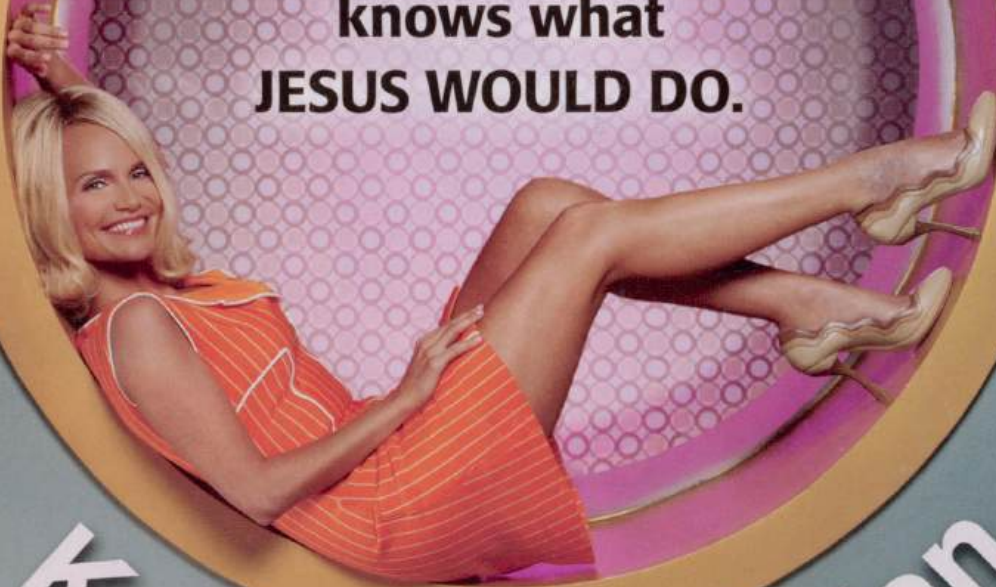


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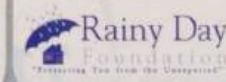
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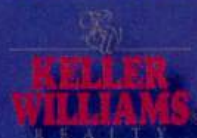
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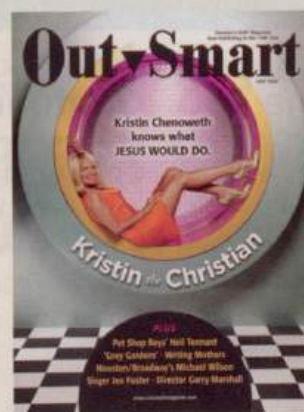
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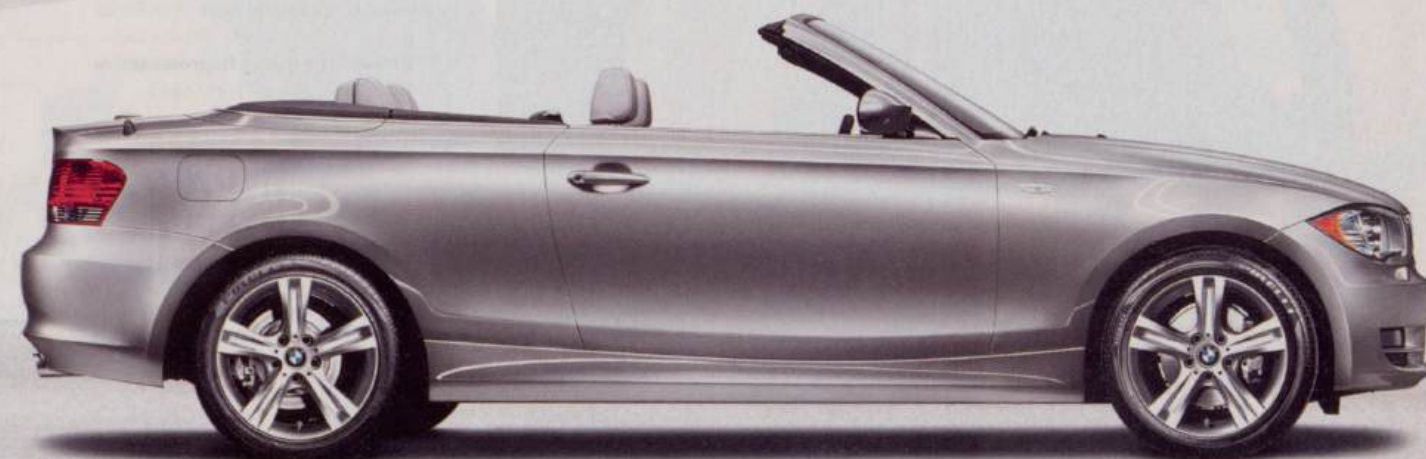
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Kristin Chenoweth (see page 30)
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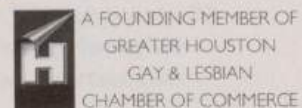


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Letters

MARRIAGE RIGHTS

[Re: "Gay Rights Timeline," April]: Please note that California's first domestic partnership law took effect in 2000. In subsequent years, the law was updated and strengthened with additional rights, but California enacted its domestic partnership legislation in 1999, effective January 1, 2000. We entered a California domestic partnership on January 10, 2000.

Dan Lindquist (and "husbear,"
John "Bubbles" Dye)
Houston, Texas

PRIME THANKS

From the depths of my heart I want to say thank you so very much for promoting our Mr. Prime Choice Texas 2009 contest ["Not Your Same-Old, Same-Old," April]. . . . The final total for Mr. Prime Choice Texas 2009 was \$7379.15, to be divided between Persons With AIDS Holiday Charities Working Account, LVL PWA Camp Out, and Texas Conference of Clubs. Thanks so very much again in helping me to help others. It is so good to be back home with you all, my Montrose family.

Don "Pa" Gill
Houston, Texas

CORRECTION: In the April 2009 issue of *OutSmart*, Mike Craig, president of Chevron's GLBT employee group, was mistakenly identified as Mike Collins in a SceneOut photograph. ■

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Top Image: Christopher Coomer and Kelly Myernick in *Jardi Tancat*. Photo: Drew Donovan

Bottom Image: Kelly Myernick and Artists of Houston Ballet in *Swan Lake*. Photo: Amitava Sarkar

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Yuri R. Mencos sent us a photo from his recent trip home to Guatemala. He's photographed here with his **OUTSMART** in Antigua, Guatemala's Soleil Hotel.



Kim Blair (left) and **Sprite Harts**, via Olivia Cruises, stopped off in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, on the way to San Juan, Puerto Rico. "What Harley Diva would not stop and get a picture?" writes Sprite.

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Next month, **OUTSMART** and Pride Houston collaborate to present Houston's official 2009 Pride Guide. Be sure to pick up **OUTSMART**'s JUNE 2009 Pride Issue complete with schedules, pride festival events, and parade coverage. For advertising information, call 713/520-7237.

For Your Calendar



Check out these fabulous events co-sponsored by **OUTSMART** and our marketing partners.

May 2, 3, 9, & 10: Galveston Historical Foundation Historic Homes Tour. Benefits the Galveston Historic Foundation. INFO: GalvestonHistory.com.

May 12: GLBT Chamber of Commerce Networking Social at Male UWEAR, INFO: TheChamberHouston.org.

May 12: OUT@TUTS Night with *Happy Days: A New Musical*. After the performance, mingle with the cast and listen to fabulous cabaret music with your GLBT friends at Artista. INFO: TUTS.com.

May 16: HRC Houston Gala. Human Rights Campaign dinner and fundraiser. Keynote speaker Christine Baranski. INFO: HRCHouston.org.

May 16 & May 19: Bayou City Women's Chorus presents *Africa: A Night of Celebration* with choral-jazz-blues infusion. INFO: BayouCityPerformingArts.org.

May 28: GLBT Chamber of Commerce Monthly Dinner at the Holiday Inn-Galleria. INFO: TheChamberHouston.org.

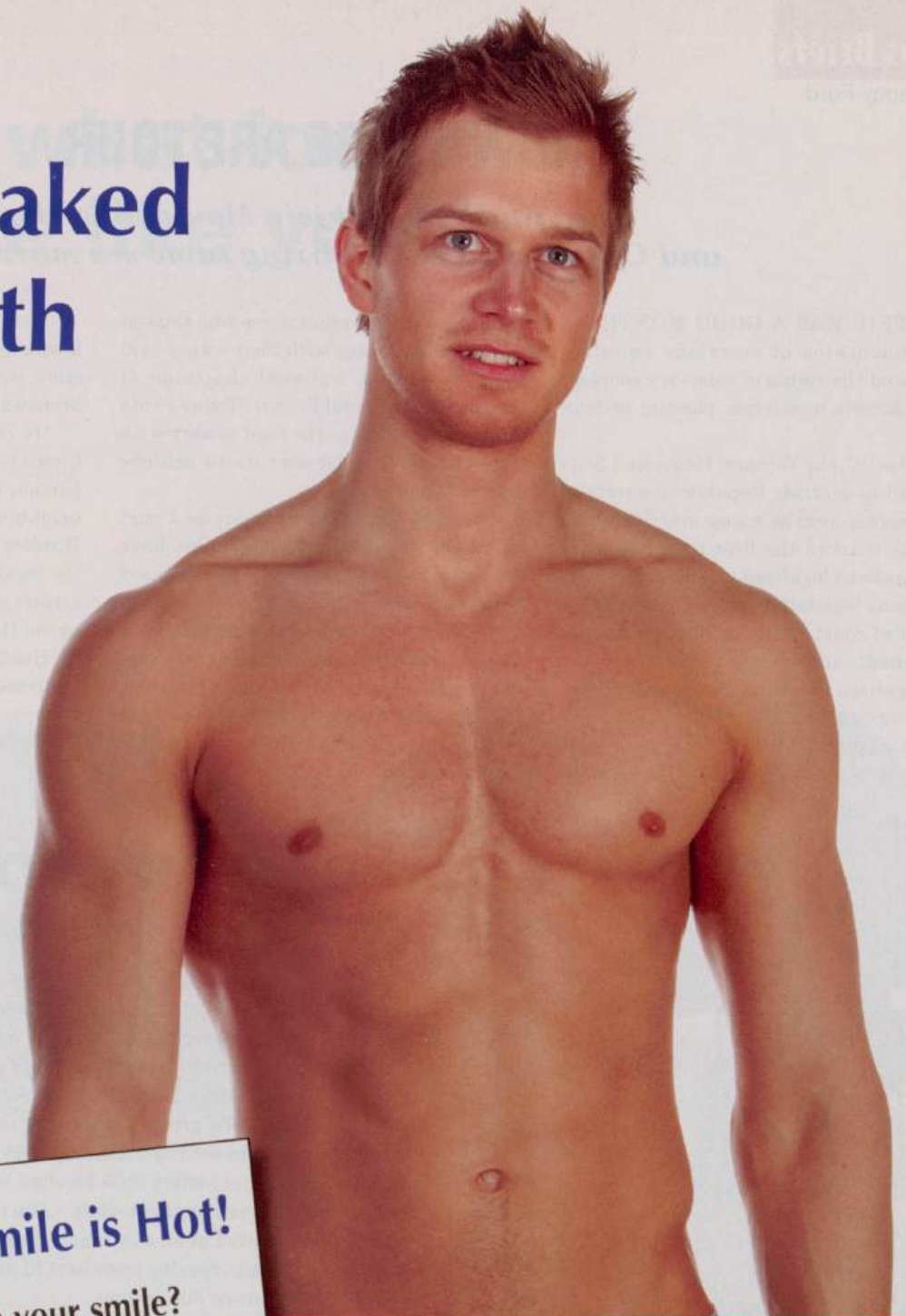
SAVE THE DATE

June 13: Gay Men's Chorus of Houston presents *La Perla!* A retrospective of the sounds and flavors of Latin America and Spain. INFO: BayouCityPerformingArts.org.

June 25: GLBT Chamber of Commerce Monthly Dinner "Honoring Our Allies." Magnolia Hotel, INFO: TheChamberHouston.org.

June 27: The GLBT PRIDE Festival and PRIDE Parade. The festival begins at 11 a.m. and the parade starts at 8:30 p.m.

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NOW THERE ARE FOUR

Iowa and Vermont join Massachusetts and Connecticut in legalizing same-sex marriage

APRIL WAS A GOOD MONTH for advocates of marriage equality and the rights of same-sex couples, with favorable legislation passing in four states.

On April 7, the Vermont House and Senate voted to override Republican governor Jim Douglas' veto of a gay marriage bill. The vote marked the first time gay marriage has been legalized in a state through the formal legislative process and not as a result of court order. In Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Iowa, gay marriage has been legalized following decisions by those states' supreme courts.

"We applaud the eight fair-minded Republicans in the Vermont State Senate

and House of Representatives who showed remarkable courage with their votes," said Terry Hamilton, national chairman of the Log Cabin Republicans. "Today's vote clearly demonstrates the need to work with Republicans and Democrats to achieve marriage equality."

On April 23, the Iowa Supreme Court found that same-sex Iowa couples have the same right to marry as opposite-sex Iowa couples.

In *Varnum vs. Brien*, in which six Iowa couples filed suit seeking the extension of marital protections to their families, Iowa justices found that the constitution of the state of Iowa does not permit discrimination.

The ruling provides not only a benefit to Iowa's families, but is also a boost to their state economy, according to Jon Hoadley, Stonewall Democrats executive director.

"In recent years, Iowa has long been afflicted by a 'brain drain,' with a substantial portion of its young workforce moving to neighboring states for job opportunities," Hoadley said. "Providing its workforce with the legal protections of marriage will help attract new investment and bring jobs back to the Hawkeye State."

Hoadley added that the ruling secures the freedom of religious institutions to continue to marry and recognize relationships they so choose.

continued on page 16

THE MILLION-DOLLAR CROWN

Miss Camp America crown donated to gay museum



Pat Petty (c), Miss Camp America founder, presents the Miss Camp America crown to Craig Farrell (r), chair of the Gulf Coast Archive & Museum (GCAM). Looking on is Judy Reeves, GCAM curator. In the background is a small section of a larger GCAM historical exhibition at the Cultural Center in the Montrose Counseling Center building.

On Monday evening, April 6, Miss Camp America (MCA) founder Pat Petty presented the organization's crown to the Gulf Coast Archive & Museum (GCAM). The museum is now the official custodian of this iconic piece of Houston's GLBT history.

Miss Camp America began in 1969 as a party for Petty, whose birthday is August 27. The group spoofed the real Miss America pageant, which was simultaneously occurring in Atlantic City.

Over its 36-year history MCA has had more than 250 different members and performed approximately 1,500 musical production numbers. The pageant started in an apartment, and then began a path of increasingly larger venues moving from bars to hotels to the Tower Theater to the Wortham Brown Auditorium.

In 1988, the organization became a foundation and donated all profits to AIDS-related charities. The Assistance Fund was their most frequently selected beneficiary. The foundation distributed more than \$1 million earned from the pageants.

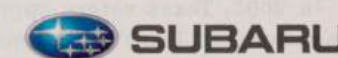
The crown presented to GCAM was designed in the 1990s, replacing more fragile crowns used in the years before. The annual pageant was retired in 2006, when the Miss America pageant moved to Las Vegas and changed the televised date to January. Petty says that the three-month rehearsal period that was needed to produce the show could not be scheduled during the holidays.

GCAM now has the crown on display at the first floor Cultural Center in the Montrose Counseling Center building at 401 Branard. The crown joins a much larger public historical exhibition which GCAM has mounted on the walls of the Cultural Center. —Brandon Wolf

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News Briefs

continued from page 14

Iowa and Vermont join Massachusetts and Connecticut as states affording marriage equality to all its citizens.

On April 16, New York governor David Paterson, a Democrat, announced a marriage-equality bill for consideration by the state legislature.

Kevin Cathcart, executive director at Lambda Legal, said that victories in the Iowa marriage case and the veto override vote in Vermont indicates that it is time to end discrimination against same-sex couples in New York and beyond.

"The state assembly has passed a marriage-equality bill in the past; the governor is prepared to sign it; and both U.S. senators from New York support marriage equality," Cathcart said. "It is time for the state assembly and senate to vote yes for equality, and finish the job."

On April 15, the Washington state legislature passed a bill expanding the rights and responsibilities associated with the state's domestic-partnership registry, with Governor Christine Gregoire, a Democrat, expected to sign it. The House passed the legislation with a 62-35 vote, following the Senate's passage on March 11 by a 30-18 vote.

The measure brings health care and other critical protections to same-sex couples in Washington state.

"While clearly not a substitute for legal marriage, it is a step in the right direction," said Rea Carey, executive director for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Carey congratulated local equality organizations for their contribution to the bill's passage, adding, "We look forward to the day when full legal marriage is a reality for same-sex couples in Washington state."

Despite the flurry of positive legislation, April's news was not all positive for advocates of marriage equality in all states. Jim Gibbons, governor of Nevada, vowed to veto a just-introduced measure to grant marriage-like rights to his state's same-gender couples. When asked why he would reject the measure now under consideration in the state Senate, Gibbons stated, "I just don't believe in it."

In 2005, Texas voters approved an amendment to Texas' state constitution, reading, "Marriage in this state shall consist only of the union of one man and one woman. This state or a political subdivision of this state may not create or recognize any legal status identical or similar to marriage." The amendment remains intact.

EARLY VOTING CONTINUES FOR DISTRICT H SPECIAL ELECTION

A SPECIAL ELECTION IS BEING HELD May 9 to fill the Houston City Council seat vacated by former councilman Adrian Garcia who was elected to Harris County sheriff in the November 2008 election.

Early voting for Houston City Council, District H, takes place through May 5 at Harris County Administration Building (1001 Preston, 1st floor), Moody Park Recreation Center (3725 Fulton St.), and

Ripley Houston Neighborhood Center (4410 Navigation Blvd.).

The Houston GLBT Political Caucus endorsed openly gay candidate, Maverick Welsh, for the District H council seat, as has the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund. Welsh's opponents in the race are Edward "Ed" Gonzalez, Lupe Garcia, Hugo Mojica, Larry Williams, James Partsch-Galvan, Yolanda Navarro Flores, and Rick Rodriguez.

REP. GARNET COLEMAN ADDRESSES DATING INEQUITY FOR GAY TEENS IN TEXAS LEGISLATURE

LAST MONTH, A PUBLIC HEARING was held before the Texas House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence on HB 3564, also known as the Romeo and Juliet Fair Defense Act. "Heavy petting" is currently considered a crime for minors under Texas law and is classified as "indecent with a child." While there is a defense for age-appropriate dating by straight youth, this defense is not available to gay or lesbian youth who are dating.

The bill, filed by Representative Garnet

Coleman (D-Houston), would make the defense of age-appropriate dating available to all couples, including same-sex couples.

"If you're a gay kid that dates, the law may force you to register as a sex offender for the rest of your life. Even the possibility that gays and lesbians might be arrested as sex offenders will keep some kids from seeking appropriate medical exams and treatment. This bill merely treats all kids equally," Rep. Coleman stated on his website.

TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY CANCELS PLANS FOR GLBT HOUSING

SHORTLY AFTER ANNOUNCING IT would begin offering GLBT student housing on its campus, Texas Christian University officials scrapped those plans.

According to 365gay.com, university administrators reversed the decision to create new themed housing programs for GLBT students beginning in fall 2009 following outcry from financial supporters of the university who oppose same-sex equality.

Victor J. Boschini Jr., TCU chancellor,

said in a statement that "TCU will not launch any new living learning communities at this time. Instead we will assess whether the concept of housing residential students based on themes supports the academic mission of the institution, as well as our objective to provide a total university experience."

In addition to canceling the fall launch of GLBT housing, the decision also cancels special housing for students based on patriotism, Christianity, and marine life.

COLORADO JURY CONVICTS ON HATE CRIME CHARGE IN ZAPATA MURDER, FEDERAL BILL AWAITS PASSAGE

ON APRIL 22, A COLORADO JURY found Allen Andrade guilty on four counts, including first-degree murder and hate-crime charges in the murder case of Angie Zapata. Zapata was a transgender woman living in Greeley, Colorado; she was beaten to death in 2008 by Andrade, 31, a sex partner who discovered that Zapata was transgender.

In 2005, the Colorado legislature added sexual orientation, including transgender

status, to Colorado's hate-crime law. The case marks the first time the enhanced law has been applied to the murder of a transgender victim.

Federally, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act was approved by the House Judiciary Committee in late April, with a vote in the full House expected to follow. The bill, also known

continued on page 18



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News Briefs continued from page 16

as the Matthew Shepard Act, enhances federal involvement against hate crimes where necessary and authorizes the prosecution of hate crimes based on sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability, in addition to race, color, religion, or national origin.

"After 10 years, and tens of thousands more victims, this critical legislation combating hate violence is long overdue," said Joe Solmonese, Human Rights Campaign president. "We urge Congress not to delay in sending this bill to the President's desk where he has stated he will sign it into law. We must not miss this opportunity to provide local police and sheriffs' departments with the tools and resources they need to ensure that entire communities are not terrorized by hate violence."

NEW ORGANIZATION LAUNCHED FOR GAY CONSERVATIVES

ITS FOUNDERS PROMISING it will address issues of importance to conservatives, GOProud, a new Washington-based political organization, aims to represent gay conservatives and their conservative allies.

"GOProud is launching to fill a void that exists," said Jimmy LaSalvia, GOProud executive director and board member. "Until today, no organization has stood up for gay conservatives and their conservative allies. GOProud will be that organization."

GOProud aims to support a traditional

conservative agenda that will improve the everyday lives of gays and lesbians across the country, according to a statement released to the press.

"There are lots of organizations on the gay left working on issues like hate crimes and federal employment discrimination, but there is no organization working on issues like tax equity, free market health-care reform, social security reform, and other traditionally conservative issues," added Christopher Barron, GOProud board chair.

The establishment of GOProud was announced on April 15 as conservatives held "tea parties" throughout America.

"This is an exciting day for the more than 1.5 million gays and lesbians who cast their votes for John McCain and Sarah Palin and for the countless conservatives across the country who want to see a Republican Party where sexual orientation is not an issue," Barron concluded.

LaSalvia and Barron are both former employees of Log Cabin Republicans.

FORMER MISS CALIFORNIA, NOW A MINISTER, SUPPORTS MARRIAGE EQUALITY

MISS CALIFORNIA 2003, Nicole Lamarche, currently serves as minister at Cotuit Federated Church in Cotuit, Massachusetts. Rev. Lamarche takes issue with the current California state titleholder, Carrie Prejean, who condemned same-sex marriage during a broadcast of the 2009 Miss USA pageant in April.

"I am often asked to interpret what the Word of God has to say on a particular subject," Rev. Lamarche says. "I am quite confident that God prefers that we human beings stick to speaking for ourselves."

"[Prejean] said, 'It's not about being politically correct, it's about being biblically correct,'" Rev. Lamarche wrote in a statement to the press. "While this sentiment is shared by many who seek to condemn gay people and gay marriage, citing pieces of the Bible to further one's own prejudice fails to meet the Bible on its own terms..."

"The truth is that it is difficult to know for sure the intentions of the biblical authors, but we do know something about God... As we continue to seek God's vision for us as a nation grounded in a love for justice, I pray that we might move closer to the cause of grace."

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THE M WORDS

What do May, masturbation, and marriage have in common?

What a dilemma, choosing a topic for my column this month.

As some of you hobbyists may already know, May is National Masturbation Month. So naturally, I've spent the better part of this year looking forward to penning this particular piece:

—Preparing punch lines, like "I just flew in for Masturbation Month, and, boy, are my arms tired!"

—Tracing the origin of National Masturbation Month. It was founded in 1994 in a stroke of marketing genius by adult toy retailer, Good Vibrations, after then-attorney general Dr. Joycelyn Elders was busted for advocating teaching masturbation in schools. (Insert your own stained blue-dress joke here.)

—Learning new euphemisms, like "waxing the MiniCooper," "dialing the rotary phone," and, thanks to a new National Geographic television special, "waking the baby mammoth."

—Exploring how different religions view the subject. No surprise, the pope's against it. Big surprise, James Dobson, former head of the straight-laced Focus on the Family, is for it. Hallelujah!

—Laughing at superstitions, like those from 19th-century cracker creator, Sylvester Graham. Graham warned that the devotee to self-pleasure "becomes a confirmed and degraded idiot [with] deeply sunken and vacant, glassy eyes, and livid, shriveled countenance and ulcerous, toothless gums, and fetid breath, and feeble broken voice, and emaciated and dwarfish and crooked body, and almost hairless head covered . . . with suppurating blisters and running sores—a blighted body, and a ruined soul." Now we know what happened to *Lord of the Rings'* Gollum.

Yes, I've spent a considerable amount of time researching masturbation. I could go on and on. And on.

But here's the rub. Even the grand titillation of Masturbation Month seems insignificant in light of other recent events that beg coverage here: the spring thaw has brought with it a veritable avalanche of marriage equality.

In April, Iowa, land of corn and cold, enacted marriage equality for all Iowans, regardless of gender. Then Vermont did

the same, joining fellow New England states, Massachusetts and Connecticut. Then New York's Governor David Paterson introduced legislation that would recognize marriage rights for same-sex couples under state law.

What seemed like only moments later, our city's Lord and Lady Lakewood, Joel and Victoria Osteen, were interviewed on CNN's *Larry King Live*, firmly holding to their belief that marriage between a man and a woman is "God's best."

"I'd love to see it stay between a male and a female, not knocking anybody else," Mr. Osteen grinned.

Even the grand titillation of Masturbation Month seems insignificant in light of other recent events.

Mrs. Osteen skirted King's question asking her the harm in same-sex marriage. "We really want to see marriage between a man and a woman," she hedged. "There [are] going to be people who get together and have relationships and have what they call their families, but I just think marriage should be sanctified by the church."

By "sanctified by the church," Mrs. Osteen likely means sanctified by the Osteen's own legendary megachurch, where members pay \$50 to \$650 to get hitched under the Lakewood brand. But not its gay and lesbian members.

Then, erupting out of one of the gayest gaygaygay bastions in all the land, the Miss USA pageant, Miss California Carrie Prejean let loose this screed:

"We live in a land that you can choose same-sex marriage or opposite marriage. And you know what, in my country and in my family, I think that I believe that a marriage should be between a man and a woman," she said.

What is "opposite marriage"? Divorce?

According to follow-up reports, one of Miss California's family members, her sister, a second lieutenant in the Air Force, is a gay activist who supports same-sex mar-

riage. "But she's not gay," Prejean later told *Access Hollywood's* Billy Bush with a don't-ask-don't-tell hush.

Totally possible. Perhaps Prejean's sister is one of those not-gay gay activists who, because of being constantly forced to stand in the shadow of her prettier, blonder, more popular sister, has sublimated her true desires into a big steaming pile of self-loathing that no tiara or scepter could assuage. Or not.

All this random flagellation about marriage leads me to an ex. (Doesn't it always?)

This particular ex is getting married this month. To a man. Which is fine, since that's where her heart now lies. She's a smart, wonderful woman, and I'm sure he's a fine young man. If I ever bump into her again, I'll tell her I wish them the very best that life can give them. Really. Honest. No regrets.

I won't be attending their wedding, though. Granted, I wasn't invited, but that's probably best, anyhow. I'd hate to have to bite my tongue as the usher offered me his arm at the entrance of the sanctuary, inquiring, "Friend of the bride or friend of the groom?"

"Bride," I'd respond, wanting so badly to add, "and we were pretty friendly."

More than 1,100 various federal rights and privileges will immediately be bestowed upon my ex and her new husband as soon as their "I do's" are exchanged. They'll never have to worry about unfair taxation or next-of-kin decisions that might have to be made in a hospital waiting room, or fight to adopt a child. Their love and commitment to each other is reason enough for them to receive all the rights and privileges that legal marriage has to offer without them being jerked around by preachers and politicians and pageant queens.

I hope my ex agrees, deep down, that she and I would have deserved all those same rights and privileges had we reached a point in our relationship where we wanted to walk down that aisle together.

Nonetheless, I do appreciate the fact the she's marrying in May. I'll be thinking of her all month. ■

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RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS
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by Annise D. Parker

CSI: HOUSTON

A truly independent Houston Crime Lab serves both the police and the public

Mayor Bill White needs to make the Houston Police Department crime lab an independent department in his new budget expected in mid-May. The mayor took a major step forward last year (when I made the same suggestion) by requiring HPD to present the crime lab budget as a stand-alone segment of its \$450 million budget.

I continue to believe that separation entirely from the police department is the only way to achieve the layer of independence the crime lab needs to truly function effectively and efficiently.

Once the new department is established, a new stakeholders committee can discuss creating an independent regional crime lab to serve the city, county, and surrounding communities. That idea has already drawn support from the mayor himself, HPD Chief Harold Hurtt, District Attorney Pat Lykos,

County Judge Ed Emmett, and several Houston City Council members, including Jolanda Jones.

I served on the 2007 stakeholders committee led by crime lab expert Mi-

An independent crime lab that produces scientific, unbiased results is not a pipedream.

chael Bromwich that reviewed the scandalous Houston crime lab. That investigation's conclusion—that serious lab problems began because the lab was not an HPD priority—supports the need for a truly independent crime lab.

Last month, I highlighted a landmark national forensics study conducted by

the National Academy of Sciences that included sweeping recommendations for improving forensics. One of the recommendations urged the establishment of independent crime labs and offered specific suggestions for making them more professional and truly independent, such as blind testing, or regularly and secretly sending one lab's forensic evidence to another lab to keep labs honest.

Another prominent expert recommends hiring evidence handlers to shepherd evidence between law enforcement and crime labs without conveying any information about where or how evidence was obtained, as well as forbidding forensic experts from talking to police or prosecutors before conducting tests.

An independent crime lab that produces scientific, unbiased results is not a pipedream. It's urgently needed to repair one

of the cornerstones of our criminal justice system and restore public confidence.

Police deserve a first-class weapon in the fight against crime. The public deserves a first-class crime lab in the fight for equal justice.

May 9 Special Election

If you live in District H, don't forget about the special City Council election Saturday, May 9. Nine candidates are seeking the council seat vacated by Adrian Garcia, who was elected Harris County sheriff. District H includes a large area of central and north Houston that includes the Heights and many other neighborhoods. (For a detailed map of District H, please go to www.houston.tx.gov/council/maps/h.html).

If you haven't registered to vote or need to re-register because you moved, please go ahead and register. There'll probably be a runoff in this election, and you could vote in the important runoff. Then you're all set for the regular November city elections.

A candidate for Houston's mayor in the November 3 election, Annise D. Parker is Houston's third-term city controller and one of the highest-ranking openly GLBT-elected municipal officials in the U.S. Her webpage is AnniseParker.com. To receive the controller's newsletter, send an e-mail to cicely.wynne@cityofhouston.net.



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MORE THAN SPRING FEVER

Tuberculosis is nothing to sneeze at

Ah, spring—my favorite time of year. I dearly love the fragrant, white blossoms on the pear trees, the photo-worthy fields of bluebonnets, and all those brightly colored azaleas, tulips, and daffodils. I enjoy the blustery days and the resulting music from the chrome and bamboo wind chimes on my patio. And I even like the cold fronts and thunderstorms that blow through our region during this season.

But all the flowers and wind bring an unwelcome visitor: pollen. Yes, springtime means increases in tree pollen, grass pollen, weed pollen—the whole pollen family. Most days, the pollen levels are extremely high, or simply high, or, at best, moderate (thank God for moderate).

And on all of those days, I feel miserable. Not just sneezy, but MIS-ER-A-BLE. Runny nose, itchy/watery eyes, wheezing, sinus headaches, blah, blah, blah. My allergies to the various pollens are so severe they also

bring about an annual bout of bronchitis.

I don't have a fever or night sweats, and darn it, there's been no associated weight loss, but all the coughing and fatigue I've been experiencing due to my current case of bronchitis this spring is turning this woman's fancy to not-so-fanciful thoughts of tuberculosis.

Tuberculosis (TB) is a common but potentially serious, infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The TB bacteria can infect various bodily organs and systems such as the kidneys, the bones, the skin, or the nervous system, and infection of these organs causes a myriad of symptoms. However, TB most often involves the lungs (75 percent of active cases are pulmonary).

The classic symptoms of pulmonary TB are a chronic cough (lasting at least three weeks) that produces blood-tinged sputum, chest pain, fever, night sweats, weight loss, pallor, and fatigue or weakness.

TB is an airborne illness that is spread

when persons with active TB disease cough, sing, talk, sneeze, or spit, thus disseminating particles containing the bacteria into the air. Those particles, called droplet nuclei, can remain suspended in the air for several hours depending upon the environment. When the droplet nuclei are inhaled by another person, the bacteria first settles in the lungs, and at that point, the person is considered to have TB infection, not active TB disease.

In about 90 percent of infection cases, the TB remains inactive. The immune system helps to contain the TB in the lungs by forming nodules, or tubercles, around the bacteria, encasing it. This keeps the bacteria from doing further damage to the infected person's body and prevents transmission to others. This is called "latent TB" and does not cause any symptoms or health concerns.

In most persons with latent TB, the bacteria can remain inactive for a lifetime without ever causing illness. However, it is →

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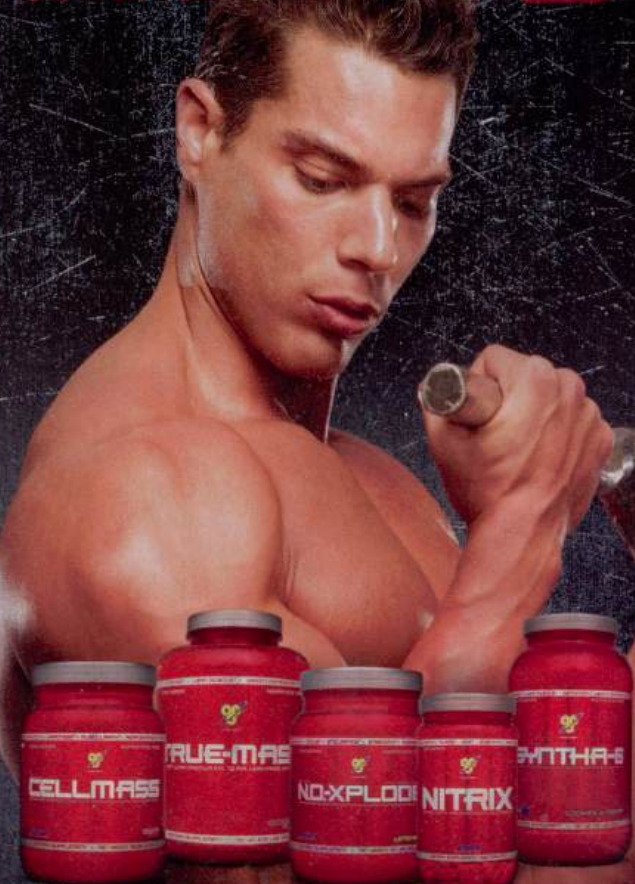
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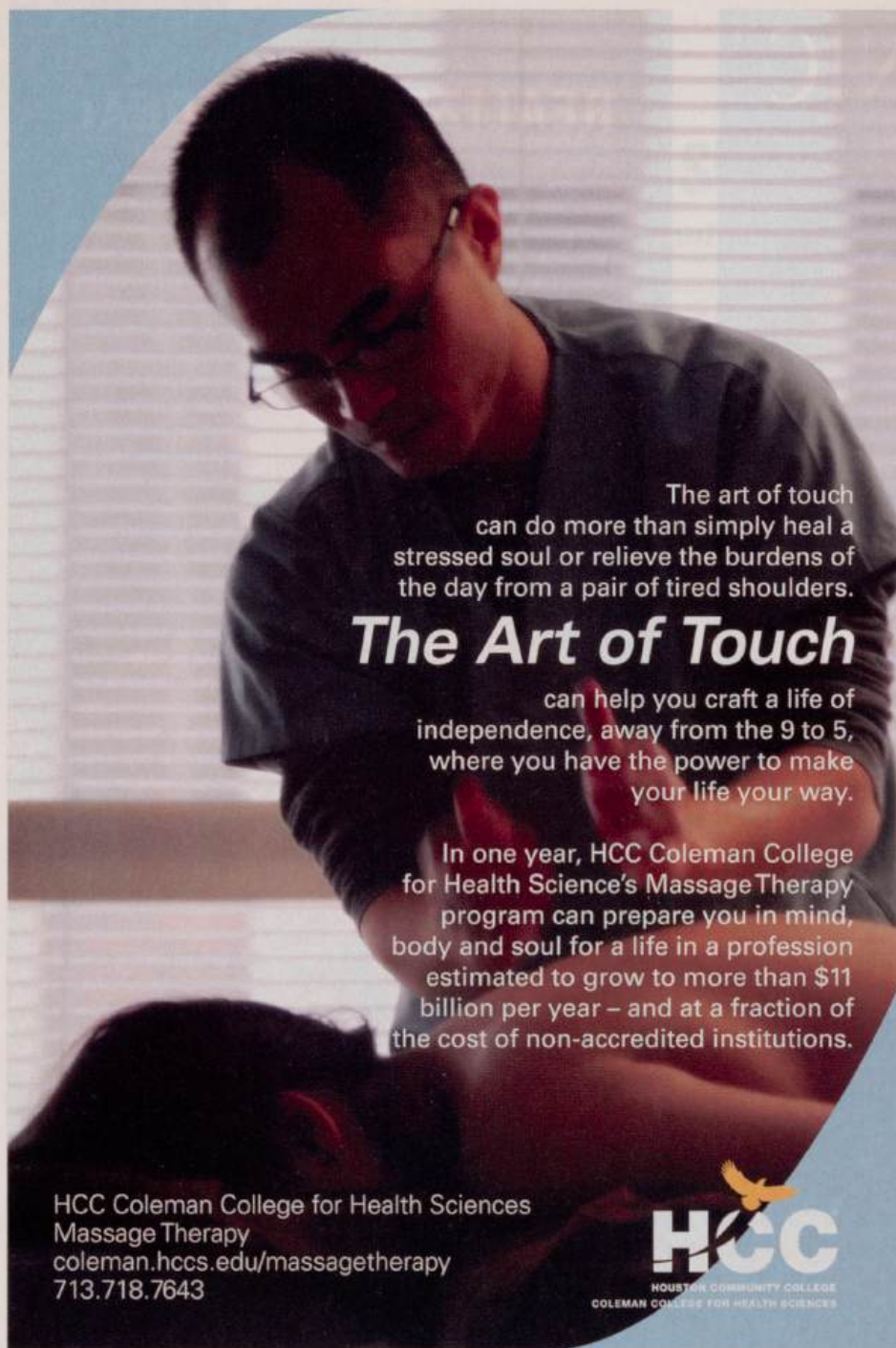
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AIDS Watch continued from page 24

usually recommended those persons receive treatment with an antibiotic medication to ensure they never develop TB disease.

How does latent TB become active TB? Active TB disease occurs when the TB bacteria overcome the immune system's defenses (they break out of the tubercles) and start to multiply. The bacteria can then spread throughout the lungs, and potentially to other bodily organs, causing damage, loss of function, permanent disability, and even death.

How does one prevent TB? The best way to elude TB infection is to avoid people with TB. This sounds harsh, but studies have shown those most at risk for TB infection are those persons who have close and prolonged contact with persons who have TB disease. So if your family member, lover, roommate, or co-worker has TB disease, you'll likely be exposed to the airborne bacteria for long periods of time, and that exposure increases your chances of infection.

People who live in congregant living facilities, like prisons, barracks, or dormitories, are also at increased risk for TB infection due to sharing the air with so many other people.

And it is also risky to spend lots of time in poorly ventilated areas where the bacteria can linger in the air for longer periods of time. Remember, fresh air and sunshine are great weapons in the battle against TB infection.

As you might expect, persons with weakened immune systems from substance abuse, malnutrition, or HIV, for example, are at higher risk for TB infection. And if they do become infected, their impaired immune systems make the progression to TB disease more likely. (In fact, TB disease is considered an AIDS-indicating illness in people infected with HIV.) Therefore, TB testing is strongly recommended for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

TB testing is done in a variety of ways. The definitive diagnostic test involves microscopic examination of sputum. If that is not possible, a probable diagnosis can be obtained using either chest X-ray or tuberculin skin test methods. Your doctor can inform you of the best testing method for you depending upon your history, your symptoms, and the health of your immune system.

Despite the serious nature of TB disease, successful treatment can be achieved in most cases. However, it can be a difficult course of treatment requiring multiple antibiotic medications that must be taken for a period of several months to one year, and possibly even longer for HIV-positive persons. Since TB is an airborne disease, treatment can be mandated and enforced by public health officials, for the protection of all citizens.

Kelly A. McCann is the chief executive officer of AIDS Foundation Houston. To learn more about TB and other opportunistic infections, including HIV, contact AFH at 713/623-6796 or AIDSHelp.org.



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PastOut

by Donalevan Maines

14 YEARS AGO IN 'OUTSMART'

Michael Wilson directed Broadway's reigning Tony Award winner, *Angels in America*, at the Alley Theatre, in one of the few productions that playwright Tony Kushner allowed outside of New York. Calling the two-part, seven-and-a-half-hour "gay fantasia on national themes" the most important work of the latter 20th century, *OutSmart* contributing writer **Steven Foster** wrote a fascinating backstage report on the show's technical challenges that was itself a work of art so epic that it spanned two issues of *OutSmart*.

Foster's prose described 30-year-old Wilson as "handsomely rough, with strong coal-miner hands, brown, piercing eyes, military hair, and de rigueur goatee... built solid, built tight, coiled body ready for a fight."

Another *OutSmart* contributor, **Michael D. Wilson**, movingly eulogized **William A. "Bill" Scott**, Gov. Ann Richards' openly gay, HIV-positive appointee to the State Board of Health. Scott, who died on April 5 of complications from AIDS, "was to be admired, honored, emulated, and, most importantly, fondly remembered by those of us who remain behind."

May 18 was the first anniversary of the death of **Michael K. Wilson**, who was fondly remembered by friends at A Moveable Feast, Spectrum Center, Awaken the Healer Within, and *Uptown Express* magazine.

Meanwhile, Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection-Houston (MCCR) celebrated 20 years of "experie(ng) God's unconditional love." Bering United Methodist Men

sponsored "Rainbow Day" at Astroworld.

The Dizinger Foundation offered a free eight-week photography class for PWAs.

Suzanne Anderson, co-grand marshal of the 1995 Houston Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade, held an open house at her new real estate office at 239 Westheimer.

The Sunday summer barbecue returned to Plaza 9200 at 9200 Buffalo Speedway with the first annual Joan Crawfish Boil (or steak and chicken with all the trimmings).

Eileen Hegar was chosen as the new president of the Montrose Clinic.

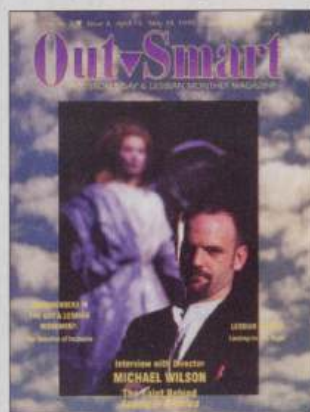
The Houston Area chapter of the National Organization for Women celebrated its 25th anniversary as the largest and oldest NOW chapter in Texas. "Women are still subject to discrimination in all aspects of their lives," said chapter president **Deborah Bell**.

Angry readers debated Houston attorney **Dale Carpenter's** *OutRight* column stating reasons for not including transgenders in the gay movement.

But this month in Houston 1995, no one fought back like **Greg Jeu** at *OutSmart* who was robbed at gunpoint in his driveway. He told *OutSmart* readers how he jumped in his truck and drove after the gunman, dodging bullets until the robber ran out of ammunition. Then he revved up the truck and rammed hard with a vengeance into the robber's white

convertible Miata. He said, "My motto is, 'If you can't put them away, at least put them in a neck brace.'"

This is Donalevan Maines' first column in a continuing series looking back at Houston's GLBT history through OutSmart.



Director Michael Wilson was featured on the cover of the April 15, 1995, edition of *OutSmart*.

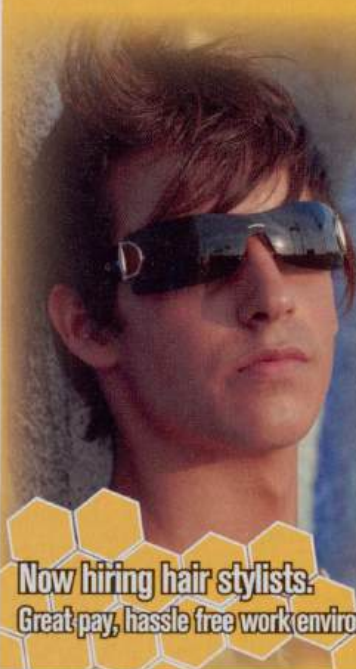


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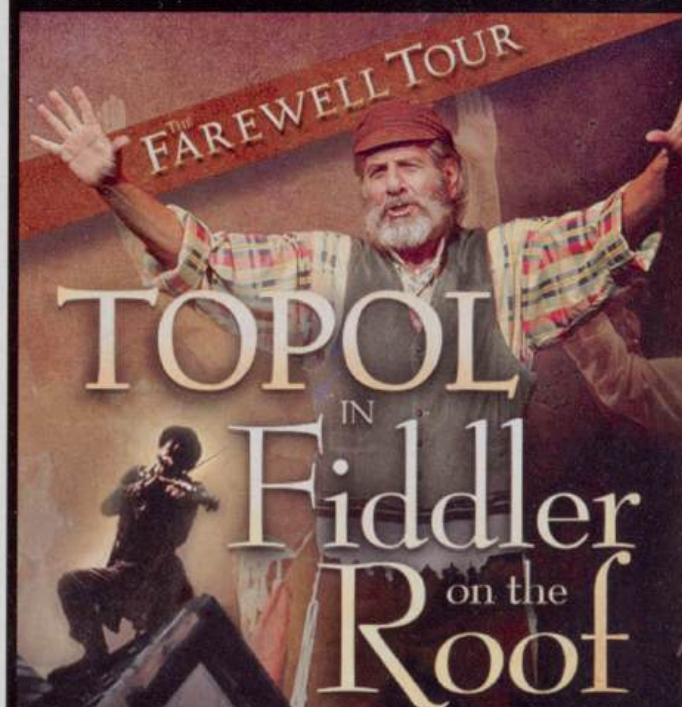


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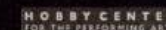
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Passing the 'Jesus Smell Test'

Actress/
singer
Kristin
Chenoweth
gets a little
bit wicked

by Blase DiStefano
Photo by Kate Turning/ABC

Multi-talented Kristin Chenoweth is a Renaissance woman. As a singer, she has recorded three solo albums and collaborated on a host of others. As an actress, she has appeared many times on stage, screen, and television. Chenoweth originated the role of Galinda the Good Witch in the musical *Wicked* and won a Tony Award in 1999 for *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. Her many television appearances include feature roles in *The West Wing* and the recently cancelled *Pushing Daisies*, for which she received an Emmy nomination. Her 11 film credits include a role as the sister of Reese Witherspoon's character in *Four Christmases*. Her best friend is gay, and her manager is lesbian. Born in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, in 1968, she grew up in a Southern Baptist family, and her Christian faith remains important in her life. In 2005, her invitation to a national Christian gathering was withdrawn after she publicly declared that God accepts all people, including homosexuals. The day that I telephone, she is lying down in bed in her hotel room. She has Meniere's disease, which brings on bouts of vertigo and ringing in the ears, as well as other unpleasant symptoms. Though it affects her mood, she is still her sweet, perky self... with less energy—but ready to discuss her just-published memoir, *A Little Bit Wicked: Life, Love, and Faith in Stages*. After exchanging niceties, she asks where I'm calling from.

Blase DiStefano: I'm calling from Houston. Kristin Chenoweth: You're kidding me! That's where my parents live... in The Woodlands.

I interviewed Lee Pace [her costar in *Pushing Daisies*] a few years ago, and he said he had lived in The Woodlands.

Yes, I know. We about died when we figured that out. He was also born in Oklahoma. And we were just like, Wait a minute, this is too weird.

When you visited your parents, do you remember the theater that Denny [best friend Denny Downs] played?

It was TUTS. And I've been to shows there and I know the guy who runs it. Houston actually has a lot of great culture.

Most people don't know that.

You're right. I have a lot of respect for TUTS and a lot of respect for the Alley.

Lee [Pace] was at the Alley.

Yes, that's right. Absolutely crazy, how things come full circle...

I'm with a gay magazine, so I'm sorry if

the questions kind of lean the gay way, but since we don't have a lot of time... Go for it.

So how did you find out Denny was gay?

I don't remember a time when I didn't know it. We met at college. We were in chamber choir together, and he came up to me and said hi and that he knew some relatives of mine. He performed in this summer entertainment show in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and my great aunt and uncle would go all the time. They were one of the groupies. It was a little embarrassing.

[Laughs]

And then we both got cast in *Carmen*, and we were at tech rehearsal. This is how we completely bonded—we both thought the cello player in the pit was flirting with us. And that's really where our relationship changed.

[Laughing] When I was reading about that in the book, I thought, Okay, I'm gonna have to ask her if they found out if the cello player was gay or not, because you stopped the story. But toward the end of the book, you both meet him again, and he's not gay!

[Laughs] So Denny lost... waa waa. I always give him a hard time, and he goes, *I still think he's in denial*. Denny and I have been friends since 1990, I guess. We call each other our non-sexual life partners. If I don't ever end up finding the right man, and I decide that I really want to have a baby, he'll be the daddy—why wouldn't I want to have it with my best friend? In fact, he's coming over in just a few minutes to take care of me. He lives in New York right now, and he flew into town to see his boyfriend, who lives here. Of course, he knows this thing that I have and that I battle and he's the first one...

That's so sweet.

Yes. He's the best guy I know, really.

I sort of fell in love with him while reading the book.

Yes, well, I don't blame you. **[Laughs]**

The thing is, I'm gay, and I think I fell in love with you, too!

That happens a lot with Denny and I. We accept it. We love you guys right back.

[Both laugh] Because of your grandmother, you said that you "subject everything to →



Passing the 'Jesus Smell Test'

continued from previous page

the Jesus smell test." How does it smell that your best friend is a gay man and that your manager is a lesbian?

Well, I must just be the biggest dummy. Dannielle is what you call a lipstick lesbian, but now that I know her, it's like how did I not know? I hired her and we got real close. Then one day, she was like, I have something that I want to tell you that I don't think that you're picking up on.

[Both laugh]

And she goes, "You know I love you so much, but I have... I'm a lesbian." I was like, What?!

I just want to say that it's not like I set out to be a controversial person, or a Christian that's a controversy in her own world. All I ever wanted to do was sing. Like, that's all I want to do.

[Both laugh]

And I've had to—and now happily so—really face what I believe, and I talk about this in the book. I just don't care what people are.

Christians have a pretty bad name right now.

Yes, they do.

You give Christians a really good name.

[Giggles] Thank you so much. That makes me want to cry.

It's so refreshing to have someone like you speak out. That probably means more to me than anything you can say. I can only go on what Jesus taught. That's just what I have to go on. It's like I said in the book, What if being short were a sin? God made me that way, what can I do about it? So I believe that people are born the way they are born. God doesn't make mistakes.

Assuming these weren't mistakes, you've now made out with Idina Menzel [her costar in the play *Wicked*]...

Yes.

... and Annette Benning [in *Running with Scissors*]. So who's next? Janeane Garofalo [her costar in *The West Wing*]?

Well, I love her. I would make out with her. I totally would kiss her. Absolutely. And I could be wrong, but I think she would kiss me back.

Not in Oklahoma anymore (from top): Kristin Chenoweth is a regular animated guest on *The Tonight Show*; Kristin and her best friend Denny Downs; Kristin and her *Wicked* costar Idina Menzel; and Kristin in *Running with Scissors*.



Family matters: Kristin Chenoweth with her mom, her grandfather, and her grandmother, who taught Kristin to subject everything to the "Jesus smell test."

[Both laugh]

But, yes, that's a very good third one. I'll stick with her.

She seems to be a real sweetie.

She's a real sweetie. A real smarty pants, and that's why I like her. I like strong women. I've always looked up to her.

Speaking of strong women... tell me all about your Dusty Springfield project.

It's at a little bit of a standstill, because I won't do it until the script is right. Luckily, because I look younger than my age, I have a few years here to work this out, and I think it would be good for me to age a little bit to play her.

I also think that it's a story that not many people know. They couldn't really pick Dusty Springfield out of a lineup. And they don't know the kind of struggle she had. She was Catholic. She had very verbally and physically abusive parents, and also sibling rivalry, and also battled her sexuality.

That voice was far from perfect, yet it was perfect. I love her voice. In fact I probably need to start picking up smoking to sound like her.

[Both laugh]

But believe it or not, I can really sound like her. It's a part of my voice that I don't show very often. I'm not giving up. It's still in development, and please think good thoughts, because we want to make that movie.

Will do. Thank you so much for your time.

And thank you for everything that you said [about me giving Christians a good name and speaking out]. You're a very, very cool guy.

So are you. Well, you're not a cool guy, but you're a cool gal.

I'd be happy to be a cool guy.

Chenoweth recently completed a pilot for NBC titled *Legally Mad*, created by David E. Kelley (Boston Legal, Ally McBeal); she plays "a cheerful and brilliant attorney who nonetheless exhibits flashes of psychosis." A Little Bit Wicked: Life, Love, and Faith in Stages is from Touchstone, an imprint of Simon & Schuster.

Blase DiStefano also interviews Garry Marshall in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

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A Quartet of Comics Creators

by Neil Ellis Orts



In recent years, you may have noticed comics and graphic novels taking up more and more shelf space at your favorite bookstore. Superheroes and Manga (Japanese comics) are the main items on the comics menu, but if you dig a bit, you'll find a much wider variety of genres being represented. If you stray from the graphic novel shelves, you might also find some very fine books (such as *Fun Home* by Allison Bechdel or *Dykes to Watch Out For* fame) in the biography section.

This month we found four comics creators, all gay, all Texas residents, and talked to them about their work. The range in work covers, yes, superheroes, but also slice-of-life stories, dark fantasy, and things more difficult to categorize. One is just beginning, one is on the verge of making a national splash after years of self-producing comics, the other two are pursuing the medium without concern for commercial success but via different means. The only real connecting thread between these creators (besides sexuality and geography) is a love of graphic narrative and an independent spirit.

Check them out!

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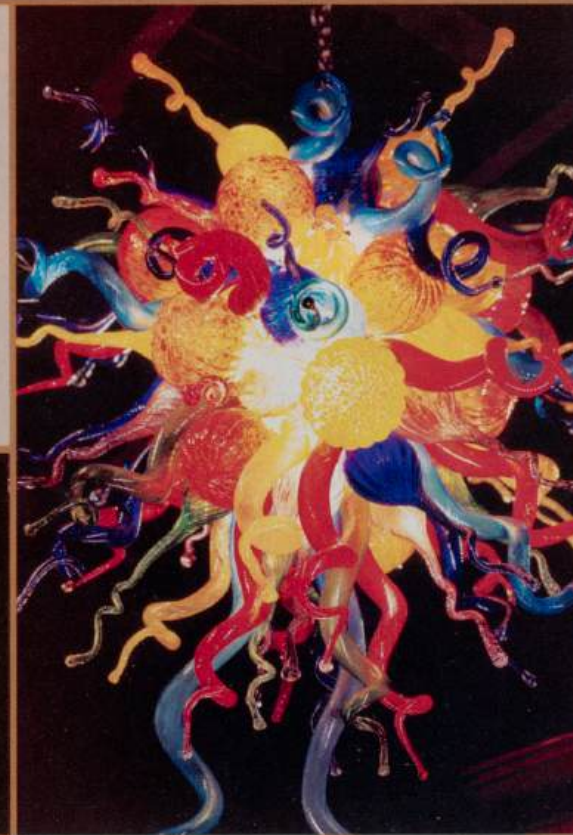


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Dylan Edwards

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Austinite Dylan Edwards

has been seriously making comics for nearly a decade. His longest running project is *Politically InQueerect*, which has morphed from mini-comic to newspaper strip to webcomic, with some fluidity back and forth among all those forms. For the last years of *TXT Newsmagazine*, he supplied political cartoons, and his work can be seen regularly on *Outsports.com*, which runs his panel comic, *The Outfield*.

Next year, Edwards's profile in the comics world will rise with the publication of his first book-length project, to be published by Beacon Press. This came about via a very old process: networking.

"About nine years ago, when I started doing my comics," Edwards says, "I sent a few of them to Allison Bechdel, and a month later, she e-mailed me back and said, 'I really like your comics.' So I've been in touch with her off and on ever since."

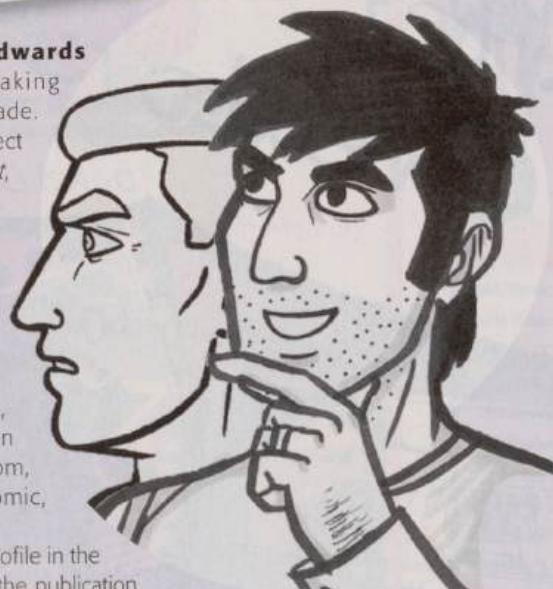
Fast forward to the recent success of Bechdel's graphic memoir, *Fun Home*. Edwards continues, "Beacon went to her after *Fun Home* was a big success, and they asked her for suggestions for cartoonists to flesh out the line of graphic books they're going to start doing. She recommended me."

Edwards categorizes himself as a fiction writer, so Beacon came to him not only with an offer but also a challenge. They wanted a nonfiction book. Edwards decided he was willing to give that a go, and the publisher and the artist discussed different ideas before finally settling on exploring some aspect of the transgender experience. Edwards finally narrowed that down to a book about gay trans men.

"Gay stuff and trans stuff is kind of lumped together a lot of the time, but a lot of trans people don't identify as gay," he says. "There are trans people who identify as gay and it's very hard for them to find information about that." Edwards interviewed several people to tell the stories of eight trans gays and, as he put it, "their experience of being some flavor of trans and some flavor of queer."

Working in a visual medium is also a strength for this project. "One of the things that's very difficult to convey about the trans experience is the ways in which people change physically when they transition, and a lot of people who are trans don't want their picture out there. They want to have their private life," Edwards says. "What I'm doing with the book is I'm basically giving them a pseudonym, and I'm also drawing not as they precisely look in real life, but a kind of anonymous cartoon version of them, so I can show the physical transition. You can still see what it looks like for someone to start out as 'physically female' and become trans male without having to invade their privacy and have to dig up photos of them or whatever. So I really think it's using the medium for something that it will be very good at conveying, something that is often missing from literature about trans stuff."

The Beacon Press book is still without a title, but is expected to be released in the spring or summer of 2010. In the meantime, *Politically InQueerect* and *The Outfield* continues. While all of his work has GLB or T characters, he strives to make it accessible to a broad readership. "I like having [my work] be for an audience that isn't, like, 'gay men who like hairy men.' I feel like a lot of gay culture gets typed down to this really fine grade of 'I only want to read about guys who are six-foot-four and blond.' I want to make gay-themed comics that aren't just about the sexuality. There's a lot more there to talk about."



shane patrick boyle

www.shanepatrickboyle.com/

Some people see their purpose in life early, even if the path is a bit out of the mainstream.

"I didn't know they were called zines back then, but I think I started in second or third grade," says shane patrick boyle, Houston comics zinester. "In one of our classes, we learned about publisher, editor, writer, illustrator—different terms like that. A couple of my friends said, Let's start our own publishing company, and we pretended to be running our own company. That was in second grade. Then in third grade, I actually started making little books with my own stories. This is in California, where at one time school supplies were free. I could use those to make these little handmade books. Each one was one of a kind, hand drawn, hand written, and," boyle continues, laughing, "usually plagiarized from a children's book, or partially. I created my own characters, I just used other people's stories. The first one I did was where I plagiarized from the Charlie Brown encyclopedia of animals. Instead of having Charlie Brown characters talk about different animals, I created my own superheroes to talk about the different animals."

Throughout junior high and high school, boyle continued to write and publish small zines, mostly



science fiction and fantasy fanzines, which he would create with and distribute among like-minded friends. In fact, while a high school student in Alief, he published the *Astro Zine* for a full year of monthly issues—an accomplishment most any zine publisher will recognize as impressive.

But it's his comics zine, *shane*, that has made him a local underground celebrity. Most of his activity in zine publishing centered on writing, but in 2003 he took up drawing because he felt blocked as a writer. It was the drawing that got him unblocked and back to writing. He decided to call his comics zine *shane* because the only connecting thread from issue to issue is that it's all work by him. One issue might be a true narrative, telling a story, and the next might be disconnected

scenes. A recent popular issue was *Scenes from a Gay Bar*, which was more of a sketchbook zine, scenes he'd sketched while in Houston gay bars.

Unlike some comics creators, he's unconcerned about his work becoming a source of income, much less a career. He makes zines because he makes zines, sort of like how the main character in his *Walking Man* story simply walks. That's what he does and it needs no further explanation or justification.

You'd never know it from reading his work, but boyle does cite one particular mainstream superhero saga as thematically affecting his current work. *Crisis on Infinite Earths* was a series in the mid-1980s from DC Comics, which "re-booted" their universe and re-routed much of its story continuity. "*Crisis on Infinite Earths* made a major impression on me. People have been talking about the time-space continuum ever since, and it had an effect on me. I mean, when you wake up and you're a different person or a different age. . . . That's another thing I'm exploring, feeling like I'm a cartoon character. I just recently turned 40 and I can't help thinking that nothing has changed since I was 30. Also, I'm trying to go back to college, so it's almost like my continuity is starting over. I look in the mirror and I still look the same."

In true zinester fashion, you almost have to run into boyle to find his zines, since he mostly sells them out of his backpack. You can also check out his work at the upcoming ZineFest Houston, which he organizes (see sidebar on next page). Beyond that, visit his webpage, which has links to much of his art on the web.

Rosendo

www.gaywired.com

Recently new to Dallas. Rosendo is making his first splash in the comics world with his strip *Fabulance*, which runs weekly on Gaywired.com. *Fabulance* is a teen-aged superhero, keeping the citizens of Prism City safe from crime—or at least looking fabulous while trying to.

Rosendo grew up on superhero comics—citing *Spider-Man* and *Batman* as particular favorites—and continues to have an obvious love of the genre. He tried his hand at comics while in high school but felt he never quite got the rhythm of the medium down. Having drawn since before he could talk, however, he never was far from artistic pursuits, which include painting and a stint at doing storyboards for adult films.

This is the secret origin of *Fabulance*. "The way it started," Rosendo says, "was a little over a year ago [a friend] sent me a picture. His name is Lance and he lives in Rhode Island. He asked, 'How do I look in this shirt?' The shirt had this really deep plunging v-neck down his front and it was skintight. I said, 'You look like a superhero.' I was bored and I drew a picture of him as a

superhero, and I sent it to him and he loved it. It just kind of morphed into this little cartoon character and I started doing these strips based on him."

The artist started posting the strips to his MySpace page not long after, just having fun, until one friend, who works at Regent Media (the owner of Gaywired.com as well as *The Advocate* and *Out* magazines), gave Rosendo the heads-up that they were looking for comic strips. The rest, to be clichéd, is history. *Fabulance* has been appearing on Gaywired.com since March, and Rosendo continues to shop it around for syndication to print media, as well as other sites.

Not that *Fabulance* is all that he has up his sleeve. "I'm a total Renaissance man; I'm always working on something new. I have a million projects going on at once." Among these projects is a pitch for a live-action, *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*-type show for Cartoon Network's *Adult Swim*, which would feature, in varying proportions, puppets and debauchery. He's also at the first stages of developing a second comic strip, which is targeted more toward a mainstream audience. He hopes to have that ready to start shopping to newspaper syndicates in the next year or so.

In the meantime, log on weekly to Gaywired for the latest exploit of *Fabulance*. So far, he's met *Milk* screenwriter Dustin Lance Black (who politely declined the opportunity to be the sidekick of *Fabulance*) and delivered a baby. Who knows what fabulousness lurks in the future of Prism City?



Illustration provided by GayWired.com

Zinefest Houston

If you're intrigued by the independent spirits of these comics creators, you might want to check out ZineFest Houston. Organized by Shane Patrick Boyle, it is a celebration of independent spirit and creativity with not only comics creators but also political commentators, poets, and other people who have something to say and can't wait for someone else's permission to say it.

Just to be clear, a zine is loosely defined as any self-produced booklet or pamphlet. It may take the shape of simple pieces of paper folded in half and stapled, or it might be a thicker book, bound by hand, sometimes with duct tape. Zinesters, as their creators are sometimes called, usually have an intimate relationship with their local Kinko's.

ZineFest got its start five years ago as the Houston Comics and Zine Festival. In that time, it has weathered shifting venues, piggy-backing on other events, and a name change to land as an independent event once again. Boyle, a tireless promoter of zine culture, says, "We keep encountering people who say, 'You can't do that in Houston; you can only do that in cool cities like Austin or Portland.' There was even the question if there were enough people in Houston who knew what a zine was. Yet, I remember, in the '90s, there was a strong zine scene in Houston." It is that history that is part of this year's ZineFest focus. There will be a collection of archived zines from Houston's underground to show a history of this unique form of self-expression.

But the past is not the whole purpose. There will be workshops and panel discussions on making zines, encouraging more people to take part in the fun. Poetry, political discussions, comics—all are fair game at ZineFest. Boyle's purpose is to see these expressions continue into the future.

Whether you're a zine creator, a wannabe creator, or just interested in the form, check out the ZineFest website. It has information on everything from directions to setting up your own table.

Zine Fest Houston 2009

Saturday, May 16, 2009
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Caroline Collective,
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zinefesthouston.wordpress.com

Sean McGrath
www.orthocomics.com

Austin Community College professor by day, comics writer by night, Sean McGrath fights a battle to keep a hobby from taking over his life—but not that hard.

"It started because I always wanted to be involved in comics, one way or another," McGrath says. "It was my childhood dream growing up. I started doing this about five years ago, just for myself, just for something to pass the time with. Now I have published stories and write articles for places, and it's taken me places I didn't think I was going to go, actually."

Frater Mine is the book that McGrath started in 2005, a story of three friends and their connection to the supernatural. "*Frater Mine* is a little more Vertigo-esque, magical realism," he says, comparing the book to the line of adult-audience comics published by DC Comics. "The people who are involved have powers of a sort, but it's not very flashy. They don't run around in tights; they basically run around in whatever they pick up off the bedroom floor in the morning." He originally published the book through Making Comics Studios, a sort of comics creators co-op, where writers and artists could find each other to collaborate on their comics. After four issues with Making Comics, *Frater Mine* moved to McGrath's own comic imprint, Orthocomics.

That's not to say that McGrath dislikes superhero comics. Another book he published through Orthocomics is *Generic Goddess*, which is somewhat based upon a fondly remembered TV superheroine, although all names have been obscured to protect the creators.



Illustration from *Metatextual*, by Marilyn Vana

He also has a more mainstream superhero title, *Praxis*, coming out later this year.

As the writer and publisher of these books, he hires artists to illustrate them, making it an expensive venture for him. He's yet to break even on any of his books, but making money is not the point. Having fun and fulfilling a passion is. Orthocomics is beginning to get noticed, however, and this is where the "going unexpected places" thing comes in.

Since starting his publishing venture, Sean has been writing articles for the annual *Prism Comics: Your LGBT Guide to Comics* on topics such as religion and AIDS in comics. He's become a regular contributor to the Prism Comics website as a reviewer and commentator. Most recently, Blue Water Productions, a comics publisher in Vancouver, Washington, who published books with such pop culture icons as Vincent Price, Roger Corman, and William Shatner, offered McGrath some free advertising space in one month's worth of Bluewater comics. That's the Orthocomics name next to some rather famous names.

When asked about his ultimate goals with his books, McGrath says, "I really want to bring good storytelling back to comics, things that aren't too complicated and too overly gory. I just want to tell really good stories about life and magic and how people can get along. As much as I love superhero comics, I'm not sure I could actually write one very well. I tend to go for the more magic-realism, slice-of-life kind of book." If that sounds like your kind of comics, find them at IndyPlanet.com or, if you're in Austin, at Austin Books and Comics. ■

Neil Ellis Orts is a regular contributor to *OutSmart* magazine.

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- May 20** - "Business Before 8" Monthly Networking Breakfast. Mango's Cafe, 403 Westheimer. 7:30 am - 8:30 am No Charge. Members and Non-Members Welcome.
- May 28** - Monthly Dinner Meeting "GLBT Travel" Holiday Inn, 3131 West Loop South. Ticket Information at rsvp@thechamberhouston.org

SAVE THE DATE:

- June 25** - "Honoring Our Allies Awards Dinner" Celebrating Pride Week and Recognizing Those Partners Who Support Our Community. Magnolia Hotel, 1100 Texas Street. Sponsorship and Tickets Information Available.

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The Triumph of a Mother's Love

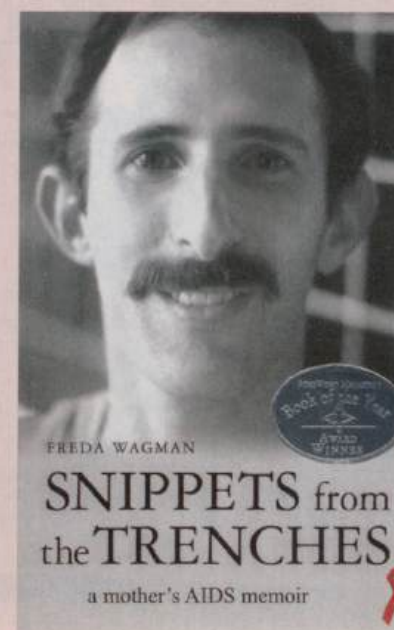
'Snippets from the Trenches' tells the story of AIDS in Houston

by Brandon Wolf

Sometimes I think we know each other so well, and yet we both keep growing, so there's ever more knowing to be done.

This book is about dying, a lot about dying, but it is even more about living—the meaning of it, and in particular, it is about knowing self.

This is Gary Wagman's 1985 inscription to his mother, Freda, in a copy of Shirley MacLaine's Dancing in the Light. Little did he know that 12 years after his death from AIDS, Freda would write Snippets from the Trenches; a Mother's AIDS Memoir, a book about growing, dying, living, and knowing self.



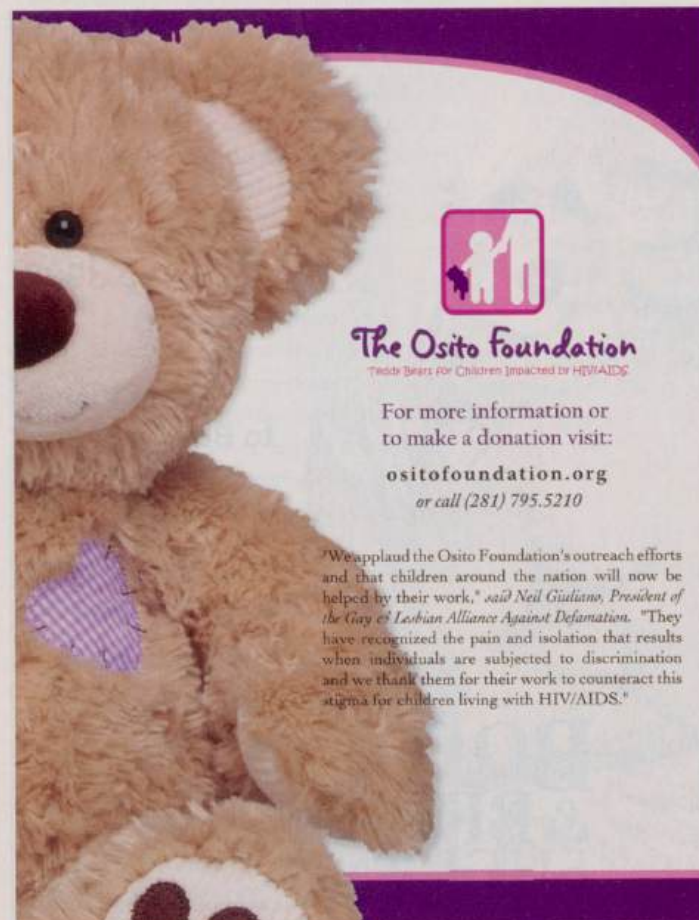
Freda Wagman and her son, Gary, age 4, in Brownsville

wrote it the way I lived it," says Freda Wagman. And the way she lived it has an amazingly familiar ring to people who lived in Houston during the first decade and a half of the crisis. *Snippets from the Trenches* starts in 1981 and recounts the last 14 years of her son's life. It also traces the evolution of both the disease and Houston's response to it. Familiar names pop out of the pages: Michael Wilson, Sue Lovell, Michael McDory, Dr. Robert Awe; organizations such as AIDS Foundation Houston, Montrose Clinic, Stone Soup, People with AIDS Coalition, Montrose Counseling Center, and Bering United Memorial Church.

Gary Wagman was living in San Francisco in 1983 when he phoned his mother to tell her he had a swol-

len lymph gland on his neck and planned to visit a doctor to have it diagnosed. When medical tests confirmed that Gary was HIV-positive, Freda Wagman flew to San Francisco to be with her son. On her return to Houston, she determined to find out everything she could about HIV. Rather than turning to books, Wagman joined a small group of volunteers who were organizing to meet the crisis head-on. The volunteers worked under the auspices of the KS/AIDS Foundation (now AIDS Foundation Houston).

Wagman immersed herself in the effort, and AIDS quickly became a part of her daily life. She worked with those living with HIV, their partners, and their families. She became familiar with hospitals and →



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What Readers Are Saying

"Freda Wagman has told the forgotten story of how Houston responded to AIDS. I had to read this book in small portions, because it was painful to remember those days—I lost my own brother to the epidemic. But I am proud to have been a part of those efforts, and I am proud of those with whom I worked."

—Sue Lovell, Houston City Council member

"Freda Wagman has written a compelling piece reminding us of both the tragedies and triumphs of a desperate period in the life of the gay community in Houston and all of the country. Her vivid account brings to life the highly personal experience of those who so bravely rose to the crushing needs. It was a time when the only hope for thousands rested in the hands of a few kind and loving people who were brave and compassionate enough to care for desperate people abandoned by most. Freda tells this heart-wrenching story in a way so compelling as to make it difficult to put the book down. Her writing is colored by the love and angst of a mother soon to lose her beloved son, a mother whose only refuge from personal pain was to care for others in great need."

—Tony Carroll, LCSW
(licensed clinical social worker)

"The book really takes you back in time when the pervasive impact of HIV was in the gay community. Freda accurately and poignantly captures the emotion of that era."

—Patty Armstrong, AIDS Foundation Houston (AFH) employee for over 19 years, and current AFH chief operating officer

"In *Snippets from the Trenches*, Freda describes the courage and tenaciousness of numerous individuals and families she came to know as a hospital and home-visit volunteer. The stories are riveting examples of love, compassion, hope, and perseverance in the face of tragedy. Freda's description of her close relationship with Gary and the emotional struggles she faced while dealing with Gary's illness is very moving. Although Gary died in April of 1995, Freda's ongoing work to help those affected by AIDS is a loving memorial to her son."

—Linda Bratsen, Houston PFLAG

"It is gratifying to see that Freda Wagman addresses the mental-health toll that HIV/AIDS takes on both persons living with the disease as well as their partners, friends, family, and loved ones. It was and still is a privilege to be associated with other Houston organizations who mobilized in the early days to address the physical and emotional needs of our community."

—Ann J. Robison, PhD, executive director, Montrose Counseling Center

The Triumph of a Mother's Love

continued from previous page

medications. She was authorized as a notary public to help attest to the authenticity of legal documents. She attended funerals and memorial services. She comforted those whose families abandoned them. She offered support to relatives who struggled to deal with a loved one's impending death.

Meanwhile, Wagman herself was struggling. Her son was living nearly 2,000 miles away. She took advantage of any opportunity to visit him in San Francisco or to accompany him on vacations either at home or abroad. And she continued her volunteerism over the next decade, remaining physically and emotionally strong for others.

But loss is deeply personal, and in 1993 Wagman began to prepare for her own private pain by joining the HIV Support Group at Bering Memorial Methodist Church. In late 1994, Gary took sick and began a steady decline. In April 1995, he died in her arms.

A Message to Tell

"The book came in starts and fits," says Wagman. "There was no epiphany." A series of factors eventually accounted for the book's completion. The first of those factors was an invitation, about six months after her son's death, to speak to a group at Rice University. She wrote a short speech, and that speech is now the foreword in the book.

The speech resonated with many people, and she received encouragement to expand it into a book. "I thought people had to be kidding," Wagman says. "I'd never written anything in my life, except for that short speech. But I was left with a thought that kept running through my mind."

Wagman continued to attend the Bering Support Group after Gary's death. She also continued to work on the book, sometimes putting it away for long periods of time. The book was about half finished, but not moving forward, when she became friends with a young man in the support group who enjoyed attending social and

art events with her. "One day I called and asked him to go to the Museum of Fine Arts," she says. "He told me that I had to start spending an hour or two working on the book before he would accompany me to an event. I liked his company, so I eventually finished the book."

In 2007, *Snippets from the Trenches* was published. In 2008, it won a *Foreword Magazine* Book of the Year Award in the Gay & Lesbian category.

The Author's Own Journey

Wagman's personal story starts with her birth in Toledo, Ohio. She was the eighth of nine children born to Russian immigrant parents who met while working for the Jewish National Fund.

The family was poor, so they moved to Detroit, Michigan, where her father could get work in the auto factories. Wagman's father worked there for many years as a tool and die maker. At the beginning of her senior year in high school, she moved to Houston and has lived here since.

Wagman's first job was as a typist at the Jewish Community Center. Next, she worked for more than a decade for Walter Pye's, a high-end apparel shop. She remembers Walter Pye Sr.: "He was a real gentleman. And he owned a fabulous pink Cadillac convertible."

From Walter Pye's, she took a position in the offices of Beth Yeshurun Synagogue, followed by the post of secretary to the chairman of the Chemical Engineering Department at the University of Houston. Finally, she settled into a longtime position as vice president of administration for a store-planning firm.

Wagman ran the business end of the

firm. She supervised the payroll, accounting, bookkeeping, insurance, and mail operations. "I ran it like a top," she says with pride. "We never missed an IRS deadline and never issued a hot check."

Bringing Up Gary

Wagman married young and reared one child, her son Gary; her second pregnancy ended in miscarriage. Wagman's husband was a commercial artist. Years later she would marvel at the ironic location of her husband's office—the building that in the 1980s became McAdory House, where she sometimes worked as an AFH volunteer.

After 10 years of marriage, Wagman and her husband mutually agreed to a divorce. "Gary's father was a jock," Wagman says, "but Gary was a very gentle soul. They eventually began to have disagreements, and their arguments had become more and more frequent. He didn't miss his father."

Wagman remembers Gary as a typical child, sometimes given to the unexplainable mischievousness of youth. "Once he got in trouble for riding his bike through the halls of the local school after hours," she says. "Another time, he filled his pockets with root beer candies at a convenience store. But he was always apologetic, and I think we

formed a bond because I didn't come down hard on him for such infractions.

"Gary was also a loner," Wagman recalls. "He stayed in the house a lot and asked me to play games like stadium checkers. He also liked to turn chairs over so the top of their backs touched, and then he would put a sheet over them. He had a little stuffed rabbit that he would take in there with him, and sometimes he would invite me in too."

Wagman describes her son as a smart student and a good boy. "He was never sick and never missed a day of school," she says. After graduation from Bellaire High School, he tried his hand at a triple major of math, anthropology, and French at the University of Texas. He entered as →



Freda and Gary, age 34, in Russ Pittman Park in Bellaire



Freda and Gary, age 3, in Galveston



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Two months before his death in April 1995, Gary sent his mother this Valentine's card.

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The Triumph of a Mother's Love

continued from previous page

a sophomore with advanced placement.

But Gary became restless with his studies in Austin and worked to pay his way to Israel, where he lived for an extended time with a relative. Shortly after returning, he offered to help his mother process the payroll at her office one holiday weekend.

"He picked up a programming book for the office computer, and with no training, he wrote the code for a payroll program so I wouldn't have to do it by hand," Wagman remembers.

With a newfound interest, Gary went to the University of Houston and graduated from their computer sciences program. He accepted a job offer with Shell Oil in New Orleans, but his sights were set on San Francisco. Before long, he found a programming job at the University of California at Berkeley. "I knew at that point in our lives that I had to let my little bird fly," Wagman says. "He was never happier than he was in San Francisco. It was his city. And for him, it was magic."

Reflecting on her relationship with her son, Wagman says, "We were close. We were pals. We were on the same wavelength. We were each other's teacher. I felt like I was winging it the whole time as a mother. But I must have done something right, because he grew up to be a very honest and caring person."

Gary came out to his mother when he was attending school in Austin. "He wrote me a letter," Wagman remembers. "I was out having dinner at Ruggles the day the letter came. I got home late, read the letter, and called him. The poor kid had to be in class the next morning, but we were on the phone from 11 p.m. until 2 a.m. I asked him if he was sure, and he said yes. It didn't shock me because I had sort of thought for the last three years that he might be gay. But now it was black and white."

Learning Amidst Sorrow

A book about AIDS and a son's death could easily have wandered into sentimentality and justifiably portrayed Wagman as a saintly mother. But she chose to do neither. Instead, she recounts her experiences with the eye of a neutral observer, searching for whatever lessons can be learned. She preferred to be a peer and friend with those around her rather than slipping into the role of a maternal angel of mercy.

Wagman became friends with the gay men who were fellow volunteers. She

accompanied them to gay discos, joined them in the pews at memorial services, and helped "de-gay" apartments before out-of-town parents arrived. She once declined an invitation to an AIDS fundraiser at The Ripcord, Houston's notorious leather bar, but then agreed to attend when her friends insisted. "I did think it a bit strange though when a lesbian activist offered to strip topless that night for a \$100 donation," she laughs. "Before I knew it, the gay audience came up with the money and I saw her prancing across the stage with no blouse or bra, as the men in attendance cheered her on."

There are many moments in Wagman's book where the reader finds their eyes misting over and their throat catching. But there are light moments, too—such as the memory of an office manager who called an AIDS hotline, frantic because he had just learned that an employee had been diagnosed with HIV. "What should I do with all the office files?" he asked. The phone volunteer later regretted not saying "Burn them!"

Wagman says she stared bigotry in the face too often, such as she witnessed at the funeral of a young black woman who had succumbed to AIDS. "The preacher kept pointing down at her in the casket and yelling about her sins and their consequences," she says. "Even her family was saying amen." Yet the author remains more baffled than judgmental.

And she remains decidedly human. She frets over accidental slips of the tongue while in the presence of the terminally ill, finds her patience running short with an irritating roommate, and wonders why she is depressed when it's everyone else around her who is dying. But it is that humanness—and her conversational writing style—that draws readers into her book.

In retrospect, Wagman says that neither she nor the volunteers with whom she worked ever asked anyone how they got AIDS. "Because it really didn't matter," she says. "Despite the fact that some parents condemned or abandoned their children, those responses never occurred to me as options. I only knew that Gary was my son, and that I loved him."

A portion of the proceeds from the sale of Snippets from the Trenches will be donated to various AIDS organizations. The book may be purchased through Amazon.com, where a downloadable copy via Kindle will also soon be available. For a signed copy, contact the author at freda.wagman@sbcglobal.net.

Brandon Wolf interviewed Acadian Bakers' Sandi Bubbett in the April issue of OutSmart.

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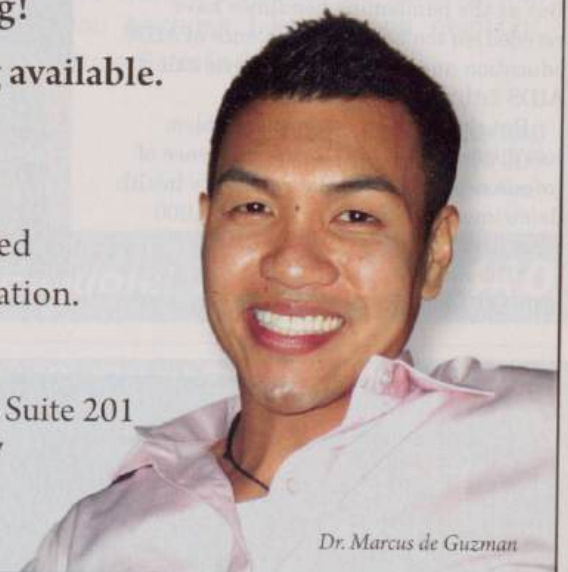
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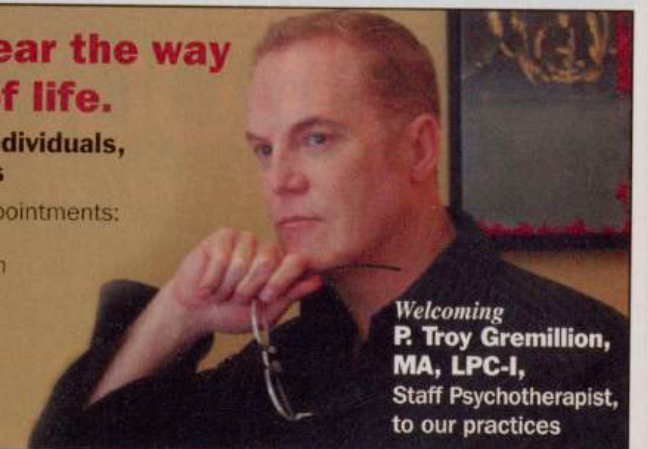
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LIVING with HIV

LIVE Consortium deals with the second front of the disease

by **Marene Gustin**
Photo by Dalton DeHart

In the '80s, an HIV-positive test result was often soon followed by full-blown AIDS. Today, the idea of living with the virus has become one more part of the ever-changing world we inhabit. Foot-long mobile phones have evolved into tiny handheld computers, our cars tell us which direction to take, and a once-certain death sentence is now a manageable disease. But as the pandemic's headlines have receded, so too has the prevalence of AIDS education and prevention. Experts call it AIDS fatigue.

But that doesn't mean the problem has disappeared. In fact, the incidence of infection is still high. Today the city health department estimates 20,000 to 22,000 Houstonians are living with HIV.

"The numbers are so huge here," says attorney Beau Miller. "Today's college kids,



Beau Miller, founder of LIVE Consortium

African Americans, and Hispanics don't think it's a problem for them, but they are the groups with the fastest-growing numbers."

Miller, who lives with the virus, began to see the need for prevention and education as a board member of Center for AIDS (CFA). With CFA's encouragement, he started LIVE Consortium, Inc., a nonprofit that aims to "facilitate individuals who are in need of health and wellness services in finding those programs and services."

LIVE's first board meeting was in January, and it's been nonstop since. Earlier this year, the organization held its first fundraiser and a month-long educational and awareness campaign at the University of Houston, culminating in a health fair and rally. The university's Anti-Stigma Campaign aims to proactively reduce the number of HIV infections in the United States by helping to cultivate social

awareness and compassion and dispel HIV myths, while also encouraging HIV-infected individuals to seek treatment.

"We don't want to remake the wheel here," Miller insists, "but we need to send messengers into these groups that they can identify with. We want to reach not just HIV individuals but people affected by it as well, the people around them. LIVE is about letting people know they can have long and healthy lives with treatment. We can win this war!"

The 35-year-old Miller has ambitious plans for the brand-new organization. Besides the Anti-Stigma Campaign, LIVE is working on a Health and Wellness Research Project to compile data and present how HIV and its stigma affect individuals and the population at large; HIVE (HIV Education program); a mentor program for the newly diagnosed called INSPIRE; SLATE, a series of social educational programs for professionals; the PPO (Primary Physician Outreach), designed to aid doctors in educating new patients; and even the first International Conference on HIV and Aging. It's a multi-pronged and well-thought-out agenda, one that Miller is eventually hoping to take international.

"If only there were 48 hours in a day," muses Miller. As founder and CEO of LIVE, Miller has been on the run since the beginning of the year. But now that the Spring events are over, he just might take time to breathe. "Maybe now I can take a break," he says. "Or get back to work at the law firm!" Also on tap, a run in Memorial Park, watching some flicks, and even sleep. But for Miller, as so many in the community who volunteer, the hard work and personal sacrifices are well worth the results.

"This is about people coming together to create a better quality of life for all of us." Or, as the organization's motto states, "Live Better, Be the Cure."

For more information: LiveConsortium.org.

Marene Gustin also writes about the Red Ribbon Adventure Tours in this issue of OutSmart.



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Tongues in Cheek

Real-live lesbian Jen Foster answers Katy Perry

by Nancy Ford

I didn't just kiss her,
We went all the way
and she liked it.
She likes to think she
didn't invite it,
But these scratches
aren't because she
tried to fight it.

—"I Didn't Just Kiss
Her" by Jen Foster



Thumbs up: a provocative new tune is driving not only faithful fans but also curious new listeners to indie songstress (and former Houstonian) Jen Foster's website.

When Katy Perry's "I Kissed a Girl" burst into iPods in 2008, touting the joys of hot girl-on-girl action, singer/songwriter Jen Foster was puzzled.

"My first thought was, 'Wow, she ripped off Jill Sobule!'" Foster says, referring to Sobule's 1995 Gay & Lesbian American Music Award-winning song of the same name. "Then my second feeling was that it was a brilliant gimmick."

Perry's catchy song had a good beat and was easy to dance to. But it was hardly an empowering anthem for lesbians with lyrics like "I hope my boyfriend doesn't mind it." It was an attention-grabber, though, Foster admits.

"It sort of walks that line between not

being too offensive to straight people, while creating a little bit of intrigue and using the gay thing to her advantage."

Foster's ultimate response was something a bit more proactive; the out musician answered Perry's song by penning "I Didn't Just Kiss Her" in a matter of hours.

"I had another song that had the same beat and guitar riff," Foster says. "The song was more political and cerebral, and [when I'd play it] people always got a funny look on their face like they were trying to figure out what I was talking about. And so I thought, if I could add some really great lyrics that are compelling and a little more obvious, I'd love to see this song hit people in a big way.

"All of a sudden I was just playing it and 'I didn't just kiss her, we went all the way and she liked it,' just came out of me! It just sort of flowed."

The appreciation from her fans, in turn, flowed back. As many as 40,000 clicked in to JenFoster.com to hear "I Didn't Just Kiss Her" within its first week on the Internet.

Told from the perspective of a jilted lesbian lover, Foster's provocative song pulls no punches. The artist generally better known for her introspective lyrics and love songs received some criticism from her fans who prefer her softer side.

"I can see how it could be a little more palatable to a wider audience if some of those lines were softened," Foster says. →



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Tongues in Cheek

continued from
 previous page

"But the deal is, that song calls for a little bit of grit; it calls for that kind of openness. I thought it through: 'What else could I say? What else would I say?'"

"Actually, there are ways I could've made it a little bit softer. But I just think, you know, you've got to go with it. I went with where the song took me. It's very raw, and it's very from-the-heart, if you will. So, no regrets."

Nonetheless, the thought of ruffling feathers, especially those of her fans, gives Foster pause. "I don't like offending people," she says. "I'm a Texan and I come from a very conservative family, as gay as I am. I still have a very Southern, polite side of me. But I'm always wanting to push the envelope, to challenge myself, and challenge what people think. So I battle with those two sides of myself."

So far, Foster's song has ruffled no feather in Perry's camp.

"I've had fans who have called her hotline and people who have posted comments on her page, but I've had no direct response from her or her people whatsoever," Foster says. "I don't know—I wonder sometimes if maybe, with all the backlash they've gotten from the gay community, maybe they think I'm coming at it from a really angry place. But I'm not. I'm coming at it from a tongue-in-cheek, humorous, witty kind of place. The song is meant to be taken with a smile."

For her part, Perry has professed her support of gay equality ("My closest friends happen to be gay," she told *TheNewGay.net*), and Foster believes her.

"As far as what she says, she supports what we're doing, and it certainly stirred up the debate. It stirred up conversation, for better or for worse."

A video version of "I Didn't Just Kiss Her" has yet to be produced, because Foster is considering turning that responsibility over to her fans. "We're talking about the idea of making it a contest and putting it out there to the fans to create their own videos."

"I love interactive stuff, because I'm really involved with my fans," she says. "I keep in touch with a lot of fans that I see on a regular basis who come out to my shows and make road trips and drive out for the weekends to see me. There are people that I see all the time across the country who just love to help and promote. So I'd like to give them the opportunity to participate and be part of what I do. Send us your video—and having some sort of prize for whoever wins 'Best Video.'"

The as-yet unproduced video has a considerable legacy to follow. Foster's most

recent video, "Closer to Nowhere," placed third in LOGO's Top 20 videos for 2008; it marked a particularly sweet honor for Foster, considering a scant three of those top videos were by female artists. The dearth of lesbian representation in the field of winners was a phenomenon not lost on Foster.

"I noticed that," she says. "I don't know—I really wonder. Were they getting as many videos from females, or what? I don't know, but I wonder."

Foster, who grew up in Houston, now resides in Nashville where she just completed the first installment of *A Writer's Share*, a quarterly songwriters' showcase and forum.

"It's the kind of environment where

you sit in the round, and songwriters go around the circle and share a song and talk about what that song means to them, and the audience is really drawn in and gets to get the behind-the-scenes stories with this music," Foster explains.

The April event benefited the T.J. Martel Foundation's cancer, AIDS, and leukemia research.

"It's just a cause that's dear to my heart because my mother died of cancer last year," Foster says. "When that happened I just decided I'm going to do more with my music to help people, more with my music that will help raise funds to help the causes I support."

Nancy Ford wrote about the Mr. Prime Choice contest for the April issue of OutSmart.

Sweet Sailing

As her fourth album, *39*, reaches completion, Jen Foster joins Suzanne Westenhoefer on a western Caribbean adventure with Sweet, November 8-15.

"Sweet is the new, hot, eco-friendly lesbian cruise line!" Foster explains enthusiastically. "I'd met Shannon Wentworth, who was an Olivia employee, on the Olivia cruises that I played, [who] sort of broke away and ended up doing her own thing. I think she's doing something really cool because she's just a very thoughtful, deep kind of person who wants to give lesbians a great source of entertainment and unique travel experience. But she is also doing something better for the planet—or as much as you can, having a cruise line."

In addition to enjoying the heady headlines, Sweet cruisers have the opportunity to pitch in with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts in New Orleans, where the excursion originates. Details: discoversweet.com.

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Thank You, Universe

'Hedwig and the Angry Inch' goes Unhinged

by Joyce Gabiola • Photo by Tra' Slaughter



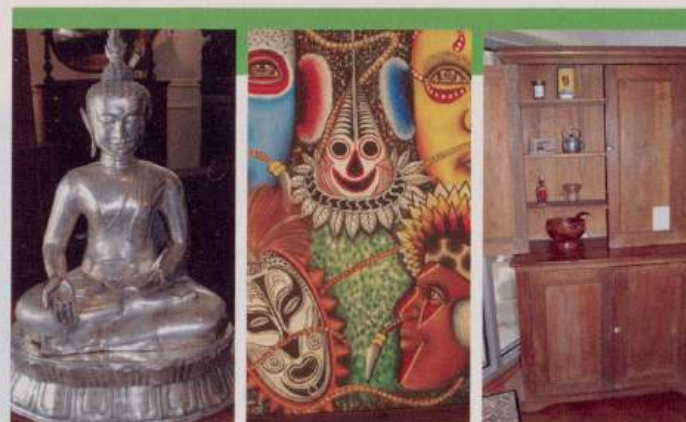
And now, Hedwig: Chris Rivera, who plays the title character in Unhinged Productions' *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, has a long history with that theater group. He has also played roles in UP's *The House of Yes*, *The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me*, *Santos*, *Breaking the Code*, and *One Fine Day*.

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Unhinged Productions, the GLBT voice in local theater, teams up with the Frenetic Theater in May to bring Mitchell's and Trask's musical to Houston. For director Betsy Brown, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* is her directorial debut in the United →

What would the world be today without John Cameron Mitchell's and Stephen Trask's 1998 off-Broadway hit, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*? What if Hansel had not fallen under the charms of the lustful U.S. soldier and his bigger-than-normal Gummibärchen? Perhaps he would still be intact. However, if he hadn't opened his mouth to the sweet, chewy goodness, he wouldn't have journeyed from behind the Berlin Wall into the bowels of midwestern America, only to rise as *the* . . . well, at first, the babysitter to the children of a U.S. Army general, then the lead singer of a band backed by the unique stylings of three Korean housewives, the inspiration for a teenage boy to get up in the morning, and *then* finally . . . *the* "internationally ignored song stylist" and front-woman of the glam-rock band, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (performing

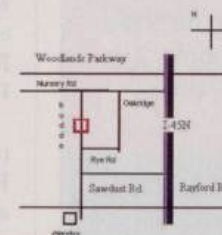


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Thank You, Universe

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States. Having just returned from London, after moving there in 2001 to pursue post-graduate studies and classical acting, Brown finds herself impressed with the local businesses and artistic community in Houston. She has spent her entire professional life in London, training as a director at King's Head Theatre and working with various theater and production companies, including Young Vic, Theater Royal Haymarket, Charm Offensive Productions, and Yellow Lemon.

When asked if she would be interested in directing *Hedwig* for Unhinged Productions, Brown says her jaw dropped and said, "Hell yeah, man!" She mentions she has a little director's wish list of about eight shows, and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* is one of them. After being approached about directing Unhinged Productions' rendition of *Hedwig*, Brown said, "Thank you, universe."

Mitchell's and Trask's *Angry Inch* extended to the global masses when a film version blasted onto screens in 2001 and was quickly turned into a cult favorite. The musical certainly has its fans. Like Brown having the opportunity to tackle a gig on her wish list, Chris Rivera, the local actor selected to play Hedwig, enthuses, "In contemporary theater, Hedwig is one of the greatest roles created in the last 20 years. There is no archetype that Hedwig is attached to. Hedwig has been in the back of my brain since 2002." Incidentally, Rivera was named one of *OutSmart*'s Top 10 People to Watch in 2005.

Although the character of Hedwig is inspired by the babysitter who had worked for Mitchell's family when he was a teenager, Brown's main goal is to convey the base premise, a series of philosophical discussions that Plato recorded called *The Symposium*. "To understand why the piece was conceived is very important," says Brown. "I want to keep it true to what the writers originally hoped. You have to try to stay true to them, and at the same time, allow myself to express myself—my interests, beliefs and creativity, and artistic vision overall."

Brown creates balance between her



Betsy Brown

creative freedom and Mitchell's and Trask's artistic visions by working with local artists to create original paintings, jewelry, and costumes, all in the style of Hedwig. The production features 18 original paintings by emerging artist Tra Slaughter. "The minute you enter the space through the front door, you're in Hedwig's world," reveals Brown. "What is man, what is woman?" she continues. "How did we come to be man and woman as separate entities, and what is love? That's what *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* is about, and I want to bring that forth, but it's also the absolute celebration of music and the rock 'n' roll nature of it."

In addition to staying true to Mitchell and Trask, Brown employs originality and artistic collaboration to achieve her vision. In addition to Rivera, Brown cast Heaven Stephens, who received an MFA in acting from the University of North



Heaven Stephens

Carolina, to play the role of Yitzhak, Hedwig's gender-bending European husband. The uniqueness of the actors for this show comes naturally, as Rivera is, according to Brown, the first non-Caucasian actor to play Hedwig. Further, Stephens is an African-American woman who performs as a European woman playing a transgender man. "As an African-American female—yeah, I'm going there," Stephens shares. "To be a character where I wouldn't normally be cast is super exciting."

Brown experienced petty criticism early on in the production process in regards to the auditions post on TheatrePort.com. The post reads: *Please only apply if you have had professional acting training or have worked extensively in the theater*. One poster stated that "it did seem kind of snotty in the wording."

As every aspect of a theater production is important, most delicate is likely the relationship between the actors and their director. "I won't work with any actors unless they're professional actors because there's a dichotomy between the director and the actor, and then the actor has to understand the stage and the theater and how it works, and it's just a lot easier to get things done," Brown explains.

In preparation for their roles, Rivera and Stephens agree that, among other things, such as research, just being →

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a minority helps them perform their roles. "Just trying to find yourself," adds Stephens. "Everyone has f-kin' tried to do that. Emphasize the f-kin'."

Brown reads from the manuscript: "Last time I saw you, we had just split in two, you were looking at me, I was looking at you. You had a way so familiar, but I could not recognize. . . 'Cause you had blood on your face. . . But I could swear by your expression that the pain down in your soul was the same as the one down in mine. That's the pain that cuts a straight line down through the heart. We call it love."

"That's 'The Origin of Love.' That song encompasses the entire show," asserts Brown.

Are you going to throw gummy bears into the audience during "Sugar Daddy"? Brown smiles, "Possibly, maybe."

Hedwig and the Angry Inch runs May 8-30 at Freneticore Theatre, 5102 Navigation Blvd. For tickets and information: u-p.org or 281/312-9379.

Joyce Gabiola is a regular contributor to OutSmart magazine.

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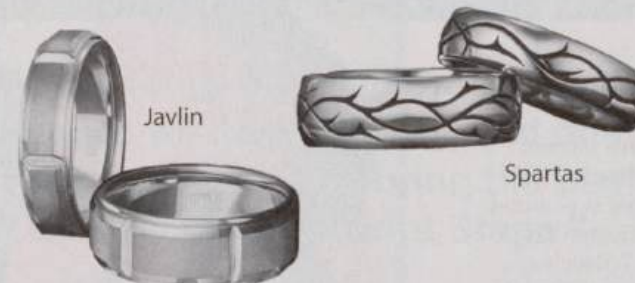
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Directing the Estate

Michael Wilson
handles with care
the work of his late
friend Horton Foote

by Donalevan Maines
Photo by Joan Marcus



As widowed family matriarch Stella Gordon, Elizabeth Ashley (left) stakes out her position in the late Horton Foote's family feud *Dividing the Estate*, while James DeMarse, Hallie Foote (the playwright's daughter), Maggie Lacey, and Devon Abner scheme to split the spoils with their own best interests in mind. Former Alley Theatre associate director Michael Wilson (inset) directed the genteel comedy, which won best new off-Broadway play before bowing on the Great White Way, where it's expected to be a frontrunner at the Tony Awards in June.

This is a big month for Broadway's Michael Wilson. June could be jumpin' all over, July hot as hell, and August—why, August will be positively epic.

Wilson, 44, lived in Montrose when he scored one of his biggest triumphs, directing *Angels in America* at the Alley Theatre in 1995.

On May 5, he will find out whether *Dividing the Estate* is nominated for a Tony Award—it's the comedy by his late friend Horton Foote that he recently directed in a limited run on Broadway. Wilson says, "I fully expect that Horton will be nominated and that he will finally take home the Tony for his body of work, over 70 years writing for the theater. I think this is among his greatest works and worthy of the honor bestowed on him."

This month, Wilson also will return to Texas for Foote's private burial service in Wharton, the playwright's hometown that he's immortalized as the fictional "Harrison, Texas" in many of his plays. Then Wilson jets back to New York for a memorial service at 4 p.m., May 11, at Lincoln Center.

On May 28, 12 of the 13-member Broadway cast of *Dividing the*



BRIAN ARMSTRONG

"We're doing *Dividing the Estate* because we love the play, and one of our missions is to bring the best of Broadway to Hartford Stage."

Estate will reprise their roles at Hartford Stage, where Wilson is in his 11th year as artistic director. Its Broadway producers hope that Tony voters will make the two-hour drive to Hartford, Connecticut, to see the show before marking their final ballots (due on June 5), but Wilson says that wasn't his theater's primary reason for staging it.

"We're doing it because we love the play, and one of our missions is to bring the best of Broadway to Hartford Stage," he explains.

In June, Wilson could be attending the Tony Awards as director of a favorite for the best-play Tony, possibly a nominee himself

for best director, and/or the significant other of a nominee for scenic design. Jeff Cowie, a painter he met in Houston, made his Broadway debut as a set designer with the tastefully decorated "Harrison, Texas" home in *Dividing the Estate*.

When 92-year-old Foote died in Hartford on March 4, he had been working for the past year and a half on *The Orphans' Home Cycle*, a nine-play epic commissioned by Hartford Stage in 2007. "The bulk of it was complete," says Wilson, explaining that he and the playwright's daughter, actress Hallie Foote, "will now finish it," prior to its run, which will employ more than three dozen artists, at Hartford Stage Aug. 27–Oct. 17 and at Signature Theatre Company in New York City, Oct. 29, 2009–April 11, 2010.

Wilson, who was then associate director at the Alley, became good friends with Horton Foote when the playwright was honored in festivities attended by actors Robert Duvall and Tess Harper, who appeared together in Foote's 1983 Oscar-winning original screenplay, *Tender Mercies*. Duvall, who worked with Foote many times over the years, made his first on-screen appearance in Foote's →

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Directing the Estate

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1962 Oscar-winning screenplay adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

"We became very close, frequently going to the theater together," says Wilson. "I have many fond memories of driving down 59 South to Wharton and having dinner with Horton and his wife, Lillian [who produced films in the 1980s from Foote's plays *1918* and *On Valentine's Day*]. We would talk about plays we had seen, new forms, new styles. Horton was passionately engaged in theater, and his love for it was very infectious."

They remained close even after Wilson left in 1993 to direct plays in New York, while remaining a resident artist at the Alley until he took over the artistic reins at Hartford Stage. Most recently, Wilson directed Jane Alexander and Lynn Cohen in the premiere of Tina Howe's *Chasing Monet* off-Broadway, and Matthew Modine in a stage version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which Foote enjoyed seeing 13 days before he died.

Wilson's theater in Connecticut is a supportive friend of the GLBT community, for example, benefiting the Hartford



The early days: Michael Wilson, a former Houston resident, brought passion to the stage and to the street, as illustrated by his lapel pin. The pink triangle was ACT-UP's logo.

Gay & Lesbian Health Collective and hosting fundraisers for Love Makes a Family prior to Connecticut's legalization of gay marriage. But in his younger days in Montrose, Wilson took to the streets as a gay activist with ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition

to Unleash Power) and Queer Nation.

"I felt a vital part of the gay and lesbian community in Houston," he recalls. "We were so active and passionate. It was a very urgent, heady time. A lot of us were out there demonstrating at the Republican Convention [outside the Astrodome in 1992] and jumping into action after the



Texas two-step: Michael Wilson interviews his old friend and fellow Texan, Horton Foote, in a video shot at Hartford Stage in 2007.

brutal [hate-crime] murder of Paul Broussard. It was a confluence of events that called for that kind of action."

Wilson and Cowie now share a Victorian home just five minutes from Hartford Stage. They host cast parties and entertain visiting artists, among them actress AnnaLee Jefferies, a favorite of gay theatergoers in Houston (currently in Hartford through May starring in the solo adaptation of Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*). Jefferies is one of so many artists who "discovered" Wilson's work in his Alley days and would follow him anywhere.

Another actress who fits that bill is Elizabeth Ashley, who starred as the matriarch Stella Gordon in *Dividing the Estate*. Her children in the play were portrayed by Hallie Foote (Mary Jo), TV's "Major Dad" Gerald McRaney (Lewis), and Penny Fuller (Lucille), whose first Tony nomination came for her role as conniving Eve Harrington in *Applause*, the 1970 musical version of *All About Eve*. Fuller, like Wilson a native of North Carolina, was nominated again in 2001 for Neil Simon's *The Dinner Party*.

Wilson's directorial debut on Broadway, Matthew Barber's *Enchanted April*, was nominated for best play in 2003, and his star Jayne Atkinson was nominated for best actress. In 2007, Wilson directed the Broadway revival of John van Druten's *Old Acquaintances*, which was the basis of the 1943 movie classic starring Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins as longtime friends and rival authors.

Donalevan Maines also writes about the musical version of *Grey Gardens* in this issue of *OutSmart* magazine.

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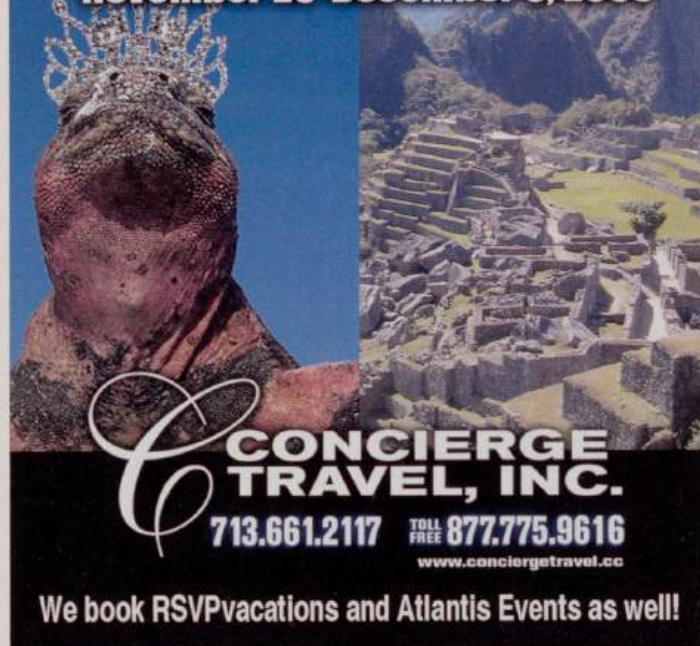
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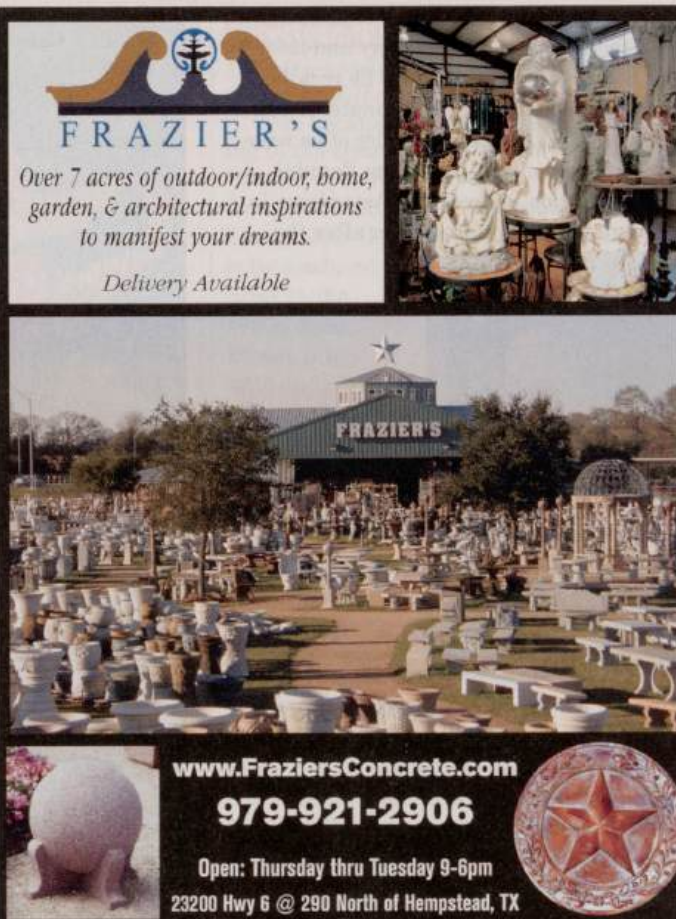
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Vacation for the Cause

Red Ribbon Adventures Offers Exotic Fun and Good Deeds

by Marene Gustin

Photo by Yvonne Feece

Tired of too much fun? How about a little voluntourism? That's the buzzword for a new trend in travel. It started around 2005 after Hurricane Katrina and has been gaining steam with travel agencies ever since. The concept is to book a getaway that offers fun in a faraway place with a component of volunteer work. According to a 2008 survey by *Condé Nast Traveler*, 55 percent of the respondents expressed an interest in taking a volunteer vacation.

While many folks opt for building homes, working with children, and teaching English, one local travel agency is targeting vacationers who want to support awareness, relief, and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

"As far as we know, we're the only agency doing this," says Sash Carl of Red Ribbon Adventures, part of Houston's Planet One Travel Management Group. Carl, an avid traveler, saw an *Oprah* segment on voluntourism and wanted to create packages for the gay community. But the appeal reaches farther. Planet One's president, Antonio Salman-Alonso, says, "The response has been great from everyone."

Red Ribbon started with individual tours, and this year is booking groups for voluntours to Puerto Vallarta, Rio de Janeiro, China, and Amsterdam (for Gay Pride Day).

"I went to Romania a few years ago," Carl says, "and visited a group home for AIDS teens. They were in the fourth grade because they had been left behind. No one wanted to school them because they had AIDS."

Whether working with HIV/AIDS children, educating gay prostitutes in Spain or working with leaders and activists, vacationers have several options for do-gooding and for accommodations. You can choose from staying with local families or in four-star hotels. Prices range from about \$600 to several thousand dollars. Both Carl and Salman-Alonso think the current economic climate will be offset by the new



Globe-trotting do-gooders: Sash Carl's Red Ribbon Tours provide travelers not only with an enjoyable vacation experience, but also a sense of accomplishment.

administration in Washington, D.C., and are hoping to book about 200 travelers this year. "There's a feeling of optimism," says Carl. "People are really wanting to start to do something and give back."

And it's not just a way for travel agencies to make money. Red Ribbon and Planet One are planning to give a portion of the tour prices to AIDS Foundation Houston (AFH). "It's a good way to give back to the community here," says Lee Zacharias, special events manager at AFH, "while doing good work from over there."

"The relationship piece is very important," says Dr. Brandon Dubeck, who has been on a Red Ribbon tour and is now an investor in the company. "The people there are so willing to help you discover their culture. Just hanging out with the people and finding out what you can do to help is amazing."

This year travelers can venture to Mexico for sea kayaking and work with

Vallarta Enfrenta el SIDA; work with HIV children in Rio while hiking Sugarloaf Mountain; volunteer at an AIDS clinic in Africa and cruise the Zambia River; serve AIDS patients at Beijing's You An Hospital and hike the Great Wall of China; or take an evening canal cruise in Amsterdam and help educate workers in the Red Light District.

"I want, number one, for people to have an amazing adventure," says Carl. "It's going to be fun. But I also want them to not forget about HIV and AIDS. Whether they are passing out flyers or giving shots, they are making a difference in the lives of people who are affected by the disease. And those people will know that they are not forgotten."

Details: Red Ribbon Adventures • 713/627-7568 • redribbonadventures.com.

Marene Gustin is a freelance writer and a frequent contributor to OutSmart.

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Local Luxury

Forget your passport.

La Torretta Del Lago is just short drive away

by Leigh Bell

Photos courtesy La Torretta Del Lago



Rising 20 stories above sparkling water and a rolling golf course, the gleaming "La Torretta" tower is the resort's elegant namesake.

We're all tightening our belts, cutting out one luxury or another as pundits warn the economic sky is falling. So, maybe it's poor timing for a luxury resort to open—unless that luxury resort is sumptuous, indulgent, and about 45 minutes from Houston, meaning you don't need to buy a plane ticket or a weeklong stay.

La Torretta Del Lago Resort and Spa on Lake Conroe is a place for Houstonians to whisk away without fiscal guilt, but with most of the carnal pleasures found in international hotspots. Consider the newly opened La Torretta Del Lago (Spanish for "tower of the lake"), a compromise between financial sensibility and the inherent desire to "get away from it all." It's not exactly cheap, but hey, it's less than a week in the Caribbean.

The resort stands out as a modern oasis on the 22,000-square-foot Lake Conroe. From afar, La Torretta's 20-story main building towers over marshy, lakefront land peppered with lavish homes and boat docks. Otherwise, La Torretta is quietly nestled within a wooded, high-end neighborhood, which secludes its posh spa, 18-hole golf course, 70,000-square-foot meeting space, state-of-the-art fitness center, and 6,500-square-foot aqua park (adult infinity pool included).

The accommodations—all 445 of them, ranging from oversized hotel rooms to villas and cottages—eschew the "Texas lodge" look with sleek and contemporary design. Our standard room in the tower was a 600-square-foot suite: a sitting room leading to a bedroom leading to a double-sink bathroom with a spacious shower. More space than two of us needed, but just enough to spoil us.

The cottages and villas, similarly decorated with a 1950s revival flare, are a short walk from the tower, which also houses the front desk, a glass-encased lobby, Yoi Sushi Bar, Sonata Piano Bar and Mokka Café. Those are just three of seven places to nibble at Del Lago.



Tower guestroom at dusk

A buffet-style Italian brunch at Prime, the resort's main dining room, was plentiful and satisfying—but pricey at \$44 per person. The crown jewel of La Torretta dining is Chez Roux. Located several hundred feet from the tower, this upscale restaurant is the first-ever American endeavor by renowned master chef Albert Roux, who has been voted one of the U.K.'s most influential chefs. The aging, robust and round, French-born chef is best known for opening Britain's first Michelin three-starred restaurant, La Gavroche in London, more than 40 years ago.

We had dinner at Chez Roux our first night at Del Lago. The service was superb, and the food was well above average but not quite excellent, especially considering the price: \$75 for two courses and \$95 for three. If nothing else, skip dinner and go to Chez Roux for dessert, which was the highlight of our evening—this, coming from someone without a single sweet tooth.

The Vanilla Panna Cotta with Poached Rhubarb was rapturous, only topped by the Pear Tart Tartin with Sea Salt



Prime Ice Cream Profiterole with Valrhona Chocolate drizzle

Caramel Ice Cream. And coffee was accompanied by a thin dish of sweets, including truffles that melted in our mouths and in our pockets when we tried to carry leftovers to our room.

On our way, we wondered why an internationally renowned chef would set up shop at Lake Conroe, of all places. Don't get me wrong. It's a nice area, but it's still Texas. Roux certainly has the world on a silver platter. Turns out the chef is close friends with La Torretta owner and developer Ronnie Ben-Zur, CEO of French Quarter Hospitality. Six months after the former Del Lago resort closed down in 2007, Ben-Zur sold off his property and bought the tumbledown resort, according to LaDonna Pettit, director of sales and marketing. Less than two years and roughly \$130 million later, he opened La Torretta Del Lago.

The resort fully opened this spring, but its soft introduction was last November, when the economy was obviously in a downward spiral. Not the best timing for a resort boasting indulgence, high-dollar food



Energie bar and lounge

and, an opulent spa, where a massage costs about \$2.50 per minute.

But La Torretta is banking on locals traveling the short distance for a quick getaway or "staycation," and it certainly has appeal for such occasions. A romantic weekend. A family-focused respite. A weekend of solitude outside of the city.

La Torretta isn't cheap, but this kind of splendor and indulgence is rarely so close by. And remember how much you're saving on those plane tickets.

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Cost includes the resort fee, which covers wireless Internet, phone calls, newspaper, and access to the pools and fitness center.



An aerial view of La Torretta Aqua Park

DON'T COME BACK

Jamaica is a killer vacation for gays

by Wayne Besen

In early April, I joined San Francisco organizer Michael Petrelis and *Box Turtle Bulletin* editor Jim Burroway in launching an international boycott against Jamaica (boycottJamaica.org). While the island appears laid-back, gays are under attack.

Forget business as usual. Instead, we should stop doing business with a country that is proud of its persecution against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

Our goal is to turn Jamaica into a pariah state, as long as GLBT people live in a state of terror. This means no more subsidizing the antigay slaughter by drinking Myers Rum and Red Stripe Beer. It requires skipping that Carnival Cruise to Jamaica—so your money won't support murder.

If Jamaica were anymore homophobic, it would change the name of its signature music, reggae, to "ray-straight." The national song would be, "Wasting the Gays Again in Murderitaville."

Why boycott? Because Jamaica is on a downward spiral and suffers from collective cultural dementia on this issue. There is clearly a pathological panic and homo-hysteria that has infected this nation at its core. Consider that the Jamaica Cancer Society has raised concerns that the fear of being labeled gay is causing some Jamaican men to avoid prostate examinations, causing one of the highest prostate cancer rates in the world.

The second reason to boycott is because traditional activism has failed. I first read about Jamaica's horrific violence against gay people in a 2004 *New York Times* editorial, "Hated to Death in Jamaica." In 2006, *Time* magazine had an article about the island headlined, "The Most Homophobic Place on Earth."

One would think that such chilling headlines would have spurred worldwide action against Jamaica. Instead, the climate has only deteriorated, with a 2008 *New York Times* article titled, "Attacks Show Easygoing Jamaica Is Dire Place for Gays."

A scathing State Department report on Jamaica's treatment of homosexuals reads like a horror novel:

"The Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All Sexuals, and Gays (J-FLAG) continued to report

human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention, mob attacks, stabbings, harassment of homosexual patients by hospital and prison staff, and targeted shootings of homosexuals."

Questioned by the BBC, Jamaica's prime minister, Bruce Golding, said that he would not allow gay people to serve in his cabinet. In March 2009 he added, "We are not going to



... This means no more subsidizing the antigay slaughter by drinking Myers Rum and Red Stripe Beer. It requires skipping that Carnival Cruise to Jamaica—so your money won't support murder.

yield to the pressure, whether that pressure comes from individual organizations, individuals, whether that pressure comes from foreign governments or groups of countries, to liberalize the laws as it relates to buggery."

A third reason for a boycott is because we can have an impact in Jamaica. The tropical island earned \$2.1 billion from tourism in 2006, with 1,025,000 arrivals from the United States. Clearly, Jamaica is uniquely vulnerable to economic pressure and thus every effort should be made to push for change.

A fourth reason to boycott is that a message needs to be sent throughout the world: "Gay people will no longer sit by passively while our people are brutalized and killed."

If we do not stop the hate in the one place we can—Jamaica—it will continue to be open season against gays across the world. There must be consequences for state-sanctioned gay bashing. Such countries will not change on their own, so economic carrots and sticks must be applied.

The current, failed strategy is "treadmill diplomacy," where we send off a few letters to embassies and hope things will magically improve. It may feel like we are advancing, but we are really, at best, running in place. This explains why the news headlines about Jamaica's treatment of gay people in 2004 look remarkably like the terrifying ones in 2009. The choice is ours: we can be meek in the face of madness or we can take action.

Finally, Jamaica is an island of self-righteous hypocrites. The Bible is used to rationalize brutality, and vigilante violence is justified with talk of virtues and values. But, the island is quite comfortable with ganja and gratuitous sex for heterosexuals. Jamaica's new motto should be, "Don't Worry, Be Happy (Unless You're Gay)."

If you are a bar owner, please take Jamaican products out of your establishment. Consider a "rum dump," where Myers' rum is poured down the sewer. If you care about gay people, tell everyone you know about the dismal human rights record of Jamaica. And, if a friend has booked a trip, express your disapproval and send him or her accurate information.

It is truly a crime if you spend another dime in this homophobic hellhole. If you have gay family members, neighbors, coworkers, or friends, book a holiday where it is okay to be gay.

As for Jamaica: don't play, don't pay, don't stay. ■

Wayne Besen is the founder of Truth Wins Out, a nonprofit organization that debunks antigay lies and myths.

EDITOR'S NOTE: While Red Stripe Beer has pulled sponsorship from music concerts featuring artists espousing antigay lyrics, the company has stopped short of specifically supporting gay equality.

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Pop Goes the World

An Interview with **Neil Tennant** of *Pet Shop Boys*

by Lawrence Ferber

Photo by Alasdair McLellan

What the world needs now is pop, sweet pop, according to Neil Tennant of The Pet Shop Boys. The openly gay duo—Tennant and tech whiz Chris Lowe—deliver just that on their 10th studio album, *Yes* (Astralwerks). Keeping up with, if not ahead of the Joneses, the Pet Shop Boys enlisted hot UK hitmeisters Xenomania (Kylie Minogue, Sugababes, New Order) as producers. As of late they've also worked with "in" artists Girls Aloud (scribing their infectious single, "The Loving Kind") and Lady GaGa, and are writing a 2010 ballet for London's Sadler's Wells Theatre. On June 10 they kick off a "high-tech" international concert tour.

Tennant gave me a call from London to discuss the album and its songs, his selections for a trio of mixtapes/playlists, and an unusual theory about vegetarians.

Lawrence Ferber: In what ways does *Yes* stand out from the rest of your catalog, and how does it represent an evolution for the Pet Shop Boys?

Neil Tennant: It's such a bright, beautiful album. I think the first half is almost like a greatest hits—one very catchy, beautiful song after another in a different style. It's the most stylistically varied PSB album, and I think it's actually the most pure pop of all of them. It's quite amazing at this stage in events to be doing that. If you listen to our first album, *Please*, next to this, *Please* sounds terribly dark.

We need some uplift during this global recession.

We do. I think the PSB always make more sense in a recession as well. That's Chris' theory.

In some ways the song "Legacy" reminds me of "Being Boring," yet it's such a different creature.

Over the years some of our music has changed harmonically and musically. We experiment using melodies and chords that are outside of pop music, that are almost dissonant, very broad dense chords, and "Legacy" is an example of that. It's got a very unusual tone. A friend of ours compared it to Richard Strauss, the German composer. I think, funnily enough, there are little '60s things about [the album], too. Like with "Beautiful People," the



Going for 10: Neil Tennant (l) and Chris Lowe, better known as Pet Shop Boys, released their latest album, *Yes*, in March. It's their 10th studio album since the duo burst upon the music scene in 1983.

Xenomania gang put guitars and drums on it, made it sound very '60s, and Chris and I, who have always been Mamas & the Papas fans, suggested these kinds of backing vocals.

Tell us about Xenomania, which many Americans may not be familiar with yet.

They're the top pop producers in Britain at the moment, particularly famous for Girls Aloud, who had 20 Top-10 singles and are a household name. I love that song we wrote with them—we should record it ourselves at some point. They experiment with mainstream pop, and I think the most interesting kinds of music [occur] when people experiment in the mainstream.

How did your personal life seep into this album, if at all?

I think people tend to assume nowadays that for art to be viable it has to be personal. I don't accept that's the case. A lot of these songs are me imagining I'm someone else. In "Beautiful People" I'm imagining I'm a woman waiting at the bus stop in the rain in London thinking about how s---t life is and looking around and seeing a newsstand with magazines like *Heat* and *OK* and *Hello* with Victoria Beckham on

the cover, thinking, Yes, I would like to live like that. "Vulnerable" is imagining myself as someone I know, a female celebrity, who appears to be very tough but is actually quite a vulnerable person. "All Over the World" is a song about pop songs. "Legacy" is inspired by Tony Blair leaving office, about how when you do something, the ramifications of it go on forever. The past is always there to haunt you, whether you like it or not.

I read that you had written the song "Pandemonium" for Kylie Minogue.

We were asked a couple of years ago to write some songs for Kylie's album, and we wrote some songs and she'd record them. We particularly liked this one, and a really good, funny song called "You're the Exception That Proves the Rule," which we just stuck in our ballet. We needed a funny tune. . . . This was another example of imagining I was someone, and, as it was going to be sung by a woman, I imagined it was Kate Moss singing about Pete Dougherty when she was going out with him.

Now that's quite a mess of a romance. Is there anything about vomiting or herpes in the song?

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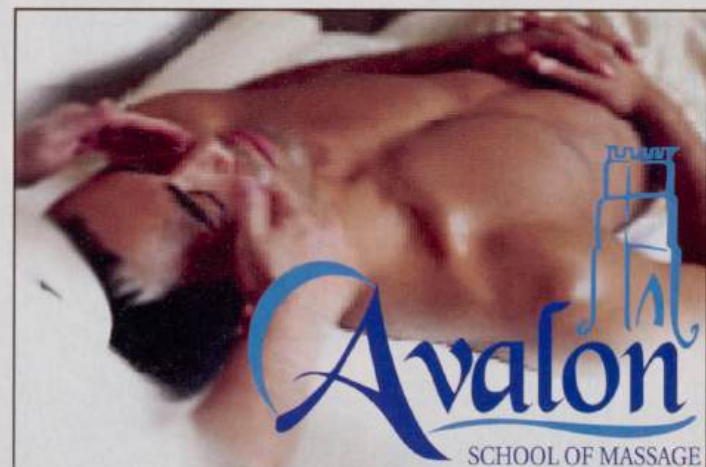
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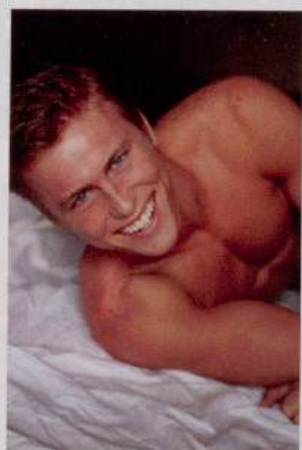
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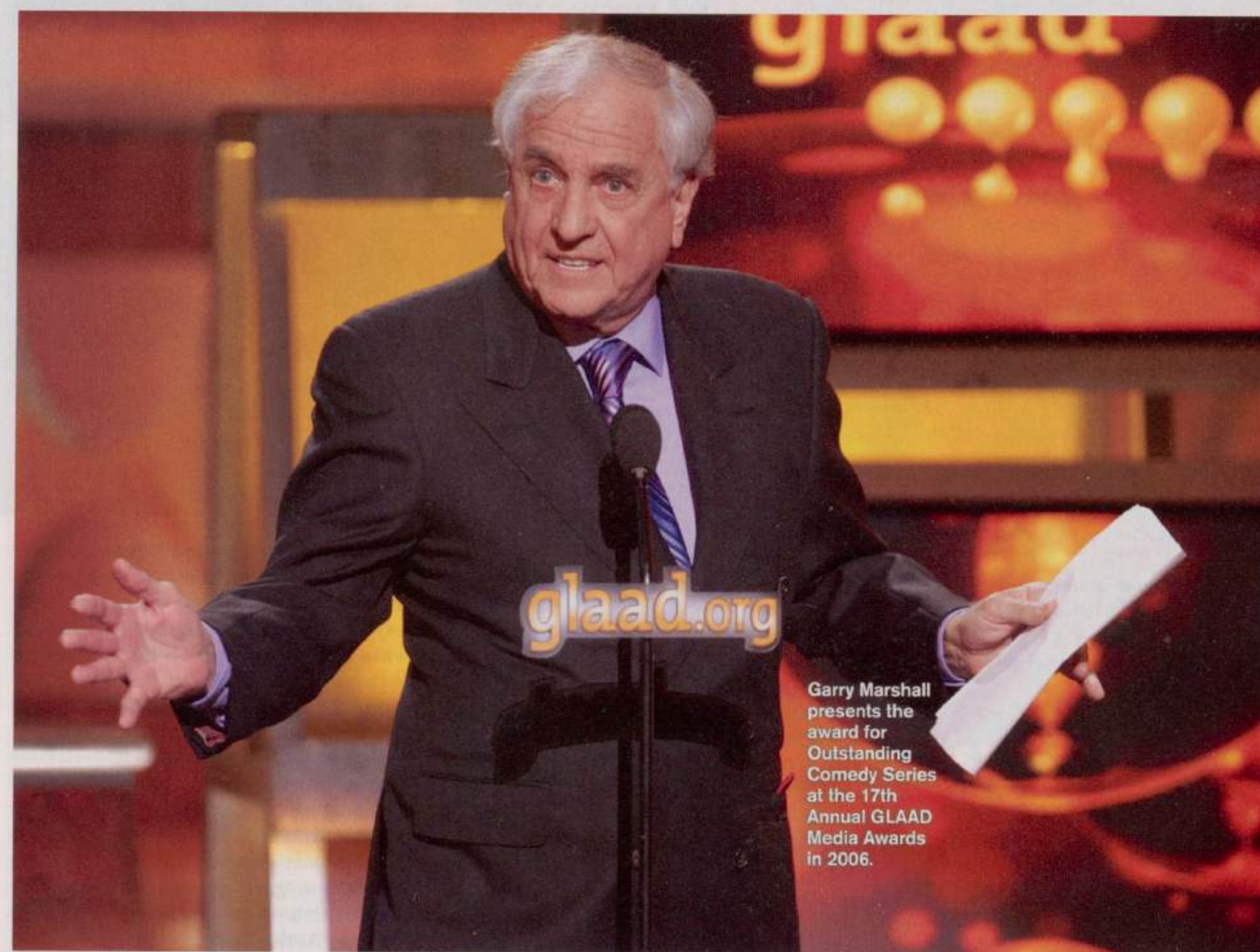
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'Happy Days' Are Here Again!

Director/actor/writer/producer Garry Marshall talks about
Jane Fonda, the GLAAD Awards, Bette Midler,
his friendship with Hector Elizondo, and more

by Blase DiStefano • Photo by John Shearer/WireImage.com



Garry Marshall
presents the
award for
Outstanding
Comedy Series
at the 17th
Annual GLAAD
Media Awards
in 2006.

Garry Marshall began as a joke writer for standup comedians and moved quickly into television, and then films, as a writer, director, actor, and producer—all roles he continues to fill, sometimes two and three at a time. After establishing himself as a television comedy writer, Marshall adapted and produced Neil Simon's hit play, *The Odd Couple*, for television and

created and produced *Happy Days*, *Mork and Mindy*, and *Laverne and Shirley* (which starred his sister, Penny Marshall, now a director/producer with her own impressive string of hits). On the big screen, he was writer and director for the 1984 hit *The Flamingo Kid*; among his other directorial hits are *Overboard*, *Beaches*, *Pretty Woman*, *Frankie and Johnny*, and *The Princess Diaries*. He is currently co-starring in Disney's *Race to Witch Mountain*. Mar-

shall and daughter Kathleen founded and built the Falcon Theatre, located in the Burbank, California, media district, "where old friends and emerging talent can come together to create exciting work on stage." On the telephone with *OutSmart*, Marshall also talks about his collaboration with Paul Williams on the stage musical version of his hit television series, *Happy Days* (being staged by TUTS at Houston's Hobby Center in May). →

'Happy Days' Are Here Again!

continued from previous page

Hi. This is Blase DiStefano. Garry?

Yes, Garry Marshall. Okay. So am I calling too early?

No, not at all.

Okay. So here I am. I'm sitting in New York.

Do you live in California or New York?

California. I live in Los Angeles in the Toluca Lake/Burbank, area where my theater is—The Falcon.

Are you bicoastal?

Well, my sister, Penny, is bicoastal. She has apartments. I come, I stay in a hotel. I go to see shows. I saw a bunch of shows. My friend Jane Fonda is doing a Broadway show [33 Variations], and she is just superb. We saw her last night, my wife and I. She even gave me a shout-out. At the end of the show they ask the audience to contribute to the AIDS Foundation and everything. And she was joking around. She says, "I want to make this funny because Garry Marshall is somewhere in the audience." . . . We became good friends when we did *Georgia Rule* together. . . . Of all things, we bonded [over the fact that] we both have new hips.

[Both laugh]

So you're in Houston?

Yes. Have you ever been to Houston?

I have. I used to go through there to promote a movie or something. And you got a parade coming or something, they told me.

You mean the Gay Pride Parade? That's not till June . . .

The Gay Pride Parade is very big in Los Angeles. You can't walk on the street . . . One of my fun things I do is the GLAAD event in L.A., and there's always fun there. There's funny stuff.

Do you go fairly often to the GLAAD awards?

Well, one of the reasons I'm in theater at all is because of a man by the name of Terrence McNally, who was one of my best friends and an idol of mine. I did a film called *Frankie and Johnny* [1991]. He had written the play and I wanted him to write the screenplay. But they wanted Bellman and Gitzman, and I said, "No, no, why wouldn't you let Terrence write this screenplay?" "Oh, he don't know how to write a screenplay." "How do you know? He knows the characters. Leave the man alone." So I said, "I'm not doing it unless he writes the first draft." He did and

they loved it! So we became close, and lo and behold, it won an award at the GLAAD event. And I got the prize, and I made a speech or something. They said, "You come back, and you'll present," and I've been presenting ever since.

Do you still keep up with Terrence?

I literally saw Terrence the other night! He's got two new shows opening. He's got a play, and he's got *Catch Me If You Can*, a musical based on the movie. He's a busy guy, Terrence. But he was the one who said, Theater is alright. Try it. That's why I built my theater. He's one of the main reasons.

And your daughter is involved with you on that, right?

My daughter Kathleen, my middle child, runs it. She does the whole thing, and I get in the way a couple of times, but she runs it pretty good. My play is there now.

What is it?

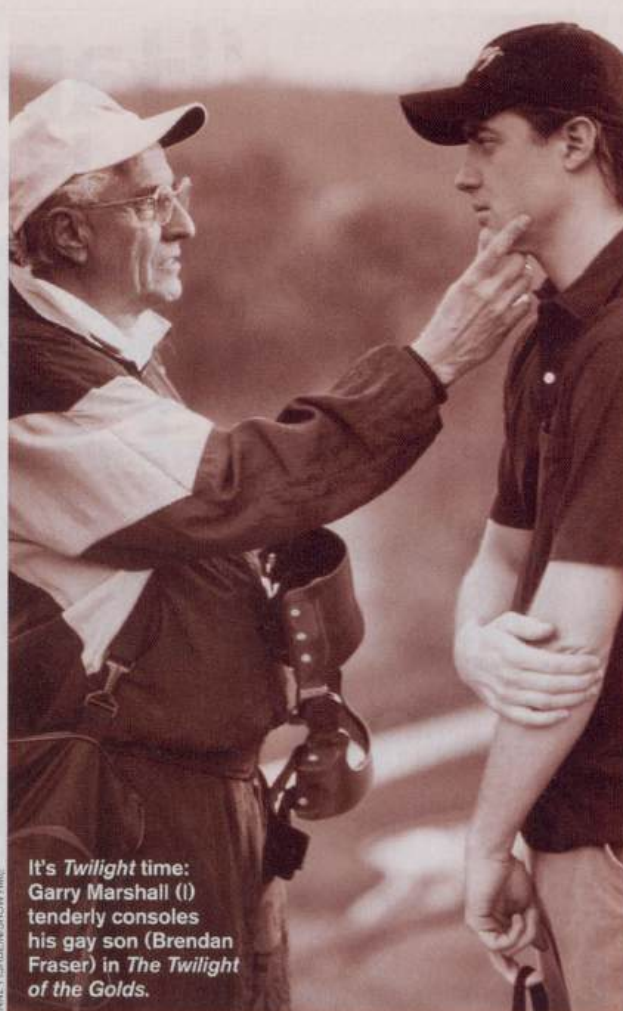
Everybody Say Cheese. It's about my parents. My sister, Penny, came to the play, right? She comes out . . . first thing she says is, "You made mom and dad so sweet." I said, "It's my play, and I can do whatever I want." Different siblings have different views. I waited until my parents were gone, God bless 'em.

You were born in 1934, and in those early days, gays were extremely closeted. Do you remember the first gay person you ever met?

I do. I guess I was 11 or 12. I was in camp . . . it was not the top-notch camp. It was a YMCA camp . . . that's all we could afford. I remember one of the kids who I kind of liked. He was funny. He was in the play at the camp, and there was a whole incident where they beat him up. I said, "Why'd they beat him up? What did he do?" And they said, "He didn't do nuttin', he's uh . . ." They didn't say "gay."

Queer?

"Queer," yes, that's what they said. "He's queer." For that he got beat up? I was used to blacks and Puerto Ricans and Irish. We all beat each other up. I was Italian. There were Jewish kids, and this was a new group that could get beat up. I didn't know what it was. But I started to ask around, and then I



It's *Twilight* time: Garry Marshall (l) tenderly consoles his gay son (Brendan Fraser) in *The Twilight of the Golds*.

understood that it was, you know, sissies or whatever that was. After that, I understood it and didn't think it was right. I don't think anybody should be beat up for what they are when they're born and when they come out of the closet. They didn't come out, I guess, much in those days. I didn't know what the closet meant in those days.

You understood, right?

I understood . . . Our gang was all Italian, Jewish—the Falcons. Unfortunately, we couldn't beat anybody up. We kept losing badly, so we gave up and said we were an athletic club—then we didn't have to fight anybody. As the years went by, I understood it and didn't think it was quite the right thing to do. . . . I was very sickly as a child. I got injured when I played sports; I got hit in the head every time. I had two sisters, Penny and Ronny, and I was the oldest, and they would go out and play and I'd try to hold them in the room . . . I was lonely. And I'd make up jokes and stories and made them laugh. "I'll go talk to Garry, he'll make me laugh." So that's when I started into humor.

Is that when you started writing?

I more or less wrote because I couldn't get out of bed. I had asthma. I had allergies. I had everything. Yes, I pretty much wrote and I loved sports, so I was the sports editor of my high school paper. Sports editor at Northwestern. Sports editor in Korea on the Korean paper. Korea was a little cold, let me tell you. So I was cold in New York. Cold in Chicago at Northwestern. Freezing in Korea. I said, "That's it! I'm going to be in California or Florida."

Okay, I'm going to skip to 1997 and *The Twilight of the Golds*. [Marshall played the father of a gay son played by Brendan Fraser.] Any idea how you would have reacted in real life had one of your children been gay?

Well, I think it would have been what it is. Whatever comes, you have to deal with as a parent. I have two handicapped grandchildren with cerebral palsy and that's not a thrill, but this is who they are. You love them and whatever it is—gay, not gay, whatever challenge—you accept it. . . . I'm married 46 years to a nurse. She has a whole other outlook. She taught me. And as a mother I think she would deal with it very well.

How did *The Twilight of the Golds* come about?

I remember Jonathan Tolins brought me that piece. For some reason he loved *The Odd Couple*. [Along with Jerry Belson, Marshall adapted the TV series from the Neil Simon play.] He wanted to meet me and he wanted me to read his play. I said I would, but I never got to it. I remember it was Jeffery Katzenberg who called and said, "There's a play we're thinking of buying to make a movie out of. Why don't you go see it?" It was *Twilight of the Golds*. I loved it. I said, "What a powerful piece this is." . . . Mark Harris—and I forget the other gentlemen—produced it. One of the other gentlemen was gay. [That would be Paul Colichman, now co-founder and CEO of Regent Entertainment and Here! Networks.] I remember doing the father, and it was a powerful part. Faye Dunaway played my wife, and a great kid, Brendan Fraser, played my son. He was terrific.

Your choices do seem to show your support of gay rights.
It's the right thing to do.

I read that you might work with Bette Midler again?

I love Bette Midler. We did *Beaches*. Yes, we tried to do a picture and we were so close, and the last minute she had to go do her Las Vegas thing. . . . I'm dying to work with her again. Great story about Bette. She has →

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'Happy Days' Are Here Again!

continued from previous page

this lovely daughter. When we were doing *Beaches*, Sophie seemed to be three or four or something. Well, she grew up into a terrific girl, and it came time for her to go to college. And so Bette, the dutiful mother, is taking her around visiting campuses. And she's walking on Northwestern campus. On the campus my mother was a dance teacher, and so we dedicated the dance building to my mother. So she's walking with her kid, and she sees my name and she jumps up and says to Sophie, "I know somebody who went to college." So I had this whole thing on my answering machine when I get home, and I call her and she said, "Help me help her get into college." I said, "She'll be fine, but I'll help." So I did of course recommend her to Northwestern. Which she did get in. Bette called me [later]. The kid wants to be closer to home and she ended up at Yale.

So, tell me about *Happy Days*. . . Is Fonzie gay, bi, or transsexual?
No, he's not any of them. We talked about that.

[Laughs] Did you?!

Yes. There were all these ideas. Let's make Fonzie gay. Let's make Joanie get an abortion. Let's make Potsie bipolar. I wanted to capture what we had, which was an innocent time . . . and that's what we captured in the musical. . . I was on a picture, and we had to hire this wonderful kid named Gordon Greenberg, who was a dancer on Broadway and is now a director, and he is one of the funniest people I ever met. And he directed this version you're going to see. And Gordon is gay, and I hear about all his things. He calls . . . I'm in Toronto . . . he says, "There's a guy I dated coming to the show tonight. Say hello to him." He gives me the name. . . So I said, "I don't know, he was alright." So I'm not one of his advisors. But he's a terrific director. And he did a heck of a job on *Happy Days*.

When I mentioned I was going to interview Garry Marshall, one guy asked if you and Penny Marshall were divorced.



But you hang out together. . . Hector has always been for me the great equalizer. When you're directing a film, sometimes things go wrong, people get temperamental. But Hector is very respected by other actors, and when there is a problem, I often say, "Hector, would you say something to so and so. We're a little late here and we need the help." So he's like a friend of the court, you might say.

I remember in *Pretty Woman*, they wouldn't hire him. They said, "He's Puerto Rican. How does a Puerto Rican run a big hotel? Nobody'll believe it." I said, "So he's Puerto Rican, but he can be anything!" They said, "Why? He has a lot of accents?" I said, "No, he has a lot of toupees. He can be whatever the hell you want him to be." Anyway, the truth of the matter is, I had to put up the money for him to be in *Pretty Woman*. After the picture they gave me back the money in two seconds and said they were wrong, which is why I like to work for Disney. Because they can say when they were wrong.

Theatre Under the Stars presents *Happy Days—A New Musical* at the Hobby Center, May 12–24. For performance schedule and ticket information, call 713/558-TUTS (8887), visit tuts.com, or e-mail boxoffice@tuts.com.

For more of this interview with Garry Marshall, go to outsmartmagazine.com.

Blase DiStefano also interviews Kristin Chenoweth in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

Everybody thinks she's my wife, my daughter. A lot, my daughter. But Penny's my kid sister. There's me, I'm the oldest; there's my sister Ronny, and my sister Penny was the kid sister. She was a pip, that one. She was pretty funny, too.

Okay, now I heard a rumor that you and Hector Elizondo are actually married.

[Laughs] That is good. I'll tell Hector that. Hector and I are best friends in a way of having similar lives. We both grew up in the streets of New York, we both were drummers, and we both played basketball together for years, and to this day we both play on the same softball team. I remember we were at a party recently, and we're walking in, and Bill Maher sees us, and he says, "I'm startled." I went, "What's the matter?" He says, "You two guys really are friends. I thought they made that up in the papers."

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Withering Heights

The opulence and decline of 'Grey Gardens' comes to Stages Repertory Theatre

by Donalevan Maines • Photo by Mark Hiebert



Live gardens: director Kenn McLaughlin (far right) in rehearsal for Stages Repertory Theatre's production of *Grey Gardens* with cast members (l-r) Rachel Logue (young Edie Beale), Jonathan McVay (George Gould Strong), and Nancy Johnson (Edith Bouvier Beale).

You know you're gay when you're glued to the new *Grey Gardens* movie on HBO. You know you're *really* gay when you're still bitter that Broadway's version of *Grey Gardens* didn't win best musical at the 2007 Tony Awards. (Why, it's the most disgusting, atrocious thing ever to happen in America!)

Ah, but you can choose to be happy that the musical *Grey Gardens* opens on May 15 at Stages Repertory Theatre in Houston. As Gould, the show's gay pianist, says, "Brava! I'm weeping already."

The story of "Little Edie" and her mother, "Big Edie" Bouvier Beale, "cuts to the core" of what it means to grow up different, explains Kenn McLaughlin, producing artistic director at Stages. "It's a gay rite of passage because she taps into sensibilities of 'I will walk my own path, and walk it proudly, and without judgment.' She has such a need to belong, but she doesn't want to have to change to become a part of the repressive East Hampton culture [that rejects her]." →

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Withering Heights continued from previous page

"And the costumes!" says McLaughlin. "They are absolutely, positively, completely elevated drag! They are so gorgeous you're going to be absolutely amazed!"

A highlight of any performance of *Grey Gardens* is Little Edie's song, "The Revolutionary Costume for Today," which Broadway star Christine Ebersole sang on the 2007 Tony Awards broadcast before accepting the award for best actress in a musical.

"It's just such a gay anthem! It's just the best," McLaughlin says, explaining that it encapsulates in song so much of what Little Edie says in the opening of the 1975 documentary *Grey Gardens* that has become a cult classic in the gay community. As depicted in the film, *Grey Gardens* was a crumbling mansion, and garbage-ridden home of the reclusive, nouveau-poor aunt and cousin of former First Lady Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy (aka Jackie O). From the point of view of the 52 cats that lived there, *Grey Gardens* was a 28-room litter box with 150 windowsills tailor-made for catnaps. To neighbors, it was an eyesore and health hazard.

Three talented gay men—composer Scott Frankel, lyricist Michael Korie, and playwright Doug Wright (who hails from Dallas)—adapted the film into a Broadway

The opening lines of Grey Gardens are spoken as if being read aloud from a newspaper:

In a statement released today, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis confirmed that her 80-year-old aunt, Mrs. Edith Bouvier Beale, and her adult daughter, Edie, are living in squalid conditions in an East Hampton estate known as Grey Gardens. The house that once played host to Howard Hughes and the Rockefellers is now a refuge for 52 stray cats, a few rabid raccoons, and its two reclusive inhabitants, all living in an environment the Health Department calls unfit for human habitation. Mrs. Onassis described the situation as "a private family matter."

Little Edie, from "The Revolutionary Costume for Today":

Just listen to this! The Hamptons Bee, July, 1972. • "The elderly, bed-ridden aunt of former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, Mrs. Edith Bouvier Beale . . ." • My very own mother, can you imagine? • ". . . and her adult daughter, Miss Edie Beale, a former debutante once known as Body Beautiful Beale . . ." • They called me Body Beautiful Beale. It's true. That was my, whaddyacallit, my, uh, sobriquet. • ". . . are living on Long Island in a garbage-ridden, filthy, 28-room house with 52 cats, fleas, cobwebs, and virtually no plumbing. After vociferous complaints from neighbors, the Board of Health took legal action against the reclusive pair." • Why, it's the most disgusting, atrocious thing ever to happen in America!

musical by showing the Beale's pre-Camelot salad days in act one, when they played host to the likes of Howard Hughes and the Rockefellers, then revealing in act two how the mighty had fallen.

McLaughlin compares the first act to the golden-age musicals of the 1940s. "It's seemingly buoyant," he says, "but there is a layer of illusion, a paradox, an irony, a subtext that is all the more powerful because we know where it's going."

"The second act shows the ruin of their lives, and makes you wonder if that first chunk of life was a fantasy," McLaughlin adds. "It's like before you 'come out,' you create illusions about yourself, how you want the world to see you."

"Beyond the great gay themes of the show," he adds, "the play is about dreams, reaching for what you want, and never ever stopping. It's a remarkable testament to the power of identity, and that's what people really connect to. That's what makes it a wonderful piece of art."

Grey Gardens plays May 13–June 14 at Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Parkway. For tickets (\$35 and \$40) and/or information, call 713/527-0123.

Donalavan Maines also writes about playwright Michael Wilson, a former Houstonian, in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

Tea for Two

A closer look at HBO's 'Grey Gardens'

by Lawrence Ferber

Apron strings thicker than steel cable bound the mother-daughter pair of "Big Edie" and "Little Edie" Bouvier Beale together. The eccentric relatives of Jackie O and subjects of *Grey Gardens*, a 1975 documentary bearing the name of their decrepit East Hampton, New York mansion, come again to life in HBO's incredible biopic of the same title (having debuted in April, with repeat airings this month).

Directed by Michael Sucs, *Grey Gardens* stars Jessica Lange and Drew Barrymore as the senior and junior Beales. Framed by recreations of Albert and David Maysles' shooting their famed documentary, the story plays out in flashbacks—the pair's



Double your fun: Drew Barrymore (l) and Jessica Lange (as Edie and Edith Beale) entertain in the pre-squalor parlor of their beloved home as Malcom Gets (George Gould Strong) looks on.

youthful 1930s well-to-do society days, Little Edie's brushes with her dreams of fame and romance in Manhattan, Big Edie's failed relationships with her husband and a gay best friend (Gould, played by out actor Malcolm Gets), and their spiral into mutual codependency and squalor in a cat- and raccoon-infested mansion.

Grey Gardens received a first 21st-century revival in 2006's Broadway musical, which snagged three Tony awards. That same year, *The Beales of Grey Gardens*, a "sequel" to the original documentary composed of unused footage, was released (both films are available in a fabulous, extras-loaded DVD set from Criterion Collection).

Sucs's Toronto-shot *Grey Gardens* recreates some of the

documentary's most oft-imitated and quoted highlights, including the bedridden Big Edie's demented warble of "Tea for Two" and Little Edie's chaotic flag dance. Yet Sucs, and co-screenwriter Patricia Rozema, manage a tightrope act balancing drama and poignancy over the sprawling net of camp.

"The first draft that I ever wrote of the screenplay was actually too straight," Sucs shares, "in the sense that I had to go back in and add some of the eccentricities and the wackiness and the kooky behavior. I mean I certainly see those [campy] aspects of it, but the foundation, the skeleton of the story is more based in impaired sanity narrative thrust as opposed to the kookiness. It's fundamentally a drama with many moments of levity. But I would be so bummed out if people didn't laugh at this. There is tons of humor in it for me."

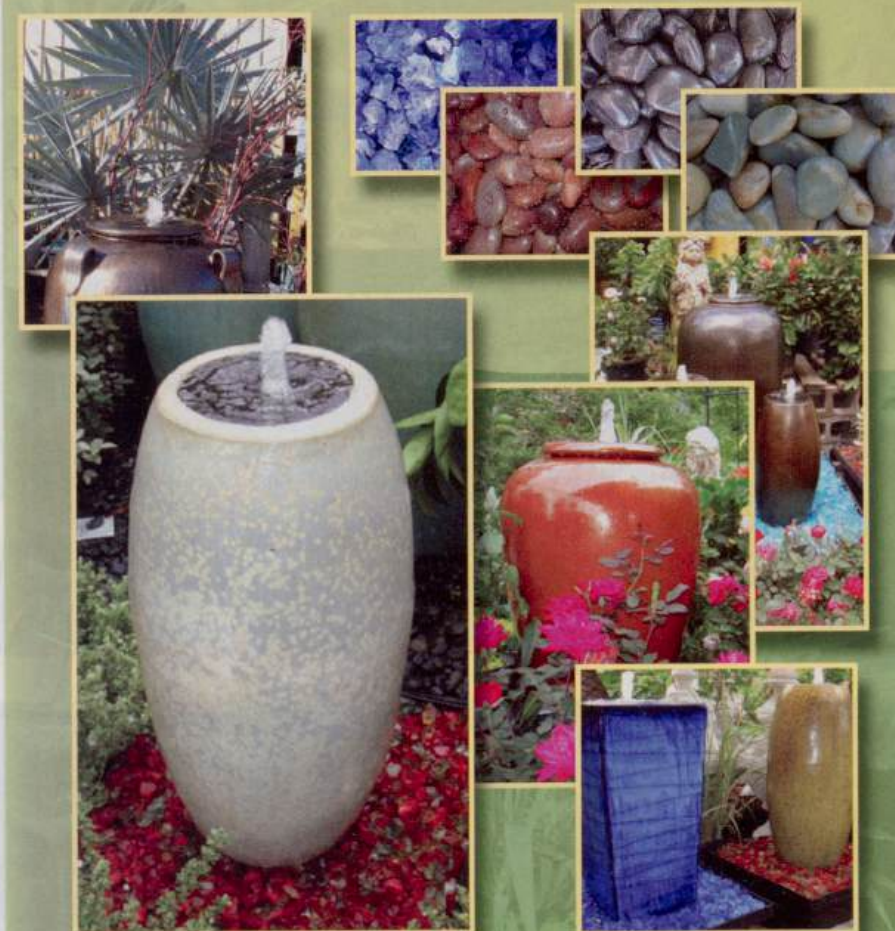
Literally immersed in character—thanks to makeup designer Bill Corso's old-age prosthetics, birdseed fatsuits, and false teeth, which took between four and six hours to apply—Barrymore and Lange frequently cracked up while shooting scenes. "There was one day when Drew laughed and her fake teeth popped out," Sucs recalls, amused. "And one of the cats wouldn't put his ass down and kept sticking it in Jessica's face. I think Jessica said, 'Geez, guys, it's hard enough.'"

Despite these jovial moments, and the fun of wearing costume designer Catherine Marie Thomas' takes on Little Edie's arsenal of home-made outfits and head wraps, Barrymore (who lobbied intensely for the part) was deadly serious in her approach. Thanks to the Beales' relatives and friends (Big Edie died in 1977, Little Edie in 2002), she had access to troves of Little Edie's journals, letters, and photographs, and worked intensely for a year on nailing her voice, mannerisms, dancing, and even her walk. Barrymore ultimately remained in character and avoided contact with anyone but Lange and Sucs throughout production. "I had to be only her," she adds. "The discipline of what I did to be as authentic as I possibly could was definitely something that made me, like, mentally unstable. It is definitely only the best work I could possibly have done. And only positivity came from that strict box I put myself in to play her."

Barrymore also worked hard on embodying the many, and often conflicting, aspects of Little Edie's personality. "I always believed that Edie is a walking contradiction," she shares. "She's a recluse, but she's a born entertainer. She bitched and moaned about 'getting out of this house' every day of her life, yet the door wasn't locked. She lived for her mother's love and approval, but would take the underhanded comments, frustrations, and all that came with her. She wanted nothing but love, but rejected it at the same time. Everything about her really contradicted itself."

As if echoing Little Edie, the film itself embraces and exhibits a dichotomy, eliciting laughter at the same time as empathy (keep watching after the credits for a poignant coda, followed quickly by a hysterical interruption). This crying through laughter quality is possibly one →

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Tea for Two continued from previous page

reason *Grey Gardens*—from the documentary to the HBO film—resonates with gay audiences. But Susy has a hard time articulating what exactly is so enduring. The trainwreck aspect? Flying your freak flag despite what others think? The twisted mother-daughter dynamic, a la *Mommie Dearest* and *Now, Voyager*? Perhaps the answer is ultimately as complex, and confounding, as the Beales themselves.

"I mean, [you can] see them as a tragedy, camp, or something," he says. "I think that's that part of what is enduring. I try to give the gay community a little more credit than maybe we identify with people who struggle with [yet] remain true to who they are at their core, even if they're fighting upstream. Is part of the appeal rubber-necking at the tragedy? Certainly. But I don't think that that's the only thing that endures, because that plays to the mean, spiteful side of the gay community. And now I'm talking out of both sides of my mouth, but yes, there is a side of us [where] we can laugh at ourselves and those sort of things, and celebrate something that would normally be relegated to the back of the closet, so to speak. That's a strength, I think, in the community. Does that make sense?"

Grey Gardens airs on HBO throughout May.

Lawrence Ferber, who is based in New York, is a regular contributor to *OutSmart* magazine.

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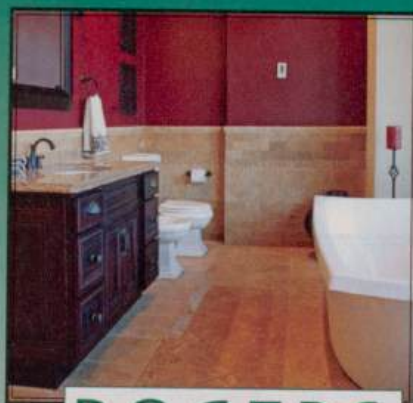
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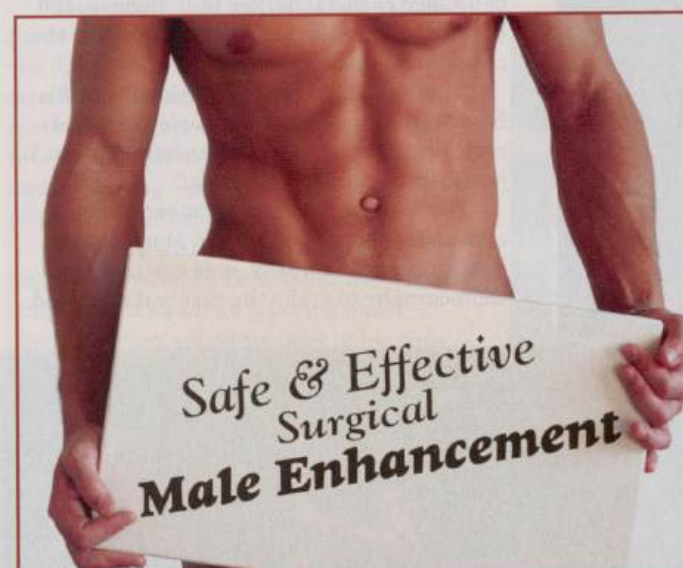
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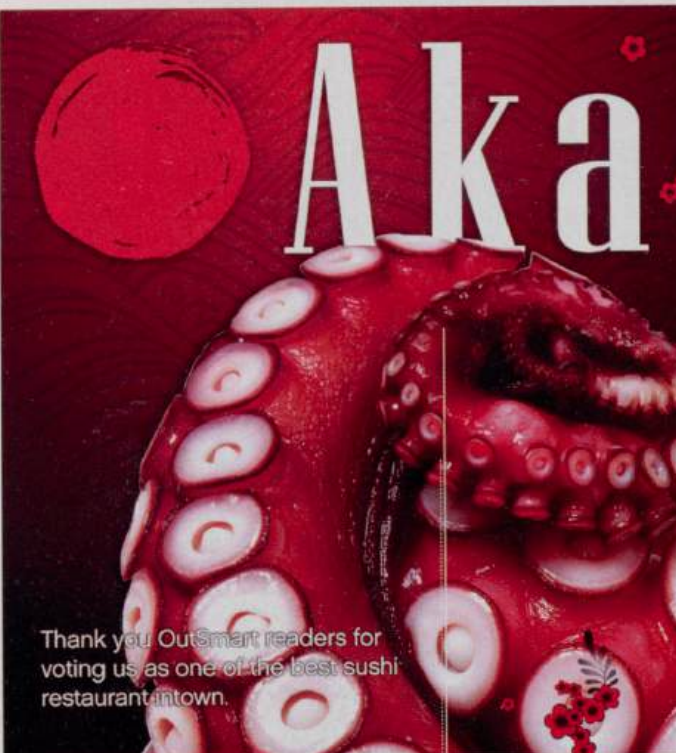


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Christopher's 'Carousel' Ride

Choreographer Christopher Wheeldon heads back to Houston with a new work

by Marene Gustin
Photo by Rosalie O'Connor



Triumphant return: British-born, but Houston bred, choreographer Christopher Wheeldon returns to the Bayou City for Houston Ballet's presentation of his *Carousel (A Dance)*. Inset: Called "too terrific not to be seen again" by *The New York Times*, Wheeldon's *Carousel (A Dance)* deftly employs the circular movements of a Ferris wheel to interpret the Rodgers & Hammerstein classic.



COURTESY HOUSTON BALLET

Houston Ballet fans will get a joy ride when the company premieres Christopher Wheeldon's *Carousel (A Dance)* on its repertory evening this month. This delightful 10-minute work, originally choreographed for New York City Ballet's 2002 centennial tribute to Richard Rodgers, is more of a dance than a narrative ballet. But any fan of the 1956 musical will see the entire story of doomed carnival barker Billy Bigelow and his love, even if the ballet is shorter than the commercial breaks in the movie.

"It is short," exclaims Wheeldon from his New York City office, "but people see it and come back and say they remember it longer. It just feels like a complete work."

The 36-year-old choreographer and co-founder of the two-year-old Morphoses/The Wheeldon Company, uses costumes and choreography to evoke the carnival rides and

fairground atmosphere in this romantic romp, which should charm fans of his *Carnival of Animals* that Houston Ballet performed in 2007 with John Lithgow as narrator.

"It seems that Houston is only getting the cheerful Wheeldon ballets," he muses. But that may change. These days the hotshot dancemaker is incredibly busy. He'll premiere a new work for San Francisco Ballet later this year as well as making pieces for his own company, which performs around the world and even in Texas this October at the opening of the \$354 million Dallas Center for the Performing Arts. "No one can say I don't keep myself busy."

The English-born Wheeldon, whose work also appeared in the 2000 ballet flick *Center Stage* ("but not the sequel, the less said about that the better"), doesn't have a lot of downtime—no pets, no hobbies. His Brooklyn home has a garden that hasn't been landscaped yet. "I want to work in it," he says, "but whatever I plant, it's going to have to take care of itself." As for a personal life, he prefers to stay "hush-hush" about relationships. He came to New York City in the '90s and also came out, which didn't surprise his mother, he says.

"Basically it was like 'we know you're gay, we love you, get over it.' She did say she didn't want to come to my wedding on a Miami beach, but I have no plans for marriage right now, so that's okay." The revelation established his mother's love and something else: "It confirmed my suspicion that mothers know everything."

Wheeldon will be here for opening night of *Carousel (A Dance)* but won't stay long. He admits to not knowing much about Houston, spending most of his time here inside hotels and theaters. But there's one place you will probably find him—"The Menil Collection and The Rothko Chapel," he sighs. "It's one of my favorite places in the world."

Houston Ballet's repertory evening, Of an Era, opens at the Wortham Theater Center May 28 and runs through June 7. Carousel (A Dance) is one of three works on the program, which also includes artistic director Stanton Welch's Nosotros and the Houston premiere of Nacho Duato's Jardí Tancat. All three choreographers are gay. Tickets start at \$17. Call 713/227-2787 or 1-800-828-ARTS. Tickets and more information are also available at houstonballet.org.

Marene Gustin also writes about Red Ribbon Adventures and Living with HIV in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

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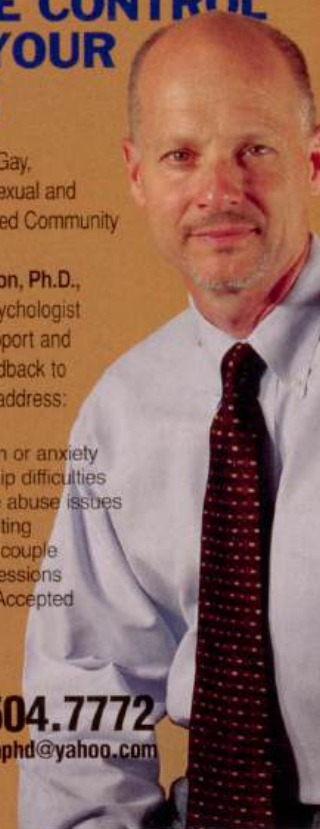
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Miss California 2009

(Miss USA Pageant, 4/19/09)

This is Miss California's (Carrie Prejean) response to Perez Hilton's question about gay marriage at the Miss USA pageant: I think it's great that Americans are able to choose one or the other. We live in a land that you can choose same-sex marriage or opposite marriage and, you know what, in my country and in my family I think that I believe that a marriage should be between a man and a woman—no offense to anyone out there—but that's how I was raised and that's how I think it should be, between a man and a woman.

Alicia Jacobs

(a former Miss Nevada USA)

Regarding Miss California's gay-marriage quote (above), Alicia Jacobs wrote the following on her blog (aliciastage3.blogspot.com); it has since been removed because of hate-mail and death threats:

As [Carrie Prejean] continued to speak, I saw the crown move further and further away from her. When she finished, she looked strangely proud for a moment. Personally, I was STUNNED on several levels. First, how could this young woman NOT know her audience and judges? Let's not forget that the person asking the question is an openly gay man, at least two people on the judges' panel are openly gay. Another judge has a sister in a gay marriage. Her very own state pageant director, Keith Lewis, is an openly gay man, who has been a very generous benefactor of hers. . . . Did I mention I was STUNNED?"

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jacobs was a judge for the pageant, and she is, in her own words, a "hard-core, registered Republican—and proud to be one—but gay marriage and gay rights are paramount to me."

Tom O'Neil

(From *latimes.com's The Envelope—The Awards Insider* by Tom O'Neil, 4/25/09)

Miss California Carrie Prejean defends her antigay view by saying that she'd "rather be biblically correct than politically correct," but maybe she should read her Bible closely. Here's a quote from Timothy 2:12 that may be of interest to her: "Suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Just like legal authorities quote biblical denunciations against homosexuality when blasting gay marriage today, many of America's lawmakers refused to grant women the right to vote before 1920 because of biblical declarations on the inferiority of women.

2 YEARS AGO

Dave Hall

(recording artist)

(*The Advocate*, 6/19/07)

Arabs have brought to the world an extraordinary number of things I'm proud of. A very brief list would include algebra, geometry, astronomy, coffee, orange juice, sherbert, newspapers, the guitar, Kathy Najimy, and my mom.

You'd like my mom. She taught me tolerance. She's proud of me as a musician and as a gay man. She makes a really mean tabbouleh. And she's as American as you are.

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blase DiStefano

Bea Arthur

• May 13, 1922–April 25, 2009 •

(*Out*, 8/01, Michael Musto)

Michael Musto: . . . Do you know a lot of gay people in show business?

Bea Arthur: Isn't that a rhetorical question?

(*USA Today*, 4/25/09, Ann Oldenburg)

When once told of drag-queen Bea Arthur look-alike competitions, she said, "I'm flattered," and added, "Of course I have gay friends—doesn't everybody?"

And when told she was dogged by rumors that she was a lesbian, her answer was, "I think it is because of the voice, but who cares?"

Cheers, dear: Bea Arthur (pictured here in 1974's *Mame*) won a Tony Award in 1966 for her portrayal of Vera Charles in Broadway's *Mame*, long before she won hearts on *Golden Girls*.



Josh Kilmer-Purcell

(columnist)

(*Out*, 4/09)

Now, with two out of three branches of the government sympathetic to our cause, we're finally spitting in the direction of the wind. Unfortunately, we're distracting ourselves with spitting at each other. It's the ultimate case of being careful what we swished for.

Paul Rudd

Paul Rudd (seen here in 1998's *The Object of My Affection*): does he feel gay?

(*Entertainment Weekly*, 3/27/09)

I always thought I'd be a really good gay guy. . . . I remember doing interviews for *The Object of My Affection*, and people would ask, "What was it like to kiss a guy?" Like it was such a shocking thing. I said, "How many times does anyone ask, 'You had to shoot somebody. Was that weird?'" I love gay guys. I feel pretty gay. I'm certainly not the most macho guy in the room.

Amy Poehler

(*The Advocate*, 5/09, Brandon Voss)

Brandon Voss: [W]ould you like a gay son?

Amy Poehler: Well, they're so good to their mothers, and they keep a clean apartment. Sure, we'd probably have a grand ol' time. Recently, Rachel Dratch, Kristin Wiig, a couple of *SNL* writers, and I went to see Liza Minnelli's show in New York. I told my friend, who was pregnant at the time, that Liza had to bless her baby so that it would either be gay or be a big supporter of the gays. So Liza laid her hands on my friend's stomach and sang the first couple of lines from *Cabaret*: "What good is sitting alone in your womb? Come hear the music play!"

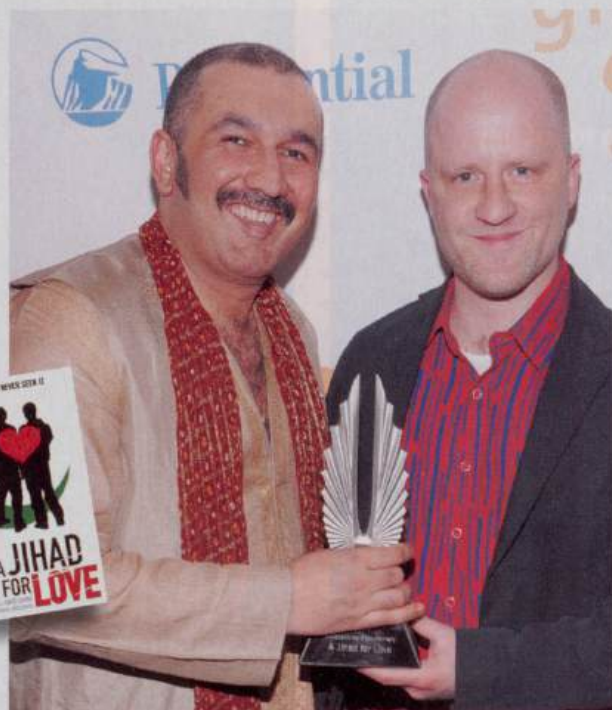
MAKE LOVE, NOT JIHAD

If you think being a gay Christian is tough, try being a gay Muslim

EDITOR'S NOTE: Parvez Sharma sat down with OutSmart's Leigh Bell for this interview in June 2008, when he was in Houston for a screening and discussion of *A Jihad for Love*.

Parvez Sharma smokes cigarettes like he makes films: dramatically and without excuses. He inhaled an American Spirit with vigor outside the Angelika Film Center downtown as he discussed his first and controversial documentary, *A Jihad for Love*. The film chronicles several gay and lesbian individuals who struggle to be accepted by Islam in countries—like Egypt and Iran—where religion is unyielding and homosexuality is punishable, even by death. Some of these people were imprisoned, beaten, and eventually driven from their homelands.

As a gay Muslim from Egypt, Sharma was touched in unexpected ways during the six-year filming process. He is both filmmaker and activist traveling nationwide this fall with *A Jihad for Love* to conclude each showing with an in-person, upfront discussion about religion and homosexuality. Oftentimes, these talks involve panels with various leaders in the community, both pro- and



We're so GLAAD: Parvez Sharma (l) and Sandi Simcha DuBowski received the award for Outstanding Documentary for *A Jihad for Love* at the 20th Annual GLAAD Media Awards in New York, March 28.

antigay. Houston was the second stop on his grueling tour of 35 cities.

Most filmmakers don't follow a documentary around. What inspired you to do it?
I'm implementing a grassroots distribution

of this film. Once filmmakers get distribution, they feel that their job is done, but I actually feel that once you get distribution, that's when you have to work the hardest. . . . I have the responsibility to make sure people leave the darkened theater with something quite profound, with questions, and maybe with some answers, and a renewed feeling to change things.

Were you first filmmaker or activist?

I was first a filmmaker but, in making this documentary, I also realized I was an activist. I believe very fundamentally that films are the most potent tool for social change, because people engage with cinema like they engage with nothing else. I want to milk the medium as much as I can to create debate and change around religion and homosexuality. For me, some of our last and most bitter battles are going to be fought on the frontlines of religion.

You confront your own religion, Islam. How did you do it with such grace?

Look, you're not going to get any kind of religious opinion coming from the pope saying homosexuality is okay. When you're battling homophobia in religious communities, you have to work with respect and you have to work very slowly. You can't present theological arguments with contempt. You have to present it to people within religious orthodoxies with this idea that our stories are about people being denied love.

These days, "jihad" is related to terrorists, and you even mentioned that some of your financial backers asked the word be removed from the title. Why did you fight to keep it there?

I thought it would be so amazing to take the word (which America incorrectly translates as only meaning "religious war") and put it next to the word love. . . . "Jihad" entering the minds of audience members as an internal struggle, at least how my film describes it, is a huge victory for me.

This film took forever to make, right?

It took over my entire identity for six years. . . . We had 400 hours of film in nine languages. I started editing in February 2006

and finished August 2007. [The current edition is almost 90 minutes, but many additional takes are included in the DVD.]

Whose story of those you filmed touched you the most?

Mazen [an Egyptian imprisoned and tortured along with 52 other men in 2001 when government officials raided a gay club. He won asylum in France, where for a while, he lived homeless and sometimes dirt poor]. I felt Mazen's anguish in the pit of my stomach. I have held him while he cried for hours. . . . I don't know any gay person who has gone through that intense pain for being a gay person.

Has that divided the American gay population?

Even this minority has divided itself into minorities and judges one another based on skin color or what you look like. . . . I would want every gay man in every gay bar to come and see this film, to see that it is possible to be religious and gay, to see that it is possible to be a victim of torture.

A Jihad for Love DVD: English and Arabic with English subtitles. From First Run Features (firstrunfeatures.com).

Leigh Bell also talks to author Billie Willmon Jenkin in this issue of OutSmart.

DVD/VHS Shorts Previews by Nancy Ford

Chris and John's Road Trip!



No need to leave town this summer. Stay home and vicariously enjoy the antics of Chris Carter and John Simpson, here! TV's culture-crashing travel duo, on a cross-country trek. Includes six episodes and a suitcase-full of bonuses. May 5. • 2005. Alluvial (villagelighthouse.com).

Finding Me



The gay black experience is the focus of this seductive film set in New York City. Specifically, it focuses on one gay black man coming to terms with his father's homophobia as well as his own self-loathing. Roger S. Omeus directs. • 2009. TLA Releasing (tlareleasing.com).

Fun in Girl Shorts 2



Here we have Frameline's second compilation of seven top lesbian short films—almost half of which, oddly, are directed by men. Includes Nicole Brending's hysterical *Operated by Invisible Hands*, which won a slew of queer film fest awards. • 2009. Strand Releasing (strandreleasing.com).

LLIK Your Idols



Five years in the making, *LLIK* (not a typo) examines the 1980s-era underground scene of New York City, featuring footage of and interviews with Sonic Youth, Butthole Surfers, Foetus, Bruce LaBruce, and other icons of the day. Angelique Bosio directs. • 2007. MVD Visual (mvdv2b.com).

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AN INDIGO GIRL

An interview with Emily Saliers

Indigo Girls fans who have been waiting longer than usual to hear from the out duo of Amy Ray and Emily Saliers will find their patience rewarded with not one, but two, CDs on the band's latest *Poseidon and the Bitter Bug* (IG Recordings/Vanguard). The first release on their very own imprint, *Poseidon and the Bitter Bug* consists of a band disc and an acoustic disc, with the song order different on each. As usual, Ray and Saliers each wrote songs for this album and they alternate performing each other's compositions, including standouts "Digging for a Dream," "Driver Education," "I'll Change," "Second Time Around," and "What Are You Like?" I spoke with Saliers shortly before the release of the album.



Gregg Shapiro: I want to begin by congratulating you on becoming a music mogul ...
Emily Saliers: [Laughs]

... creating your record label IG Records with Amy Ray. How does it feel to be the head of a record label?

Well, I certainly don't feel like any kind of mogul, I'll tell you that. I just think that we've come full circle. We had a long history with Epic Records that, especially in the beginning and up through at least midway,

was very productive and cooperative. And then it just ran its course. Then I was in the state of mind where I thought we'd go smaller with a label, but maybe there was still a label out there that has enough resources and creative ideas that can take us to the next level. ... Amy would have gone independent after Epic—that day, she was ready. I was thinking, let's give this one more shot. We went with Hollywood [Records] and they were so excited to have us, blah blah

You go, girls: Emily Saliers of the Indigo Girls says, "We certainly concentrate on queer issues, but also on environmental activism." The Indigo Girls grace Houston with a concert on Friday, May 22, at the Verizon Wireless Theater. Tickets: 877/598-6671.

blah blah blah. And that panned out to be nothing, just empty promises, [and] it didn't work. We were happy that they dropped us and we're very happy to have everything under our control. We have a very good relationship with our distributing company Vanguard.

Vanguard Records is a label with a long history in the folk and political-activist music realm, signing artists such as The Weavers, Paul Robeson, Buffy Sainte-Marie, and Joan Baez.

There is a lot of cache to being associated with that group of people. And the head of the label and distribution is a music guy. They're music people. We met some of the staff and you just know when people love music and they're not just bullshitters. And it's a distribution deal; they're not our record company. But they are in cooperation with us to get the music out there as creatively and quickly as possible. They're willing to work with us and it's a really good relationship. ...

Do you think there is any significance that this new disc is being released 20 years after your Epic debut?

I think that's just the timing, really. Our careers have had a sort of mysterious bet to it. If you think about it, Amy and I have known each other since elementary school. We ended up in high school chorus together as pals and then began playing together. Then we both transferred back to the same university in Atlanta without telling the other one. It's kind of like we were destined to share some sort of path.

The fact that it's come full circle to independence at a time when independence is the best way to get your music out there—I just feel like Amy and I have been extremely fortunate the whole way. ...

There were three years between *Despite Our Differences* and *Poseidon and the Bitter Bug*. Were your songs written over the course of that time or during a more concentrated period leading up to the recording of the disc?

For me, it was more like that. For Amy, she →

GrooveOut Shorts

Reviews/previews
by Nancy Ford

Linq
Life Goes On



Linq began her musical career at 55, legitimizing that familiar cliché, "better late than never." Rich tones and sparkling harmonies, especially on the title tune, make us want to go camping. Womyn's music superstar, June Millington (Fanny), who contributes crystal bass lines, produces. Self-released (linqmusic.com).

Dolly Parton
9 to 5 and Odd Jobs



Timed to coincide with Broadway's *9 to 5: The Musical*, our favorite double-D-cup gal offers up a reissue of one of her top albums. Amateur vocalists will enjoy the included karaoke mix of "9 to 5." RCA Nashville/Legacy (legacyrecordings.com).

Stevie Nicks
The Soundstage Sessions



The years can't diminish the former Fleetwood Mac frontdiva's talent, as she proves with this collection of her finest hits. Recorded in 2007 at Chicago, with an accompanying DVD, this CD marks Nicks' first solo live outing. The lush version of "Landslide" is absolutely transporting. Reprise Records (warnerbrothersrecords.com).

Sarah Brightman
Symphony—Live in Vienna



This CD/DVD package provides a double dose of the perfectly pitched soprano's PBS special recorded at the resplendent Stephansdome Cathedral. Contains fan favorites, "Phantom of the Opera," "Pie Jesu," and "Time to Say Goodbye," and an interview with Brightman. Manhattan Records (manhattanrecords.com). ■



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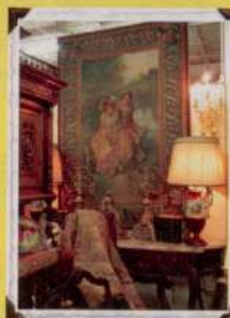
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GrooveOut

continued from page 88

had been writing her songs over the course of time. But I had a really bad writer's block this time around.

We actually made this record last spring [2008], almost a year ago, which is very unusual for us to sit on a record this long. But we were putting everything together—our plan for being on our own and for signing with Vanguard for distribution—and we didn't want to release it in the horribly competitive fall quarter. Not that we couldn't compete with anybody else of a certain echelon in terms of sales or whatever, but we thought, let's just wait until the time feels right to release it. . . .

How many songs did you each have to choose from that were whittled down to the five each on the first disc?

[Laughs] For me, I wrote five songs and I got five songs on the record. I think Amy had one or two extra. Sometimes she decides between what is going to be an Indigo Girls song and what is going to be a solo Amy Ray song. She's more prolific than I am, so she's got a whole treasure-chest full of songs from which to choose. . . .

Poseidon and the Bitter Bug is a double disc set, with band and acoustic discs. Was that always the intention?

It was an idea that the producer, Mitchell Froom, had, and it struck us as a very good idea from the beginning. . . .

The album is titled Poseidon and The Bitter Bug. "Poseidon" is mentioned in the song "Fleet of Hope," and the "bitter bug" is mentioned in "Second Time Around." How did you come up with title?

Again, all credit goes to Mitchell Froom [laughs]. We were sitting around in my house one day actually doing arrangement ideas and preproduction and just jamming on the songs together. He said, "You should call the record Poseidon and the Bitter Bug," and he looked like he was making a joke. And we all laughed and thought it was funny. But then as time went on, the title stuck with us. I like the fact that it's a lyric of hers and a lyric of mine, and that it's got a certain whimsy to it that you can't exactly put your finger on. I think that best expressed what was going on on the record.

I mentioned "Fleet of Hope" which has an aquatic theme. But there's also a sadness to it, which also comes through on "Love of Our Lives."

My songs are a bit world-weary on this record, I think, more so than any other group of

songs on any other record for me. It was my state of mind when I was writing. We were still in the throes of the Bush administration. I mean, how f--king depressing is that? It was hard to have hope politically. All my friends broke up. I came out of a long-term relationship, so there was a lot of sadness, interpersonally. . . .

Another out performer, Missy Higgins, can be heard on a couple of tracks. How did that come about?

[Laughs] Mitchell Froom again! He produced her latest record. He was like, "Missy's in town, wouldn't it be great if she came out . . ." We hadn't even heard her before, to be honest. He brought in her CD and played us some tracks, and we were like, "Oh my God!" She has an incredible voice and a great sensibility. . . .

A lot has happened in the past year. You mentioned coming out of the Bush era. Both musically and on an activist level, both you and Amy have made a point of being out there. Would it be fair to say that in addition to your role as a musician, your activist side got a workout during recent events, including the 2008 presidential election and gay marriage issues such as Prop. 8?

I wouldn't say that it got a workout. We're always interested in what's going on out there, try to keep our finger on the pulse. Prop. 8 was a huge disappointment, a heartbreaker. I thought it was going to go the other way. Everybody who had hoped it would go the other way really believed it. We had such mixed emotions because of the combination of Obama's victory and that happening in California. It was difficult to describe. I think you know what I mean and I think a lot of queer people do. It's hard to feel two diametrically opposed emotions at the same time. That was challenging for a lot of people I know. As far as our activism, we certainly concentrate on queer issues, but also on environmental activism, especially through the indigenous lens, so we work with a group called Honor the Earth, and we're in the communities where they're fighting for solar power and wind projects and alternative energy projects, rather than coal fire and nuclear energy plants and nuclear waste dumping. That's the thrust of our activism. We like to be aware of what's going on out there and see if we can lend a helping hand.

Read more of this interview with Emily Saliers at 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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PERFECTING PARENTHOOD

When her gay son came out, this right-leaning mom did the right thing



Author Billie Willmon Jenkin sitting on the front porch of her son's house in Montrose. Inset: Jenkin's book, *The Knock-Kneed Cowboy*.

Decades before Billie Willmon Jenkin learned one of her two sons was gay, she often told them a tale of "The Knock-Kneed Cowboy." It's a yarn the mother/schoolteacher had been weaving for a while.

The knock-kneed cowboy loathed and scorned his come-together legs, desperately wishing them bowlegged, like the other cowboys in town. When Jenkin told the story to her young sons some 30 years ago, in the solitude of their West Texas ranch, that knock-kneed cowboy got his bowed legs, by goodness. But things seemed simpler back then.

Jenkin painted life with a religious-



right brush, drawing a box to fit her beliefs nice and neat. She attended church where others felt the same: don't question, don't ask. And homosexuals? They could be "healed" with enough prayer and devotion. Jenkin would later refer to that religious community as "judgmental" and "straight-laced."

"I raised my boys with those same views, thinking I was protecting them," Jenkin said, during a talk at a recent

Houston PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays) meeting. She is now an active member of the group. "This is what I knew."

Today the oldest boy, Rusty Willmon, is 37 and his younger brother, Trent Willmon, is 36. When Jenkin was raising them, she most feared, "more than anything, except them getting killed in a car accident or something, was that they'd be gay."

What do they say about our greatest fears? The boys grew up, and although Jenkin didn't know it, her oldest son, Rusty, was homosexual. He silently feared damnation and shamefully prayed for God to make him straight—much like the knock-kneed cowboy wished for bowed legs, late in the dark of night. Neither wanted to live with their reality.

Rusty had seriously considered suicide—more than once. Nobody knew. Not his father, not his mother. No one. Life went on.

The boys moved out and into their own lives. Jenkin and her husband eventually divorced after 25 years of marriage. She moved off the ranch and, albeit more slowly, away from the religious right. Then, Jenkin began suspecting Rusty might be gay. What kind of good-looking, charming guy rarely dated or even mentioned girls?

In what Jenkin later admits wasn't the best judgment, she asked her youngest son, Trent, if his brother was gay. Trent told the truth. That was 16 years ago. →

ReadOut Shorts

Mommy, Mama, and Me
Lesléa Newman
Tricycle Press (tricyclepress.com)



Good children's books should lull them to sleep. And I mean that in a good way. Here, the author of *Heather Has Two Mommies* gives us a story with a rhythmic, soporific, beat that shows all the warmth and fun of a healthy family that just happens to have two mothers. Perfectly illustrated by Carol Thompson, this one is a perfect gift for a baby shower or a lover of children's books. —Review: Angel Curtis

Out at the Movies
Steven Paul Davies
Kamera Books (kamerabooks.com)



Out at the Movies, with a foreword by Simon Callow, covers gay filmmakers and actors, their influence within the industry, the most iconic scenes from gay cinema, and the most memorable dialogue from key films. With a subtitle like "A History of Gay Cinema," *Out at the Movies* should be more comprehensive, but it's simply not as memorable as *The Celluloid Closet*, the classic by Vito Russo. —Review: Troy Carrington

Hollywood's Tennessee: The Williams Films and Postwar America
R. Barton Palmer and William Robert Bray
University of Texas Press (utexas.edu/utpress)



The cover of this relatively small (6x9 inches, 344 pages) and rather expensive (\$60 hardcover) book reveals a bit of the advertising campaign used for the 1956 film *Baby Doll*, a film Tennessee Williams and Elia Kazan patched together from a couple of one-act Williams plays. The image, highly shocking then, depicted a very young Carroll Baker sucking her thumb while reclining in a crib. →

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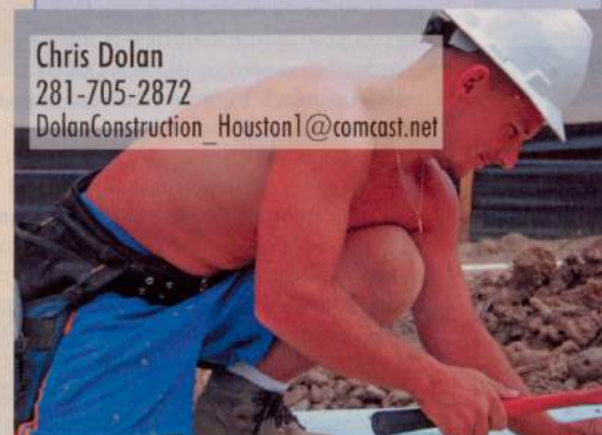
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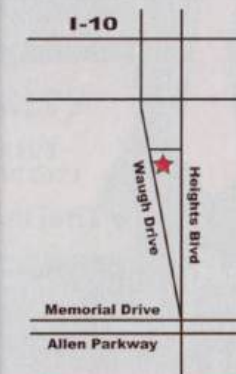
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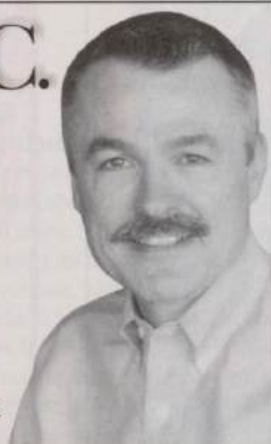
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ReadOut continued from page 92

At that moment, "All those old [religious] recordings kicked in," Jenkin said. She was in the process of lightening and widening her religious beliefs, but those church-talk recordings were deeply imbedded and difficult to kick: homosexuals go to hell. The mother's to blame. What did the parents do wrong? The list goes on.

"I didn't understand, but I couldn't stop loving Rusty," she said.

Jenkin did have the benefit of sitting with the news without Rusty knowing she knew. She could absorb the idea of a gay son in her own time. But it didn't take long. Love for Rusty overcame those old recordings. Jenkin wrote him a letter, expressing her acceptance—no matter what. She mailed the letter to Rusty's San Antonio home, where he lived with his then-partner.

She followed with a visit. Over dinner one night, Rusty told his mother that, yes, he is gay. Jenkin fought off the wedge her son's admission might have put in their relationship, clearly expressing her love for Rusty. She further proved acceptance when she and Rusty hit the gay bars later that night. There, Jenkin met a preacher's son whose parents kicked him out when he came out.

"That's when my heart really began turning away from the religious right," Jenkin said. "How could someone who preached about an 'all-loving God' turn his back on his own son? . . . It was undoing and rewinding those tapes and realizing that there are a lot of things we don't know, a lot of things yet to learn," Jenkin said. "I realized that if I—a human parent—loved my son unconditionally, that a Perfect Parent would love His offspring even more."

It was a profound thought for a woman who had lived so long on the right, but like most realizations do over time, this one lost its profundity. Jenkin was initially thankful to overcome those petrified religious beliefs in order to accept her son's homosexuality. She was grateful Rusty had managed the same.

"I became complacent about where I was with Rusty," she said. "I was so happy that I had bridged something in my mind to keep loving Rusty, so I kinda put it on hold." Kinda like she did the tale of a knock-kneed cowboy.

The next several years were filled with renewals and realizations, as Jenkin came into her own. One of those moments occurred in a seminar on setting and

continued on page 97

ReadOut Shorts continued from page 92

It's maybe one of the more interesting recommendations for this meticulous, extremely well-researched, and, well, quite textbooky exploration of 15 or so films adapted from plays and stories by Williams, who was not merely one of the greatest American writers, but was also one of the great gay icons at a time when a spectacle on the order of *RuPaul's Drag Race* was about as likely as the colonization of Saturn. Early on, the authors let us know that space limitations prevent them from including much back-lot gossip or trivia. Well, there's always that shot of Carroll Baker on the cover. —Review: Jack Varsi

Accidental Rebels

Kelly Sinclair

Blue Feather Books (bluefeatherbooks.com)



Small Texas towns always have gay people, mostly in hiding. *Accidental Rebels* shows us what happens when the married gays, the "suspicious" straights, and the girls no one ever dreamed were gay all come out. Although the writing is a little rocky, this is a wonderful story and a solid debut novel. I look forward to the author's second book. —Review: A.C.

Angel Food and Devil Dogs

Liz Bradbury

Boudica Publishing (boudicapublishing.com)



Liz Bradbury brings us a delightful new lesbian detective, Maggie Gale (love the name). Well plotted and fun, this book might be the best first novel of the season. Off we go on a delightful romp, reminiscent of the days when girl-detective novels were fun and the biggest mystery was if the lust would light off before the story was over. Set this one aside for a summer afternoon beach read—it's perfect. —Review: A.C.

Walking the Perfect Square

Reed Farrel Coleman

Busted Flush Press (bustedflushpress.com)



A college student has disappeared, and Moe Pager travels to New York's rough-trade ramble to find out what happened. Funny thing, along the way everyone who should have an interest in finding this kid gets in the way. In *Walking the Perfect Square*, Coleman gives us the full package—great plotting, writing, and a detective we can care about. Once again, Busted Flush Press brings us a must-have reprint. —Review: A.C.

The Summer Book 2009

Sarah Gish

Gish Creative (thesummerbook.com)



Distributed locally, this seventh annual guide helps children get more out of their vacation time than a high Wii score. *The Summer Book* contains more than 200 listings, including yoga, fencing, cooking, sports, and countless other preoccupations. —Preview: Nancy Ford ■

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Extra Large

Coffee-table publishing giant Taschen is bringing their comprehensively artistic expertise to gay artist Tom of Finland. Where the straight world had the bomber-vixen pin-ups of Vargas or oh-so-'70s new waves of Nagel, we had Tom. Prudes and moralists have been writing off Tom (real name Touko Laaksonen) of Finland's art as nothing more than homopornography. But in this massive

retrospective of his work, Tom's artistry can be viewed for what it is—a unique, erotic, and yes, sometimes shocking, exploration of the male physique, gay fantasy, situational sex, power roles, and influential take on the pleasure principle. Containing nearly 1,000 images, Tom of Finland XXL (edited by Dian Hanson, 666 pages, \$200) also includes

essays by the likes of cultural critic Camille Paglia, filmmaker John Waters, author Armistead Maupin, tastemaker Todd Oldham, and others, making XXL a valuable art history lesson with one of our own at its lecture's center. While a bit of a stretch to put Tom in the same league as Michelangelo, his often orgasmic, and infamously generous renderings of the human form cannot be written off as simple porn. Get past your initial shock (or arousal), and you realize that many of these images are clever contemporary recreations of, say a 17th-century levee, with courtesans now recast as sailors, pumped up on sex, power, and steroids; or Mona Lisa as a smoldering, lantern-jawed GQ coverboy. Sex isn't degrading as de Sade saw it, but a pleasurable exploration on the world of role play, sexual subordination as liberation. There's an old argument that says "you'll know porn when you see it." But writing off Tom of Finland as a dirty-minded fag who could draw is like shorthand-ing Hugh Hefner as a creepy old man who beds triplets. And of the two, it's Finland who's having his legacy lauded by a powerful publishing company and hyper-cool cultural pundits, not turned into punchline on E! —Steven Foster

Pop Goes the World

continued from page 68

No, it's a sweet and charming Walt Disney version of it. It's a Pixar version.

I just watched the animated video for Yes' first single, "Love Etc." The graphics are completely trippy.

It's by this Dutch guy, Martijn van Dam. He's got such a strong graphic style. We found it quite psychedelic. It was the quickest video shoot we ever did—it took about 4½ minutes [for each of us].

What artists are you listening to these days, and do you like the new wave of synth pop from Australia and New Zealand like Ladyhawke and Empire of the Sun?

Yes. I particularly love "My Delirium" by Ladyhawke. Empire have got one really good song, but I'm worried they look like MGMT clones.

What songs would you put on a mix tape or iTunes playlist today?

What configuration or personality am I appealing to? [Laughs] I'll tell you what—as my computer's in front of me, we'll do three different configurations. Here's one called *Roll on Babe*: "Roll on Babe" by Vetiva. "Baby I'm-a Want You" by Bread. "Against All Odds" by Phil Collins. I know people slag off Phil, but it's a f--king amazing song. Here's a playlist called *Bitch*: Do you know the series *Summer Heights High*? Well, the first track is Mr. G's "Naughty Girl (Paul Mac's Extended Mix)." "Do I Look Like a Slut" by Avenue D. "Munchausen" by No Bra—it's a London duo. "C'est Beau La Bourgeoisie" by Discobitch. "Filthy Heteros" by Tom Stefan. My final mix is going to be *New Quiet*, a mix of Max Richter, Jóhann Jóhannsson's *Fordlandia*, my favorite album of the year so far, and, slightly

worryingly, the Norwegian Arve Henriksen who does ambient jazz.

Let's talk current events. How do you feel about the way Boy George, who was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment in January, has been treated?

I probably don't know enough about the case, but I think it's weird. Okay, Boy George and his pal have phoned up a rent boy. He's come over, and they've all done coke together. Boy George [handcuffs] him to the wall or something, so insubstantial he's able to pull them off the wall anyway, and rushes out into the street. This guy has obviously been frightened by Boy George. What amazes me is this guy in court gives his version of events when he was doing coke. I'm not a huge expert on this, but I think coke makes people paranoid. Doesn't it?

Gee, where'd you hear that?

That's what I've heard. I think I've even witnessed it before. So I think it's a bit weird. And then George, I thought he would get two weeks or something, goes to jail for [15 months]?

Will you visit him in the clink?

"Well I don't know him well enough to do that. So no. I do know him but I don't think he needs a visit from Neil Tennant."

Do you Twitter? Or Facebook?

We Twitter, yeah. I think Facebook is sinister because you get a network of friends and allow people to see who all your friends are. But Twitter I like. It may become tedious quite quickly, but it's a fun thing. You look at Pet Shop Boys on Twitter and you will see the empty plate after I've eaten risotto for lunch today.

Isn't Twitter fantastic for celebrities and

public figures because it eliminates the need to stalk somebody? Why wait outside someone's house when you can get an actual look inside it, and know everything happening, via Twitter?

I never thought of that, that's quite clever. It's a very good point, I like it. Stalking is outdated!

Personal life—are you dating or single?

I don't comment on those things, it's personal.

Well, are you happy?

Um... yeah, pretty happy. Reasonably happy. I don't think you should ever be too satisfied with what's going on.

I'm going to be in London for two weeks in June. Any restaurants you would recommend? Do you eat meat?

I do.

Well, congratulations. My favorite restaurant is called St. John at 26 St. John Street. [Another one is] Great Queen Street, at 32 Great Queen Street in Convent Garden for great English food. If you want vegetarian, there's a good one in Soho. I'm a meat-eating vegetarian, really. I like vegetarian food. I have my theory that vegetarians don't like vegetables. If you've got vegetarian friends, monitor their diet and see if they eat anything apart from starch, eggs, and dairy. They're not eating the salad. Not eating the spinach. They're addicted to carbohydrates. They're having rice, pasta, polenta, eggs, cheese. A cheese omelet and French fries is a vegetarian meal. Hold the salad, by the way! [Laughs] I'm mildly obsessed by this. It's the meat eaters who keep the vegetables going. ■

Lawrence Ferber is a freelance writer and a frequent contributor to OutSmart.

ReadOut

continued from page 94

achieving goals, in which Jenkin was inspired to complete her children's book, *The Knock-Kneed Cowboy*, the story she told her boys decades ago. She was working on that when Jenkin got a wake-up call. Rusty forwarded her an e-mail he had written to a mother struggling with her son's homosexuality. In the e-mail to this woman, Rusty stressed the importance of acceptance and underscored his point by admitting he waltzed with suicide. He related how he had courted the notion as a teenager wrestling with his sexuality and what others—God, parents, friends—would think. Twice Rusty had knives at his wrist and once had a shotgun in his mouth, he wrote. He danced cheek to cheek with death.

Reading that e-mail, Jenkin realized that "my words, my attitude, were at the heart of that. Yes, he got them from his peers, too, but it started with me."

She was shocked—shocked that Rusty was in such turmoil and she had no idea, shocked by the number of kids who must experience what Rusty did growing up. Jenkin's knowledge of her son's inner-tussle brought her to a deeper acceptance not only of her son, but of herself and of the world. From that e-mail, Jenkin found her own purpose: accepting herself and helping others do the same.

"If we're okay at the core of our being, we're off to a good start," she said. "And if we see others with compassion, even those who we think are so different from us, then we do ourselves a big favor."

Acceptance of self and others is now a mission for Jenkin. A self-proclaimed "self-acceptance guru," she gives influential speeches on acceptance throughout Texas and has written sections in collaborative, inspirational books, including *Wake Up Women* and *Wake Up Moments*.

At the heart of her mission, she says, is "how my life turned around through my embracing Rusty being gay." And so did that story, "The Knock-Kneed Cowboy." Jenkin completed and published the book, but the conclusion has changed since she spoke the tale to her young boys. The knock-kneed cowboy doesn't get his bowed legs. Instead, he learns to love his knock-kneed-ness, eventually embracing it.

Wake Up Women, *Wake Up Moments*, and *The Knock-Kneed Cowboy*, as well as more information on Jenkin and her cause, can be found at empoweringforchange.com.

Leigh Bell wrote about PFLAG Houston for the April issue of OutSmart magazine.

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Calendar of Events

Compiled by Sheri Taylor Bockelman

History Revisited

Theatre New West returns to holocaust theme



Director Joe Watts says Taavi Mark (l) and Lance Marshall deliver "some shattering scenes" in Theatre New West's production of Dan Clancy's *The Timekeepers*. "What has to happen is the actor must take the scenes to the depth that the character would," Watts says. "In not doing so, the actor and the production would be cheating the audience of that emotional experience, regardless of how it affects the actor."

Dan Clancy's *The Timekeepers*, presented by Theatre New West in collaboration with Holocaust Museum Houston, is a psychodrama focusing on the relationship between two inmates of a World War II Nazi concentration camp.

TNW founder and play's director, Joe Watts, hopes this production is as warmly embraced as his 2004 and 2006 sold-out productions of *Bent*, Martin Sherman's psychodrama focusing on the relationship between two inmates of a World War II Nazi concentration camp.

"*Bent* came about when I read Holocaust Museum Houston was going to have an exhibit titled 'Persecution of Homosexuals in Nazi Germany,'" Watts says. "I talked to them about how perfect it would be to do *Bent* there during the exhibit, and they loved the idea. The rest, as they say, is history—in more ways than one."

The museum is a beneficiary of this production. Runs through May 23 (Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 8 p.m., and Sunday, May 17, at 6 p.m. No performance May 2). 5401 Caroline St. Tickets: \$20. Details: 713/522-2204. —Nancy Ford

MAY

PERFORMING ARTS

Armide (the opera). French stage director Pascal Rambert joins Mercury Baroque to revive Jean-Baptiste Lully's opera for its Houston debut. \$20–\$52. 8 pm. Pre-concert lecture, 7:15 pm. May 15 & 16. Cullen Theater, Wortham Center, 501 Texas Ave. Info: mercurybaroque.org, 832/251-0706.

Armide (the musical performance). Concert by Mercury Baroque. Sun., May 17, 2 pm, at The University of Houston, Clear Lake, 2700 Bay Area Blvd. Tickets: 281/283-2560.

Awake and Sing! Bessie Berger and her Bronx family struggle with poverty and the hardships of the Great Depression. \$20–\$36. May 7–June 7. Main Street Theater–Rice Village, 2540 Times Blvd. Info: mainstreettheater.com, 713/524-6706.

Back to the '80s, presented by UpStage Theatre, is a wild ride through the high school drama of the 1980s, filled with lots of pop tunes from the decade that made Cyndi Lauper, Michael Jackson, Bon Jovi, and Debbie Gibson household names. May 8–30 in

Lambert Hall, 1703 Heights Blvd. Tickets (\$20, \$15 for seniors/students): 713/838-7191, www.upstagetheatre.org.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane. A lonely Irish spinster is trapped taking care of her elderly, cantankerous mother. But after years of abuse and insults, things get horribly out of hand when the daughter has romantic inclinations. \$13–\$15. 8 pm. May 29–June 20. Theatre Southwest, 8944-A Clarkcrest. Info: theatresouthwest.org, 713/661-9505.

Brief Encounter. World premiere. Two strangers meet by chance in a train station, leading to a relationship torn between love and loyalty. Based upon Noël Coward's play *Still Life* and the film screenplay for 1945's *Brief Encounter*. \$20–\$200. May 1–9. Brown Theater, Wortham Center, 501 Texas Ave. Info: houstongrandopera.org, 713/228-OPERA (6737).

Fiddler on the Roof. Last chance to see Topol in the role of Tevye, humble milkman, harried husband, and devoted father to five marriageable daughters. Sarofim Hall, Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 800 Bagby. May 26–June 7. Info: broadwaycrossamerica.com, 713/315-2500.

Grandpa Hasn't Moved in Days. Ned is dead and it's a Felt family funeral. \$22. Through May 9. Radio Music Theatre, 2623 Colquitt. Info: 713/522-7722, radiomusictheatre.com

Happy Days—A New Musical. The Fonz, Richie, and the gang rock and roll back to 1959 as the famed drive-in mall shop and number-one hangout, Arnold's, is in danger of demolition, and they all team up to save it. Tickets start at \$32. May 12–24. Hobby Center for Performing Arts, 800 Bagby. Info: tuts.com or 713/558-8887. See interview with Garry Marshall, creator of the original *Happy Days*, on page 71.

Houston Ballet's Classically Contemporary showcases great classical showpieces like George Balanchine's *Tchaikovsky Pas de deux* to *Solo*, a contemporary tour-de-force for three male dancers. The evening also features two recent works by Stanton Welch: *Medieval Babies* and *Nosotros*. May 8–10 at 8 pm at

Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park. Free. Info: 281/373-3386, milleroutdoortheatre.com.

Houston Ballet's Spring Repertory Program features Christopher Wheeldon's *Carousel: A Dance*, set to melodic and evocative "Carousel Waltz" and "If I Loved You" from the iconic 1945 musical *Carousel* (see page 82); *Jardi Tancat*, by choreographer Nacho Duato; and Stanton Welch's romantic *Nosotros*. \$17–\$125. May 28–June 7. Wortham Center's Brown Theater, 501 Texas Ave. Info: houstonballet.org, 713/227-2787.

Lend Me a Tenor. The Cleveland Opera Company of the 1930s has hired Tito Merelli, known on stage as "Il Stupendo," to open their grand opera season. \$12–\$20. May 15–30. The Country Playhouse, 12802 Queensbury Lane. Info: countryplayhouse.org, 713/467-4497.

Living Fat. The Coopers are a hard-working family with no money but a whole lot of love for one another—until a bungled bank robbery drops \$15,000 into their lives. \$18–\$27. Through May 24. The Ensemble Theatre, 3535 Main St. Info: ensemblehouston.com, 713/520-0055.

The Miss Firecracker Contest. When Carnelle Scott (known locally as "Miss Hot Tamale") enters the local beauty pageant, poignant self-improvement and outright hilarity ensue. \$25–\$45. May 6–24. The Texas Repertory Theatre Co., 14243 Stuebner Airline Rd., Northwoods Plaza. Info: texreptheatre.org, 281/583-7573.

RENT! With openly gay actor Anthony Rapp, who originated the role of Mark Cohen, and Adam Pascal as Roger. Tickets start at \$20. Through May 3. Hobby Center for Performing Arts, 800 Bagby. Info: tuts.com, 713/558-8887.

Rock 'n' Roll. Four-time Tony Award winner Tom Stoppard returns to the Alley with this winner of London Critics' Circle Theatre Award for Best New Play. The play spans two countries, three generations, and 22 turbulent years ('68–'90), at the end of which, love remains—and so does rock 'n' roll. Recommended

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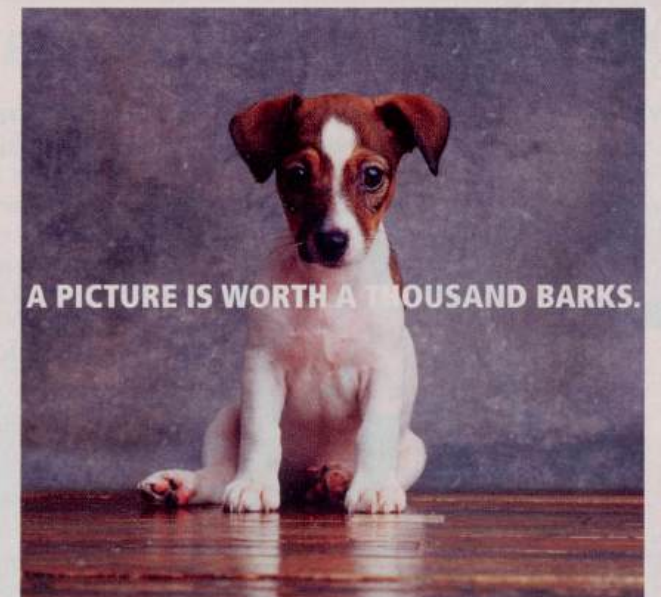
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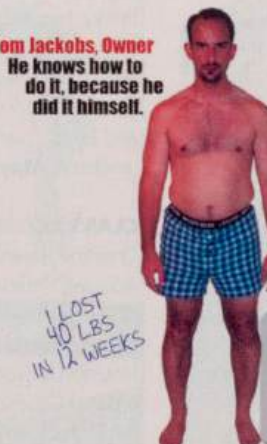
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by Nancy Ford

SOY SONGS. Who knew Wang Chung, Connie Chung, Chun King Chinese food, and Ricardo Montalban could all fit into one song? Three men



L-r: Gregg Dailey, Josh Wright, and Jimmy Phillips in Theater LaB Houston's *China: The Whole Enchilada*.

sing, dance, and irreverently march their way through 4,000 years of Chinese history in Mark Brown and Paul Mirkovitz's *China: The Whole Enchilada*. Linda Phenix directs and choreographs the 2008 New York City International Fringe Festival hit musical tackling racism, human rights, genocide, and the birth of the fortune cookie. Theater LaB Houston, 1706 Alamo St. **Through May 31.** Tickets: \$25. Details: 713/868-7516 • theaterlabhouston.com.

CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY CONCERTS. Ms. Gay Pride Houston, Sara Sjolander, presents twin concerts celebrating country-western music. Hits of gone-by years are featured in Sjolander's **May 1** concert beginning at 9 p.m. at Brazos River Bottom (2400 Brazos St.) Contemporary country hits are the focus on **May 2**, 10 p.m., with a concert at Chance's Bar (1100 Westheimer). Both shows benefit Montrose Counseling Center's Stella Link Seville Room and Gulf Coast Archive & Museum of GLBT History. Details: montrosecounselingcenter.org.

AND THEY'RE OFF. Enjoy the Kentucky Derby with all its traditional trimmings at the second annual Derby Day, featuring drag performances by Miss Ginger Grant, Shy Anne, and other winners of the Mint Julep pageant. **May 2**, 2 p.m., at Chances Bar, 1100 Westheimer. Benefits Legacy Community Health Services. Details: 713/830-3015 • salton@legacycommunityhealth.org.



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LOVE. Houston's premiere belly-dancing troupe, The Tribal Lillies, and drag performers Yna Nova, China Doll, and Christina Lee entertain at Carl Han's fourth annual Love Party, this year titled "Beautiful." Benefits "Flashback to the '80s," HATCH's upcoming Alternative Prom, set for June 12. **May 2**, 6:30-9 p.m., at Meteor, 2306 Genesee. Tickets: \$10. Details: hatchyouth.org.

GRIDIRON GIRLS. Houston Energy, the hometown champs of the International Women's Football League, return to The Rig for its third season. Regular season home games include Miami Fury (**May 2**), Shreveport Aftershock (**May 23**), and Dallas Diamonds (**June 6**). 3755 S. Main in Pearland. Details: 281/997-2323 • houstonenergyfootball.com.

PRIDE IDOL. Organizers for Pride Houston, the group that produces Houston's annual Pride parade and festival, have announced the return of Pride Idol. Toddicus emcees the six-week elimination contest seeking "Houston's most talented singer" beginning May 21, 10 p.m., at Guava Lamp, 570 Waugh, and continues Thursdays through June 25. But first, auditions are set for **May 3**, 12-5 p.m., at Warehouse Live, 813 St. Emanuel. Details: pridehouston.org.

CAUCUS TALK. For its May meeting, the Houston GLBT Political Caucus welcomes Rice University's Dr. Brian Riedel discussing the GLBT Community Digital Archive Project. Members also vote on new terms for president and several board positions during this meeting. **May 6**, 7 p.m., with a casual reception starting at 6:30 p.m. Havens Center, 1827 W. Alabama. The caucus' community work day is set for **May 9**, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., with general volunteers encouraged to pitch in with various organizational tasks each Saturday, also 10 a.m.-2 p.m. 1915 Commonwealth, Suite 104. Details: thecaucus.org.

GRIZZLY GOOD FUN. It's a big weekend for hunky, hirsute, gay men and those who love them, as Bear Watch 10 returns to Galveston. Registration begins at Inn at the Waterpark and Groove Galveston, followed by treasure hunts, and beach, pool, and foam parties throughout the weekend. **May 15-17.** Details: bearwatch.net.

CLASS ACT. Multi-award winning actress Christine Baranski headlines "Imagine, Believe, Achieve," Human Rights Campaign Houston's 2009 formal dinner gala. Legislative director Allison Herwitz delivers the keynote address, with Houston Mayor Bill White receiving the group's Political Equality Award and Shell Oil receiving the Corporate Equality Award. **May 16**, 6 p.m.,



Christine Baranski in ABC's *Ugly Betty* at Hilton Americas, 1600 Lamar. Tickets: \$175. Details: hrchouston.org.

WEDDING SONG. Openly gay singer/songwriter and Logo Click List fave, Tom Goss, brings his country flair to Houston in support of his new album, *Back to Love*. One of the album's songs,



"Till the End," a tribute to legalizing same-sex marriage, is getting considerable play on YouTube. **May 17**, 8 p.m., at The Artery, 5401 Jackson. Details: tomgossmusic.com.

TWICE EVERY YEAR WHETHER WE NEED IT OR NOT. Lesbian Health Initiative Houston's biannual Rainbow Health Fair for women offers free HIV and STD, total cholesterol, and blood-sugar testing; A1C for diabetics; blood typing; oral screening for cancer; and information about living wills and related legal matters, as well as assorted health and wellness education. Free mammograms and Pap smears are also available by appointment. **June 6**, 8:15 a.m.-3:15 p.m., at Legacy Community Health Services, 215 Westheimer. Details: 713/426-3356 • lhihouston.org. ■

for mature audiences. Through May 24 on the Alley Theatre's Hubbard Stage, 615 Texas Ave. Tickets (start at \$21): alleytheatre.org. Alley box office, 713/220-5700.

Romeo and Juliet. Can two dreamers from warring families find the courage to love one another? Opera to Go! presents scenes from Gounod's Shakespeare opera. Appropriate for all ages. May 4-8 at 11 a.m. at Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park. Free. Info: 281/373-3386, milleroutdoortheatre.com.

The Story of Burford, Category 5. When a hurricane hits Houston, the Spy Eye News team hits the water. May 14-Aug. 29. \$22. Radio Music Theatre, 2623 Colquitt. Info: radiomusictheatre.com, 713/522-7722.

You're the Cream in My Coffee. presented by Bayou City Concert Musicals, is the music of DeSylva, Brown, and Henderson. Their names may not be familiar, but their songs have lived on from the 1920s and become American standards. The cabaret takes place on consecutive Mondays in May—the 4th, 11th, and 18th. 7:30 p.m. Performance Centre of The Ensemble Theatre, 3535 Main St. Tickets (\$25): 713/465-6484, at the door, or at bayoucityconcertmusicals.org. Reservations recommended.

PERFORMING ARTS

For Young People

Scapino! Sixteen Houston-area children perform in this slapstick comedy about love, chases, mistaken identities, an Italian menu set to opera, and, of course, a happy ending! \$5. May 8-10. Main Street Theater-Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose. Info: mainstreettheater.com, 713/524-6706.

Sideways Stories from Wayside School. Whimsical classroom adventures always happen in Wayside School, built one on top of the other, but for five students on the 30th floor, there's never a dull moment! Sat., May 2 & 16. \$12 adult, \$10 child/senior. Main Street Theater-Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose Blvd. Info: mainstreettheater.com, 713/524-6706.

RADIO

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

Queer Voices. Monday nights, 9-11 p.m. Features, news, music, interviews, reviews, and commentary. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-4000.

ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

Amy Blakemore: Photographs 1988-2008. Thirty-six intriguing works from Houston-based Blakemore's collection includes black & white street settings to lush colorful landscapes. May 9-Sept. 13. Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. Info: mfa-houston.org or 713/639-7300; Spanish: 713/639-7379.

Beachtown. Tour *Coastal Living Magazine's Idea House*. Built in carpenter gothic style several feet above the required base flood elevation, the Idea House is fortified with concrete and steel designed to protect it from potential hurricane damage. \$10, proceeds benefit Galveston Historical Foundation. Through June 30. Info: galvestonhistory.org/Coastal_Living_Idea_House1.asp.

Conceal/Disclose is an exhibition of paintings by Hagit Barkai (from Israel) and photographs by Tala Vahabzadeh (from Iran), works evolved from each artist's life experience. May 8-June 19. Front Gallery, Art League Houston, 1953 Montrose. Info: artleaguehouston.org, 713/523-9530.

First Saturday Arts Market. Local artists display and sell original works of art, and local musicians entertain. Held the 1st Saturday at 548 West 19th at Wind Water Gallery's parking lot. Free. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Info: yalestreetmarket.com.

Literally Figurative focuses on the many aspects of the human figure as depicted by several craft artists through works made from ceramic, fiber, glass, metal, wood, and mixed media. Through July 3 at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, 4848 Main St. Info: 713/529-4848, craft-houston.org.

Mexcavations: Merry Calderoni. The artist's archeological work unearthing a pyramid only 20 miles from her home in San Miguel de Allende provided the inspiration for a new series of paintings. May 8-31. Canal Street Gallery, 2219 Canal St. Info: canalstreetgallery.com, 713/223-2219.

The Nature of Diamonds. Included in the exhibition are the Elton John Cartier shoulder brooch and the 2,000-diamond corsage ornament made in 1855 for Princess Mathilde, the niece of Napoleon Bonaparte. Opens May 8. The Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Dr. Info: hmns.org, 713/639-4629.

Pioneers of Contemporary Glass is 300 pieces of exemplary glass works. Through July 26. Caroline Weiss Law and Audrey Jones Beck buildings of the Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. Info: mfa-houston.org, 713/639-7300; Spanish: 713/639-7379. →

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Project Row Houses: Home. Space. Place. Seven featured artists explore ideas centered around home, identity, culture, struggles, and perseverance in the Third Ward neighborhood. Round 30 on view through June 21 at 2505-2517 Holman St. Project Row Houses presents Yinka Adebisi, a Yoruba artist from Nigeria in his solo exhibition, *My Houston Turning Point*, at 2521 Holman St. Info: projectrowhouses.org, 713/526-7662.

Regeneration is a group show highlighting the artists' explorations into new materials. Includes new paintings, drawings, jewelry, photography, sculpture, and collages. Through May 31 at Green House Gallery, 716 W. Alabama. Info: 713/443-8397, info@greenhouseartgallery.com, greenhouseartgallery.com.

The Retablos: Art for the Masses. An insight into the art of the retablo, small oil paintings on tin, zinc, wood, or copper. Free. May 5-July 12. The Heritage Society Museum, 1100 Bagby, Sam Houston Park. Info: heritagesociety.org, 713/655-1912.

Terra Cotta Warriors: Guardians of China's First Emperor. Featuring 14 life-size clay figures and artifacts excavated in 1974. May 22-Oct. 18. Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Herman Circle Drive. Info: hmns.org, 713/639-4629.

Vulnerable Ecologies, an installation by British sculptor Susan Stockwell, displays one aspect of mass consumption that has a devastating effect on our global eco system. Recycled computers are autopsied, and the components interwoven into delicate architecture. May 8-June 19. Main Gallery, Art League Houston, 1953 Montrose. Info: artleaguehouston.org, 713/523-9530.

DAILY

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, 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. • **MONDAYS:** All Star News and Video Emporium, 3415 Katy Frwy & Studewood, 4-8 pm; GEORGE SPORTS BAR, 617 Fairview, 6-10 pm. • **TUESDAYS:** 611 Hyde Park Pub, 611 Hyde Park, 4-8 pm; MIDTOWN SPA, 3100 Fannin, 4-8 pm. • **WEDNESDAYS:** Club Houston, 2205 Fannin, 8pm-12 am; EJ's, 2517 Ralph, 10pm-1am. • **FRIDAYS:** MIDTOWN SPA, 3100 Fannin, 5-9 pm; EJ's, 2517 Ralph, Fri. 10pm-1am. • A complete listing of locations is also available by calling 713/830-3070. Free confidential syphilis testing is also offered. HIV & syphilis testing is offered at the main clinic located at 215 Westheimer, Mon-Thurs. 11am-7pm and Fri. 11am-5pm.

Daily (Sun.-Fri.)

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

Weekly (Mondays)

TG Support Group. One of the oldest groups in Houston (started in 1990), Helping TransGenders Anonymous is a facilitated support group for all transgenders, supporters, family, and significant others. 7-9 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. More info: 713/520-8586, transhouston.com.

Meditation Mondays. Alan Davidson, author of *Body Brilliance: Mastering Your Five Vital Intelligences*, leads Big Mind, a simple, yet powerful and rapid way to help you shift into wisdom, self-realization, and actualization. 7:30-9:30 pm in the studio classroom at 1712 Fairview. Info: ThroughYourBody.com/events.html, 713/942-0923.

Weekly (Tuesdays)

Houston Roller Derby Rec League. Girls interested in skating but need to learn more skating skills or just want to learn the game and skate recreationally do not have to join the derby to skate with the rec league. Training is 7:30-9:30 pm at Dairy Ashford Roller Rink. Info: http://houstonrollerderby.com/public/page236.aspx.

Weekly (Thursdays)

Depression & Bipolar Support Group. Don't let depression or bipolar disorder dig its claws into what little hope you've managed to hide from the shadows. Bering Support Network can help. You can benefit from the experience of others. GLBT friendly. Free. 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. Sundays 9 am-noon, Wednesdays 7:30-9 pm, and offers clinics every Saturday 9-10:30 am. There are also social activities throughout the year. Annual membership \$30, court fees \$3 per session. More info: houstontennisclub.org.

Biweekly (2nd & 4th Wed.)

City of Houston Transgender Task Force is charged by the city of Houston to ensure that transgender Houstonians are able to access the medical and social services in order to reduce the incidence of HIV within the transgender community. 7-9 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. More info: 713/520-8586, transhouston.com.

Biweekly (2nd & 4th Fri.)

Transgender Buddhist Meditation Group offers a traditional Theravada Buddhist vipassana 30-minute meditation for transgenders. 7-9 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. More info: 713/520-8586 or transhouston.com.

Semimonthly (2nd Tues. & 4th Sat.)

FTM TG Support Group. Some Transgenders are Guys is one of the most dynamic FTM groups in the country. STAG is a facilitated group for female-to-male identified individuals, supporters, family, and significant others. 2nd Tuesday 7-9 pm and 4th Saturday 5-6 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. More info: 713/520-8586, transhouston.com.

Monthly (2nd Tues.)

Free Legal Consultations for Anyone with HIV/AIDS. AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc. (AFH, www.aidsfho.org) and Katine & Nechman L.L.P. have partnered to provide 30 minutes of free legal consultation on any legal issue to anyone with HIV. If any action is recommended, an attorney will take steps when

applicable or make referrals to appropriate legal aid offices. Consultations are held at the offices of Katine & Nechman, located at 1111 North Loop West, Suite 180. To schedule an appointment, clients should call the law office at 713/808-1000 or use the contact box on the firm's website (which has more info on the consultations): lawkn.com.

Monthly (3rd Tues.)

The Chapter One Book Group at St. Paul's United Methodist Church discusses *Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout. May 19, 7:30 pm, in the church's Youth Library, J-202, 5501 Main. To be added to the group's e-mail list: Linda@hibit.com. Info: 713/528-0527, stpaulshouston.org.

Monthly (1st Fri.)

TG Social. The Friday Night Transgender Social is a special, once-a-month event hosted by the TG Center for the Houston-area transgender community, supporters, family members, friends, community providers, and significant others. Each themed social consists of a dinner, movie, games, and/or presentation. 7-10 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. \$5. More info: 713/520-8586, transhouston.com.

Monthly (2nd Sat.)

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. Info: 713/862-0082, winterstreetstudios.net.

Monthly (4th Sat.)

TG Support Group. Texas Association for Transsexual Support is another one of the original support groups in Houston. TATS is a professionally facilitated support group for those identifying as being a transsexual. 4-5 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. More info: 713/520-8586, transhouston.com.

Significant Others TG Support Group. The Significant Others Support is a group that provides support to the wives, husbands, girlfriends, and boyfriends of individuals whose partners are considering transition. 3-4 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. Info: 713/520-8586, transhouston.com.

1 (Fri.)

Cabaret of the Americas: From Piazzolla to Porter brings together the sensual heat of the South American dance hall and the cosmopolitan cool of North American jazz clubs. The evening is presented as a double-bill concert by APERIO, Music of the Americas, in collaboration with the Foundation for Modern Music and Flamart. 8 pm at Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Parkway. A reception with the performers immediately follows the show. Tickets (\$20, \$10 students): aperioamericas.org, modernmusic.org, 713/965-4597.

1 & 2 (Fri. & Sat.)

The Gold tells a powerful, fictional story that follows the life journey of Joseph Cohen, a German Jew and amateur boxer, through the Nazi regime and the formation of the state of Israel, culminating at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. Free, but tickets required for seating. 8 pm, Miller Outdoor Theatre, 100 Concert Dr. Info: MillerOutdoorTheatre.com, 281/373-3386.

1, 2 & 3 (Fri., Sat. & Sun.)

Ho'oponopono with Sondra Ray. Hawaiian spiritual process

to "make right" or "make amends"—simple profound ceremony for forgiveness and release. Fri., 7:30-9:30 pm; arrive 7-7:15. Love offering/donation. • **Live, Love, Flourish!** is a two-day workshop with Sondra Ray. Create abundance & love in any circumstance. Teaching, interactive learning, & breathwork. Sat. & Sun., 10 am-6 pm (arrive 9-9:45). \$250 till Apr. 10; \$325 after. • Both at Great Hall at Mankind Project, 6950 W. 43rd. Info: LiveLoveFlourish.info, 713/649-3209.

1-9 (Fri.-Sat.)

André Previn's Brief Encounter. World premiere. Two strangers meet by chance in a train station, leading to a relationship torn between love and loyalty. Based upon Noel Coward's play *Still Life* and the film screenplay for 1945's *Brief Encounter*. \$20-\$200. Brown Theater, Wortham Center, 501 Texas Ave. at Smith St. Info: houstongrandopera.org, 713/228-0674 (6737).

2 (Sat.)

Carl Han's 4th Annual Love Party, benefiting HATCH's Alternative Prom in June, features Houston's premiere belly-dancing troupe, The Tribal Lillies, and drag performances by Yna Nova, China Doll, and Christina Lee. Donation: \$10. 6:30-9 pm. Meteor, 2306 Genesee. Info: Montrose Counseling Center, 713/529-0037.

2, 3, 9, & 10 (Weekends)

Galveston Historic Homes Tour: Celebration of Historic Galveston's Rebirth. Ten privately owned homes, each a survivor of a calamity such as hurricane or fire, some still in the midst of reconstruction, are on the 2009 tour. Advance tickets, \$20; \$25 after May 2. 10 am-6 pm. Info: galvestonhistory.org, 409/765-7834.

3 (Sun.)

Kenny Chesney concert, with Miranda Lambert and Lady Antebellum. \$39.50-\$85. 7:30 pm. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, 2005 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands. Info: woodlandscenter.org, 713/629-3700.

6-9 (Wed.-Sat.)

HGO Chorus Auditions at the Wortham Theater Center, 510 Preston. The Houston Grand Opera Chorus is a professional group of diverse men and women of all professions and backgrounds. Info: houstongrandopera.org.

7 (Thurs.)

Black Joe Lewis & the Honeybees, a Lost Highway band that recently released *Tell 'Em What Your Name Is!*, opens for Lucero. \$12 adv/\$14 door. Walter's On Washington, 4215 Washington. Info: 4215washington.com, 713/862-2513, blackjoelewis.com.

9 (Sat.)

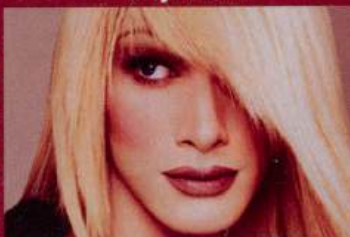
Houston Art Car Parade is a roadside stage of mobile artworks. See old favorites and new creative wheels from the whimsical to the outrageous. Free. 1 pm. Downtown Houston, Allen Parkway at Bagby. Info: orangeshow.org/artcar.html.

10 (Sun.)

Il Trionfo del Tempo, led by openly gay Mathew Dirst, captivates the audience in a timeless musical battle of wills between Beauty and Pleasure. \$31.25-\$41.25. 5 pm. Zilkha Hall, Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 800 Bagby. Info: arslryciahouston.org, 713/315-2525.

A Rose Among Thorns: A Dramatic Tribute to Rosa Parks starring actress Ella Joyce in a special performance for The Ensemble Theatre's 9th Annual Heart of the Theatre subscription drive. The one-woman show has received rave reviews. →

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14 (Thurs.)
Happy Days-A New Musical. Happy days are here again with Richie, Potsie, Ralph Malph and the unforgettable "king of cool" Arthur "The Fonz" Fonzarelli. *OutSmart* magazine invites you to mingle in a cabaret-style atmosphere immediately after performance. Complimentary appetizers and happy-hour drink specials. Meet cast members and enjoy music by a TUTS pianist. Artista Restaurant, street level. Free admission with show tickets, start at \$32. 8 pm. Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 800 Bagby. Info: tutshouston.org or 713/558-TUTS. See interview with Garry Marshall, creator of the original Happy Days, on page 71.

Collectors & Cocktails. Join Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (HCCC) for this fundraiser, where guests can jump-start or build their art collections with top-notch, yet affordable pieces. 7-10 pm at HCCC, 4848 Main St. \$75. RSVP by May 12. Details/reservations: craftthouston.org, 713/529-4848.

Composer/pianist John Cornelius provides the primary entertainment for this meeting of the St. Paul's Prime Timers. 10:30 am in Fondren Hall, Jones Building, 5501 Main. Program follows at 11: A \$5 lunch is served to those who RSVP by May 12 via info@stpaulshouston.org, 713/582-0527.

15 (Fri.)
Houston Symphony's Four Italians. Hear the symphony, under the stars. Orchestra seating \$15; free mezzanine and general admission lawn seating. 8 pm. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, 2005 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands. Info: woodlandscenter.org, 713/629-3700.

Gnosis in Song features a collaboration between Rice University religious scholar April de Conick, harpist Becky Baxter, and mezzo soprano Sonja Bruzauskas. Free. Seating limited. 7 pm at Rothko Chapel, 1409 Sul Ross. Info: rothkochapel.org and divasworld.org.

15 & 16 (Fri. & Sat.)
American Cancer Society's Relay for Life is an overnight event that mobilizes communities throughout the country to celebrate survivors (anyone who has ever been diagnosed with cancer), remember loved ones, and raise money for the fight against cancer. 6 pm at Delmar-Dyer Sports Complex. Info: rfligh.org, 281/630-5120.

15-17 (Fri.-Sun.)
The Houston Fringe Festival is a lively, show-stopping, no-curtains music and art fest held all weekend throughout Montrose. Enjoy presentations by playwrights, performers, dancers, and filmmakers from Houston and out of town. With minimalist staging and sets, performances emphasize non-traditional use of space at various venues on Westheimer. \$15/person. Info: houstonfringefestival.org.

16 (Sat.)
Zine Fest Houston 2009 is an event dedicated to promoting zines, comic, and other forms of small press, alternative, underground, and D.I.Y. media & art. Featuring exhibitors, discussion forums, workshops, & more. Free admission. 2-10pm

at the Caroline Collective, 4820 Caroline. Info: zinefesthouston.wordpress.org. (Want the gay angle? See page 35.)

Bathing Beauties Contest. Islander By Choice (IBC) announces the resurrection of Galveston Island's legendary Bathing Beauties Pageant, which is free to attend. Registration to compete is open to men, women—everyone! Two categories: contemporary swimwear and vintage-inspired. 2 pm on the Galveston shoreline, just east of the 33rd Street jetty. Details/to enter contest: registration form at GalvestonBeachRevue.com.

17 (Sun.)
The 2008-09 St. Paul's Choral Scholars present a concert with a repertoire selected from previous service music featuring choral settings from composers such as Benjamin Britten and Arvo Part. 4 pm in the sanctuary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main. Info: 713/528-0527, stpaulshouston.org.

19 (Tues.)
Invitation to the Psalms is a 10-week study that begins at 6:30 pm on the 19th at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main. The \$10 text may be purchased at the first session. No registration fee, though you must register via info@stpaulshouston.org or 713/528-0527. Info: Rev. Shelli Williams, minister for adult education, at swilliams@stpaulshouston.org.

21 (Thurs.)
Houston Symphony's Dancin' Beneath the Stars. Concert led by Michael Krajewski, conductor. Orchestra seating \$15; free mezzanine and general admission lawn seating. 8 pm. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, 2005 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands. Info: woodlandscenter.org, 713/629-3700.

23 & 24 (Sat. & Sun.)
Boni's Dance presents *Reach for the Stars*. Local children and youth perform in a recital celebrating Boni's Dance 25th anniversary. All reserved seating \$11. 6 pm. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, 2005 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands. Info: woodlandscenter.org, 713/629-3700.

31 (Sun.)
St. Paul's Choir sings an Evensong service on Pentecost Sunday at 4 pm in the sanctuary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main. Info: 713/528-0527, stpaulshouston.org.

PLANNING AHEAD

JUNE
June 4 & 6 (Fri. & Sun.)
See Fiddler on the Roof and benefit Holocaust Museum Houston. For each ticket purchased for special performances on June 4, 8 pm, and June 6, 2 pm, Broadway Across America will donate \$10 to Holocaust Museum Houston. Tickets: broadwayacrossamerica.com/groupsales, password "Holocaust." Sarofim Hall, Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 800 Bagby.

Due by June 15 (Mon.)
Holocaust Museum Houston needs YOU! Can you spare a few hours each week to help teach the dangers of prejudice, hatred, and apathy? Held at Holocaust Museum Houston's Morgan Family Center, volunteer docents attend a 7-week class in Holocaust history and tour-training: Aug. 4-Sept. 17 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 am-noon. Applications due by June 15. Contact: volunteers@hnh.org or 713/942-8000, ext. 102. Holocaust Museum Houston, 5401 Caroline St. Info: hnh.org.

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Photos by Dalton DeHart

Annie Parker for Mayor
Campaign Kickoff Fundraiser on
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Bayou City Performing Arts Just 'N Auction on April 2.



BCBC Jungle 17 on April 11.



Diana Foundation's 56th Annual Awards—Serengeti Nights at the Houston Zoo on March 21.



Pride Houston's Official Pride Guide 2009 in the June issue of OutSmart

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Saks 5th Avenue salutes
LIVE Consortium on March 25.



Theater Under the Stars Out at TUTS night for *Les Miserables* on March 26.



Montrose Softball League Pranksters in Pumps on April 4.



MaxXandauX at Violet
Velvet Photo by Kyla Moreno

Pride Houston 2009 kick-off celebration on March 26.



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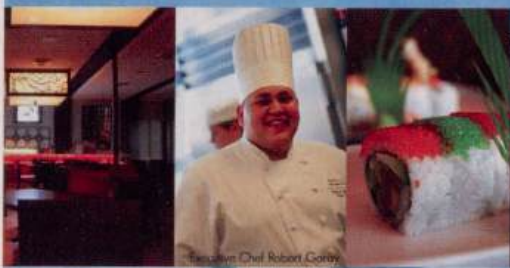
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Photos by Dalton DeHart

"It's My Party"
Party for Life Fundraiser for AIDS
Foundation Houston on March 1.



Banner Party at the Pink Dolphin in Galveston. Photos by Jo-Ann Arauza



Montrose Softball League—Splash Kick-Off Bash at Crocker Bar on March 15.



20th Annual Houston AIDS Walk 2009 on March 15.



Bunnies on the Bayou XXX 2009 on April 11.



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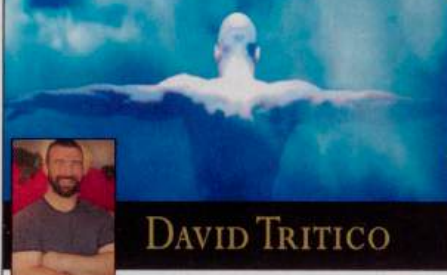


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Business News

by Nancy Ford

DATING BONUS. Christophe Brillard has announced a new enhancement to The Agency, the first private,



Christophe Brillard

exclusive, and personalized dating network for gay men in Houston. Brillard, president of the service, says new memberships now include a one-hour, complimentary coaching session with life coach, Melissa Hudson, C.P.C.C. Hudson, Brillard says, helps clients identify self-defeating influences and offers pro-active steps to overcome them. Details: theagencyhouston.com.

DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS. Despite a shaky economy, Mad Klik continues to grow. The parent company of *Gay & Lesbian Rainbow Pages* has added more online directories to its website, including Phoenix, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, Miami, Atlanta, Portland, and Seattle, says Mad Klik chief executive officer, Cristina Martinez. Additionally, Martinez has launched Sync Employment, an agency that specializes in finding GLBT people employment with companies and corporations that offer same-sex benefits. Details: rainbowpages.net • syncemployment.com.

JAYCEES AWARD. What do former Houston Oiler Warren Moon, Lakewood Church pastor Joel Osteen, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott, and now, Space City Empire founder Sean Carter, have in common? They are all recipients of Houston Junior Chamber Foundation's Five Outstanding Young Houstonians awards. Carter, who currently works as chief development officer for The Rothko Chapel, was male grand marshal in Houston's 1999 Pride Parade. He receives the HJCF award with 2009 co-recipients, financial writer, Shannon Buggs; attorney, Alberto Cardenas Jr.; Harris County District Clerk, Loren Jackson; and software consulting firm founder, Norman Nolasco at a banquet set for June 23. Details: houstonjaycees.org.

NEW TAMU AWARD. A new honor has been created at Texas A&M University as part of the university's annual Diversity Awards. Beginning last month, the Phyllis R. Frye Advocacy Award is presented each year "to an individual or organization who has shown great leadership in the advancement of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex civil rights at the infrastructural and/or interpersonal level," says Lowell Kane, program coordinator of TAMU's GLBT Resource Center. The award was presented April 29 in TAMU's Memorial Student Center after this issue of *OutSmart* went to press.

RAINBOW LIVING. Representatives of Rainbow Ranch, a popular campground for GLBT guests located in Groesbeck, Texas, have announced they are developing a subdivision of home sites called Stonewall Estates. To gauge interest, they are currently soliciting e-mails from prospective buyers of the 2.5-to-5.5-acre wooded, secluded lots located across the street from the campground. Details: info@rainbowranch.net. ■

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BAR & CLUB GUIDE

Houston

LA ACADEMIA

Hot salsa and Latin flavor rule at this dance bar on the southwest side of Houston. Weekends often offer high-production drag shows, drink specials. 5829 S. Gessner • 713/554-5422 • myspace.com/laacademiadance

ANITA'S BAR & GRILL

The "soon-to-be-famous" Anita-Rita dominates the bar menu at this trendy Montrose spot which is also a full-service restaurant specializing in American casual cuisine. Open Thursday-Sunday, and 'til 6 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. 713/522-2867 • anitasbarandgrill.com

AZTECA'S VIP LOUNGE

The talented DJ Rocky B holds court and spins "the best girl-4-girl night in Houston," held each Friday atop this Greenway-area Mexican restaurant. 2207 Richmond Ave. Details: throbparties.info

BARTINI

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

BEER ISLAND

Tropical touches combine with Texas roadhouse chic at this comfortable Heights hangout. Beer is king, but the island is also becoming famous for their sake shots. 2631 White Oak Dr. • 713/862-4670

BLUR

This multi-level dance club features an expansive patio upstairs lounge, and balconies that overlook the busy Pacific St. traffic. The ladies enjoy Wet and Wild Wednesdays, 18-year-olds are welcome on Thurs., resident DJ Lorenzo spins Wed-Sat. nights, DJ Pollo spins Karumba Latin night on Sun. Happy hour, 8-10 p.m.; free cover before 11 p.m. 710 Pacific St. • blurbars.com

BOCADOS

Patrons enjoy dining on the deck at this cozy Menil-area Mexican restaurant that also accommodates special events, like charitable dinners for AIDS Foundation Houston and American Cancer Society. 1312 W. Alabama • 713/523-5230

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 Thurs. night. 2400 Brazos • 713/528-9192

CHANCES/THE NEW BARN/G-SPOT

Houston lesbians and those who love them enjoy three separate clubs under one roof, satisfying their C&W, urban dance, and live chick-music needs. Expanded and renovated bars include multiple video screens, banquet seating, and more. 1100 Westheimer • 713/523-7217 • chancesbar.com

CLUB 2020

Located downtown near the Toyota Center, this urban club features Clubbers Friday with male and female dancers. Its 6,400 square feet also offers theater-sized viewing screens and VIP rooms. 2020 Leeland • 713/227-9667 • club2020houston.com

CLUB ADAM AND EDEN

Serving the collective party needs of the Clear Lake area's gay men and lesbians, the adjacent clubs are open seven days a week, offering a large video lounge, a martini bar, pool tables, a private VIP area, and a 1,200 sq. foot dance floor. 522 W. NASA Parkway. Details: 281/557-0434 • clubadam.net

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. crystaltheclub.com • 713-278-2582

CROCKER

New ownership has taken over this durable Montrose nightspot that boasts "the longest happy hour in Montrose." Miss Jenny hosts Wii tournaments, with gay boxing on Wed. and gay bowling on Sun. 2312 Crocker • 713/529-3355

COUSINS

Drag fans frequent this club in the heart of Montrose for its campy shows. Thurs.-Sun. 817 Fairview • 713/528-9204

DECADES

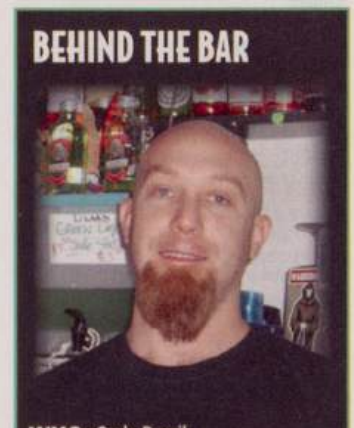
This casual neighborhood bar attracts a devoted crowd of regulars. It hosts a Monday pool tournament and Wednesday dart tournament and offers free pool on Sundays. 1205 Richmond • 713/521-2224

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 • ejsbars.com

GEORGE

Regulars rule at this comfortable neighborhood sports bar, just like most other neighborhood sports bars in town. But George's occasional benefit drag show makes it a wonderful, campy alternative. Sports Saturdays start at 3 p.m. with dart and pool tournaments; Sleek Night is Sun., 3-7 p.m. 617 Fairview • 713/528-8102



WHO: Cody Brazil

WHERE: Beer Island
 2631 White Oak Dr. • 713/862-4670

WHAT'S UP: This icehouse-like, Heights hangout lives up to its name with "88 bottles of beer on the wall," and also offers steak night each Tuesday.

GUAVA LAMP

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

IN-N-OUT

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

JR'S BAR & GRILL

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

LADY BARBARA'S CLUB TRUE COLORS

Lady Barbara and MC Zip, who previously held court at Bella Aida Gardens and Bartini, have opened this new southwest club for "everyone in the community" featuring "Free For All" open mic on Sundays. 2727 Crossview Dr. • 713/266-6505

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

Check out the classy baby-grand piano at this posh but comfy lounge on the downtown edge of Montrose. The spacious double-room bar offers multiple giant plasma video screens, the updated patio accommodates smokers in style. 2306 Genesee • 713/521-0123 • meteorlounge.com

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

This comfortable neighborhood club doubles as a piano bar with a regular roster of evening pianists including Wayne Gray and Roger Woest. 1419 Richmond Ave. • 713/520-8446

MONTROSE MINING COMPANY

Studly 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

RAINBOW ROOM

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

RIPCORD

Named best place to show off your leather in the 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 • theripcord.com

THE 611

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

SOUTH BEACH

This expansive, ultra-chic dance club is a frequent winner of OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest awards, with Billboard Magazine favorite DJ Jimmy Skinner and frequent high-producing-value drag shows on Sunday. DJ Franky Boy spins Thursdays for Noche Latina Latin Night. 810 Pacific St. • 713/529-SOBE • southbeachthenightclub.com

TONY'S CORNER POCKET

This comfortable club located close to downtown has one of the friendliest staffs in town, both inside and outside at its patio bar. The raised stage where local charities perform also features an amateur dance contest each Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 11 p.m. Opens daily at noon. 817 W. Dallas. 713/571-7870 • tonyscornerpocketbar.com

VIVIANA'S

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

Spring

RANCH HILL SALOON

With its two pool tables, 52-inch plasma televisions, and large dance floor, the gayest spot on the north side also accommodates private parties, holy unions, and receptions. Enjoy Wii tournaments Fridays, 7-9 p.m., and Sundays, 5-8 p.m. 247041-445N, Suite 103. 281/298-9035 • www.ranchhill.com • myspace.com/theranchhillsaloon

Humble

WHISPERS

Northerly GLBTs meet at this comfy neighborhood bar that offers pool, darts, video games, karaoke Thurs., dancing to the Internet jukebox and live DJ on Fri. and Sat., and Steak night on Sun. 226 First St. • 281/359-2900 • whispers-bar.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. Thurs. is karaoke night, with cabaret/variety shows on Fri. and Sat. nights. 31st and Seawall Blvd. • 409/765-6911 • 3rdcoastbeachbar.com

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 Sat. and Sun. nights, the Ladies of Lafitte show takes the stage. 2501 Avenue Q (at 25th) • 409/765-9092

Baumont

THE COPA

This popular two-story club provides a friendly place for Lamar University and east Texas GLBTs to shoot pool, dance, enjoy karaoke, and take in the occasional drag show. Open Wednesday through Sunday. 304 Orleans • 409/832-4206 • myspace.com/officialcopanightclub

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Bryan/College Station

HALO VIDEO BAR

The only GLBT dance club in Bryan/College station, this sleek spot is open Thurs.-Sat. Smack in the middle of Aggieland, "our venue is always packed with the hotties," the owners promise. 121 North Main • 979/823-6174 • halobcs.com

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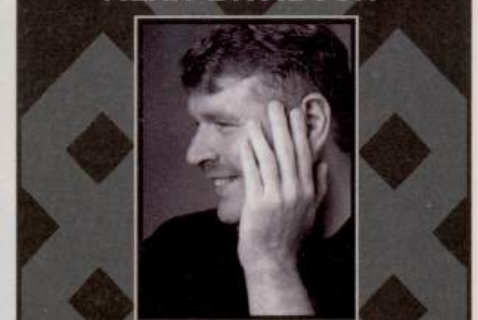
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SignOut

by Lilly Roddy

Yes, our old pal is going retrograde on May 5, so get your act together before then so you can be ready to review all of your ongoing plans. This retrograde will especially affect the fixed signs of Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius. So those signs should pay attention to finishing up old projects, particularly. But all signs should take into account the Mercury retrograde and wait 'til Mercury is fully direct on June 6 before you take any actions on new projects. • The Sun begins the month in Taurus and enters Gemini on the 20th. Mercury is direct in Gemini but quickly retrogrades back in Taurus and stays there for the entire month. Venus is focused on herself as she moves through Aries. Her friend and playmate, Mars, is moving along right there with her in Aries, his home sign. Jupiter remains in Aquarius, Saturn in Virgo, Uranus in Pisces, Neptune in Aquarius, and Pluto in Capricorn.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). There is a combination of energies this month for you. First, with Mercury retrograde, it is the time to pay attention to financial issues from the past. And with both Venus and Mars in your sign for the entire month, you will have especially high energy. Some exercise, dancing, or hiking in the woods may help to burn off that excess. Otherwise, you are ready to tackle any projects that you have half-started. Pay some attention to your love life this month—she needs the attention. Career aspects can be tense as the month opens. Don't get sidetracked by the small stuff.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). You will be in a total period of retreat as the month begins. With your ruling planet retrograde, it is normally a time when you are not at the top of your game. Only allow people who are your friends into your life. You will be more sensitive than usual and people with negative energy will affect you more than usual. This is a good time for journaling or lying at the beach. Home, career, and future activity begins to pick up after May 16, but you are still not ready to act on anything. Your imagination is fertile, but wait until June to expose your ideas to the light.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). Friends and associates will be your key this month. Keep your crab claws open and be warm and receptive to their gifts. They will want to spend time with you. And with Mercury retrograding there, you should be hearing from old friends from the past. You will want to get a lot of projects going, but put them in the planning stage only. Work could be extra busy and you could seem a bit pushy to your co-workers. Beware of their feelings as you go charging about the office. Relationships are tense as the month opens, but there just needs to be some change in your routines. Take your partner out for something special and release that tension.

LEO (July 23–August 22). Mercury is retrograding through your career sector this month. And with that you can full well expect problems to come up so you can deal with them. If you keep a good



TAURUS (April 20–May 20). With this being your birthday month and Mercury retrograde in your sign, this will be an especially reflective birthday month. I would highly recommend that you take some time to get away from your routines. Do some yoga or get some weekend getaways to help clear your mind of all the clutter. You will be doing lots of de-cluttering at home and at the office. Get your plans together as you will be ready to take action on these new plans in June. There are some new career opportunities ahead; keep your eyes open.

attitude about this, you can see this as a time where you can avoid some larger problems in the future by taking care of these things now. And you can generally get all parts of your life in order at this time. You will want to get out and play this month, and you could be easily distracted by an upcoming trip or getaway. Don't let yourself get too scattered this month. There is a lot going on and you only want to eat cake.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). With your ruling planet Mercury retrograde, this is the month to take care of old projects and clean up those oh-so-neat piles that you have around your office and your home. If you can get out of town for some travel, that would be really good for you. Try to get to a place where you can relax and be comfortable. Deeper issues with relationships are showing up, especially around intimacy. Your sex life needs some renewing and the same old-same old won't work. It shows a lack of disinterest on both parts. Work continues to be busy. Don't let the new projects take your sight away from taking care of what you currently have on your plate.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). You have been in a long series of relationship cycles, and this month is no different. Your partner will be more demanding than usual. They will seem impatient. They don't want all of your time; they just want to be noticed right now. Otherwise, they will create a fight and you will have to pay them some attention. There could be some plans about you moving, so there is much discussion about where you are going to move. Keep the topic to possibilities and not choices. You are feeling especially playful and childlike near the end of the month. Take yourself to the park and enjoy the flowers.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). Relationships with co-workers are very much the topic this month. There needs to be some sort of meetings of the minds so that tempers don't flare. This is especially tense at the beginning of the month.

Don't keep all your feelings inside—they aren't mind readers and don't know what you are feeling. Old relationship partners are returning this month for a visit or to have their coffee warmed up. Don't be looking for future plans until after June gets here. Money issues are lurking in the background. Keep your eyes open as they may show up next month.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). This is the month to get your workplace in order. With mercury retrograding there, you will have the inner push to create order around you. Be prepared to reorganize files and clean out closets. You are still in a big push to get your career on track and move forward. Don't take this time of reflection as a setback but only a time of breathing in. Make sure that you take some time for play at the end of the month. You will need it, even if you aren't done. Relationship opportunities open the door near the end of the month. Be sure and answer.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). As the month opens, home and family issues rise to the surface. You are concerned about security when there is no real problem. But you are still going to plan ahead and try to make sure that you have more than you need. Buying property is on your mind, but you will want to wait until June before you sign your name to any documents. Family shows up and they could be fairly demanding. Set some boundaries; they are not in charge of you. Look for a big push toward being more public by the end of the month; that will continue into next year.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). Fate is having her way with you this month. And she is taking you on a very good ride. You are feeling optimistic about the future, and even with this retrograde period you are happy to be at home in the bosom of your family. Expect to hear from family and relatives that you have not heard from in a while. And you will be on a big housecleaning urge. Spring cleaning has come and you are up for the job. Relationships are good and new ones are on the horizon if you are single. Keep your dance card blank until June.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). You are feeling more chatty than usual this month. And talking to friends about what is going on with you is the topic of the day. There seems to be a lot of fires to put out, but you seem to be moving through them without any stress. Relationships are about to take a turn toward the future. If you are single, this will be a time when you are ready to meet someone. If you are involved, this is a time to renew what you have, unless it is not working, and then it may come to an end. Career activity is building and will only get better as the year progresses. Organize and plan this month and be ready to act as soon as June arrives.

Read Lilly Roddy's forecast for all of 2009, which appeared in OutSmart's January issue. For more astro-insight, log on to www.lillyroddy.com.

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Photos by Dalton DeHart



Annise Parker, Joanne Herring, Roy Gonzalez, Peter Brown, Gene Locke, and Parvin and Marty McVey at the Meet Houston Mayoral Candidates on April 7.



Noel Freeman, Mayor Bob Lanier, and Sue Lovell at the Sue Lovell campaign fundraiser on March 31.



Club 54, the winning bunny hutch group with some of the hosts of Bunnies On The Bayou XXX on April 12.



Ben Jones, Phillip Lyles, Tori Williams, and Lynn Schwartzburg at the Krewe Of Olympus Appreciation/Distribution To Beneficiaries event on March 29.

OUT IN HOUSTON



Walter Scarborough, Diana Scarborough, Maverick Welsh, and Daryl Sinkule at the Maverick Welsh for District H fundraiser on March 31.



BCBC Members at Jungle 17 on April 11.



Jeremy Williams, Lance Marshall, James Oxford, Brandon K. Sampson, Bryan McSween, and Cody Soutar at the BARC Volunteers Weekend on March 29.



Victor Castillo, Jeremy Edwards, Soraya Gallegos, and Melissa Noreiga at the Mel-tinis with Melissa Noreiga fundraiser on April 21.



Misty Robertson, Johnny Hooks, Quintina Smith, Emily Hilton, Lashaune Tisdale, Emily Hilton, Lauren Lovell, and Wendy Pearson at TUTS Rent Relief - A Bailout Mixer on April 15.



Maureen Haver, Derek Darnell, Dee Young, and Fred Lewis at 27 Texans Together Candidates Meet and Greet on April 21.



Kelly McCann and Marc Cohen of AIDS Foundation Houston receive a check from Southern Country for Camp Hope on March 26.



Estaban Caro, Lily Hernandez, Charles Coleman, Israel Rabago, Cody Grizzoffi, and Terry Lynn Flores at Birthday Dragstravaganza on April 18.



Susie Hebert and Mike Craig at AFH's 20th Annual Houston's AIDS Walk 2009 on March 15.

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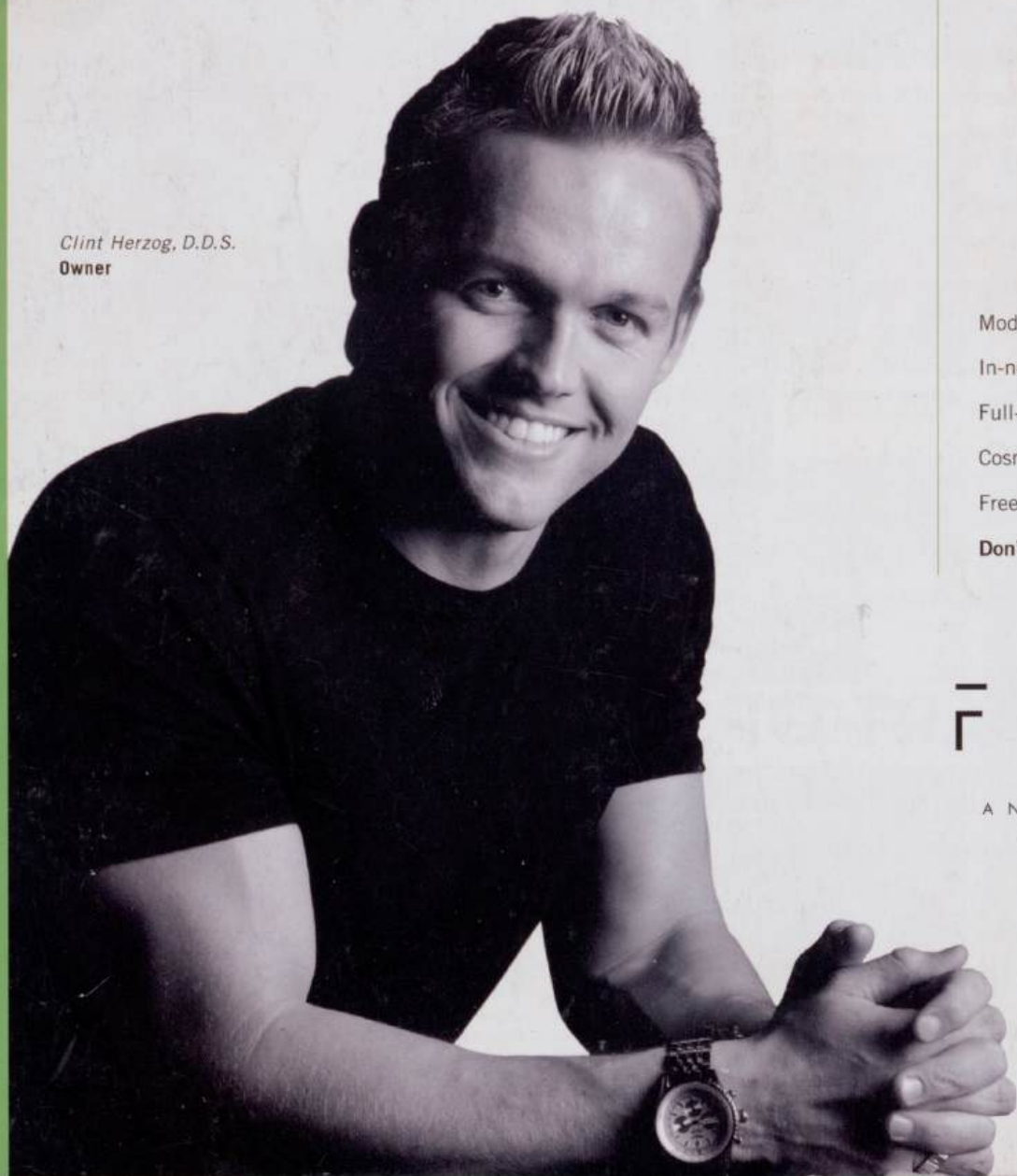
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