give each piece a setting, a visual environment in which to live and breathe. \$20-\$50. Fri., April 11, 8 pm. Wortham Center's Cullen Theater, 500 Texas Ave. Tickets/info: www.spahouston.org or 713/227-45PA.

Young and Fertle. 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

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.mainstreettheatre.com, or www.ticketweb.com.

Peter Pan. Kids of all ages will enjoy HITS Theatre's presentation of the beloved Broadway musical fantasy about the young boy who refuses to grow up. 8 pm on Thurs., Fri., and Sat., April 10-12 and April 17-19. Free. Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park, 100 Concert Dr. Tickets required for covered seating; available on the day of performance only between 11:30 am and 1 pm at the Miller Theatre box office; remaining tickets released one hour before curtain. Info: www.milleroutdoortheatre.com or 281/FREE FUN.

Peter Rabbit. The whimsical tale goes on stage, presented by Express Children's Theatre. Peter Rabbit's brothers and sisters try to keep him away from trouble and his mother warns him about going into Mr. McGregor's garden, but he wouldn't listen. The entire family will enjoy the exciting story, as Peter's adventures teach him

a valuable lesson! \$8/group rates start at \$6. 2 pm, Sat., April 5 and Sat., April 12. Express Theatre, 446 Northwest Mall. For info: www.expresstheatre.com or 713/682-5044.

ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

Charles 'Teenie' Harris: Rhapsody in Black and White. Part of a citywide collaboration, the Mitchell Center presents an exhibition of photographs by pioneering 20th-century African-American photojournalist Charles "Teenie" Harris, whose works inspired explosive choreographer Ronald K. Brown's new performance work, *One Shot*. The Mitchell Center is hosting the exhibition at the Blaffer Gallery in conjunction with an upcoming presentation by DiverseWorks and Society for the Performing Arts of *One Shot*. Fri., April 25, 6 pm, at Blaffer Gallery, located in the UH Fine Arts Building, entrance 16 off Cullen Blvd. at Elgin.

Breaking Earth. Alfred Guzzetti and Kurt Stallmann collaborate to transform the DiverseWorks Gallery into an immersive atmosphere of light and sound. Using five expansive screens displaying crisp, high-definition video and multiple channels of audio, *Breaking Earth* uses the visuals of environment to alter what we hear and see, carrying us to a place where the abstracted natural landscape becomes a landscape of consciousness. Through April 26. Info: www.diverseworks.org.

City on the Bayou: Houston's History through Floods is now showing at the John C. Freeman Weather Museum. Take a visual tour of Houston's historic weather events through vintage photographs of past floods from the museum's collection and contemporary weather photographs taken by local photographers. Open Mon.-Sat., 10 am-4 pm. \$5 adults, \$3 children/seniors. Children to age 3 admitted free. Free for all on Thurs. afternoons, noon-4 pm. Guided tours available for a fee. More info: www.weathermuseum.org or 713/529-3076.

Class Pictures: Photographs by Dawoud Bey. Organized by the Aperture Foundation, a not-for-profit organization devoted to photography and the visual arts, *Class Pictures* is comprised of large-scale portraits of American teenagers that refute false stereotypes and reveal the individual strengths of this age group. Dawoud Bey photographed young adults from all economic, racial, and ethnic spectrums in both public and private high schools in major cities including Detroit, Chicago, Orlando, San Francisco, and New York City. To complement Bey's inspiring exhibition, The Teen Council, a select group of high school students employed by the museum to design public programs specifically for young people, organized an exhibition of Polaroid photography by local teenagers. *Polarized* is on view in the Cullen Education Resource Room. See both exhibitions through May 11. Contemporary Arts Museum, 5216 Montrose Blvd. Info: www.camh.org or 713/284-8250.

Current Perspectives 1999-2008 is an exhibition featuring Chinese mainland-based artists, which addresses issues of religion, ethnicity, gender, urban transformation, identity, globalization, and the inter-relationship of contemporary art to classical Chinese art and history. Art League Houston partners with FOTOFEST 2008 and its Twelfth International Biennial of Photography and Photo-Related Art to present three separate exhibitions of Chinese-based artists: *Sun Guojun: Sweetness Forever*, *Chen Lingyang: Twelve Flower Months*, and *Liu Lijie: Another Episode*. Through April 19. Art League Houston, 1953 Montrose Blvd. Info: artleaguehouston.org or 713/523-9530.

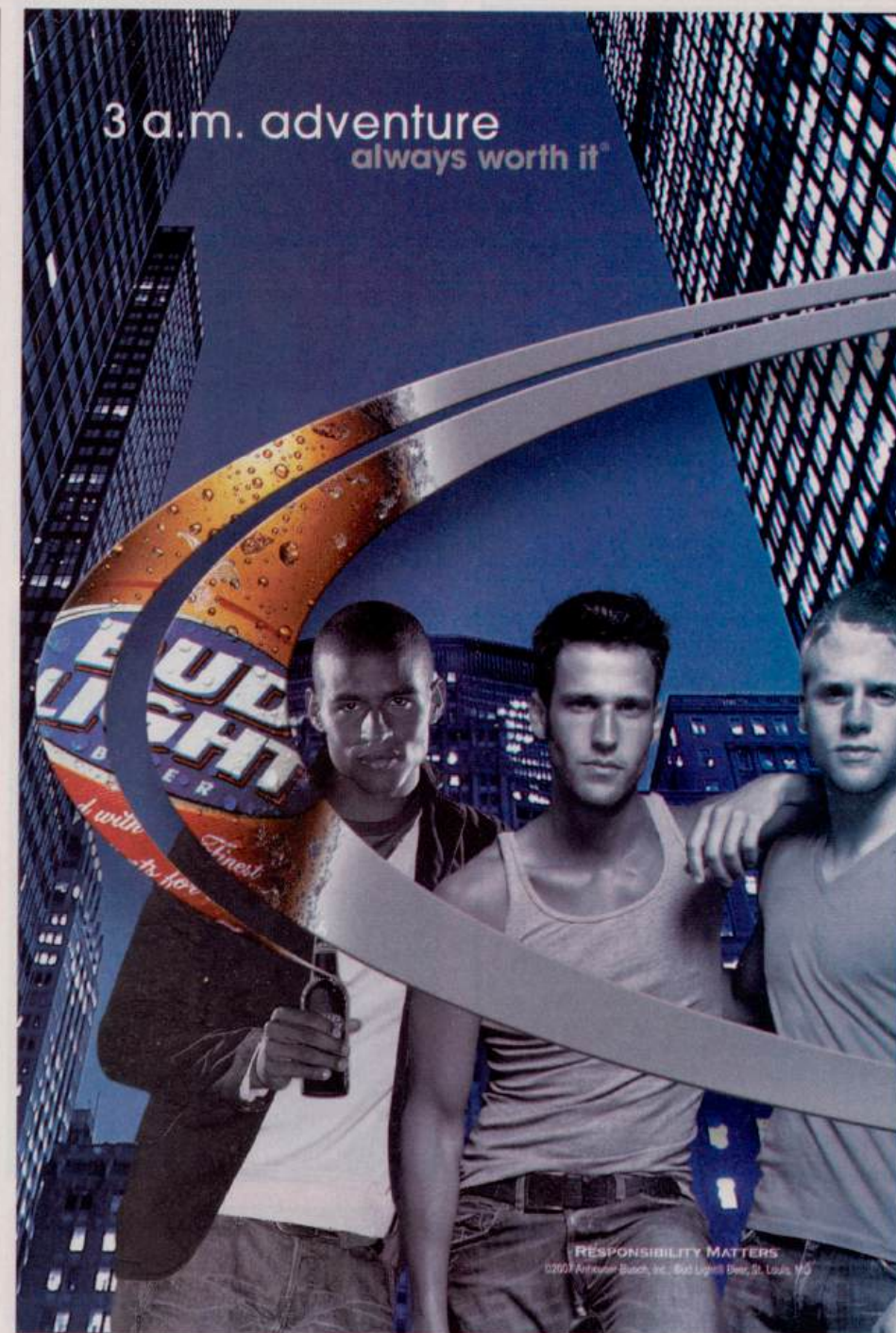
Design Life Now: National Design Triennial. This exhibit presents innovative American designs in a variety of fields, including product design, architecture, furniture, film, graphics, new technologies, animation, science, medicine, and fashion. Through April 20 at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose Blvd. More info: www.camh.org, 713/284-8257, or 713/284-8250.

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. Through May 11 at the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. More info: www.menil.org or 713/525-9400.

Glassell's 2008 Core Artists in Residence Exhibition. Glassell School of Art announces this year's residencies awarded to eligible visual artists and art scholars. Second-year residents are: Mequita Ahuja, William Cordova, Nicholas Kersulis, and Jeff Williams. First-year residents: Kara Hearn, Andres Janacua, Lauren Kelley, and Sergio Torres-Torres. Core critical-studies residents: Meredith Goldsmith, second year, and new residents Jennie King and Andrea Liu. Exhibition held through April 18 at the Glassell School of Art, 5101 Montrose Blvd. Info: www.mfah.org.

John Alexander: A Retrospective. Texas native John Alexander expresses his world view through art. His evocative oil paintings and drawings convey humor, rage, and a deeply sensual appreciation of nature, habitat, and ecology. The exhibition runs April 13-June 22 at the Audrey Jones Beck Building, 5601 Main St. \$7, \$3.50 for kids 6-18/students/seniors.

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



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percent of her skeleton intact, Lucy's remains are the oldest and most complete adult human ancestor ever fully retrieved from African soil. Over 100 artifacts illuminate the exquisite heritage of Lucy's homeland, including fossils, historical manuscripts, and implements of daily use. \$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: www.hmns.org or 713/639-4629.

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: www.mfah.org or 713/639-7300 (en Español: 713/639-7379; TDD/TTY for the hearing impaired 713/639-7390).

Navis C. Pitman Exhibition. Three Visual and Dramatic Arts majors, chosen through proposal and portfolio review for an award to develop their body of work, display their creativity. Mon.-Fri., 11 am-5 pm, April 2-18 in the VADA Main Exhibition Gallery, Rice Media Center, 6100 Main St. Info: www.arts.rice.edu.

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/college students. Through April 23 at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle. Info: www.hmns.org or 713/639-4629.

Passionate Vision: Celebrating the Life and Photographic Work of Beaumont Hall. Marking the 100th anniversary of Beaumont Newhall's birth and highlighting his significant scholarly as well as photographic achievements, this tribute exhibition includes a broad selection of photographs taken by or of Newhall, plus many from exhibitions curated by him. Complementing this is an array of publications from the Hirsch Library collection, featuring his development as a scholar. Newhall's rich and diverse derives from his various roles as historian, curator, museum director, photographer, collector, critic, educator, mentor, and friend to many in the photographic community. \$7 adults; \$3.50 for kids 6-18/students/seniors. Through May 4 at The Caroline Wiess Law Building, 1001 Bissonnet St. Info: www.mfah.org or 713/639-7300 (en Español: 713/639-7379; TDD/TTY for the hearing impaired, call 713/639-7390).

Photographs by Bill Brandt: A Sense of Wonder. Born and raised in Germany to an English father and German mother, Bill Brandt worked as an assistant to the Surrealist photographer Man Ray in Paris before moving to London in 1933. His photographic essays were published in popular British picture magazines. His distinctive photography of British society resulted in two books: *The English at Home* (1936) and *A Night in London* (1938). During the Blitz, he photographed in the London underground. After the war, his style changed dramatically, making high-contrast prints instead of the more traditional full-tonal-range images expected by magazines. His two primary post-war series are *Literary Britain*, a series of portraits of famous British authors and poets, and photographs of female nudes titled *Perspective of Nudes*. \$7, \$3.50 for kids 6-18/students/seniors. Through April 27 at the Audrey Jones Beck Building, 5601 Main St. Info: www.mfah.org or 713/639-7300 (en Español: 713/639-7379; TDD/TTY for the hearing impaired, call 713/639-7390).

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 intriguing works from the likes of Jasper Johns, Mark Rothko, Cy Twombly, Georgia O'Keefe, among others. Through May 25 at the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. Info: www.menil.org or 713/525-9400.

Pompeii: Tales from an Eruption. In their final terrifying hours on Aug. 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. See the exciting 58-minute documentary *In the Shadow of Vesuvius*, produced by National Geographic, in Brown Auditorium Theater; check museum schedule for viewing times. Admission to this film is free with an MFAH Pompeii exhibition ticket stub. Pompeii requires special admission: tickets range from \$7-\$25. Through June 22 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's Caroline Wiess Law Building,

1001 Bissonnet St. Tickets/info: www.mfah.org or 713/639-7300 (en Español: 713/639-7379; TDD/TTY for the hearing impaired, call 713/639-7390).

Revealing Character: Robb Kendrick's Texas Tintypes. The photographer traveled all over the Lone Star State to capture today's working cowboys and cowgirls, producing 66 incredible images using the 19th-century tintype technique. Four cowgirls, primarily from West Texas, are also highlighted in this exhibit, which was initially commissioned by Frost as a campaign in *Texas Monthly*. Exhibition tickets included in museum general admission: \$9 adults; \$7 kids age 3-11 and seniors/college students with ID; free for museum members; \$2.50 school groups; and \$4.50 for groups of 20 or more. Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Dr. Tickets/info: www.hmns.org or 713/639-4629.

A Requiem to Loss, a CORE Performance Company dance event with new choreography, engages the human body in the artist's passionate elegy to our world. "Artful Thursday" free admission for the event on Thurs., April 17, at 6:30 pm. Brown Auditorium Theater, The Caroline Wiess Law Building, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 1001 Bissonnet St. More info: www.mfah.org or 713/639-7300 (en Español: 713/639-7379; TDD/TTY for the hearing impaired, call 713/639-7390).

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: www.menil.org or 713/525-9400.

Where Clouds Disperse: Ink Paintings by Suh Se-Ok. A collection of dynamic, abstract works tracing conceptual and technical processes that led to the Korean artist's transformation of traditional ink into a modern material. Transfixed by the figurative form, Suh Se-Ok continually studied and perfected it until it evolved into powerful formal gestures of simple lines that codify into his definitive pictorial vocabulary. The exhibition includes sketches, seals, and journals that will demonstrate the range of his artistic process as well as the meticulousness of his aesthetic investigation. \$7, \$3.50 for kids 6-18/students/seniors. Through April 20 at The Caroline Wiess Law Building, 1001 Bissonnet St. More info: www.mfah.org or 713/639-7300 (en Español: 713/639-7379; TDD/TTY for the hearing impaired, call 713/639-7390).

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 first Sat. at 548 West 19th at Wind Water Gallery's parking lot. Info: www.YaleStreetMarket.com. Stop by The Artful Corner at 3423 White Oak Blvd., 713/426-4ART.

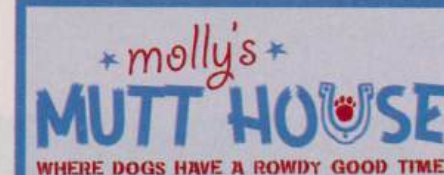
Zoe Crosher: 1 Yr Later. The L.A.-based photographer trained her lens on young women in America's small towns and big cities, photographing them in their rooms to capture the pivotal period of growth and transformation in the last year of high school and the first year of college. The result: an unusual insight into the subtle physical and personality shifts that occur during the gradual transition from adolescence to adulthood. Free. Through April 26, in DiverseWorks' Project Space, 1117 E. Freeway. Info: www.diverseworks.org. ■

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Business News

by Nancy Ford

MUSICAL CHAIRS. On March 6, Noel Furniture, located at 2727 Southwest Freeway, hosted an opulent cocktail reception featuring Sir Elton John's stunning red grand piano. Community music man, Jerry Atwood, provided accompaniment for the gathering, which benefited programs of Bering Omega Community Services. Details: www.noelfurniture.com.

CHRISTIAN DESIGNS. Male Uwear representatives have announced celebrity designer Andrew Christian is scheduled to

visit the popular Montrose apparel retailer at its 415 Westheimer store on April 11, 7 p.m. In addition to complimentary cocktails, attendees also receive an "Undy" game ticket. The party then moves to Meteor for a fashion show at 10 p.m. Details: www.maleuwear.com.



Andrew Christian



Jerry Atwood playing Elton John's piano at Noel Furniture.

KARPAS REALTY SELLS. Houston real estate giant, Martha Turner Properties, has acquired Karpas Properties, former Karpas real estate agent Danny Pleason told *OutSmart*. The deal will give Martha Turner Properties more exposure in southwest Houston, particularly the high-end market Meyerland and Bellaire, where Karpas had done much of its business. Martha Turner Properties closed more than \$1 billion in 2007 properties sales;

Karpas closed \$200 million, according to the *Houston Chronicle*.

PRIME MOVE. Cody Grizzoffi, formerly with Countrywide Home Loans, is now a senior loan officer with PrimeLending. Grizzoffi has 14 years combined experience in the mortgage and financial industry. PrimeLending has been serving the community for over 20 years, specializing in residential mortgages. For multiple years, Grizzoffi has been top producer with over 25 million dollars in funding in a year.

Grizzoffi specializes in Texas mortgage needs, but can help finance purchases in all 50 states. Details: 832/541-1103.



Cody Grizzoffi

Send your business news to *OutSmart*, 3406 Audubon Place, Houston, TX 77006, or e-mail to letters@outsmartmagazine.com.

Call Him Colt

continued from page 49

hard core—looks like a lesbian, smells like a lesbian, acts like—you know, 100 percent. Men's cologne—you know what they smell like." They met in a psychology class during Meier's senior year at Rice and have been inseparable since.

Inspired by Ame, who has been out for so long and had undergone the whole introspection thing as a young GLBT person, Meier eventually exclaimed to himself, "Oh my god. I'm a guy!"

In October 2006, Meier came out to himself and Ame. In October 2007, only a year later, he started testosterone. He spent that year really thinking about what he wanted to do. Did he really need hormones to feel like a guy? He consulted with counselors, conducted research, conferred with Ame, and came out to his parents, extended family, friends, school administration, and all the rest. And he continues with his journey to simply be who he was meant to be.

His driver's license reads Stacey Anne Meier. Professionally, at church and with the people he grew up with, he still goes by Stacey.

"A lot of trans people that I know have a real internalized hate for their name," he says. So, he is Stacey Lawrence Meier with the nickname of "Colt" among the GLBT community, family, and new friends.

He wanted a nickname to reflect how energetic and spunky he is. "I didn't want to change who I am; I wanted to become more of the person that I already am."

Stacey's gender-clinic doctor recommended he send out a "coming out" letter because soon he would have facial hair. He has a tiny bit of hair now. Although he emphasizes "tiny," Meier playfully boasts, "In a year from now, it'll be like a Franciscan friar."

In Meier's "coming out" letter to his parents' friends in December 2007, he wrote: "Please do not be shocked, it's just me."

That's the gift he gives to his family, his friends, and to himself: to simply be who he is.

Funding Dreams

Houston Transgender Unity Committee's Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship is awarded annually at the groups' annual Unity Banquet. Though the application process is closed for 2008, trans-identified high school seniors and adult students pursuing higher education are encouraged to apply for the 2009 cycle. Details: www.htuc.org.

Joyce Gabiola contributed to *OutSmart*'s 2008 People To Watch spotlight in January, interviewing musician Evrim Baykal.

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Marketplace	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	12 Month
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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 coolest 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' night, Passionate Sundays on the second and fourth Sunday, in addition to the Exclusive 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 pm. Sunday brunch starts at 11 am and lasts 'til 3 pm. 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 • 713/666-3740.

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.

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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:
Rusty Young

WHERE:
Decades,
1205 Richmond,
713/521-2224

WHAT'S UP:
Darts and pool tournaments, as well as karaoke, rule, especially on Wednesdays, at this friendly neighborhood bar on the edge of the Museum District.

CLUB EDEN

Finally, a LGBT-friendly oasis between Houston and Galveston. Located in the Webster/Clear Lake area, this spacious, multi-banded dance club caters mostly to women with weekend drink specials and the Girls of Eden dances. 20701 Gulf Fwy • 281/554-EDEN.

COUSINS

Drag fans frequent this club in the heart of Montrose for its campy shows on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. 817 Fairview • 713/528-9204.

DEAN'S CREDIT CLOTHING

DJ/promoter Gracie Chavez presents Les Femmes de la Nuit, the monthly women's DJ/music night. She reports that the crowd includes a growing contingent of queer folk. 316 Main • 713/227-3326 (Dean's), 713/656-6227 (Chavez) • www.myspace.com/lesfemmesdelanuit.

DECADES

This casual neighborhood bar attracts a devoted crowd of regulars. It hosts a Monday pool tournament and Wednesday dart tournament and offers free pool on Sundays. 1205 Richmond • 713/521-2224.

EJ'S

Located on the western front of Montrose, EJ's retains the charm of a colorful, local hangout. Frequent shows, including community benefits, pack the stage.

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 Wough • 713/524-3359.

GEORGE

Regulars rule at this comfortable neighborhood sports bar, just like most other neighborhood sports bars in town. But George's occasional benefit drag

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

Sturdy 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. 805 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 Lockhart 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 of this second-floor spot overlooks the lively Westheimer/Montrose intersection. The mixed crowd includes smartly dressed gays as well as nongays. 910 Westheimer • 713/522-2542.

PÜR

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

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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 pm; women get in free 'til 9 pm. Live music with no cover, Sundays. 1417 Westheimer.

SOUTH BEACH

This expansive, ultra chic dance club is a frequent winner of OutSmart's Gayest and 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.southbeachnightclub.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 am. 817 W. Dallas • www.tonyscornerpocket.com.

VIVIANA'S

This club, in a new location, appeals to fans of Latino music and drag alike. 4624 Decoma • 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 LGBT 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 Sleek 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 Langlinas, 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.

Beaumont

THE COPA

The hangout for Lamar University students, this two-story dance club has pool tables, a spacious stage, and a staircase that would make Norma Desmond green with envy. 304 Orleans • 409/832-4206.

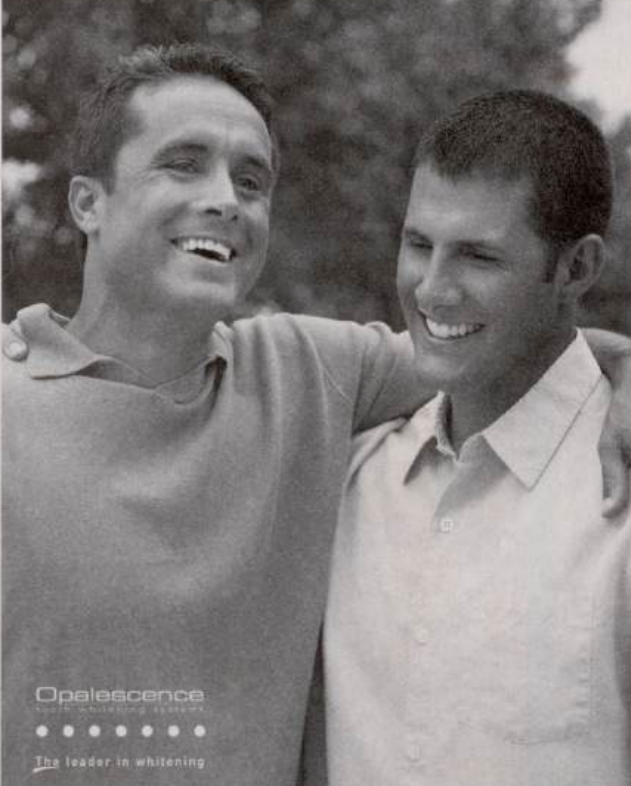
Bryan/College Station

HALO VIDEO BAR

The only GLBT dance club in Bryan/College station, this sleek spot is open Thursday-Saturday, smack in the middle of Aggieland, "our venue is always packed with the hotties," the owners promise. 121 North Main • 979/823-6174 • www.halobes.com.

Send bar/club news to
clubguide@outsmartmagazine.com.

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This month is very busy as it opens, but not always a good busy. At least all of the inner planets are direct, which means you don't have to constantly redo or rethink your decisions. Most of the planets are in cardinal signs Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn, causing us to be direct, a bit impatient, and maybe moving faster than what is good for us. • Particularly tense days are the 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 10th, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, and the 29th. Count to 10 a lot on these days, and remember that everyone is mired down in his or her own ego needs. Positive days are the 14th, 16th, 18th, 20th, 21st, 25th, 27th, and 28th. • The Sun enters the sign of Taurus on the 19th, Mercury enters Aries on the 2nd, Venus enters Aries on the 6th, and the rest of the planets remain in the signs they are in. Mars is in Cancer, Jupiter and Pluto in Capricorn, Saturn in Virgo, Uranus in Pisces, and Neptune in Aquarius.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). This is a month of rest and retreat for the bulls, so try to keep your work commitments manageable. This can be a very good month to spend time with close friends, whether business associates or personal relationships. You are in a relaxed and entertaining mode but are simultaneously still extra-sensitive; rude and offensive people really put you off now. Your communications skills improve after the 18th. Career is still a bit unclear for many of you; focus on making sure you really want to do what you do.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). There is a lot of extra activity in the career sector of your life. If you feel a bit trapped and restricted as the month opens, perhaps you just need more passion and interest in your work. If you already have that, you are having a great time. Group activity and social interest dominate the better part of the rest of the month. This is a good month to make new friends and bring some new, exciting people into your life. As the month ends, pay more attention to your finances and definitely avoid spending sprees.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). If you thought you were busy before, get ready because April is gearing up to be even busier. There is much emphasis on career this month: Either you are ready to take charge of a situation, or there is a promotion in your future. You are particularly visible to others around you, and they are watching you for all sorts of reasons. You may be more short-tempered, but a little exercise really helps to relieve that tension. Relations are improving, but you may want to take some time for courtship and reinitiating your relationship the week of the 20th through the 26th. If you are single, get out there—you are a sexual magnet!

LEO (July 23–August 22). You certainly are feeling playful as the month opens; consider taking some time away from your routines. If you can't do that, make sure that you keep your work schedule light. This is also a good time for mind expansion, whether by traveling or taking some classes. Either mode provides you with a



ARIES (March 21–April 19). Happy Birthday to all the Rams and Ewes. During this time it is perfectly OK that you are at the top of all agendas. Make sure that you create some time to review the past and set some new plans for your upcoming next year. This is an especially active and busy time for you, causing many of you to feel overcommitted in most every area of your life. Home and work are demanding most of your time, with home and family matters more volatile than normal. Keep your eyes open on the 2nd and 3rd, as well as on the 5th and 6th.

larger view of the world. By mid-month you are ready to get back to your career. This is a time of some recognition for you. Be prepared to take on some extra responsibility; it serves you well in the future.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). Life for you is all about being serious, paying attention to the job at hand, and planning for the future. As the month opens, you are a little less tense about relationships; they have not been so easy, and you have very little tolerance for them if they aren't going well. This month you make sure that you and your relationships are on the same page. Closer to the end of the month, consider taking some time off. You may not want to, but it may really improve your perspective, and help you to not take yourself so seriously.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). April is an especially strong month for relationship and intimacy, so you are likely examining the viability of your relationship. Moreover, you want to have a stronger connection to your partner, whether business or personal. As the month progresses, you are more open, not only about how you feel, but also about how your partner feels. If you are not in a relationship, get out there to look for someone to connect with. This is a time of truth with just about everyone in your life, but make sure that you are clear about work before you are "truthful" there. Otherwise, you may be stirring up things that you later wish you had just let pass.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). This month you are getting your workspace and your home space cleaned up and organized. You have been wanting to hang out at home more anyway, and this is about making it more livable. You are also ready to take better care of your health, paying more attention to exercise and nurturing yourself. You may also find yourself giving advice and being very supportive of friends.

If they are listening, you find that you don't have much tolerance for their drama. Expect relationship issues to present themselves by the end of the month.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). Career and creativity are mixed together this month to the point where you are either making a commitment to your career, or finding a new career altogether to commit to. In either case, you want to be stimulated more by this external choice. And why not? You are very attached to your career. Career activity flows a little more smoothly by the end of the month. On the other side of this, you are not willing to expend your energy on projects that don't have some sort of outcome that directly improve your life. You are more direct and to-the-point than normal. Others may experience you as pushy or impatient, but that may be their problem, not yours.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). The emphasis this month is on getting your home and family in order. It's time for spring cleaning, and you are ready to give your home a facelift. Naturally, the cleanout inspires you to do some entertaining as well. Family issues also come to the surface this month, but you are ready to deal with them and get them out of the way. Career activity is still very positive, and you are having to make some choices about which ones you are going to commit to this month. Relationships need renewal; if you ignore them, there could be fireworks.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). It's time to get your ideas and views out there. You are ready with solutions, and you are only too happy to be using your brain. Most of these solutions involve day-to-day life, and you are ready to make it all work better for you and for those around you. Just be careful about how you present your solutions at work because some people, including bosses, may be challenged no matter how good your intentions are. By mid month, your focus shifts to making your home a more comfortable place. Creature comforts are a big thing for you, and this month is no exception.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). The month begins with a clear emphasis on self and continues with others appreciating your special skills and talents. In many ways you are in a no-tolerance zone, making the normally easygoing Pisces more direct than ever. This has been a theme since last year, and this year that theme becomes even more intense than before. Everyone must grow up this year or you won't keep them in your life. Self-worth and money become major issues as the month progresses. You are getting a lot of support from friends and even from your children, if you have children. By month's end, you are communicating more clearly than ever.

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 Dwane Todd sports a bit o' blarney bling at Montrose Counseling Center's Bringing in the Green fundraiser, held March 14 at the home of John Danielson III.



2 Jeremy Kizer (l-r), Raymond Williams, and Coy Tow camp it up at Bayou City Performing Arts' "Just An Auction" held March 6 at the Alley Theatre.



3 Kathy Prado (l-r), Salud! Winery owner Brad Odom, and Mary Hunsacker at a Pride Houston happy hour held March 12 at Salud! Winery.



4 Nearly 40 women registered for some friendly competition at a social event for single lesbians produced by Carol Wyatt (l), Mary Jean Tiernan, and Angela Taylor (not pictured) on March 8. The event, held at the Oaks of Inwood clubhouse and Wyatt's home, included an "Olympic Processional," an awards ceremony, and barbecue.



5 Community fundraiser Don Gill (c, wearing plaid shirt) is surrounded by friends and admirers at an appreciation party held in his honor March 9 at Brazos River Bottom.



6 AIDS Foundation Houston chief executive officer Kelly McCann (l-r), Houston Mayor Bill White, and Dave Feldman at the opening ceremonies of AFH's annual AIDS Walk Houston, held downtown on March 9. Organizers estimate the event raised more than \$1 million for local HIV/AIDS service providers, a new record for the walk.



7 Houston City Controller Annise Parker is flanked by Dee Dee and Gilbert Garcia, who hosted a fundraiser for Parker in their home, February 25.



8 Approximately 25 kickball enthusiasts, including Danny Kallan (holding ball), gathered to play at Memorial Park on February 2. The event was organized by Houston Tennis Club.



9 Jeffrey Chen (l-r), Jerry Simoneaux, Patricia Cantu, Phyllis Frye, Martin Daraz, and Ed Cruz at a cocktail party hosted by Simoneaux, Frye, and Thomason law firm, March 5 at McCormick & Schmick.



10 The Vipers softball team won AssistHers' 2008 softball tournament, held March 8 at Memorial Park.

PHOTOS: 1-7, 9, 10, DALTON DEHART; 8, DANNY KALLAN

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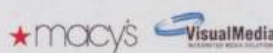
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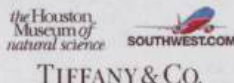
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