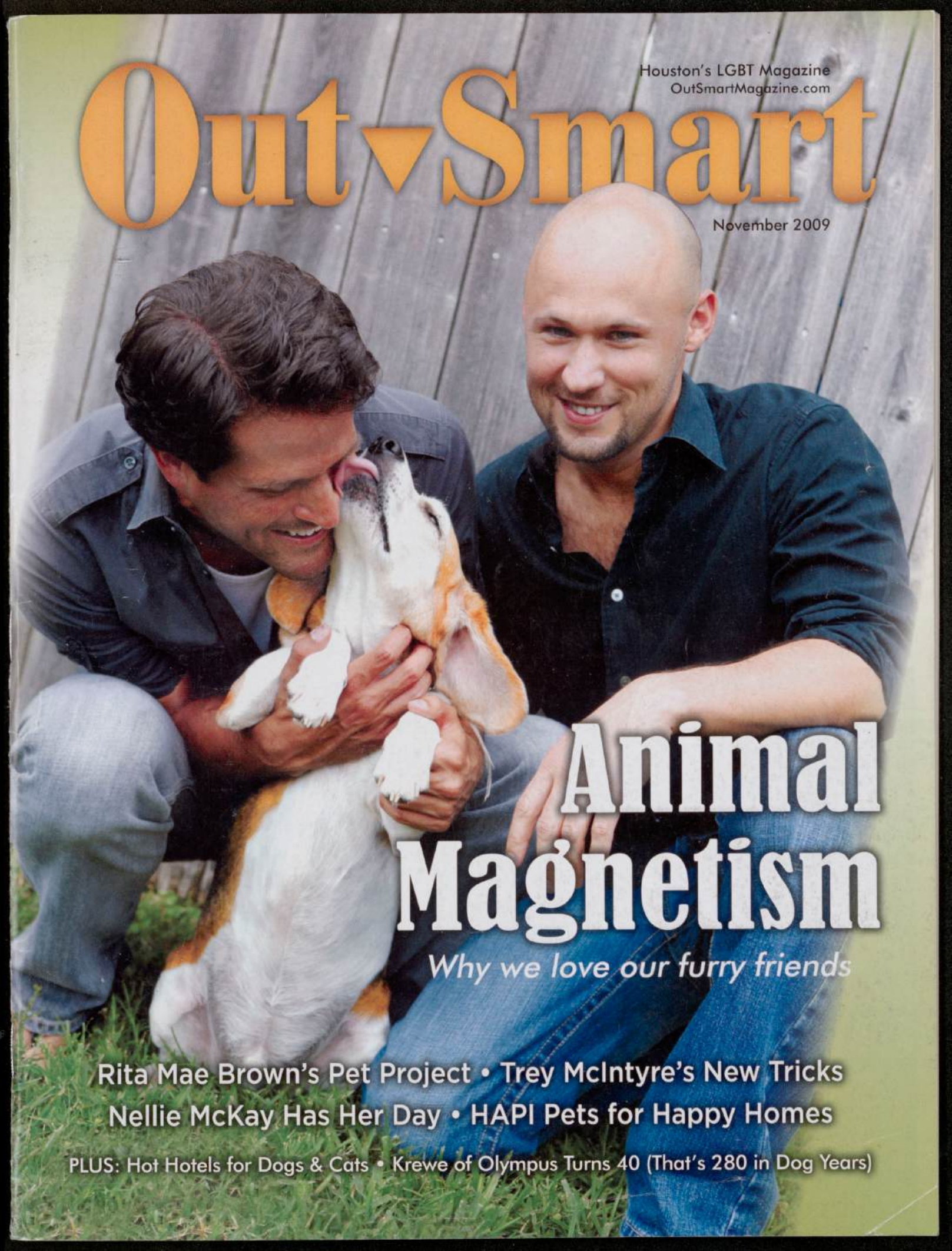


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November 2009

A photograph of two men and a dog. On the left, a man with dark hair is crouching and smiling while holding a small, white and orange beagle puppy. On the right, a bald man with a goatee is also crouching and smiling, looking towards the camera. The background is a wooden fence and green grass.

Animal Magnetism

Why we love our furry friends

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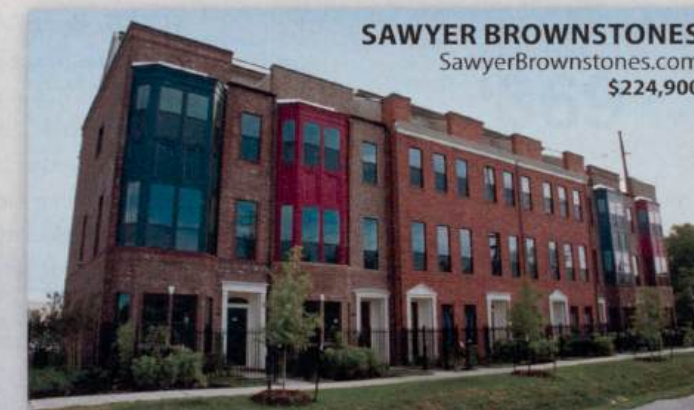
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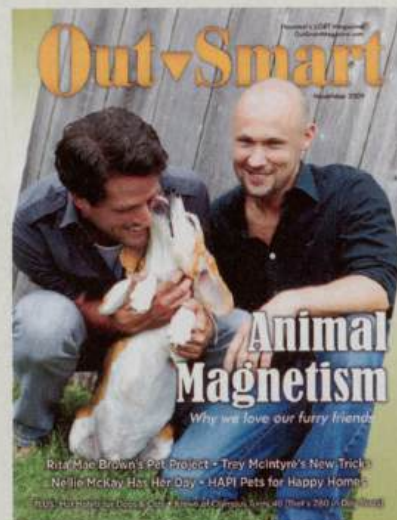
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Lance Marshall (l), James Oxford,
and BARC foster dog, Charlie (see page 25)
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Letters

COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

I just wanted to say that I enjoyed reading "Achtung, Baby: AIDS is a mass murderer" ["AIDS Watch" by Kelly McCann, October]. It has enlightened me on some things and taught me some things, too. Please give a special thank-you to Kelly McCann for the great job she did on this article.

Prince Bailey
 Houston, Texas

GUFFAW AT GRIFFIN

I just got the October issue in the mail and laughed hysterically while reading the interview with Kathy Griffin ["Sleeping with the Emmy" by Blase DiStefano]. Very well done.

David Garbella
 Houston, Texas

GROOVE ON

I went on iTunes and bought Cathy-Anne McClintock's single "So American" after reading your review ["GrooveOut Shorts" by Nancy Ford, September]. You were right, very accurate, and a bit humorous, too. She is a good singer and songwriter. Thanks for turning me on to it.

Mike Collins
 Katy, Texas

NO SPECIAL RIGHTS

I strongly support equality all the way, and we will fight for it until it is legal in all states. GLBT rights are civil rights; there are no "special rights" in America. I am a 22-year-old butch lesbian and new to the GLBT community. I am excited about the National Equality March. It is our turn to lead and fight for what we believe. We are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Ana Tarver
 Houston, Texas

Corrections: In last month's "Dominic Does Diaghilev" by Neil Ellis Orts, we identified Lauren Bettencourt as a dancer in a photo caption. The dancer is Marie-Agnes Gillot from Paris Opera. Also last month, Mark Segal was listed as author of "An Affair to Remember." Jack Veasey is the correct author of the story. *OutSmart* regrets the errors. ■

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AIDS FOUNDATION HOUSTON CHANGES CRITERIA FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

AIDS FOUNDATION HOUSTON HAS announced changes in its Stone Soup food assistance program to more effectively utilize scarce financial resources.

"Ryan White funding does not consider 'food pantry/home delivery meals' a core medical service," AFH chief executive officer, Kelly McCann, said in an October 19 statement to the press. "Therefore, effective immediately, Houston's Resource Group and the Department of State Health Services have changed the eligibility requirements of this service category, which funds our Stone Soup Food Assistance Program."

Prior to this change in the Standards of Care, the program served approximately 1,200 individuals who had a positive HIV/AIDS diagnosis, had an income eligibility of 125 percent of federal poverty guidelines, and lived inside the Houston service delivery area. Stone Soup Food Assistance Program clients must now also have a symptomatic HIV/AIDS diagnosis as certified by a medical provider.

McCann anticipates that approximately 30 percent of AFH's current Stone Soup Food Pantry clients will become ineligible.

"We wish we could continue to serve everyone in our community who needs the assistance of our Stone Soup Food Pantry, but our funding realities don't allow that," McCann continued. "AFH will work with our clients who are no longer eligible and refer them to other sources of food and nutrition. We appreciate your support as we make these changes."

JUDGE: GAY DIVORCE OK IN TEXAS

THOUGH THE STATE OF TEXAS does not recognize same-sex marriages performed within its borders or in other states, a Dallas-area judge has approved a divorce between two men married in Massachusetts in 2006.

Dallas state District Judge Tena Callahan ruled on October 1 that the state's bans on same-sex marriage violates the constitutional guarantee to equal protection under the law. "This is huge news. We're ecstatic," attorney Peter Schulte, who represents one of the men who filed the divorce, told the *Dallas Morning News*. The couple chose to remain anonymous during litigation.

Schulte said the ruling was a surprise and that he hoped to have a divorce order for the judge to sign in the "next few weeks."

In a prepared statement, Attorney General Greg Abbott said he would appeal the ruling "to defend the traditional definition of marriage that was approved by Texas voters. The laws and constitution of the state of Texas define marriage as an institution involving one

man and one woman. Today's ruling purports to strike down that constitutional definition—despite the fact that it was recently adopted by 75 percent of Texas voters."

Judge Callahan denied the attorney general's intervention, saying her court "has jurisdiction to hear a suit for divorce filed by persons legally married in another jurisdiction."

GLBT POLITICAL CAUCUS HONORS COMMUNITY LEADERS

AS IT DOES EACH YEAR TO commemorate National Coming Out Day, the Houston GLBT Political Caucus presented its annual leadership awards. Texas State Rep. Garnet Coleman received the Eleanor Tinsley Award, given to a person who does not identify LGBT but has been an outstanding advocate for the LGBT community. Rep. Coleman represents the 147th District in the Texas House of Representatives.

The John Paul Barnich Award, for commitment to justice for the LGBT community, went to Phyllis Frye, managing partner at Frye and Cantu PLLC, who is nationally known as a trailblazer for the transgender community for her expertise in legal matters pertaining to the LGBT community.

The Caucus Leadership Award, given to a member of the LGBT community who has shown extraordinary leadership, was bestowed upon Judge Steven Kirkland, who was elected in 2008 to preside over the 215th District Court. He is the first openly gay district judge in Texas.

Houston city council member Sue Lovell received the caucus' Lifetime of Achievement award. Lovell, a former caucus president, was elected in 2005, and also is the Mayor Pro Tem for the city of Houston.

The awards were presented October 11 at a brunch at the House of Blues.

MONTROSE NAMED ONE OF AMERICA'S 'BEST NEIGHBORHOODS'

ON OCTOBER 7, 2009, AMERICAN Planning Association recognized the Montrose neighborhood as one of its 10 Great Neighborhoods. Ranking among 30 US neighborhoods cited for exemplary character, quality, and planning, Montrose represents "the gold standard in terms of having a true sense of place, cultural and historical interest, community involvement, and a vision for tomorrow," according to APA's website.

Houston city council members Wanda Adams and Sue Lovell accepted the honor on behalf of the city of Houston. "We have one of the best communities and one of the most diverse communities," said Lovell. "Montrose is a great example of a neighborhood where people of different backgrounds can come together and build a community. Montrose is an example of what all of Houston can be."

FEDERAL HATE CRIMES BILL PASSES SENATE, AWAITS PRESIDENT'S SIGNATURE

ON OCTOBER 22, THE UNITED STATES Senate approved federal protection of victims of hate crimes perpetrated against LGBT persons. The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act, attached earlier this year to the annual Defense Department spending bill, ensures justice for the victims of hate crimes targeted for violence due to their sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

Under the legislation, federal prosecutors could step in to try violent hate-crime cases if local authorities cannot or will not secure an appropriate conviction. It also opens up federal funding for law enforcement to handle the typically high cost of investigation and judicial proceedings in such cases, and would make grants available for training and prevention.

"This vote firmly places the federal government on the side of LGBT Americans and sends a clear message that homophobia and transphobia are unacceptable," said Winnie Stachelberg, senior vice president for external affairs at Center for American Progress and former political director of the Human Rights Campaign. "The bill urges police to take into account the homophobia and transphobia that undergird too many crimes, while giving law enforcement agencies around the country the tools they have asked for to effectively fight these crimes."

The bill is named for Matthew Shepard, a gay college student slain in Casper, Wyoming, in 1998 and James Byrd, an African-American resident of Jasper, Texas, who was dragged to death in 1998 by white supremacists.

The legislation now goes to President Barack Obama's desk for signing, which the president has pledged to do.

EXPERTS: NATIONAL EMERGENCY STATUS MAY AID IN DADT REVERSAL

AFTER PRESIDENT OBAMA EXTENDED the country's military national emergency status for one year, experts noted that the move allows him additional time to sign an executive order suspending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." According to a "stop-loss" statute (10 U.S.C. section 12305), Congress has authorized the President to suspend any law regarding military separations during national security emergencies.

"By extending the state of emergency," said Dr. Aaron Belkin, director of the Palm Center, a research institute at the University of California, Santa Barbara, "the president has given himself more time to suspend the gay ban via executive order. Because the legislative process is frozen, a two-part strategy is the only realistic way to go. Start with an executive order, and then follow with legislative repeal."

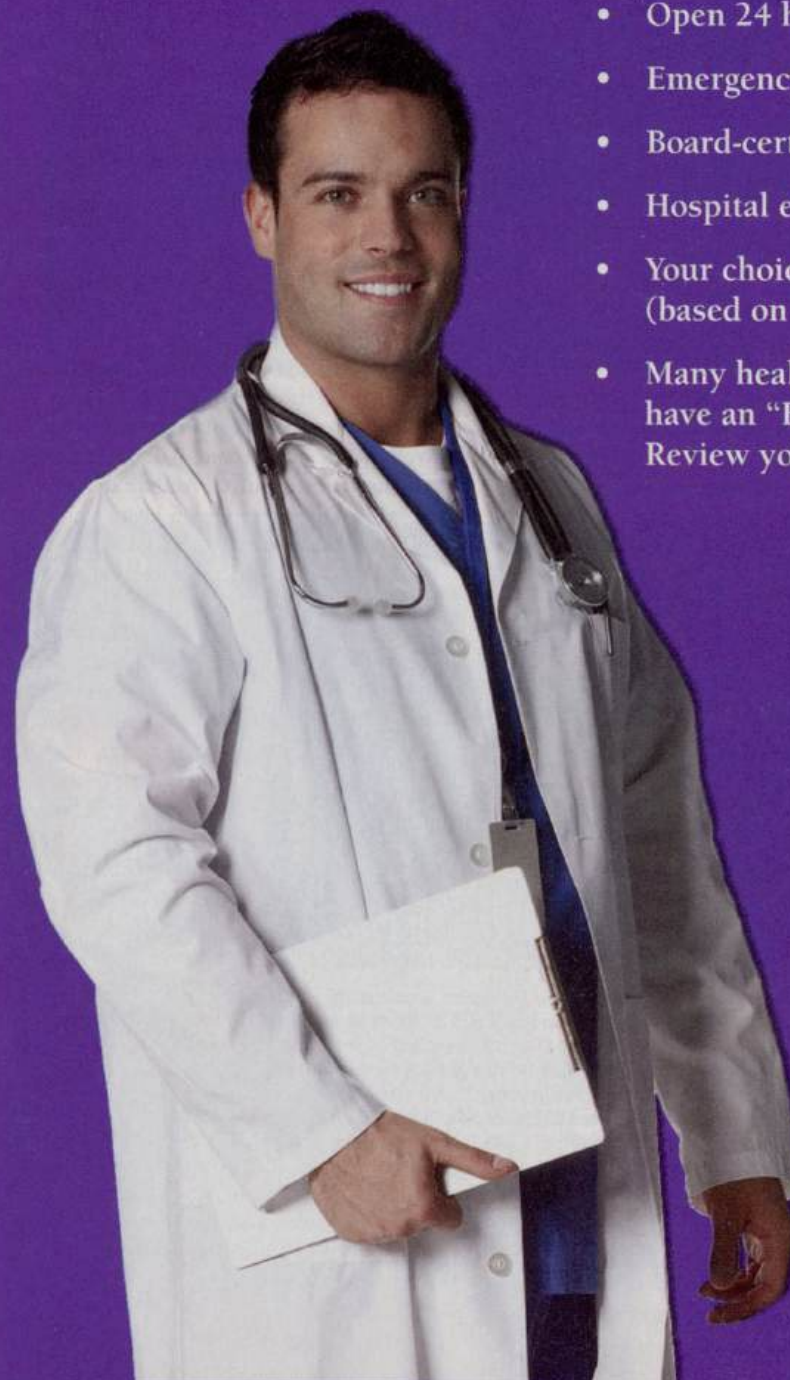
On September 10, the President issued the document titled "Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Certain Terrorist Attacks" in which he noted, "I am continuing for one year the national emergency declared on September 14, 2001."

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HOLLYWOOD HEAVYWEIGHTS HIT HOUSTON

Tilda Swinton, Tommy Lee Jones, and Richard Linklater amp up the Cinema Arts Festival

Outshined by perennial Cannes, innovative Sundance, and aching close SXSW, Houston makes a bold move to increase the film festival wattage this month with the Cinema Arts Festival. Oscar winners Tilda Swinton and Tommy Lee Jones are just two of the avant artists descending on Space City next month for the classy celebration of cinema and cutting-edge *verite*. Indie idol Swinton graces several events during the five-day fest,



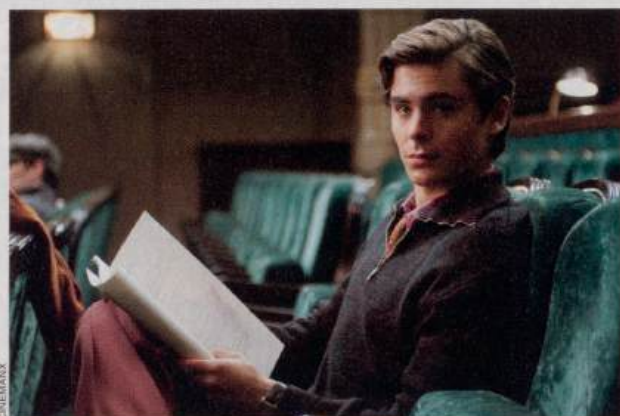
Oscar-winner Tilda Swinton comes to Houston.

including a screening of her documentary on gay painter and film-making auteur Derek Jarman, and unveiling a preview of her latest independent feature. Jones will appear with gifted scribe Guillermo Arriaga (*Amores Perros*, *21 Grams*, and *Babel*) at the MFA, who will also be making the rounds with a reading and the much-anticipated "Setting the Scene" workshop for all would be Orson Welles.

A MAN, A CAMERA AND A MISSION

Patrick McCutchan sets out to document the various tribes of all 50 states

Photographer Patrick B. McCutchan's All Fifty State Photography Tour is an interesting concept, to be sure: travel to major cities of every state in America, snapping portraits of people from all walks of life, including LGBTers. But it's his message that puts a uniquely bohemian spin on the project. McCutchan started out in Minneapolis and took to the road with just his camera and his dream, opting to let the very subjects he's photographing support the tour. His message is quite simple—to prove that "prosperity lives in America." McCutchan's in Houston now and, much like the WPA and traveling artists before him, he's willing to sing—or rather snap a pic—for his supper. (We see a book deal in the future.) You can follow his journey by adding him as a friend, visiting his website, or even sponsoring McCutchan along the way. Of course, you can also get some pretty hip portraits of yourself in exchange for your support. INFO: patrickmccutchan.com.



Zac Efron in the film *Me and Orson Welles*, by Texas maverick filmmaker Richard Linklater.

Speaking of Welles, the festival will feature two headline-grabbing premieres, one being the buzzworthy new film from *Dazed and Confused* director Richard Linklater. *Me and Orson Welles* is Hollywood heart-throb Zac Efron's grand bid to go beyond Disney dance mannequin to serious actor, which isn't such a stretch, given Linklater's uncanny gift to discover and nurture young

needed the hype, not with shocking performances by Mo'Nique as a horrifically abusive mother, a heartbreakingly nuanced turn by newcomer Gabourey Sidebe in the title role, and a gasp-inducing supporting role by a dressed-down and mustached Mariah Carey, who with one role will make all *Glitter* jokes a thing of the past. *Precious*, with its lesbian schoolteacher character played with tender sincerity by Paula Patton, as well as the documentary *Who's Afraid of Kathy Acker?*,

illustrate how the CAF isn't shying away from the LGBT angle, either.

But queers, premieres, and stars aren't the only attractions the festival is offering. The innovative H BOX, a futuristic, traveling screening room, will draw crowds at the newly re-acquired Alabama Theatre, while Discovery Green hosts a closing night performance by the Houston Ballet

in conjunction with a viewing of the classic *The Red Shoes*. The event will bring attention to Tilda Swinton's The 8½ Foundation, so in case you miss seeing her around town, this will be your best chance to witness the porcelain beauty in action.

For years, any Houston film festival has been an admittedly who-knows/who-goes/who-cares venture. But this fete is sure to bring out the powerful rich and plain old movie lovers alike, so be sure to snag your tickets

fast and plan your cinematic excursion early by logging on to the Cinema Arts Society website at cinemarts.org.

The 2009 Cinema Arts Festival Houston, at various venues around the city, is held from November 11–15.

—Steven Foster



H BOX is the portable screening room designed by Portuguese artist/architect Dider Fiuza Faustino and sponsored by the Hermès Foundation. It is stationed at Houston's historic Alabama Theatre through the close of the Cinema Arts Festival on November 15 and features a rotating, diverse program of videos by 10 internationally renowned artists, including Matthew Buckingham (USA), Kota Ezawa (Germany), and Cao Fei (China). Curator Benjamin Weil, who commissioned the works for H BOX, attends the festival to speak in the festival's "Meet the Makers" series on November 15. H BOX is open Wednesday through Friday 1–6 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Admission is free.

talent (see: entire D&C cast). The festival will also bring Oscar sure-fire *Precious* to Houston, a brutal tour de force based on the breakthrough novel *Push* by Sapphire. The film, skillfully directed by Lee Daniels, has been the subject of countless news items of late, much due to the involvement of Tyler Perry and Oprah Winfrey. The film hardly

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THE MAMMS AND THE PAPS

Taking care of women's health, the Rainbow way

Al is well now, but a few years ago I was diagnosed with a gynecological problem.

Bye-bye, guys. Catch you next month.

Fortunately, it was one of those cervically pre-cancerous situations that was caught early. The problem areas, a couple of clusters of suspicious cells, were found during a standard annual physical exam that I had neglected for three years. It was either mere luck or divine intervention—you decide—that prompted my doctor to detect those two little trouble spots.

My doctor treated my problem easily with a colposcopy, a procedure that might best be described as a cryogenic douche. In what seemed like less than 10 minutes, he zapped the offending blight right off what was once my fertile plain. Painful? Slightly. Not bad. No worse than briefly holding your face in front of your local grocery store's frozen food section with the wind whipping out of that display-case door at about 50 miles per hour. Except exchange your face with your vagina. Best of luck explaining that maneuver to your local frozen-food manager.

While it was not the most pleasant experience I've ever had with my legs in the air, neither was it the worst. The most negative thing about the whole deal was the six-week hands-off moratorium the doctor imposed on sexual activity during my recovery, a dicey period I've come to refer to as my Spring Thaw.

Today, a six-week no-sex vacation would not present a challenge. Today, six sexless weeks is a walk in the park—a nice, languid, undemanding, uncomplicated walk in the park. At the time of my diagnosis, however, the prospect of a month and a half without doing the deed in some form or fashion was daunting. After all, the last time I had gone for six weeks with no sex, there was a good reason. I was married.

At first I found the paralyzing reality of having been side-swept by The Big C was itself enough to squelch my sex drive. Throughout Week 1, I spent the time I normally would have spent on sexual activities by rejoicing in life, stopping to smell the roses and tossing bread crumbs to

the birdies. Tra la!

Mid-way through Week 2, seemingly innocent little things like inserting the nozzle of a self-serve gas pump into my empty tank set my mind wandering into the Land of the Lust.

By Week 3, I cancelled my premium cable subscription, not previously realizing how racy the programming of Showtime and HBO is. No need to be tempted.

Near the end of Week 4, I checked with my doctor to see if my hands shouldn't be fitted with a pair of those giant satellite-disc shaped cones that dogs get attached

**Getting my mamms
grammed is not
my favorite way to
spend time naked
from the waist up
in a small room
with a stranger.**

around their heads after surgery to prevent them from chewing out their stitches.

As Week 5 began, I cancelled my basic cable subscription, too. That Rachel Ray is a tantalizing whore.

By the time Week 6 finally drew to a close, I was able to astral-project into the future, visiting new worlds and dimensions where sexuality is not an issue, a place where humankind finds fulfillment through intellect, art, and reason. Some call that the highest level of enlightenment. I now realize I was visiting menopause.

Since my suspicious cell incident, I have tried to pay more attention to health maintenance, like mammograms. Suffice it to say, getting my mamms grammed is not my favorite way to spend time naked from the waist up in a small room with a stranger. Yet, again, it's not the worst experience I ever had with little metallic

dots covering my nipples. The worst involves a camping trip in Austin during an electrical storm, but that's another story for another time.

There are, ironically enough, two things we women must accept about our breasts as we grow older. One is that, after a certain age, they have a propensity to point due south, almost racing each other to see which one can touch the ground first. Gravity is a harsh mistress. Eventually I hope to be able to simply mention to my breasts that it's time for their annual mammogram, and they will automatically amble over to the clinic and jump up in between those compressing plates all by themselves, like two little puppies in a vet's office waiting for a treat: *Do Mama's little girls want their mammogram? Do they? Yes, they do! Yes, they do! Do Mama's little girls want to put little metallic dots on their little noses? Do they? Yes, they do! Yes, they do! That's Mama's good girls! Good girls! Yes! Yes!*

The second thing is that we need a mammogram every year. Every. Single. Year.

For those lesbians who have a tendency to ignore their own physical maintenance, Lesbian Health Initiative-Houston hosts its winter(ish) installation of their Rainbow Health Fair on November 7, 8:15 a.m. 'til 2 p.m. at Legacy Community Health Services, 215 Westheimer Rd. Mammograms and Pap smears (by appointment), blood sugar and glucose testing, blood pressure, cholesterol readings, and a variety of other health screenings and services are available to gay women whether they are insured or not. The fair also presents a panel of speakers addressing topics like long-term health-care planning, living wills, and safe sex, including my own little dyke-and-pony show with AIDS Foundation Houston chief executive officer, Kelly McCann. Come say hello.

Best of all, not only is the Rainbow Health Fair free of charge, it also gives lesbians the opportunity to take care of their health in a comfortable, friendly, woman-centric zone.

Try getting that in your local frozen-food section. ■



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by Annise D. Parker

SECURING OUR FUTURE AND HONORING OUR PAST

Why voting matters—every day

Imagine trying to play with your children or dogs while looking over your backyard fence at a 23-story residential high-rise with dozens of people on balconies staring right into your backyard.

Welcome to Houston 2009 . . . 2012?

Plans for the 23-story Ashby residential high-rise cast an eerie shadow over the future of Houston neighborhoods, especially the Southhampton and Boulevard Oaks neighborhoods where the high-rise will tower over the Bissonnet-Ashby intersection.

Unless Houstonians want unbridled development—23-story residential high-rises popping up all across the city on already-crowded two-lane residential streets instead of wider four-lane thoroughfares—the next Houston City Council must stand up for responsible neighborhood-friendly development.

So what little voice told more than half of Houston voters it's not important to vote in the Houston city elections November 3? The

recession means fewer TV commercials and less political mail, hence, more voter apathy.

When a homeowner calls the police to report a man kicking in his front door, he wants officers at his home ASAP, a few minutes at most. Not 10 or 15 minutes. It doesn't matter whether the homeowner voted or not. But he's lucky. His neighbor took a little time to study candidates and vote, and she voted for city officials who stressed more police officers on patrol and maintaining fast response times. Her well-chosen candidates won.

Perhaps the non-voting homeowner will vote next time. Perhaps it'll take a halfway house or a noisy bar moving in across the street to make him spend an hour voting.

As they listened to distant cannon fire and worried about the British overrunning their farms and killing loved ones, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson debated word changes in the Declaration of Independence that would launch a bloody

war and the great American experiment of democracy. No longer would the world be ruled by kings. If the disorganized and outnumbered colonies somehow managed to defeat the British Empire, the United States would establish the truly revolutionary idea of people voting for their own government representatives. That was 1776. Both Adams and Jefferson died July 4, 1826, just hours apart on the country's 50th anniversary. Adams always swore he'd outlive his old friend and archrival Jefferson, although Jefferson was seven years younger. "Thomas Jefferson survives," Adams said right before dying. He didn't know Jefferson had just died.

The founding fathers were not perfect, and neither is our great country. They were, however, in agreement about one cornerstone of the new democracy: voting.

I love local government. I absolutely believe it's the most important level of government because it's the one that touches

people's lives most directly. If you have tap water to drink, the toilets flush, your garbage is picked up, and you have a street to drive to work on, there's probably a local government to thank.

I have been an active volunteer since my youth. Taking up the duty of community service doesn't mean we can't choose areas that bring us joy or that we find interesting. Duty doesn't have to be a burden. But civic engagement must include participation in the political process that affects our lives every day. Being an informed voter is the minimum.

I hope each of you exceed that standard.

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 LGBT-elected municipal officials in the U.S. Her webpage is AnniseParker.com. To receive the controller's newsletter, send an e-mail to annise.parker@cityofhouston.net.

ON THE RUN (1997)

by Annise D. Parker

You give up: anonymity, autonomy, privacy . . .
To gain: authority, celebrity, a legacy?
Perfect strangers share imperfect thoughts . . .

So, you're running for office?

Well, just be yourself,

But . . .

You're too reserved, you need to loosen up!
Don't quip or speak irreverently—you'll offend someone.

Smile—you'd seem more approachable.
Don't smile so much, people won't think you're serious.

Don't cross your arms.

Don't speak with your hands.

Don't stand so stiff.

Your handshake's much too firm.

A firm handshake signals confidence.

You stand too far away from folks.

You need to respect personal space.

You should be more spontaneous.

Think before you speak.

You should cut your hair.

Your hair's too short.

You're going gray—thought about a little color?

Highlights!

That suit's too dark, not feminine enough.

Stick with power suits.

Stick to pants.

No pants.

You wear your skirts too long.

Your skirt's too short.

Heels would make you taller.

A little makeup's all you need.

You should do your nails.

I hope your speech isn't too boring.

Oh, no, I'm not political at all.

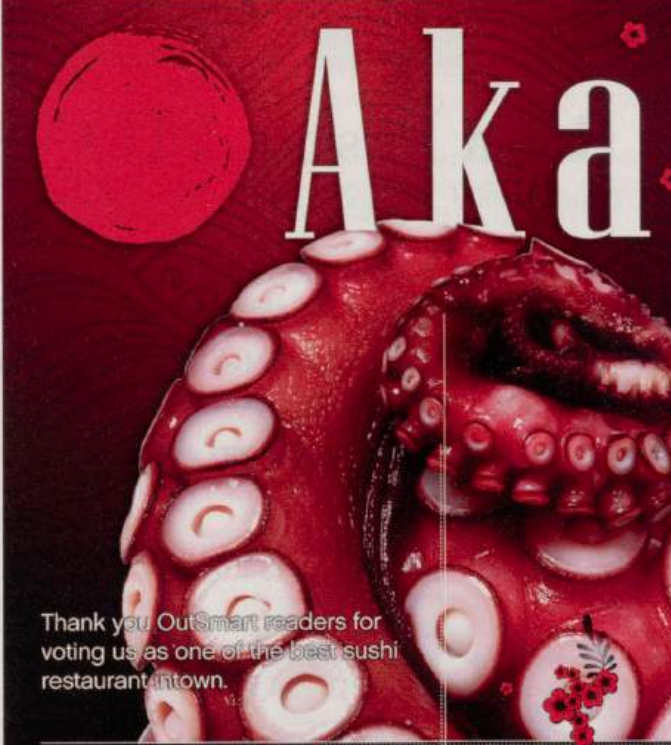
. . . What was your name again? ■



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Shelby Hodge award winner:

PWA Holiday Charities

All proceeds from the World AIDS Day luncheon benefit AIDS Foundation Houston by funding housing, food, prevention, youth and benefit counseling programs for those living with and/or at risk for HIV/AIDS in the Greater Houston area.

For more information or to purchase tickets, please contact Claire Dutton at 713.623.6796 ext. 224.

For more information visit www.AIDShelp.org




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THIS ONE'S FOR JERRY

On World AIDS Day, show your colors

For the past 21 years, World AIDS Day has been observed every December 1 in order to raise awareness of the AIDS pandemic.

Allow me to digress for just a moment: "epidemic" refers to the spread of an infectious disease to large numbers of people in a certain area; a "pandemic" refers to the same spread of infectious disease, but it impacts higher numbers of people over a much larger geographic area, like across continents. In short, a pandemic is an epidemic of worldwide proportions.

Now, back to the topic at hand.

The inaugural World AIDS Day observance in 1988 was conceived and implemented by two men who worked for the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland—James Bunn and Thomas Netter. Thanks to their vision and the leadership offered by Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (now known as

UNAIDS), World AIDS Day has become the longest-running disease-awareness-and-prevention campaign of its kind.

On this day, all around the globe, people remember those who have died from HIV/AIDS and commemorate those who are living with the disease. We at AIDS Foundation Houston host a luncheon to honor corporations and individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of HIV/AIDS. Other community-based organizations and public health agencies conduct HIV-testing events, convene education seminars, and hold candlelight vigils to bring attention to the important missions of preventing new HIV infections, eliminating stigma, and improving access to life-saving medications for all people living with HIV/AIDS.

Statistics clearly illustrate that we have far to go before we achieve those ideals. Since 1981, more than 25 million

people around the world have died from AIDS-related causes. Currently, UNAIDS estimates there are 33.2 million people living with the disease, and only one-third of those who need it have access to care and treatment.

In 2007 alone, 2.1 million people with AIDS died, including 330,000 children. And in that same year, there were 2.5 million new HIV infections. That means almost 7,000 people were infected each and every day of the year, and that trend continues in 2009!

Of course, sub-Saharan Africa is the worst affected region of the world with over 22 million people with AIDS living there. That's 68 percent of the global total. In particular, three African countries where AFH supports camps for HIV-infected children have incredibly high rates of infection. In the countries of Botswana and Lesotho, more than 23 percent of the adult population

(ages 15 through 49) are infected with HIV, and in Swaziland, it's 26 percent. Think about it. Approximately one in four adults living in those countries has been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS! One in four!

Adults are not the only ones suffering in sub-Saharan Africa. Children are also paying the price. More than 1.8 million African children are infected with HIV, and AIDS kills one child every minute. In addition, more than 11 million sub-Saharan children are "AIDS orphans," having lost at least one parent to AIDS-related causes.

The picture is not nearly so bleak in the United States, but that doesn't mean the news is good. The CDC estimates 1.2 million Americans are infected with HIV, and there are approximately 55,000 new HIV infections in our country each year. Locally, one Houstonian contracts HIV every eight hours.

Luckily, most of our citizens have access to antiretroviral medications and other treatments needed to achieve positive health outcomes. As a result, AIDS-related deaths in the U.S. have decreased to about 15,000 per year, down significantly from the mid-1990s peak of over 50,000 deaths per year.

However, AIDS still kills Americans. We at AFH were recently reminded of that fact in a very real, very personal way. Our former colleague, fellow activist, and comrade-in-arms, Jerry Morales, passed away in mid-September. Jerry was a thoughtful and intelligent man with a wicked sense of humor and a tireless spirit. He was a kind and caring service provider, a passionate crusader in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and, most of all, a loyal friend. We miss him terribly.

Prior to Jerry's death, we at AFH had not lost a co-worker to AIDS in several years. It is our hope that Jerry will be the last.

On this World AIDS Day, please pause to reflect upon the impact this disease has on our world and on our lives. Think about Jerry, or someone you know, and say a prayer. Talk about HIV with your associates and make sure they understand the importance of knowing their status. Make a commitment to practice safer sex. Show your true colors (and your concern about this vital health issue) by wearing a red ribbon. And take to heart the theme of this year's World AIDS Day: Stop AIDS. Keep the promise.

Kelly McCann is chief executive officer of AIDS Foundation Houston. For information on AFH's World AIDS Day luncheon, call 713/623-6796 or visit the website at AIDSHelp.org.

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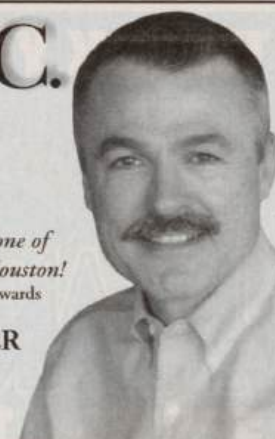
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7 YEARS AGO IN 'OUTSMART'

Members of EPAH, the Executive Professional Association of Houston, donned military and tropical gear to celebrate Veterans Day with a military ball at 1415 Bar & Grille. Former Miss Gay Houston-USA **Lauren Taylor** headlined the "Rum & Cola Show" that highlighted the event's "South Pacific" theme, featuring music from Bette Midler's *For the Boys* and "Stuff Like That There."

GLBT military heroes were honored with Internet postings "Documenting Courage: Veterans Speak Out," while current active-duty personnel kept silent per restraints of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Mr. Gay Everything **Don Gill**'s favorite movie *Auntie Mame* debuted on DVD, while Mr. Showbiz **Jack Varsi** recommended the reading of *Uncle Mame*, Eric Myers' biography of author **Patrick Dennis**.



NOVEMBER 2002

Bayou City Concert Musicals announced an encore engagement of **Stephen Sondheim's A Little Night Music** at the Hobby Center, with **Paul Hope** reprising as befuddled Fredrik, Hilary Field reprising "Send in the Clowns," and Sylvia Froman recalling "Liaisons" past, as canny Madame Armfeldt.

Third-term Houston City Council member **Annis Parker** urged voters to approve \$808.6 million in Houston Independent School District bonds for much-needed repairs and school construction. In addition, Parker thumped for Sylvia Garcia to become the first Hispanic and first female elected

to Harris County Commissioners Court, David Patronella for justice of the peace, re-election of gay-friendly state representatives Debra Danburg and Scott Hochberg, and Chris Bell for Congress.

Southwest Alternative Media Project (SWAMP) marked 25 years of dedication

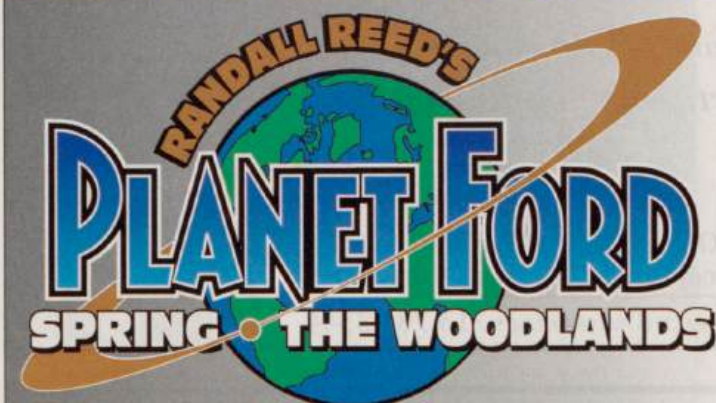
to independent film, including support of the Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival since its inception.

Channel 8's **Ernie Manouse** documented "The Big Switch," a 2-day project that *OutSmart* initiated to transform a pair of houses next-door in the Fifth Ward with the talents of designers **Jennifer Loh** and **Troy Broussard**.

Also this month in 2002, Houstonians **David Fagan** (paddle ball), **Charles Caliva II** (physique), **Carlo Deason** (track), **Mitch Mitchell**, **Carrie Howlett**, **Lori Hidalgo**, and **Kas Cejka** (billiards), **Frank Garcia** (marathon), **Steve Ruimveld** (volleyball), **Kevin Taylor** (soccer), and Houston Pride Band members **Russell Williams**, **Debbie Hunt**, **Connie Moore**, and **Kevin Taylor** descended on Sydney, Australia as part of the Space City contingent to Gay Games VI and an international band festival.

Donalevan Maines wrote about The Rocky Horror Show in the October issue of OutSmart.

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Dale Alexander, professor at the UH Graduate College of Social Work, shows his OutSmart at the Samanyolu TV Station in Ankara, Turkey.



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Suzy Lovejoy (r) and Debbie Martinez went to Japan with OutSmart. The picture was taken in Atami, Japan at a Ryokan (traditional Japanese hotel).



Jeff Turner and OutSmart at The Great Buddha in Kamakura, Japan, on July 27, 2009. Jeff writes, "In the highest form of flattery, even The Great Buddha dressed in green in honor of Joan Rivers' appearance before him."



Ed Smith, Tom Fricke, Scott Murray, Cherri Carbonara, and Blake Kottenbrink celebrated Independence Day this year, relaxing on the beautiful white sandy beaches of the Fire Island Pines, New York, and reading OutSmart.



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

Nov. 7: Lesbian Health Initiative Rainbow Health Fair
Houston's Rainbow Health Fair provides free health screenings and related information for lesbians. 8:15 a.m. - 2 p.m. Legacy, 215 Westheimer. INFO: lhihouston.org

Thru Nov. 29: Texas Renaissance Festival. INFO: TexasRenFest.com

SAVE THE DATE

Dec 6: Red Ribbon Toy Drive benefitting AIDS Foundation Houston at the Hotel Derek. INFO: hotelderek.com/toyparty

Dec 6: Kindred Spirits Foundation's The Judy Garland Christmas Special and Sing-along with OutSmart's Nancy Ford and special guests. Benefit local women's programs. INFO: kindredspirithouston.org

Dec 10: Out@TUTS Night with The Sound of Music. After the performance, mingle with the cast and listen to fabulous cabaret music with your LGBT friends at Artista. INFO: TUTS.com/out

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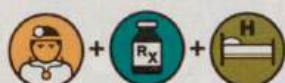
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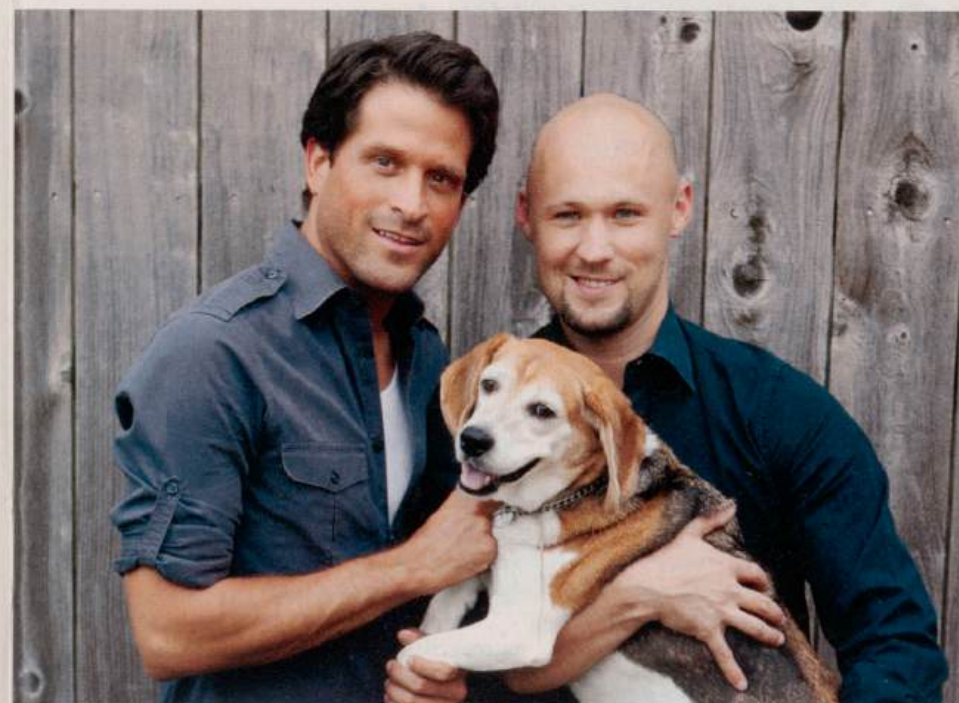


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HAPI Tails

by Marene Gustin

New animal advocacy group helps find homes for abandoned pets



Lance Marshall and James Oxford with BARC foster dog, Charlie.

You could call James Oxford and Lance Marshall animal lovers. But they're so much more.

"If you're going to do something, just do it!" says Oxford. "Make a difference."

Which is what they've been doing since January. The couple moved back to Houston just about a year ago, along with their two lovable dogs Holly and Penny. Marshall, a film and stage actor, was working with Karen Derr, a Heights-area realtor and city council candidate who first took him to the city's Bureau of Animal Regulation and Cruelty, otherwise known as BARC.

"I'd never even heard of BARC," Marshall says. Several years ago when the couple was looking to adopt a dog, they went to the SPCA facility to find Holly, their corgi-terrier mix, because neither of them knew about BARC or that it had pets for adoption.

"The first thing we saw was a starving

dog in a cage with a fat one who ate all the food," Marshall asked the attendant to move the dog so she could eat, but the attendant ignored him. First, he moved the dog and her paperwork to an empty cage and fed her. Then, he went home and told Oxford they couldn't just sit there on the couch watching TV with their two dogs and cushy lifestyle while other dogs were starving.

"So we started volunteering at BARC," Oxford says. "We went every weekend and walked all the dogs and played with the cats." Pretty soon they had a cadre of volunteers helping them, but even that didn't seem to be enough to put a dent in Houston's notorious abandoned pet problem and high euthanasia rate. So the idea for Houston Animal Partnership Initiative was formed. "I wanted a serious name for a serious problem," says Oxford. "But one with a happy acronym, so it's HAPI."

continued on page 33



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Rita Mae Brown Goes to the Dogs

*And the cats and the horses
and the foxes and the...*

by Steven Foster

Photo opposite page by Betsy Sinsel

It would have been difficult to imagine that the young woman who penned a firebrand bestseller known for its frank depictions of lesbianism in the early '70s would later become more noted to a new generation of readers through a series of books "co-authored" by her cat. Still, whether it's the pungent citrus of the *Rubyfruit Jungle* or the sweet confection of the Sneaky Pie Brown mysteries, Rita Mae Brown has continued to confound, surprise, and enthrall with the diversity of her talent, as well as political and sociological fearlessness. This is a liberation advocate who famously tussled with pioneering protofeminist Betty Friedan over Friedan's vocal exclusion of lesbians in the women's right movement. This is a cultural explorer who sported a mustache and man drag to infiltrate the infamous Club Baths

in New York, all in an effort to study gay male sexuality. Brown's private life was as attention-getting as her literary and socio-political excursions. Among her list of lovers were politician Elaine Nobel, the first openly gay candidate elected to a state legislature, and actress-comedienne and *Fried Green Tomatoes* author Fannie Flagg. In the late '70s, Brown scandalously bedhopped from tennis star Martina Navratilova to Navratilova's notorious, litigious ex, Judy Nelson.

But through every juncture of her career, Brown has always kept one love central and constant in her personal, professional, and political life. Never has this passion been more apparent than in her latest book, *Animal Magnetism: My Life with Creatures Great and Small* (Random House). In the memoir, Brown tells tales of animals loved and pets lost, using each fur-covered or feathered companion and canine acquaintance as bellwethers of emotional connectivity, spiritual renewal, and continual reminders on the preciousness of life and the imminence of death.

OutSmart spoke with Brown while she was in Detroit as part of a promotional book tour. The freewheeling conversation began with talk of animals, but quickly began to encompass spirituality, gay marriage, the politics of economics, angry ex-lovers, the origins of American loneliness, and Brown's greatest professional regret.

Steven Foster: Congratulations on the book. Is this something you wanted to write for some time now, or was it a notion? All of a sudden?

Rita Mae Brown: Judy Sternley, who was

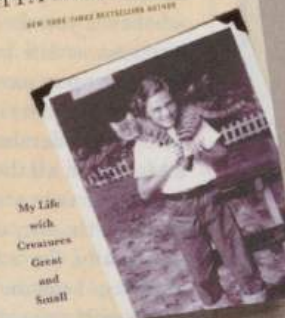
the editor at the time, was the one who suggested it. She came down to the farm and she met one of my old foxhounds who was retired, and she just fell in love with him. His name was Chaser, and I told her about his accomplishments and this and that, and she said, "You have to write about this." And then she met other animals on the farm, and she kept saying, "You have to write about this."

So I thought, Well, you know, she knows more than I do. One of her authors won the National Book Award, I guess I better write about this.

[Laughs] I think one of the surprising discoveries of the book is that it isn't just a "my pets" memoir. You use these stories of animals to tackle some very heavy issues while delving into some heartbreaking recollections. Was that difficult for you? Going to such a painful autobiographical place?

I think it always is when you have to recall those moments. On the other hand, it once again reminded me of how incredible those animals were. →

Animal Magnetism
RITA MAE BROWN



A lesbian's best friend: Rita Mae Brown explores her long-term relationship with her pets, including this giant of a canine, in her book, *Animal Magnetism*.



Hello, Kitty: Rita Mae Brown is pictured here as a child in her back yard, evidently gathering material and forming feline bonds that would later provide her with the pulp for her renowned series of books co-authored by her cat, Sneaky Pie Brown.

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Rita Mae Brown *continued from previous page*

And it's not relegated to just one species. You seem to have a touch with all animal life.

Well, I don't know about that, but I know I pay attention to them. A lot of it I think is just being alert. But I grew up with animals, and I'm afraid most people these days don't, so they don't know how to communicate with them.

There are some wonderful pieces in the book. One of the first quotes that struck me was, "If there aren't any foxes in heaven, I don't want to go." And then you say, "I'm a bad Christian, but I'm too old to be a good anything else." Where is your spirituality these days?

I think where it always was. In nature. Seeing how everything fits together. I mean, once you get into dogma, I really don't think it matters whether it's Christians or Jews. There's conservatives, reform, orthodox. That's all about the human ego. That's not about spirit.

You talk a great deal about your mother in the book. She had an uncharacteristically (for the time) low regard for monogamy. Yes, she did!

And you've gone on record as saying you're not pro-marriage. What's your position on the gay marriage debate? Do you have a low opinion of monogamy?

I think it's an ideal. If one can accomplish it, more power to you. But I don't think people should beat themselves up over it, which is why the marriage vows are difficult. You have to make a promise in your 20s or 30s, whenever you do it, without any idea what happens as life goes along, what happens to you or your partner. I don't care if people want to get married, it doesn't really interest me. I understand the medical reasons, I understand all the legal reasons. Of course, I would never stand in anybody's way or stand in the way of that movement. But me, personally, I'm a lot more interested in job security. I mean, what's the good of being married if you can't eat?

Exactly. And speaking to that, of being with a partner, another line from the book: "As in all higher invertebrates, the woman controls the deal." So how is the deal controlled in a lesbian relationship?

You know, I'm not sure. I really don't know how that works out. And in a way it's kind of wonderful. Whether you get two men or two women thrown together, they don't have societal models to fall back on. I mean, models at least under patriarchy or at least 10,000

years old. So they either have to make it up as they go along or just imitate what they see around them. And I'm for the ones that make it up as they go along.

You've had your fair of relationships.

Well, not really. I got my fair share of attention. [Both laugh] I can't mate in captivity.

I'm with ya on that one, Rita.

I wish I had said that first, but it was Gloria Steinem who said it. But she did finally get married in her late 60s.

She's amazing. Still. So vital and intelligent.

She's one of the smartest people I'd ever met in my life. And one of the kindest, too.

The longest relationship I was ever in was five years, and that actually wasn't a struggle for me. But I think it's a struggle for the other party, whoever it is. I'm not irritable, I don't have PMS, I'm not one of those people. I'm not particularly emotional—which may be the problem. And when I write, I'm not there. And people think, "Gee, it's great that you're a writer." But after a while I think [lovers] perceive that withdrawal. Even though they intellectually know better, it seems like a loss of love, and it really isn't. It's just that it takes everything I got to do what I do. And then they get what's left over. And then when the book is finished, of course, they get everything. But people aren't accustomed to living that way. And I just don't know how else to do it.

It's asking a lot of a partner. Speaking of, you were in a relationship with Fannie Flagg.

Well, yes, but it just kills her every time I mention it, because, for whatever reason, Fannie thinks people don't know she's gay. Particularly when she was younger, and she was just really homophobic on so many levels, and I couldn't understand it. But she's always despised me for telling the truth about her and the two of us. And, you know, it's too bad, because she's one of the funniest, most delightful people I have ever known. But she just has that blind spot. And I hope maybe now it's not there anymore. But I think she always loathes me.

I could never get it. I was always surprised she wasn't more open with that part of herself.

There were a lot of people like that in Hollywood in those days—the closet with the open door, or people who thought others didn't really know. But I will always mourn that, and I'm sorry she felt that way and felt that I was a terrible person by mentioning it in my autobiography. But it's done, →



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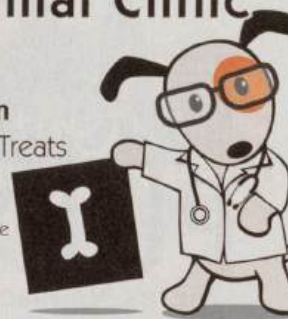
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SPECIAL EDITION

FROG TAKES GIANT LEAP!

TERRIFIC FROG NEWS!

The Barking Frog is taking a giant leap to Galveston Islands West End! Their new pad is now open and they are celebrating with huge savings all month long.

Owner, Todd

Slaughter has taken over the location formerly known as Design Solutions. Stop by either location during the month of November and enjoy HUGE savings of 40-60% OFF during their Fall Sales Event. They are making room for all new merchandise at

both locations. Hop on in for Cool stuff at Toadally Great Prices! Rumor has it that there will be an additional 2 Day Sale the Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving. The prices will be dropped to the bottom of the pond

for this event. This sale will include all in-stock merchandise as well as special orders. No matter which pad you visit you're guaranteed the best prices on designer coastal furnishings, lighting, art and accessories.

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December 5-6
- Look for the Frog Booth at Dickens on Strand

December 12
- Dian Malouf Jewelry Trunk Show
- Grand Opening Celebration

Rita Mae Brown *continued from previous page*

there's nothing I can do about it. Why would I be ashamed to be in a relationship with her? I kinda thought she was ashamed of being in love with me.

Are you in a relationship now?
No.

How's the single life?

Well, it's mostly all I know, really. And it's fine. I recognize that most people want to go in twos. If I find myself in that situation, I'm sure it will be good, but I don't look for it.

One of the strange, and actually quite challenging, lines from your book was in the chapter "Finding My Way." The very first words are, "The core of American emotion is loneliness."

It is.

Really?

Think of it. 1607. We get here on this little ship and we wind up in Jamestown, or what's now Jamestown. You're in a lower latitude than you know, but it's close enough that it's not going north to south, in which case knowledge doesn't travel environmentally, because it's so different. So there was enough that we could connect to as Europeans, and there was so much that was different, and there were people that were already here that were so completely different from any British or European experience.

And there's no women. And there weren't women for a long time. I mean, occasionally there were a few. They'd send over prostitutes or women who were having to escape difficult circumstances, but it took awhile for things to grab hold.

There is this isolation and loneliness. And I think it's one of the reasons we are so hospitable. Americans are really a very warm people. Even if you were from another country, if you were broken down on the road, someone would stop to help you. If you broke down on the road in Germany, they're all gonna fly right by you. And I hope we never get so dependent on government, we don't take care of one another. That's what really terrifies me.

Are you saying American empathy is rooted in a core of loneliness?

So often it is, even a hundred years ago on the prairie, in these vast spaces, in very few what you would say "sophisticated" settlements, or even small cities. And most of them are on rivers. [Then] somebody comes by, and you haven't seen anybody but your blood family for months. Oh my God, you're gonna open the doors! You want to know

everything they've seen and heard, what's going on in the world. You're gonna feed them even if you don't have much.

The excitement of seeing another person, that's still ingrained in us. And I've been in other places of the world and, believe me, it's not there. It's not that the people are hateful, but they don't have that impulse. First of all, their societies are, in some cases, thousands of years older than ours, and they've evolved different systems. And personal responsibility to another human, in this respect, is not the same.

They're not wired like we are.

But they're good people. They look at it differently. We're an incredibly open group. The media's been hijacked by hot-button issues. That's not who we are. We really are not people who are focused on single issues. If you talk to most Americans, they know it's all bull. They know it doesn't have any place in politics. They may have strong feelings about how you should behave. But let me make this real simple: most Americans know you cannot legislate morality. So let's focus on what we can do.

I find your perspective so incredibly relevant. But you said something in your book about chicken one day, feathers the next...

[Laughs]

... that maybe one day people no longer wish to read what you write and that this country worships the new and the young. Do you still feel relevant in this gossip-girl generation?

No, not in terms of the popular culture. I actually think I could be more useful now than I ever was when I was younger, just because I've lived so much longer and seen so much more. But you just accept it. This is a youth-obsessed culture. Why? Because they'll buy more. They know less, but they'll buy more. They're gonna get married and establish homes—they gotta have refrigerators and cars. Think about it. Television doesn't exist to teach you anything, it exists to sell you products. I worked in television, I know what I'm talking about. I mean, I've got two Emmy nominations. Wonderful those shows may have been, and I sure thought they were, and I loved the people I worked with, but those shows [exist] to sell you coffee or deodorant.

Do you still work in Hollywood?

No, I don't, because there's a tremendous age bias. And I'm actually part of a class action suit through the Writers Guild of America about it. I don't know what'll come of it, but it's a pity, because I know more now, and →



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Rita Mae Brown *continued from previous page*

my skills are better now than when I got those Emmy nominations. But I was so glad I had that experience, and some of those people are still my friends—actors or producers or whatever. I'm not bitchin' and moanin', it's just the way it is, and I'll do the best I can with it. But at least with a novel, I could be two years older than God. Who cares as long as it's a good novel.

How are you with the writing process? Are you a good disciplinarian? Do you wake up, hit it at six a.m., and make sure you crank out 100 pages?

I am disciplined, and it depends on the season. In the summers, I'll go out in the morning and get all the animal chores done and work the horses and walk the hounds and all that. Then I'll come back in the afternoon, because I can sit in the air conditioning. In the winter it's in the reverse. But I'm very disciplined. That's the thing about writing. If you're not disciplined, it's not going to happen.

"Creativity comes from trust. Trust your instincts. And never hope more than you work." You said that.

[Laughs] That's the truth.

You also said, "Good judgment comes from experience and often experience comes from bad judgment." What was one of the worst judgments you had that gave you your greatest lessons?

[Long pause, then a sigh] Not fighting harder to get the women's movement to delay all that energy spent on the Equal Rights Amendment. I think that was the worst mistake I ever made.

I was young, I was 22. They didn't listen to me. They wanted to start out by amending the constitution, and how many amendments are there? They never did the work on the local and state levels. They got some great coverage on television, and they gave great speeches, and they thought they were a lot stronger than they were. They just didn't know how everybody really *lived*. They were intellectuals, and intellectuals are always a disaster in government. I shouldn't say "always," but it's not the right mix.

And lawyers are another problem. And we've got a cabinet now, and there's not one person in this cabinet that has ever held a real job. They're all lawyers or intellectuals. There's not one person in this cabinet who ever farmed. No one made payroll. No one knows what it is to make payroll. I mean, that terrifies me. We need practical experience. We don't need a bunch of people

where their ideas are fabulous and marvelous and they look great on paper, but they don't work.

I'm so with you on that. My dream would be a government mandate for everyone to wait tables in this country for eight months.

[Laughs] God, you are so right! [Laughs] I mean, it's incredible to me the lack of practical experience and the lack of what the average American has to do to make a living. When you work from January to June to support the government! Think what you could do with that money if it were actually put into the economy.

So what's next for you? What are you doing now?

Well, I have to go to a taping. That's what's immediately next. But once I'm off the book tour, I wanna go home, and even though it's winter, I have to order my seeds for the spring because you get a discount if you order early. So I gotta go through all the catalogs, order alfalfa seeds, and all that kinda stuff. I know it sounds boring, but I really love it.

I think it sounds pretty nice, actually.

Steven Foster also talks to Nellie McKay in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

MUST LOVE DOGS

And with these three glam dog hotels—and one noble benefit—the affection is evident

by Steven Foster

Gone are the days when dog kennels resembled something out of an all-canine version of *Oz*. Three of Houston's finest puppy palaces are more like four-legged Four Seasons. A dog's life? We should all be so lucky.

RUMMY'S BEACH HOUSE

If your pooch is more athletically inclined, you might want to check out (and check the dog in) to Rummy's Beach House. Staffed by fierce dog lovers, Rummy's focuses on workouts that would make a Rotweiler proud. The emphasis here is on warm water canine aquatic exercise to reduce pain and inflammation of joints and tissues, while also increasing the dog's circulation and muscle flexibility. The benefit for you is their traveler-friendly service. If you're boarding your dog for more than three days, Rummy's will pick up you and your pets, take you to the airport so you can have a goodbye lick, and then take the precious cargo to their spa-like facility.

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HAPI Tails

continued from page 25

There are dozens and dozens of nonprofits in Houston aiding animals, from Friends of BARC to breed-specific rescue groups and spay and neuter groups. But until now there hasn't been one organization to bring them all together. HAPI works as an umbrella group, hosting adoption events where rescues can bring their animals and raising funds for spay and neuter organizations.

"How can we get less animals into BARC and how can we get more out?" asks Oxford. Adoption and neutering are the answers.

In just a few short months HAPI has hosted three adoption events and a candidates forum at BARC where 20 political wannabees showed up to talk the issue and their ideas for bettering BARC. But what the

couple really wants is a citywide adoption fair similar to the ones they saw in New York sponsored by Broadway Barks, the group founded by Bernadette Peters and Mary Tyler Moore. Oxford envisions a day of pet adoptions, live music, and face painting, maybe held at Eleanor Tinsley Park along Allen Parkway. Sort of a Bayou BARC day with all the shelters and rescue groups participating.

"But first we have to raise a lot of money," Oxford admits. "I want all the groups to just show up with their dogs and not to have to pay for anything."

Fostering a spirit of cooperation among all the animal groups and the city is a big part of HAPI's mission. And Oxford aims to keep everything positive. "I don't show up at city council and yell and show photos of



Pet Paradise welcomes the pampered pooch.

SCOUT'S HONOR BENEFIT

Montrose favorite Happy Tails Dog Spa is hosting their Second Annual Movie Night & Silent Auction to benefit Scout's Honor, a nonprofit that rescues animals from Houston and surrounding areas, including those from the pound. Since its formation, Scout's Honor has rescued over 1,250 animals. The November 12 benefit begins at 7 p.m. at the River Oaks Theatre, where they will be screening *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* because, we're guessing, *Old Yeller* would be too much of a downer. Various items will be auctioned off to raise funds next door at Epicure Café, including such items as Yao Ming-signed basketballs, Houston Texans' club-seat tickets, spa packages, wine baskets, and art by animal-loving artists George Rodrigue and Kermit Eisenhut. 100 percent of the proceeds go directly to providing needed funds for vaccinations, spaying and neutering, and veterinary care for abused and abandoned dogs and cats. For tickets, contact learlock@gibbs-bruns.com. ■

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Cat Calls

*A quest for her Dear Pussy
brings perspective to one activist
about President Obama's promises*

by Sally Sheklow



Our cat got out last night. Balmy summer evenings must be the call of the kitty-wild to Dear Pussy (not her real name).

Wifey and I took turns calling her from out the front door and then the back. She ignored our coaxing. Maybe you heard us—or some other equally desperate cat owner—stage-whisper, hissing into the past-bedtime darkness, “Psss-psss-psss, kitty kitty kitty, psss-psss-psss!”

Wifey, who has to get up for work earlier than I do, abandoned hope and went to bed. I was too worried to join her. (Talk about a threat to the sanctity of marriage!)

Dear Pussy vs. the sharp claws of night-roving raccoons. After-hours speed-

ers not even watching for cop cars, let alone a black and white of a much smaller scale. A mouse in rat-poisoned death throes posing as a midnight snack. You name it, I worried about it. This must be how my poor parents felt during my incorrigible high school years, while they waited up, frantic, all those nights when I was out doing “nothing.”

I pushed the screen door open and tried again. I psss-psss-psssed for all I was worth. No kitty. Also no snarling raccoons. Or screeching tires. Or toxic wretching. Thank God(dess.)

I'd have to stay up until Dear Pussy came home—or turned up as road kill, God(dess) forbid. I was too anxious to sleep. I switched on the late edition of *The Rachel Maddow Show*. My favorite com-

mentator's brilliant news analysis might lessen my cat-astrophizing.

Rachel reminded viewers that our president has yet to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (trans-inclusive), overturn Don't Ask Don't Tell, or undo the Defense of Marriage Act. Then, in all her Rhodes Scholar dykey handsomeness (drool, drool), Rachel ended her show and bid me goodnight. I clicked off the TV and barefooted onto the back deck.

I called out over the railing, “Psss-psss-psss, kitty kitty kitty, psss-psss-psss.” Silence.

Not a sign of Dear Pussy.

While I waited for the pitter patter of little kitty paws, I stood under the starry sky and wondered, Is our president straying from his campaign promises? Can Obama supporters coax him back? Are my president and my cat beyond retrieval? Do I still have the audacity of hope?

I settled into a deck chair and looked for the big dipper, the “drinking gourd” underground railroaders followed to freedom. I was trying to imagine Harriet Tubman's night terrors when Dear Pussy came prancing up the back steps as if it had just occurred to her that she'd prefer to spend the night in the comfort and safety of her own home with the people who pet her and groom her, buy expensive organic kibble, pay the vet bills and provide cushy furniture—not that I'm resentful.

Dear Pussy trotted right past me with a What-Me-Worry? look on her furry little face, scampered through the door and curled up in her spot on our comfy sofa (aka the *homo-sectional*).

I lingered on the deck. A shimmering moon rose over the rooftops. I took in the soft night air scented with jasmine, nicotiana, and heliotrope. If Dear Pussy had come in when Wifey and I first called her, I'd have missed this quiet, sweet-smelling, moonlit moment. If Obama had made good on his word the moment he got into office, we'd have missed an awful lot of strategic organizing and heartfelt community building. But enough already. Time to come on home.

The neighborhood was utterly quiet—all except for the distant, soft, harmonic rasp of a train whistle. That, and some other poor shmo in some other backyard calling, “Heeeeeeeeee kittykittykitty-kitty!” into the night.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow lives with Wifey (not her real name) and Dear Pussy (not her real name) in Eugene, Oregon.

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In the *Pink*

It begins, most obviously, with the articulation of her name. The "Kay" appears to rhyme with "day" but instead rhymes with "die." This disjunct is symbolic of everything about Nellie McKay. She seems, in photographs and on paper, as a sweet, doll-like charmer. But McKay is no amusement park kewpie. Beguiling, true, but artistically and intellectually McKay confounds easy expectations, refusing to be placed peacefully onto some neat, categorized pop music shelf.

McKay slipped into the musical edgestream a scant six years ago by disarming critics with lyrics of surgical-strike precision, softened by the dizzy anesthesia

for her sophomore effort. When the label balked, she coughed up her own cash to complete the project, and sweet-talked legendary Elvis Costello producer Geoff Emerick to finish the album gratis. Then she proceeded to trash-talk the record company in every interview, never losing her trilling lilt of a voice. Of course, the press turned her into a shrew, a troublemaker, the Lindsay Lohan of alt-pop. They loved her, but every critical pat on the back felt strangely like a slap in the face.

"I don't know how a lot of people do it," admits McKay while on tour in Seattle. "A lot of people, they just have that kind of shameless quality where they don't care what people say about them. Or maybe

Doris Day was always known for her voice. But it was the naughty wink sex comedies of the '60s that made Day an international superstar and box-office draw, showcasing Day's peerless skin, blue sky eyes, white gold hair, and perfect but modestly couture-draped body, as well as her impeccable comedic timing. But Day's real life more closely resembled her shattering turn as a Hitchcock blonde in the tortuous classic *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. The hotel scene where cinematic husband Jimmy Stewart tells Day's character their son has been kidnapped is almost too wrenching to take, and, sadly, it was this role that was truer to life than any bubble-bath romantic farce with closeted actor co-star

The closer you spin into McKay's dizzying orbit, it's easy to see why the singer has such an affinity for Doris Day.

of her voice, which floated dreamily along buoyant cabaret-from-another-planet musical melodies. The discerning college crowd and choosy gay music lovers followed accordingly, drawn to songs like "Cupcake," where she channeled a disco dancer who relented to the concept of gay marriage, and tunes such as "Won't U Please B Nice" that expressed the child-like sweetness of loving infatuation in one verse while revealing murderous adult ardor in the next. "If you would sit oh so close to me/that would be nice like it's supposed to be... If you don't I'll slit your throat." None of the bloodlaced lyricism was mere artistic posturing, either. With only one album under her belt, McKay demanded her record label greenlight a double disc CD of more than 20 songs

they do have it and they just put on the armor. I don't know, every day I wonder if I'm doing the right thing."

Second guessing aside, McKay's obviously doing something right. Her new album, *Normal as Blueberry Pie*, a tribute to the classic crooner Doris Day, was gloriously received and is selling briskly. McKay's voice is tailor-made to follow Day's, and what she lacks in crystalline clarity of Day's unique pipes, McKay more than compensates for with attitude and style. *Blueberry Pie* manages to channel Day's playful musical narrative, while infusing each song with McKay's own champagne chanteuse sensibilities. The closer you spin into McKay's dizzying orbit, it's easy to see why the singer has such an affinity for Day.

(and best friend) Rock Hudson. In reality, a gay husband would have been a welcome relief. Day's real-life spouses were, at best, thieves, making off with her significant fortune, and at the brutal worst, physically abusive, jealous, tyrannical alcoholics.

As the sexualized '70s cast Day into irrelevance, she drifted away to her 11-acre Carmel ranch, appearing in public only when causes near and dear to her heart forced her to show her face and, once again, grace the world with that intoxicating voice, if not in song, in support. She famously stood by Hudson's side as the actor, gaunt and ghostly from the ravages of AIDS, admitted he was dying from the disease. But her less-than-secret love, of course, was for animals. Day hosted a show about animals that aired on the →

The balloon high & blueberry pie of Nellie McKay

by Steven Foster

Photos by Caroline Knopf

Up, up & away: Nellie McKay is high on the success of her new CD of buoyant, balloon-light Doris Day covers.



In the Pink

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Christian Broadcasting Network, and continued to raise awareness for animal rights, though she preferred the role of silent supporter over celebrity spokesperson. The only time anyone can truly count on hearing from Day is when one of the oldest classic radio stations in the country celebrates her birthday. Every year Day faithfully calls the station to have a birthday chat, only to vanish again to her ranch, content to spend her days and nights with the only companions she knew would never break her heart—her dogs. And it was this pet passion that brought the worlds of Doris Day and Nellie McKay together, though McKay was primed for Day's classic sound before she was even aware of the singer's canon.

"We found these eight tracks at the Salvation Army," McKay recalls. "And my mother would listen to Blood, Sweat & Tears, and I would listen to Tommy Dorsey." This musical taste—more Billie Holiday than Backstreet Boy—was just one of the traits that made McKay somewhat of an outsider in her social circle. Instead of fitting in to whatever Heathers' peer group was in power vogue at the time, McKay forged her own way, opting for personal passion rather than a mass-market mindset. She took to social activism, and it was during one such rally that she first encountered Doris Day's music.

"I was at an aquarium protest in Baltimore, and I went to a music store," explains McKay. There, she found a Doris Day album, as bright and luminous and fake as the aquarium she was protesting. "I liked the cover. It was a very kinda kitsch cover. It was during her earlier Warner Brothers days, so it was the late '40s, and the hair was in an up-do, and she was in an evening gown with . . . I think it was a cape, and she was on a boat. It was a fake boat with a fake sky, and it really appealed to me. So I picked it up, and I listened to it on the bus ride home from the protest, and I was just smitten."

Still, McKay was no fool and realized early on that the music "appealed to a more romantic time, even if that time never really existed." This wry appraisal of the real world behind the soft-focus facade is what gives McKay's original work its acerbic appeal. She may sound like a pillow-talk sweetie, but she understands that more often than not the bed is made of nails.

However, Day would continue to show up in McKay's path, by almost magical Hollywood plot coincidences. *The New York*



Pearls not included: McKay, with her two dogs, Hank (l) and Bessie. Hank is actually a foster dog looking for a good home. To adopt Hank, contact Emily@inourhandsrescue.org. Maybe if you ask nicely, Emily will throw in the necklace.

Times would ask her to review Day's biography. Knowing the two singers shared a proclivity for animal-rights issues, *The Bark* asked her to interview Day.

"I always heard about her [activism]. Dick Gregory or Sandy Dennis or Sid Caesar, Julie Christie, you start to see things in the animal-rights newsletters and stuff. Pink. They say getting involved with politics will hurt your career, but I can't tell you the number of people I've bought because they fight for the animals or civil rights, gay rights, women's rights. Because even if you don't like what they sound like, sometimes you like what they stand for, you know? Or even if you just like one song, you buy the whole album because you want to support them."

Support turned to emulation pretty quickly. But if McKay was going to honor Day, she would do so with painstaking precision, right down to the vintage microphones used to record the tracks.

"Singing into those old microphones, those same microphones you see in old pictures of Doris Day or Billie Holiday or Frank Sinatra—that was just delightful," swoons McKay. The recreation of a long-gone studio aesthetic only enhanced the recording process, imbuing the sessions with a stirring authenticity that was palpable. McKay smiles. "When you feel like

you got it, it's such a great feeling."

That emotion is apparent on the album, coming through in delightful, candy-colored pastel playfulness. When McKay sings "Go on now, shoo! Shoo!" you practically see animated birds fluttering out of her path. And while it sounds impossibly or annoyingly cute, somehow it works. Perhaps that's because *Normal as Blueberry Pie* engages all the standard glockenspiel of a musical era that skipped through influences as easily as a musical heroine would hop down a backlot lane, never landing in one spot long enough to wear out its welcome. There's a little Calypso spice, bluesy brushes on a drum kit, background vocal doo-wop call and response, and bubbly vocals that tickle the ears like so much audio Perrier. The CD manages to honor the musical styling of Day vocally, yet is wholly owned and fleshed out by McKay's musical dexterity. She might not possess the icon's uniquely glassine vocal clarity, but she nails the gentle exuberance and airy poetry that is pure Doris Day.

"I just wanted to do a good album, knowing that we'd have to get the arrangements together, and wanting to do something different. I still don't know if it was a good idea, but I'm glad we did it." Critics agree, handing McKay some of the most →

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In the Pink

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adoring reviews of her career. But lest one think McKay's going to be pigeonholed, think again. After all, this is a woman who played Peggy Lee like PJ Harvey, starred on Broadway in *The Threepenny Opera*, stealing the spotlight from bigger costars Cyndi Lauper and Alan Cumming, and even tried her hand at stand-up. "Very badly," she admits somewhat jokingly. "I consider myself a fairly cantankerous person, but I'm not nearly bitter enough to do comedy."

That restless artistic daring recently brought a call from the Alley Theatre. The Tony-winning company has just commissioned McKay to pen a musical for their upcoming season.

"I have to have my first draft by next May. One of the sponsors sent me a bunch of books of French literature, so I'm still working my way through them, but I think it'll probably be a more contemporary story. I think they're hoping it will be something about tough times, so it will be reflective of what's going on now."

That musical may have to be written on the road. McKay and her band are on tour right now to support the album, and the cabaret act is a hot ticket. "We just came from San Francisco. We were rehearsing and cursing the day the album came out, but somehow it's all paid off. We just did six shows there. And now we're in Seattle. The band is real truants, they're rebels. You never know what they're going to do." That rebel spirit should play well when Nellie and company take to Craig Ferguson's show on November 11.

Until then, McKay is content to just keep moving, whether it's on the tour bus or walking her dogs around Central Park, which is a fitting respite for someone who just tackled a tribute to one of America's most beloved musical treasures. Sure she felt the pressure. But McKay admittedly enjoyed the entire experience.

"I did," she confesses in her charming, almost boozy cartoon voice. "More so at certain points, because sometimes you reach a quandary. I don't deal with stress the best."

She giggles.

"It's like Doris Day in *Midnight Lace*. You're going insane."

Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps. But like Day's lighter cinematic romps, it's a fun kind of crazy.

Steven Foster also talks to Rita Mae Brown in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

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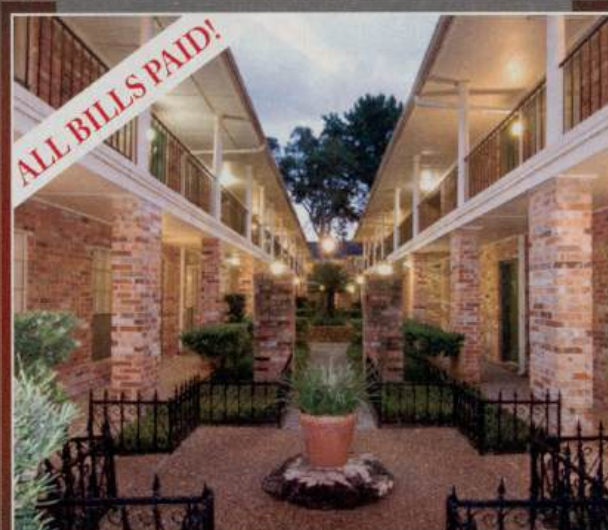


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Stand-up Artist

Fortunately, not all of Kelly Faltermayer's works require him to kneel

by Brandon Wolf

Last November, gay artist Kelly Faltermayer was chosen from nearly 200 applicants to be the featured artist at Houston's annual Via Colori festival, a celebration of pastel chalk art on concrete. He won the prestigious top billing as a result of his vivid interpretation of a mandrill, a baboon-like primate with colorful facial markings found in tropical rain forests.

Faltermayer delighted early visitors as he created the festival's large signature artwork on a Saturday morning, layering and blending colors, slowly bringing the animal to life. "It takes strong thighs" he laughs, recalling the creation process.

Faltermayer remembers laughing a lot that weekend. "I met new people and old friends," he says. "We enjoyed the simplest of life's pleasures." →



A beautiful zoo-full: artist Kelly Faltermayer kneels in front of his award-winning, chalk-on-concrete rendering of a mandrill at last year's Via Colori (his original artwork of the mandrill is shown in inset). Will one of his other depictions of animal life follow him to this year's colorful event?



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Stand-up Artist

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Early Days in El Salvador

But life hasn't always been times of laughter for Faltermayer. He was born in 1965 in the poverty-stricken Central American country of El Salvador, a small nation facing the Pacific Ocean. Most of its citizens are descended from Maya Indians, Aztecs, and the Spanish.



Faltermayer's family lived in the capital city of San Salvador, where his father was a car salesman and his mother worked at a pharmacy. "We were part of a very small middle class. We had a decent home and a car and could actually ride to the local beach," he says. "We were able to attend school and get a basic education."

Faltermayer remembers that he played soccer until he was 12, but then dropped



It's not just about the animals: Faltermayer's diverse works include (l-r) Marlene Dietrich, bare-chested men, and Frida Kahlo.

out. "I was considered somewhat of an oddity. I knew I was different, but I couldn't put it into words. I gravitated towards girls as friends. They found me witty and charming and enjoyed my company. I had a great love of beauty and noticed fine details. I expressed this in artwork, but I

never shared it with anyone. And I never connected to the dominant macho culture."

Like many other parts of Central America, Faltermayer's country was afflicted by warring factions of guerillas. "Different groups rose up to fight against the corrupt government and military," he says. "Citizens living in poverty felt oppressed by the rich landowners. There were lots of homegrown rebel groups with three initials for names, referring to things like workers, laborers, and liberation."

Faltermayer remembers the sounds of gunfire in his home city. He regularly heard first-hand accounts of nearby village massacres. "These rebels didn't have any respect for life or human rights," he says. By 1977, Faltermayer's parents began the process of immigrating to the United States, with their eyes on Houston. "They saw no future in their homeland. I probably would have gone insane there."

New Hope in America

Faltermayer entered the United States in 1980, with the birth name Salvador Bermudez. "I was young, and America was a totally open horizon for me, where dreams could come true," he recalls.

He spoke enough English to make it through his freshman year of high school, where he worked hard to improve his fluency and to curb his accent. "You know you've mastered a language when you dream in it," he says. During that freshman year, Faltermayer's art teacher noticed his artistic talent. "She collected my best artwork and put together a portfolio," he remembers. "Then she told me she had arranged for an audition at the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts."

The audition was successful, and Faltermayer completed high school there. Looking back at these high school days, he says, "I had a great sense of wonder. Everything was new—the language, the culture, and the people."

The next fall, Faltermayer entered the Otis Parsons School of Design in Los Angeles. "I enjoyed having purple hair and listening to the music of Kiss and Adam & the Ants," he remembers. "I finally had the opportunity to be a rebel." The financial burden of a college education quickly became prohibitive, however. At the completion of his freshman year, the rebelliousness yielded to practicality.

"I worked as a layout artist for a group of Houston community newspapers for many years," Faltermayer says, "then I found a job in the art department of a large nutrition enterprise." He was caught up in the personal computer revolution within the workforce of the 1980s and →

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Stand-up Artist

continued from previous page

1990s. He learned new skills and continued to build an ever-more-impressive portfolio of work.

In 1996, Salvador Bermudez changed his name to Kelly Faltermayer. "I'm not sure where Kelly came from," he says. "It could have been Jaclyn Smith's character on *Charlie's Angels*. My last name was taken from Harold Faltermeyer, the musical arranger for disco diva Donna Summer. But I got one of the letters wrong!"

In 2004, Faltermayer joined a corporate communications group at AIG Retirement Services, where his duties included the preparation of a monthly magazine. Recently, the economic downturn claimed his job. "It's good to have a little more time for my art," he says, contemplating the results of his layoff, "but I really look forward to getting back to work."

Drawn to Fantasy

Although Faltermayer is a skilled commercial artist, he has always created personal artwork in his free time. "I'm very interested in science fiction fantasy," he says. "I like the science element—the marvelous possibilities." Much of the artwork that passes for science fiction these days, he says, really isn't. "True science fiction is based on science and stays within the boundaries of what might be possible. It is not about outlandish things."

Faltermayer's examples of true science fiction are *Blade Runner* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. "It's possible that all this could happen in the future" he says. "And I love the idea that a man might fall in love with a robot that possesses completely human physical characteristics."

Sleek technology, beautiful animals, and attractive human beings show up in Faltermayer's fantasy work. "I love men," he says. "I like the mathematics of their faces and their bodies."

When he creates fantasy portraits, he usually begins with someone he has seen or with a picture in a magazine that appeals to him. "I see amazing lips, eyes, gestures. With the image floating in my head, I begin to highlight the qualities I like the most. I make changes to other characteristics to make them more appealing. I end up with someone who is an ideal. It's someone who I love to look at."

Working for a large comic book company like DC or Marvel occurred to Faltermayer. "But I realized that I would be an inker or a colorist of other people's sketches. I didn't want to be limited to just one aspect. I wanted to work from original concept to completed piece."

Establishing Gay Identity

Faltermayer came to America at the crossroads of becoming a man. "I was in high school when I came out," he says. "I used my school friends as a testing ground. Then I came out to my parents. It was not a surprise for them, and they accepted it because I was their son. I tried to explain to them that science shows a genetic basis for homosexuality, but I don't think they completely understood that."

Remembering his high school years, Faltermayer says, "They were the best of times and the worst of times. I thought America was welcoming and accepting. But being gay wasn't a picnic. Not everyone had open arms. It was a difficult reality for a 16-year-old to face. As a teenager, I was often filled with rage, because I couldn't understand all of it. I couldn't put the social puzzle together."

Still, Faltermayer knew that life in Central America as a gay man could have ended in death for him. "Gay men there are looked at as freaks that need to be extinguished. I never had any desire to return to my homeland for that reason."

Contemplating the issues of gay marriage, Faltermayer says, "The inequities are ludicrous. But culture is what it is, and it will not change overnight." Still, he's hopeful when he sees today's young gays. "Recently, I was driving through Montrose on Fairview, following a pick-up truck. There were two young boys about 15 or 16 in the back of the truck. I could tell they liked each other. Suddenly they reached across to each other and kissed on the lips. It helped me realize how far gay men have come."

A Life of Exploration

"If I summed my life up in one word, it would be exploration," Faltermayer reflects. "Understanding life has always been a challenge for me, and I've constantly searched for answers."

As a child, Faltermayer remembers being given a white shirt and being taught basic religious prayers. He was then taken to a church for his first communion. "I was just doing what I'd been told to do," he says. "But it didn't have any meaning for me. It was just a cultural tradition."

Lacking religious groundedness, Faltermayer sought for meaning in life elsewhere. "One day at work, someone left a copy of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* in the employee lounge. I began reading it and couldn't put it down. It gave me a reason for my rage, and it changed my life," he says.

He gravitated to Rand's rational objectivist philosophy, but later realized that →



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Stand-up Artist

continued from page 47

her virtue of selfishness lacked compassion. "I left objectivism behind," he says, "but I also found that I was an individualist, and the most important thing in life was to be true to myself."

At 44 years of age, Faltermayer believes he is now true to himself—as an artist, as a human being, and as a gay man. "I've begun to understand the magnitude of a life—of my life," he says. "I realize there is always something new to learn, always room for self-correction."

"Life is a learning process," he says. "You have to hit the bottom before you learn to look upward. When you're young, you have to be lost, or else you're not really trying. You have to experience pain and own it. Life is both agony and glory."

"Art is a way for me to connect with people," he explains. "It has been a way for me to make friends since I was in kindergarten, and that has been very fulfilling. The imagery that interests me now is different than what interested me in the 1980s. It is more down to earth and simpler. Via Colori and their conservation theme got me started drawing animals four years ago, treating them like the human fantasy portraits that I have done previously. The beauty that I've discovered in animals is a great source of joy, and it's something I continue to explore. I've also begun to do digital illustration, using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop."

Kelly Faltermayer will be participating in the 2009 Via Colori, to be held at 110 Bagby, beginning Saturday, November 21, at 10 a.m. and ending Sunday, November 22, at 5 p.m. The free event is held in Sam Houston Park and on the adjoining streets of Allen Parkway and Bagby. More than 175 artists will create colossal-sized works of art, completely created in pastels. Via Colori is presented by El Paso Corporation and Quantum Energy Partners and produced by the Center for Hearing and Speech (CHS). Proceeds from the event support CHS's mission to teach deaf children to listen, speak, and read. There will be live music, food, and children's activities. Faltermayer invites *OutSmart* readers to "stop by and say hello!"

Kelly Faltermayer's impressive and imaginative corporate portfolio can be viewed on his website at kellyfaltermayer.com.

Brandon Wolf profiled Annise Parker in the June issue of *OutSmart* magazine.

WARNING: Don't Let the Holidays Weigh you Down

It seems like every year I hear about people going through the same problem, and I'm sure you're no different. They are scared to death about putting on 10 or 15 pounds over the holidays. It's true, the holidays can be hazardous to your health... and mid-section. After all who wants to show off an extra tire around the belly at all the hottest holiday parties?

And there seems to be no end to the number of holiday parties between Thanksgiving and New Years. Every weekend is almost guaranteed to be booked with buffet grazing, boozing, and holiday cheer. Don't get me wrong there's nothing wrong with it...in MODERATION.

I've seen for years people pack on 10 to 15 pounds in 2 months only to have to create a New Year's resolution to shed it in 4 months! Yo-yo weight changes wreak havoc on your body and make it harder and harder to lose the last 5 pounds every year you get older.

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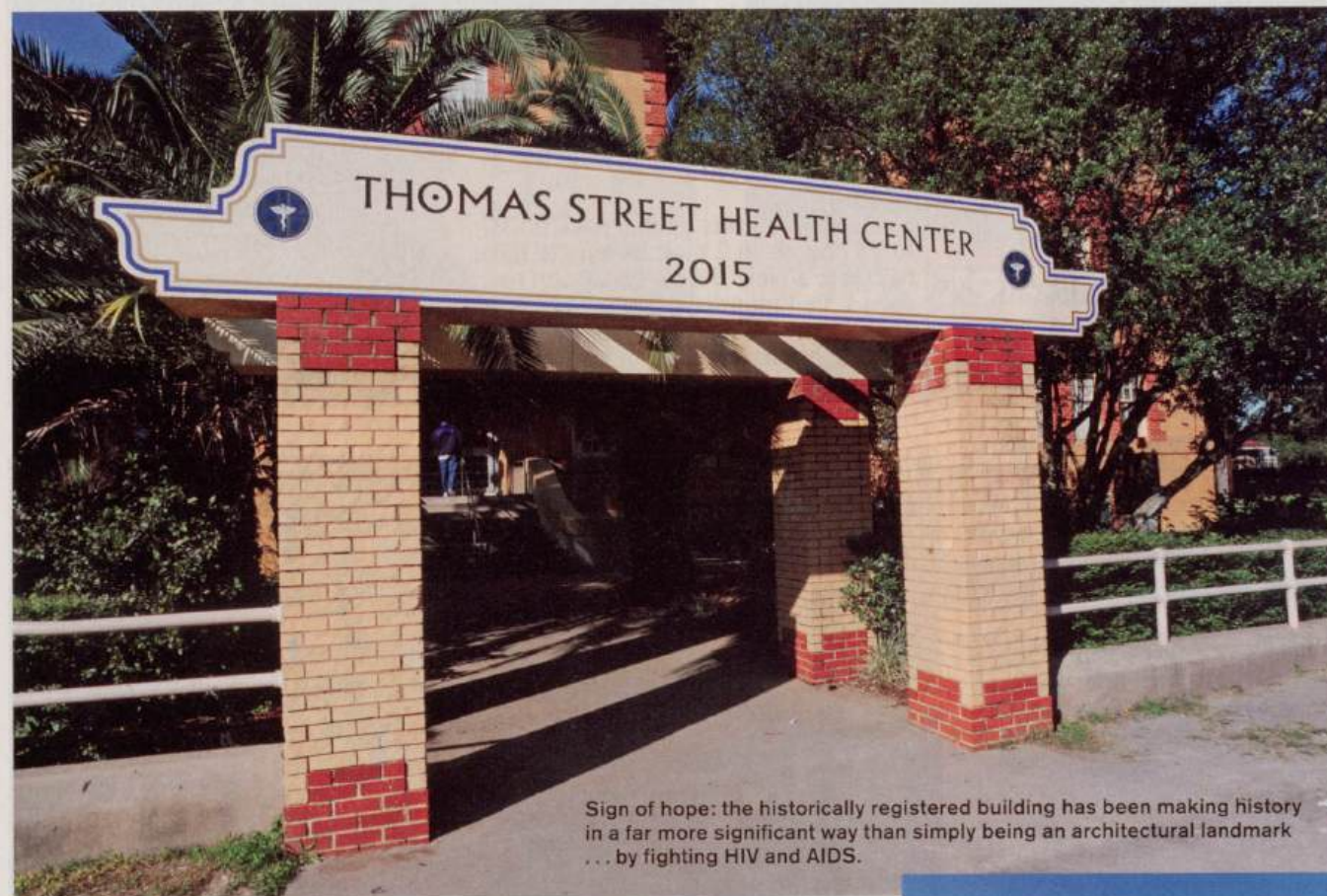
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'Thomas' turns Twenty

Thomas Street Health Center celebrates two decades of service

by Rich Arenschliedt

Photos by Yvonne Feece



Sign of hope: the historically registered building has been making history in a far more significant way than simply being an architectural landmark ... by fighting HIV and AIDS.

Evoking a bygone era, two palm trees tower over a 1920s Gatsby-esque building. This registered historic structure, completely untouched on the outside, inside has been replicating its success as one of the nation's most important bastions of HIV-related care and research.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, Thomas Street Health Center (TSHC) is the Harris County Hospital District's (HCHD) freestanding HIV/AIDS treatment facility, providing medical and support services to residents of Harris County with HIV/AIDS. Two decades of caring

for individuals facing serious health issues has put TSHC at the forefront of the epidemic. Countless staff and volunteers have assisted patients since the clinic opened on May 1, 1989. Twenty years ago a group of medical musketeers embarked on an incredible adventure in medicine, one that continues today.

"TSHC started as a hospital for the employees of the Southern Pacific Railroad," according to original staff nurse, Jerry Boice, RN, BSN, ACRN. "It had been used in various capacities before HCHD gained possession of it."



The acquisition of TSHC was prescient—it occurred as the number of HIV cases in Harris County began to rise and as other facilities treating patients were shutting down. "The Institute for →

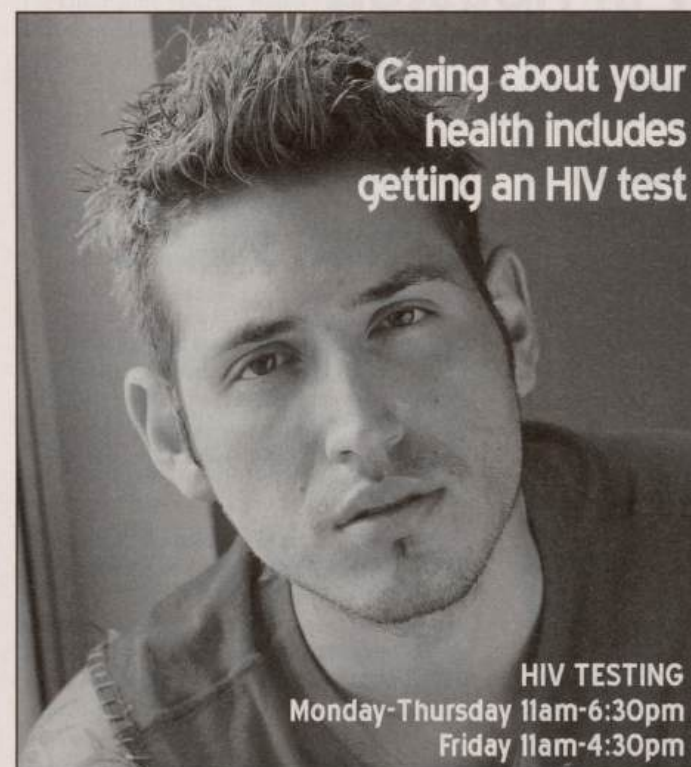


Bunnies on the Bayou is seeking deserving organizations to benefit from our 31st anniversary event, scheduled for April 4, 2010.

We invite 501(c) (3) organizations that are performing exceptional work in the community to apply for funding.

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For complete information: bunniesonthebayou.org or call Jack Berger 713.520.7237



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'Thomas' Turns Twenty

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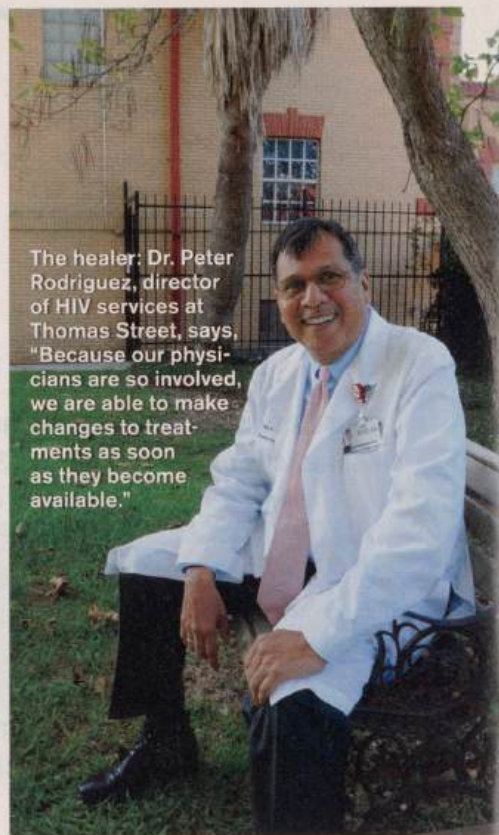
Immunological Disorders was closing and we knew that there would be an influx of patients into HCHD," Boice said. "Combined with the patients already at the Chest Clinic at Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital and the Infectious Disease Clinic at Ben Taub General Hospital, it was clear that the public health-care system would soon be overwhelmed with HIV-positive patients. Lois Jean Moore [then CEO of HCHD] was a wonderful advocate for providing medical care to people with HIV. Under her leadership HCHD chose the clinic, which, at that time, was centrally located to patients."

Dr. Thomas R. Cate, retired professor at Baylor College of Medicine, was one of the first physicians to see patients at TSHC. "With the expansion of the epidemic, we knew that we had to have a dedicated, local facility to treat patients," he said. As the clinic's first medical director, Cate reports that he "just kind of fell into the job. Very shortly after coming to TSHC, I was spending the majority of my time there."

According to Cate, "Clinics like TSHC were somewhat rare. There were others, especially on the east and west coasts, at the epicenters of the epidemic. TSHC was one of the earliest facilities in the south and in Texas."

With limited medications in their armamentarium, TSHC staff often found themselves in medically uncharted territory. Patients were despondent. AZT, the only medication indicated for controlling HIV infection, had been approved in 1987, and the CDC had just issued treatment guidelines for the treatment of PCP (Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia), a major cause of HIV-related mortality. "At that time I was working with other doctors, including my colleague, Dr. Robert Awe. All of us were seeing a lot of opportunistic manifestations of HIV, especially pulmonary infections." Undeterred, Cate and others persisted.

Early days at TSHC were simultaneously challenging and invigorating for the sparse staff. At that time the clinic looked nothing like its present-day incarnation. According to Boice, "It was dark, dingy, and we only used the first two floors."



The healer: Dr. Peter Rodriguez, director of HIV services at Thomas Street, says, "Because our physicians are so involved, we are able to make changes to treatments as soon as they become available."

World AIDS Day in Houston

Annually commemorated worldwide, World AIDS Day highlights the progress made in the battle against HIV/AIDS and serves as a reminder of how much still needs to be accomplished in the fight against the disease. This year, World AIDS Day is being recognized in Houston with the following events.

HIV Testing. Free HIV testing, with no gold card or donation required or requested. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. daily. HCHD Thomas Street Clinic, 2015 Thomas St. 713/873-4157 • 713/873-4026.

HIV Testing. Legacy Community Health Services offers free confidential rapid HIV testing using the OraQuick-Advance collection method with results available within 20 minutes. MONDAYS: All Star News and Video Emporium, 3415 Katy Frwy. 4-8 p.m.; George Sports Bar, 617 Fairview, 6-10 p.m. • TUESDAYS: 611 Hyde Park Pub, 611 Hyde Park, 4-8 p.m.; Midtown Spa, 3100 Fannin St., 4-8 p.m. • WEDNESDAYS: Club Houston, 2205 Fannin St., 8 p.m.-12 a.m.; EJ's, 2517 Ralph, 10 p.m.-1 a.m. • FRIDAYS: Midtown Spa, 3100 Fannin St., 5-9 p.m.; EJ's, 2517 Ralph St., 10 p.m.-1 a.m. Free, confidential syphilis testing is also offered. HIV and syphilis testing is offered at 215 Westheimer Rd., Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. and Friday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. 713/830-3070.

HIV Testing. Planned Parenthood offers daily free anonymous or confidential testing at clinic locations throughout the area. To speak with an HIV counselor, call 1/800-230-PLAN. Dickinson: 281/337-7725. Fannin St.: 713/831-6543. FM1960: 281/587-8081. Greenspoint: 281/445-4553. Huntsville: 936/295-6396. Lufkin: 936/634-8446, ext. 223. Rosenberg: 281/342-3950. Stafford: 281/494-9848.

Illuminations Project, an annual music, dance, and drag showcase, features performers from the Houston area helping to bring awareness to AIDS. Hope Stone, Houston Metropolitan Dance Company, City Ballet of Houston, Regina Dane, Lone Star Lariats, Psophonia Dance Company, Dance of Asia America, Uptown Dance Company, Kimberly Anne O'Neil, Second Generation Dance Company, Clay Hardy, and Houston Fly Boys perform. Nov. 11, 7:30 p.m. Hobby Center for the Performing Arts Zilkha Hall, 800 Bagby St. \$35. Benefits Montrose Counseling Center and Gulf Coast Archive Museum. Illuminationsproject.org.

AIDS Foundation Houston's 2009 World AIDS Day Luncheon honors PWA Holiday Charities with its Shelby Hodge Vision Award, which recognizes a community member's commitment and perseverance to improving the lives of AFH clients and their families. For more than 20 years, PWAHC has consistently demonstrated compassion for those living with HIV/AIDS and dedication to increasing the quality of their lives.

"The work of PWA Holiday Charities makes life better for our HIV positive brothers and sisters," said AFH chief executive officer, Kelly A. McCann. "For that reason, we believe PWAHC is duly deserving of this year's Shelby Hodge Vision Award."

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and long-standing support of AFH. Presented by Chevron. Dec. 1, 11:30 a.m. Benefits AIDS Foundation Houston. Four Seasons Houston, 1300 Lamar St. 713/623-6796, ext. 278. aidshelp.org. (See AIDS Watch, page 18.)

Artists from the Healing Arts Outreach Group, a program of Art League Houston led by artist Kermit Eisenhut, display their works in commemoration of World AIDS Day. Some of the pieces of art on displays may be for sale. Dec. 1, noon-8 p.m. Houston GLBT Community Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207. HoustonGLBT-Center@gmail.com.

Bethel Church UCC observes World AIDS Day with a bilingual service of remembrance. The service is being hosted in partnership with other local organizations, including League of United Latin American Citizens and the Houston GLBT Community Center. Dec. 5, 6:30 p.m. 1107 Shepherd Dr. bethelhouston.org • 713/861-6670.

Resurrection MCC and its community partners present Community World AIDS Day Service, reflecting on how HIV and AIDS affect friends, family, community and world. Presented by the Affirming Ministerial Alliance of Greater Houston. Dec. 6, 6 p.m. Resurrection MCC, 2025 W. 11th St. resurrectionmcc.org • 713/861-9149.

We had a handful of docs and about 350 patients. Ninety percent of them were gay white males, some were intravenous drug users, and just a handful were women."

One of those original patients was David Douhant, diagnosed with HIV in 1989 and currently a TSHC volunteer patient mentor. "I was one of the first people there when they opened the doors. I remember that the place was like a museum—a dusty old hospital. It looked like something out of an old movie, but we didn't care. Patients were so happy to have their own clinic; this was a dream come true for us. Many of us had received our care at other clinics throughout HCHD. We used to get frustrated, because prior to TSHC, people would always ask us why we had medical appointments, and we didn't want to disclose our status."

Stigma, ignorance, and secrecy abounded. There were still many impediments to caring for patients who were part of a burgeoning, behaviorally-centered epidemic. "There was still a great deal of fear associated with treating TSHC patients, even among medical professionals," Boice recalls. "We experienced a lot of stigma from others who couldn't understand why someone would choose to work at TSHC. Every professional who was at the clinic volunteered for their jobs there," Boice said. We educated medical staff and residents about transmission issues.

This sentiment is echoed by Dr. Cate. "The staff was in many ways invigorated by the challenges that we faced on a daily basis. Over time we put systems in place that monitored patients and helped them to stay well. The patients were very appreciative of our efforts and were very compliant with medication and appointments. In spite of the difficult circumstances, there were many people we really enjoyed taking care of."

Though not public knowledge, some of the TSHC staff had a very close connection with patients in the clinic. According to Boice, "Several of the staff were part of the GLBT community. They saw what was happening to people they cared about and wanted to be part of a solution for the epidemic."

As utilization of TSHC increased, it became clear to the staff that the existing "museum" they inhabited needed a major makeover. "In the early '90s we obtained a large federal grant to completely redo the interior of the clinic," Boice stated. "They started the reconstruction from the 4th floor down, demolishing everything to the exterior walls. When the top two floors were completed, we moved up there, →



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'Thomas' Turns Twenty

continued from previous page

and they began construction on the two bottom floors. It was chaotic, but as the employees witnessed the transformation, we became very excited about working in a brand-new clinic. Also, patient care improved dramatically as the result of this reconstruction. There was now space for physical therapy, medical records, social workers, case managers, radiology, and pharmacy. We were also able to house additional medical staff."

"When Dr. Cate informed us that we would have access to expanded services as the result of reconstruction and enlarging of the clinic, that was a huge help to us," patient Douhant said, "especially with regard to mental-health issues. Having a psychiatrist here enabled us to deal with some of the issues that contributed to our becoming HIV positive. We were finally able to address the emotional impact of HIV on us and our families. Also, when case managers came to help us to get housing and other services, it allowed us to live more stable lives and stay healthy. The word 'family' took on a new meaning—we would look forward to seeing other patients—the camaraderie through-



I will survive: David Douhant, one of the original patients, is now a Thomas Street Health Clinic volunteer patient mentor.

out the clinic was wonderful. Patients motivated each other."

With the advent of Ryan White funding in 1990, money was allocated for a Volunteer Program, sponsored by the People With AIDS Coalition of Houston. "Lynn Pannill [then executive director] facilitated the creation of that program," Douhant said. "This was a big turning

point for patients. Volunteers took care of everyone, and organizations like the Colt 45's and other GLBT groups also provided lots of help to us."

While this support may seem ancillary in nature, in the early '90s it was crucial. According to Douhant, "it was beneficial in many ways, but most of all it helped people to stay away from activities that

were harmful to them—abusing drugs and alcohol."

"Clinic staff provided much more than medical care," Boice remembers. "We were able to empathize with their situations. We did take the time to sit and listen to them and try to give them hope. We did some research, but it was limited. We just didn't have many drugs in the pipeline to work with."

With any illness, when a dedicated group of clinicians focuses on a disease process, they inevitably make progress toward a solution, if only incrementally. "After a period of seeing patients with the same symptoms, we began to notice trends and similarities," Dr. Cate reported. "As our knowledge evolved, we began to take care of patients earlier. When we stopped having to put out so many fires, things became a little more manageable. Also, as time progressed, patients became more alert to what an HIV diagnosis meant; they realized quickly that they needed to take care of themselves."

"One of the things I was proud to see," Dr. Cate remembers, "was that, after a period of time, the clinic was able to provide not just care in response to emergent situations, but care that helped us to become pretty darn good at managing HIV infection and its complications. At that time, this was the best we could hope for. Patients evolved with the clinic. As we provided better care, the patients became more involved in their own health outcomes."

Today, the man in charge as medical director is physician Thomas P. Giordano, assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine. Like his predecessors, Giordano shares the same traits of commitment and inquisitiveness. "TSHC has always been interesting to me because of the breadth and diversity of patients—all ages, genders, and risk factors for infection are seen here. I came to Houston to train in infectious disease precisely because there was a large HIV-positive population, many of whom were treated in a single clinic. As a physician, TSHC provided a great opportunity to care for people with HIV."

In addition to providing clinical care, Giordano, like most of the TSHC medical staff, participates in a variety of research projects to improve outcomes. "One of our milestones was the clinic's substantial involvement in the 2002 SMART [Strategies for the Management →



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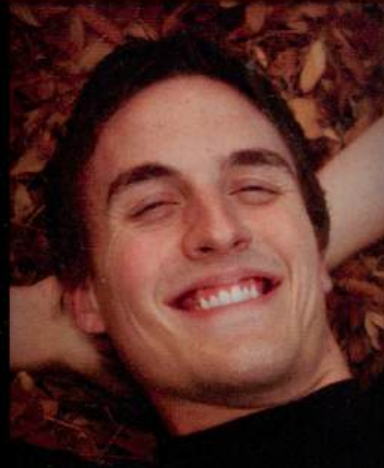
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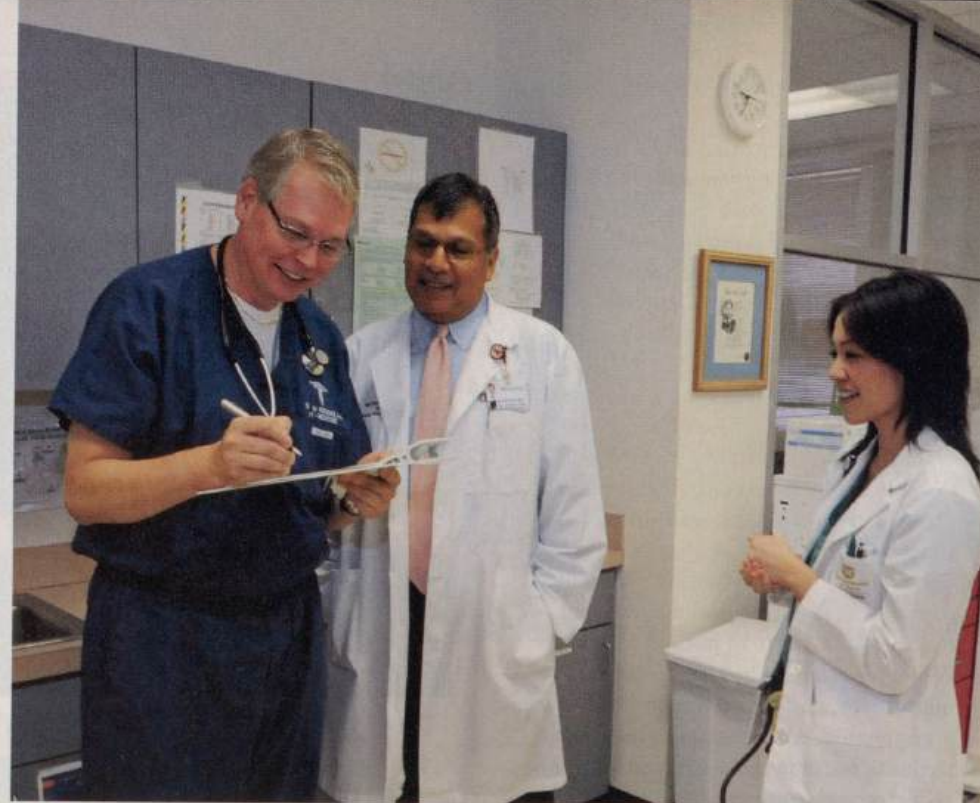
'Thomas' Turns Twenty

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of Anti-Retroviral Therapy] study, a collaborative effort between UT, Baylor, the Veteran's Administration, and others." This worldwide study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, was the largest clinical trial of any infectious disease and was used to answer crucial questions about long-term management of HIV. "We were heavily involved," Giordano said. "In fact, among all the centers that participated, only the country of France enrolled more individuals in this study than we did at TSHC."

Research continues to play an important role within the clinic's medical milieu. Recently, Giordano and others have concentrated their research on how to use existing tools more effectively to help manage disease. A continuing question for Giordano is, "How do we get medications to patients, and how do we keep them connected to the clinic to maximize positive health outcomes?"

Given that the clinic serves as the medical safety net for half of the uninsured HIV-positive patients in Harris County, the public health ramifications of staying on medication and being healthy



The doctors are in (l-r): Gus Krucke, MD, Rodriguez, and Glynda Caga-anan, MSIV. While the building has changed from its original dark, dated appearance, the current staff is just as passionate and caring as the first caregivers at the clinic.

are economically and epidemiologically important.

"We have made incredible progress in

terms of the efficiency and effectiveness with which we deliver care," Giordano said. "Today TSHC is comparable to any

major HIV specialty clinic in the nation. Other clinic directors who visit us are very impressed with the physical plant, as well as the comprehensive care that we provide."

"We are very lucky to have so many physicians who are doing research on national and international projects," says Pete Rodriguez, RN, BSN, ACRN, the director of HIV services at TSHC. "They are our eyes and ears that determine which projects we undertake."

TSHC is known for innovative treatment. "Because our physicians are so involved, we are able to make changes to treatments as soon as they become available. We try to stay very current on what is happening with our patients."

Rodriguez is also very concerned about adherence to medication and care. "Our research also involves patient mentors who are trained to work with patients and guide them through the clinic." They also have had a lot of input into how research concepts are communicated effectively to patients clinic-wide."

Seeking to move beyond its historic façade, TSHC has implemented Routine Universal Screening for HIV (RUSH), whereby more than 25,000 patients accessing HCHD emergency centers have been screened for HIV. "This follows the established CDC guidelines that seek to include HIV testing as a routine part of medical care," Rodriguez said.

Medical Director Giordano and others express sincere optimism for the future. "With proper treatment and lots of effort from patients, HIV has become a manageable infection. Patients now have many options, and as a clinician that's very exciting to me. Currently, medical practice is built around episodic problem solving. Eventually, we will need to transition TSHC to treat chronic disease and keep people in care."

Volunteer Patient Mentor Douhnt is still concerned about the 50 newly diagnosed individuals that arrive at TSHC monthly. "In spite of all of the education that we have done, we still see many younger people; we continue to battle addiction issues and we continue to combat stigma. As a mentor I tell my story and share how my behavior after I became positive has helped me to survive. I didn't think I would be here after 20 years. All of the good health I have, I owe to the medical staff of TSHC. Just by being here in Houston, Thomas Street Health Center saves lives."

Rich Arenschioldt wrote about the Ryan White CARE Act in the October issue of OutSmart.

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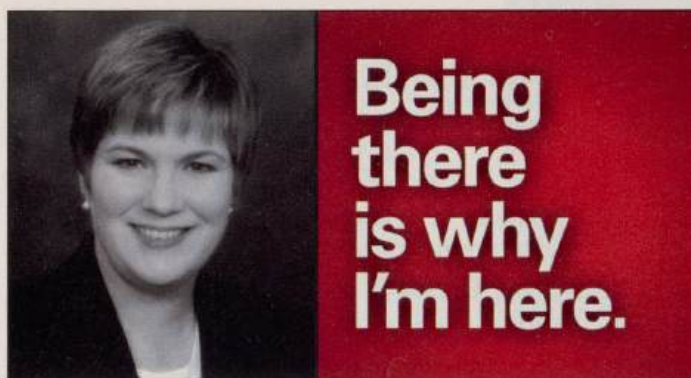
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Getting '(serious)'

*Being counted among
People magazine's 2003
"25 Hottest Bachelors" and
one of Out magazine's 2008
"Tastemakers" is the lighter
side of life for one of the
dance world's most sought-
after choreographers. Trey
McIntyre talks to OutSmart
about his process, the work
he's bringing to Houston,
and coming back to a city
he loves.*

by Neil Ellis Orts

Photo by Jonas Lundqvist

Trey McIntyre grew up in Kansas, studied at the North Carolina School of the Arts, then came to Houston in his late teens to train at the Houston Ballet Academy (now the Ben Stevenson Academy). Artistic Director Ben Stevenson created for him the position of choreographic apprentice and later named him choreographic associate. Since leaving Houston, McIntyre has choreographed more than 80 works of dance for some of the world's most prestigious dance companies. In a few short years, his own company, the Trey McIntyre Project (which he created in with his partner in life and dance, Executive Director John Michael Schert), has created a stir in the contemporary dance scene. The company, which now calls Boise, Idaho, home, is currently on its second international tour and appears at the Wortham Center's Cullen Theater on Friday, November 13 (visit spahouston.org for ticket information).

Neil Ellis Orts: Looking at some video that you have on your website, I was surprised by what I saw. Everything I've heard about you is Houston Ballet and other ballet companies, but your work doesn't look like ballet to me.

Trey McIntyre: Great!

**So what are some of your influences?
Clearly your background is ballet.**

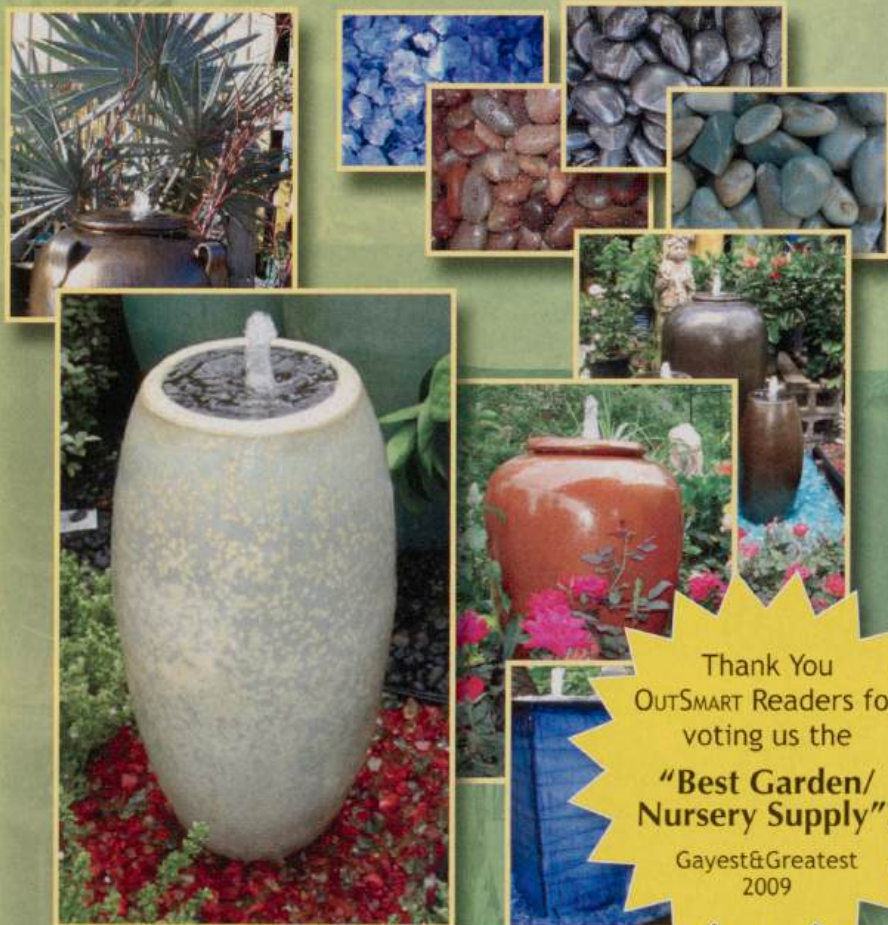


Don't fence me in: Trey McIntyre broke away from Houston Ballet to form Trey McIntyre Project, a dance company that he says defies strict definition. "The labels of what category [my choreography] might fit into, I leave up to somebody else," he says.

Ballet is a language and a vocabulary and a science for making sense out of an imperfect instrument in the human body. I think the reason I still consider myself a ballet chore-

ographer is because the way I communicate with dancers is through that terminology. I think it's just a way of speaking incredibly clearly. No matter where the movement →

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Getting 'serious'

continued from previous page

may go, even if it doesn't end up looking like ballet, it's still the process by which that information is communicated clearly. But as a choreographer I'm constantly pushing myself to find new things. I don't mean just trying to expand the form or be more creative. I think as an artist you're constantly having to find new things in yourself because you're changing every single day, and if you're truly being honest, each piece is new and different. In that case, for me, especially because I've gotten further and further away from working with ballet companies, it's probably pushed the style of movement further and further from that, but still in the end I consider it all ballet.

On the rocks: dancers (l-r) Dylan G-Bowley, Jason Hartley, Brett Perry, and John Michael Schert commune with nature in preparation for Trey McIntyre Project's *The Sun Road*.



One of the things I noticed in your dancers or choreography is that I feel the weight, which I generally associate with modern dance technique. Have you always played with weight in that way?

I don't think it was ever a conscious choice to move in that direction. As far as I can recollect, that's always been something that's important to me. I like the idea of contrast and juxtaposition. There can't be a lift without weight. I also think that weight has something to do with my heritage. I was born in Kansas and there's something about people that come from the Great Plains. They have a natural sense of the earth under their feet. I grew up just seeing space; there's barely even a hill. So there's something about that

expanse. And the way air hits your body, to me, is like one big breath out.

I work with ballet dancers, and it's actually one of my biggest struggles, when I first work with someone, to still exercise a fantastic classical technique, but to also do that through a sense of what's underneath them. Honestly, I think the distinctions at this point in history are meaningless. It changes drastically from piece to piece. I guess the labels of what category [my choreography] might fit into, I leave up to someone else.

What are you bringing to Houston?

We're opening with a ballet called *Like a Samba*. That one looks like ballet. It's actually the only piece that I didn't make with these dancers. I actually made it some time ago. It was back when I was having a real fascina-

tion with the confines of classical vocabulary and really sticking to it in a purist manner and seeing how I could communicate within that. It's all the music of Astrud Gilberto. It's different riffs, also, on Latin dance and incorporating that into classical vocabulary.

The next piece is called (*serious*). It's a trio and all set to Henry Cowell music. I really try to build some impossible challenge into each work just so I'm guaranteed to not fall into any of my own comfort zones. I have to be uncomfortable the whole time making the piece, otherwise it just becomes about demonstrating what I think I can do well as opposed to diving into the unknown. So with this piece in particular, my challenge was to not prepare at all. It was really →

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Getting '(serious)'

continued from page 61

just call some dancers into the studio, not even choose music, and commit myself to making the piece about that particular moment, what I bring in that day, what the dancer brings in that day, and figuring it out there in the studio. Eventually its own poetic narrative presented itself.

Then the last piece in the first half is called *Shape*. It's a really short piece. It's basically the story of the dancers' bodies using big red balloons. It was meant to be ridiculous, and then I saw how quickly I could make it a serious topic, to take this new body shape seriously and see if I could create a world for that.

In the second half is a piece called *The Sun Road*. It was commissioned by Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, and they asked me to make a piece about Glacier National Park as a part of their Face of America series. I dove in there on that one, because it's something I would never have thought of on my own, to make a piece about a national park. We went to the park, and we decided the focus of the piece would be about the loss of glacier and how global climate change is impacting that park. We filmed a lot of video content of the dancers in the park, and then that video content is presented as projections as part of the live performance.

Is there anything that connects these four pieces that you put them all in one program, or is it again about juxtaposition?

It's not a thematic program, but I certainly think about balance and how the works relate to one another and create an experience.

How long were you in Houston?

I was there for nine years. I loved it and I miss it so much.

Is it fun to bring new work to a city where you lived and worked so long?

I'm excited about it, and I'm also excited about spending time back in the city and going to places that I love. It can be very melancholy. Nine years is a long time. It was pretty formative years. I got there when I was 17, and I actually had a position with Houston Ballet for longer than that. I remained choreographic associate for quite a while, so I had ties for a really long time. I'm looking forward to showing off the city to my company.

Neil Ellis Orts wrote about choreographer Salim Gauwloos in the June issue of OutSmart.

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They Love a Parade

After four decades, Krewe of Olympus keeps on rolling

by Nancy Ford • Photos by Dalton DeHart



Lordy, lordy—look who's 40! "We are celebrating our 40th year in existence this year, a pretty remarkable feat for a small 501(c)(3) GLBT organization," says Krewe of Olympus' Annie Couch.

The Houston Krewe, with its 60-or-so members, is one of the largest predominately gay Krewes in the United States. It exists as a perpetuation of the Crescent City's fabled Mardi Gras. Officially, the group exists "to present theatrical and educational events that perpetuate and continue Mardi Gras traditions and to

Pretty as a peacock: the Krewe of Olympus' "main event is its annual Tableau Ball, in which members strut down the runway in fully beaded, feathered, fabulous regalia.

raise money for community charities," according to its mission statement.

"Our main focus is to perpetuate the idea of Mardi Gras here in Houston, but to also help out community organizations," Couch continues. "We want to celebrate that with everybody!"

The Krewe of Olympus isn't Houston-born, but has carved out a considerable

niche for itself in the Bayou City—and beyond since its conception in 1970 in New Orleans. Longtime Krewe members, Ben Jones and Bill Walters, were responsible for moving the Krewe from Louisiana to Houston in the early 1990s. The Krewe's first Mardi Gras ball was held in Houston in 1991.

Couch is the vice president of the Krewe, and is celebrating her own 10-year anniversary with the group. She is proud of the face of diversity the Krewe membership has developed over the years. "When the Krewe was in New Orleans, it was an all-male organization, and so I think →

LET THE BUENO TIMES ROLL! The Krewe of Olympus goes Latin with a Kicked-Up Brunch offering south-of-the-border cuisine, plus prime rib, waffles, an omelet station, and an open bar. Nov. 8, 2–4 p.m. \$30. Benefits Krewe of Olympus. Sycamore Heights Bed & Breakfast, 245 W. 18th St. • mardigrastexas.com.

AND MANY HAPPY RETURNS. Mix and mingle with members of the Krewe of Olympus as they gather for cocktails to toast the group's 40th anniversary of throwing beads and raising funds. Nov. 22, 3–5 p.m. JR's Bar & Grill, 808 Pacific St. • mardigrastexas.com.

They Love a Parade

continued from previous page

that's pretty significant. We're about 10-to-15 percent female now."

Krewe of Olympus does not restrict its activities, or its membership, to Houston. "We have members in Dallas and we have members in Austin that are part of the Houston Krewe," Couch says. "We even have a member in California."

"This year we went to San Antonio to participate in their gay pride festival. We also always go to Austin and Dallas and participate in their gay pride parades," she continues. "We have a great time."

Major Krewe events coming up in 2010 include a Kicked-Up Brunch on November 8, a 40th-anniversary cocktail reception on November 22, and the Twelfth Night Party on January 9. All the ancillary events throughout the year lead up to the group's main event, the Tableau Ball.

Prominently featured at all Krewe events are a "king and queen" who are appointed at the ball each year, based on their overall contribution throughout their years of service with the Krewe. This year's Krewe ambassadors are "King" Ray Kroulik and "Queen" Billy Bailey.

"They represent the Krewe throughout



Head in the clouds: Krewe of Olympus vice president, Annie Couch, paid homage to Amelia Earhart, donning full aviator drag, for a recent Tableau Ball.

the year at various functions, whether it's coronation for the court systems, or it's participating in the Colt 45's or holiday charities, or somebody's shows to raise money," Couch explains. "The king and queen are basically the public face of the

Krewe for that particular year."

In 2010, the Krewe plans to blow out all the stops with Ball XL, scheduled February 6 at the George R. Brown Convention Center.

The Krewe's Tableau Balls are built to

reflect imaginative themes, like "Olympus Goes to Hollywood" (2004) and "Everything's Bigger in Texas" (2005). Members construct mini floats, some motorized, some manual, which they feel represent the spirit of that year's theme. For the Krewe's 2007 ball, dubbed "Time Travelers," Couch fashioned herself into a tribute to famed aviatrix, Amelia Earhart, walking the ball's long runway with a mini Spirit of St. Louis aircraft around her, complete with spinning propellers.

"I didn't know I was creative until I started doing this!" Couch says, laughing.

The theme of the 40th-anniversary ball is "Ports of Call."

"We will visit the world in costume!" Couch says with anticipatory enthusiasm. "Everyone pitches in to do the floats."

After all the glitter is gone and the beads are swept off the ball's runway, the Krewe's main goal is to raise money for local charities. Couch estimates that hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised by the Krewe in the last four decades.

AssistHers, Colt 45's AIDS Trouble Fund, and PFLAG/HATCH Scholarship Fund are the beneficiaries for the year.

"We are so pleased that in recent history, it's been anywhere from \$15,000 to \$20,000 each year. We're so proud of what all we can do for the community and what we've been able to do."

An outlet for creative expression and raising money for the community are not the only aspects of the Krewe that draws members, Couch says.

"It's a 'family thing,'" Couch reveals thoughtfully. "So many of us are not from Houston and don't have family close. It becomes a family."

"It absolutely becomes a family," she reiterates. "It offers an opportunity to help the community, and just make a whole bunch of friends. It's a whole group of people you would do just about anything for, I think."

Like any strong family, the Krewe of Olympus, Couch expects, will grow even larger and stronger in the next 40 years. "Our balls are probably going to start being wheelchair balls," she laughs. "Whatever works!"

But then Couch grows more serious as she considers the future needs of the community the Krewe serves.

"There are going to be more people coming up who need help," she says. "It's really important to have the community out there behind us, because we certainly couldn't do it without them. It's a big undertaking, that's for sure." ■

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Gays in the Military

(The Advocate, 11/09, Michael Joseph Gross)

Re: interviews with straight men (given anonymously) who serve with gay men in the military.

You have to be a little bit gay [to be in the infantry]. Gay, as in, you have to like being around guys, touching guys, being touched by guys, being pretty much only with guys. Not sucking-c**k gay. Anybody tries to cross that line with me, he gets slapped. But if that's what you want to do on your own time, in your own life, and you can shoot as good as I can, I Do. Not. Give. A. Shit.

Seth Meyers

(actor/comedian)

(Saturday Night Live's Weekend Update, 10/17/09)

In a speech to the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay rights group, President Obama pledged to end the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Even better for gays, it's being replaced with a new policy, "Truth or Dare."

Ali Abdussalam Treki

of Libya

(the new president of the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly)

(10/5/09)

Re: a UN resolution that calls for the universal decriminalization of homosexuality.

That matter is very sensitive and very touchy for many countries. I think, as a Muslim, I myself am not in favor of that. And it's not only the Muslim countries, I can see it is not accepted by the majority of countries. And there are some countries that allow that, thinking it is a kind of democracy. I think it is not, in my opinion. . . . I think it is not acceptable by our religion, our traditions, and the Muslim world, who almost [comprise] more than two billion people in the world. I think also, for other religious communities, it's not acceptable also. . . . I think it's the same for Buddhist and Hindu communities, too. So, it's a very touchy issue. . . .

Coco Chanel

(fashion designer)

(Vanity Fair, 9/09, Amy Fine Collins)

An average Dior dress [in the early '50s] could take 135 hours to produce, and the interior could be as intricately wrought as a Gothic cathedral. . . . When [Coco] Chanel traveled back to Paris from Switzerland, where she had been in "exile" as a collaborator, she fumed, "Look at how ridiculous these women are, wearing clothes by a man who doesn't know women, never had one, and dreams of being one!"

Jennifer Tilly

(actress, Bound, TV's Family Guy)

3 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

(The Advocate, 11/7/06, Dennis Hensley)

Dennis Hensley: Have you ever encountered any crazed Bound fans?

Jennifer Tilly: Oh, yeah. At the Lesbian and Gay Film Festival in San Francisco, as we were leaving a screening, me and [costar] Lori Petty were chased down the street by a bunch of really excited lesbians. They were gaining on us because I was wearing these four-inch Dolce & Gabbana heels. We went into a restaurant and climbed out the bathroom window.



Ian McKellen (seen here in *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*): does he use his hands or a sword to ban Leviticus?

Ian McKellen

(Details, 11/09, Ian Daly)

Ian Daly: Is it true that when you stay at hotels you tear out the Bible page that condemns homosexuality?

Ian McKellen: I do, absolutely. I'm not proudly defacing the book, but it's a choice between removing that page and throwing away the whole Bible. And I'm not really the first: I got delivered a package of 40 of those pages—Leviticus 18:22—that had been torn out by a married couple I know. They put them on a bit of string so that I could hang it up in the bathroom.

So did you?

It is in the bathroom, yes, but it's too much of a curiosity to actually put to use.

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blase DiStefano

(SheWired.com, 10/2/09, Tracy E. Gilchrist)

Re: her role as Dr. Camille Gray, Stargate Universe's (SGU) first gay character and the first Asian-American lesbian series' regular on television.

According to Brad Wright [executive producer], in writing the series, . . . I don't know if it's a risk for Syfy at this juncture, but they were taking so many risks with SGU as far as changing the look of this amazing franchise, as far as developing more character-driven storylines, they felt that there was a void in representing the gay community, and they wanted to take on that task. So they approached me about that, and my eyebrows went up. I was like "Oh, wow. I've never played a lesbian before." And that fascinated and challenged me.

You know, I always want to do something I've never done before—like kiss a girl. (Laughs)

Ming-Na

(actress, The Joy Luck Club, TV's ER)

Ming-Na in Syfy's Stargate Universe.

Jimmy Fallon

(Late Night with Jimmy Fallon, 9/30/09 & 10/14/09)

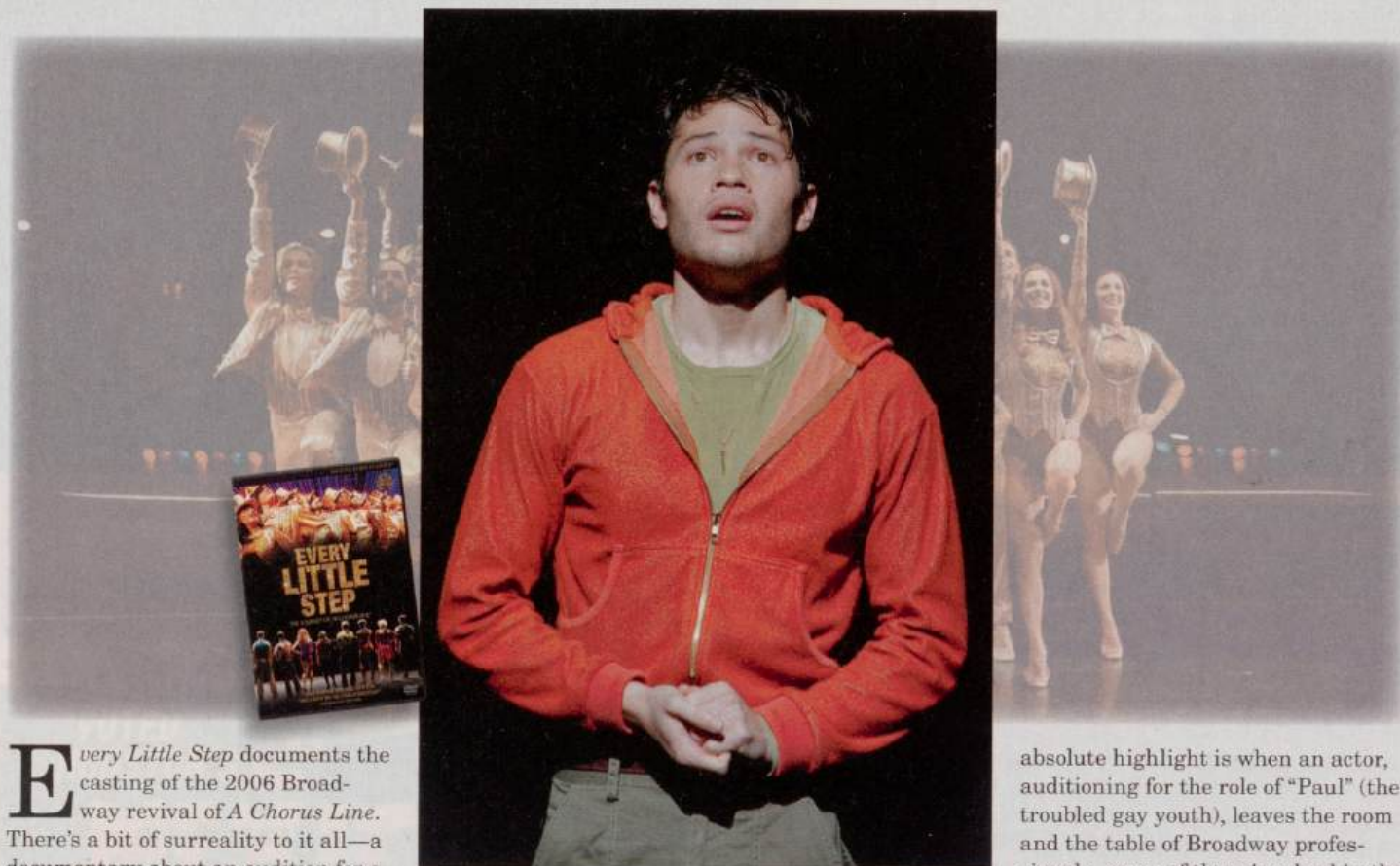
It was announced yesterday that Cleveland, Ohio, will host the 2014 Gay Games. That's weird—I thought New York always hosted the Tony Awards.

When they heard that the Gay Games were in Cleveland, Ohio, San Francisco was like: "Uh, hello?!!"

Rush Limbaugh was denied the opportunity to buy the St. Louis Rams. They said he was "too controversial." Rush was like, "Too controversial?? That's the blackest, gayest, most abortion-loving thing I've ever heard in my life!"

A SINGULAR SENSATION

'A Chorus Line' documentary rings theatrically—and terrifyingly—true



Every Little Step documents the casting of the 2006 Broadway revival of *A Chorus Line*. There's a bit of surreality to it all—a documentary about an audition for a show about auditioning—but it also highlights the impact of this show on a generation of theater artists. At the very least, as one auditioning actor noted, many actors since 1975 have had the opening song running through their minds as they stood before directors and gave it their all. "God, I hope I get it! I hope I get it!"

Roughly 3,000 people came to the first round of open auditions, all hoping to fill one of the 19 roles. That's heartbreaking enough, but to also see the people on

Dance—ten, looks—gay: when *A Chorus Line* hit Broadway in the mid-'70s, the coming-out confessional by the gay character, Paul, was considered a big deal. In *Every Little Step*, Jason Tam plays that role, portraying Paul's angst with conviction and clarity.

the other side of the table, among them the original "Connie," Baayork Lee, and original co-choreographer, Bob Avian (who directed the revival), investing just as much passion and hope in casting the show, gives an all-around picture of the terror and joy of making theater. The

absolute highlight is when an actor, auditioning for the role of "Paul" (the troubled gay youth), leaves the room and the table of Broadway professionals, many of them involved in the original production, to dissolve into tears.

This documentary is a dream. From the archival footage of Michael Bennett to the phone calls telling actors they got the part, it is spellbinding and as full of tension and drama as you'd hope to find in a movie.

From Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (sonypictures.com).

Neil Ellis Orts also profiles Trey McIntyre in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

DVD Shorts

Previews by Nancy Ford

Love of Siam (Rak haeng Siam)



This groundbreaking gay coming-of-age tale took the Best Picture and Best Director honors at Thailand's version of the Oscars, proving once again that a good love story knows no gender or language. Chookiat Sakveerakul directs. 2007. Thai with English subtitles. Strand Releasing (strandreleasing.com).

Girl Seeks Girl (Chica Busca Chica)



Originally conceived as an online soap opera, this *L-Word* full-length film follows the beautiful Lines, a dyke-bar Lotharia, as she beds and breaks the hearts of all the pretty young things who cross her path. Sonia Sebastian directs. 2009. Spanish with English subtitles. November 17. Wolfe (wolfevideo.com).

Eating Out 3: All You Can Eat



The impish Leslie Jordan (*Will & Grace*, *Boston Legal*) and John Waters cult icon, Mink Stole, do the heavy and too-brief lifting in this most recent installment of the popular hunk-meets-hunk comedies. What else do you need to know? Glenn Gaylord directs. November 10. Ariztical Entertainment (ariztical.com). ■

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IT'S HER MOVE

'Chess in Concert' diva, Idina Menzel, feels no need to compromise

Idina Menzel is best known for playing two memorable and powerful women on the Broadway stage. In *Rent*, Menzel played lesbian Maureen, who inspired a whirlwind of emotions in girlfriend Joanne and ex-boyfriend Mark. Surpassing the constraints of Maureen, Menzel's portrayal of the misunderstood Elphaba in *Wicked* is the stuff of legends. She went on to win the Best Actress Tony Award for the role. For *Chess in Concert* (Reprise), in which she appeared in the concert version of the stage musical in London alongside Josh Groban and *Rent* co-star Adam Pascal, Menzel took on another powerful woman, Florence, the long-suffering girlfriend of egotistical chess champ Freddie. I spoke with Menzel shortly before she and husband Taye Diggs welcomed their first child in early September 2009.

Gregg Shapiro: I attended your House of Blues show in Chicago in August of 2008. One of the things that was so amazing was that, in addition to all the gay men, there...
Idina Menzel: [Laughs]

...was a huge number of young girls stand-



Her *Chess* is out: to her LGBT fans, Idina Menzel says, "Hang in there."

ing at the foot of the stage. What do you think of your devoted following of young girls due to *Wicked*?

I'm just glad to be able to go on tour and perform and sing my music. I feel a responsibil-

ity to some of the young girls, because I think that they look to me as some kind of role model. I always felt that way, even when I was in *Wicked*. I felt it was important to show up to work as often as I possibly could, even on the days where I didn't feel well. For someone like me, who's in her late 30s, to have young fans, it's a pretty special thing. It gives my fan base a wider spectrum and more opportunities to all kind of music. They're a sophisticated bunch. They're open to all kinds of styles of music that I sing, and they're really smart girls who have a great energy. I kind of find myself feeling really fortunate to have them.

I Stand was released in January of 2008, and you quickly went into rehearsals for Chess in London. Do you feel as though you were able to give I Stand the full attention it deserved?

Oh, yeah. I went on tour for an entire year. I actually, if anything, made a lot of sacrifices. I didn't go in for a lot of acting roles for a year. I really dedicated myself to my record company and my music career and wanted them and my fans to feel, to know that my music was very important to me. A lot of time actors can get a bad rap, and they take the next job and ditch their →

GrooveOut Shorts

Barbra Streisand
Love Is the Answer



The Diva of Divas reminds us once again why she is exactly that. Streisand is in flawless, timeless tune with this collection of standards penned by Jacques Brel, Julie Styne, the Bergmans, Johnny Mandell, and assorted legends, all produced by the amazing Diana Krall. Bettah than buttah. Columbia Records (columbiarecords.com). —Review: Nancy Ford

Logan Lynn
From Pillar to Post



This out electro-pop artist gained Logo viewers' attention with 2007's dance-y "Feed Me to the Wolves," also featured here. His whimsical, trance-y "Bottom Your Way to the Top" is melodically busy, yet

oddly addictive. Beat the World Records (beattheworld.com). —Review: N.F.

Sacha Sacket
Heritage



The out piano rocker provides nice string work on the soaring lead track, "Running Away," and then gets even meatier with "Used." Think Coldplay, but gay(er). We hear traces of Rufus Wainwright in there, too. Nov. 17. GS Records (sachasackett.com). —Review: N.F.

Otep
Smash the Control Machine



Well, here's something unusual: a metal band fronted by an out lesbian poet. The founder of Girls Out Now social networking site goes thrashingly deep with lyrics like "I took his wife into my mouth like a slice

of wedding cake" on the track, "Numb & Dumb." Victory Records (victoryrecords.com). —Review: N.F.

Greg Scarnici
12 Inch Freak



Beyoncé, Fergie, Eminem, Amy Winehouse, and other pop personalities have all been skewered by this out New York comic. Here, dance music, with its many genres, is the target. Scarnici's Britney parody, "Gimme More (Pills)" stands out on the list. Greg Scarnici Music (gregscarnici.com). —Review: N.F.

Sugarbeach
Not Deserted



This electro-pop lesbian duo specializes in inspiring and energetic equality-themed original music at Pride festivals and assorted LGBT events. Their enthusiastic "Living Out Proud," also available on →

THE WAINWRIGHT STUFF

Consummate showman Rufus Wainwright dazzles in the brilliant 'Milwaukee at Last!!!'

If you ever want to cause a stir at a cocktail party, just bring up Rufus Wainwright. Some will declare his dynastic genius practically immortal. Others will angrily cast him off as a showy, nasal one-note who needs an editor. This DVD could move the latter into the camp of the former. Still wildly enamored with his own oeuvre, Wainwright nonetheless can be forgiven, especially in today's Elgocentric culture that anoints fame on anyone with famous parents and a fat ass. Wainwright has famous parents and a bony ass, but he has the bullshit to back up his indulgences, something the Kardashians, Jenners, and Lamases are painfully lacking. As his previous sex and drug addictions, and his painful opera, *Prima Donna*, attest, Wainwright's creative muse can quickly morph into a possessive demon that can get the best of him. But when he selectively raids his own crammed closet of influences and artistry, he can assemble a breathtaking show. It's not everyone who can decide to—and successfully pull off—an exact clone of Judy Garland's most famous concert, right down to the iconic poster art.

Milwaukee at Last!!! (Decca) is a 10-track CD and a 23-song DVD recorded from his

sold-out show at the Pabst Theatre in Wisconsin, of all places. And though the CD is fine, the DVD is a stunner. Obligatory backstage footage (cute boyfriend, fizzy band banter) aside, the concert itself is pure, exuberant showmanship that's this close to epic. As usual, the voice is crystalline, and Wainwright uses his

gifted vocal instrument to hit all the right notes, ascending to heartbreaking heights as if he was loping his way up a Mount Everest of emotion. But his

humor and surprising humility keep the angel grounded among mortals. I saw Wainwright 10 years ago at the long-gone Instant Karma, a venue as small as your parents' rec room, when he was but a blip on the culture musical radar. He's Carnegie Hall huge now, but this DVD somehow manages to capture the intimacy and awe-inspiring performance magic of a smaller setting, and is a fine example of a daring, thrillingly theatrical entertainer capable of mad genius. Wainwright can be polarizing, to be sure. But his talent is always worthy of passionate discussion. And he probably wouldn't have it any other way. —Steven Foster ■



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GrooveOut

continued from page 72

album. I wanted to go on the road and support my music and play with my band and get on a tour bus. What was great about it [Chess] was that I was able to do a lot of press in London for my album and do some international meeting and greeting, and I think I sang at Andrew Lloyd Webber's birthday concert. It's always been very important to me that I be taken seriously as a musician and a songwriter, and sometimes you have to make sacrifices so the community will take you seriously.

Was there ever a full-scale revival of Chess in the works, or was the plan to always do Chess concert-style?

I think they talked about lots of different incarnations, but the only thing that I was involved with or knew was happening was this concert version at Royal Albert Hall.

Did either of the other Florences—Elaine Paige or Judy Kuhn—have any influence on your portrayal?

Yes! I mean I listened to everyone. I hadn't seen the show, so if there's any research I can do, I always listen and try to emulate and really absorb all of their goodness [laughs]. I'm not afraid of that, because I know I'm going to sound like myself. I think it is the best learning tool to try to soak in people that you respect, whether it be in this case or the singers and songwriters that I love. You know, why not? Especially since you only have eight days to learn the whole thing. Why not listen to the best? Then I got to meet her [Paige]; she came to the concert in London, and that was really exciting. She has her own radio show where she talks about musical theater music, and I got to sit with her for an hour on her radio show.

I think you have the best numbers in Chess, including "Nobody's Side," "Heaven Help My Heart," and "I Know Him So Well." Do you have a favorite number?

I did. Actually, because the whole show is so powerful and really big and really loud at times, I really love singing "Heaven Help My Heart." It is a real moment to just be intimate and sing a beautiful melody. It's a quiet moment for the character to really show her vulnerability.

What was it like to be reunited with your Rent co-star, Adam Pascal?

It was wonderful. I grew up with Adam. We lived around the corner from each other, and not everybody knows that. We took the same school bus to elementary school. Through the years we have had a lot of moments →

GrooveOut Shorts continued from page 72

DVD, reminds the listener what Pride celebrations should be. Plus, their moving title track could easily be HATCH's new anthem. Pink Productions/SOCAN (sugarbeachmusic.com). —Review: N.F.

Mika

The Boy Who Knew Too Much



High production value and clever arrangements grab us immediately with the peppy, full-chorused "We Are Golden" and its platinum hook, "We are not what you think we are." The electro-pulsing "Rain" is also a pleasing treat, and "I See You" builds nicely, especially for those who enjoy falsetto. Casablanca Music (universalrepublic.com). —Review: N.F.

Bebel Gilberto

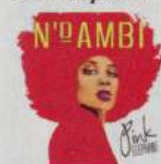
All in One



Sensual, soothing rhythms of her native country influence this Brazilian vocalist who sings mostly in Portuguese. We especially like the birdies chirping on the title track, plus the Charo-y "Chica Chica Boom Chic." Verve Records (ververecords.com). —Review: N.F.

N'dambi

Pink Elephant



Judging from her F-bomby lyrics, this Dallas native apparently threw off her Baptist roots, now laying down smooth R&B and even tossing in some wah-wah pedal for good measure. Profanely mellow. Stax

Records (ndambionline.com). —Review: N.F.

Noisettes

Wild Young Hearts



This pop trio rocked this year's South by Southwest Music Festival with their fun, funky, jumpy tunes, and rightly so. "Never Forget You" harkens back to do-wop girl groups of the '60s, but also drops traces of the very 21st-century Adele. Tasty. Mercury Records (mercuryrecords.com). —Review: N.F.

Various Artists

Now That's What I Call Club Hits



Superstar artists including Pink, Lady Gaga, Black Eyed Peas, Justin Timberlake, Jamie Foxx, Kelly Clarkson, and others contribute to this must-have collection of dance hits. It's the definitive background track for your upcoming New Year's Eve party. Sony Music (nowthatsmusic.com). —Preview: N.F.

Willy Catt

Disconnected



Southern rock and blues dominates this second release of this Maryland-based independent artist, which has placed in the top 20 on FMOB.com's (Friday Morning Quarterback) adult contemporary chart. Self-produced

(willycatt.com). —Preview: N.F. ■

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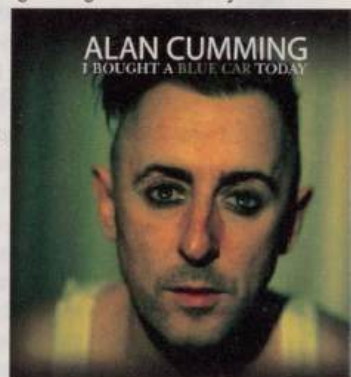
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AND IT WAS A LEMON

**Alan Cumming's 'I Bought a
Blue Car Today': where's Cash for
Clunkers when you need it?**

In addition to being a television, stage, and screen actor, and reliable fashion police target, Alan Cumming infamously added perfume to his varied résumé. That eponymously titled *eau de toilette* was christened, not "Alan," but "Cumming."

Suffice it to say, Cumming does what he wants. What Cumming wants now is to channel his inner diva, so he has committed his one-man show, *I Bought a Blue Car Today* (Yellow Sound, available now), to CD. Unfortunately, Cumming devoted the entire disc to his cabaret, neglecting to include any of his incisively witty show-biz insights that made the live stage show tolerable. Void of his gossip chatter and sounds of an audience tittering their appreciation,



Blue Car—the title comes from the sentence he chose to write on his American citizenship exam—lurches awkwardly from gear to gear, swerving toward and subsequently crushing every cone in the Broadway canon. The results are like the car wreck you can turn away from.

His Scottish brogue makes the entire screamscape sound like a terribly eager *Brigadoon* revival, and the song selections illustrate an eclecticism that is so forced it renders the listener mercilessly confused, if not a victim of Broadway whiplash. One minute he's channeling Dolly Parton (badly), then he's reducing the delicate poetry of Jimmy Webb to Blue Mountain greeting-card drivel.

Cumming has the misguided balls to try to cover Frank Sinatra's classic "That's Life," and when he has the shot to make something work, belting out a song from his Tony-winning tour de force in *Cabaret*, for example, he doesn't warble his own Emcee showtune, but warps the Sally Bowles number, "Mein Herr." One self-penned confessional song actually works because it suffers by no competent comparison, but most often the performances are, if not amateurish, simply baffling.

The CD doesn't smell as bad as Cumming's ill-named fragrance, but it affronts the senses nonetheless. —S.F. ■

GrooveOut continued from page 74

where we look at each other and say, "Wow, we're doing some really cool things together." We've gotten really close through the years, and his wife and my husband as well, we all hang out together. When we were in London, there's a moment on stage when we were in a dress rehearsal and I leaned over to him and I said, "We're in London doing *Chess*." [Laughs] We just kept getting these great opportunities to sing together. And he said, "I know, babe." I just love him so much. He's a great guy. I feel really fortunate to keep this professional relationship with him.

Now that you've done the show, do you feel like you have some perspective on why *Chess* didn't have the kind of success on Broadway that other musicals did?

The only thing I can think of is that, for Americans, we don't identify with chess in the same way, with the game itself. They're much more obsessed with chess in Europe and have much more of an affinity for it, and it's more commercial and in their daily lives. It's a hard game. It's so small to bring to life on a stage. That aspect didn't appeal to people as much, perhaps, but that's why once you get past that and you let the music seep into your soul, then people can't resist it, and that's why the music kind of lives out the show itself.

Are there aspects of doing a concert version of a musical versus the daily grind of it that you like or dislike?

I think the perfectionist in me likes it less, to be one-hundred-percent honest, than if we had a real five-week rehearsal period, because you don't have as much time. You're holding scripts and you're memorizing, but you're not completely off book, and you're trying to develop relationships with your fellow actors on stage. And, yet, it's Royal Albert Hall, and you have to sing for the million people that are there. [Laughs]

I don't like compromising. I like to feel one-hundred-percent prepared. It feels like you're walking a fine line between really developing those relationships and then just singing for the sake of getting it heard. I'd rather just know that I've put in the work with my fellow actors and things are coming out of spontaneity and preparation, as opposed to just getting up there and going for it. [Laughs]

The first day that we were actually on stage was the night that we sang the first concert. It was daunting. It's exhilarating and all that and has its wonderful moments. If you're going to ask me to compare, I would much rather take the longer rehearsal process. [Laughs] →

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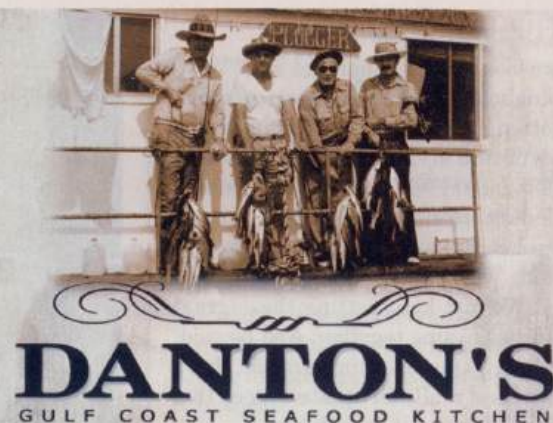
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GrooveOut

continued from page 77

Is it too soon to ask about the movie version of *Wicked*?

Oh, you can ask. Everybody asks. [Laughs] I think that they're waiting longer before they do something like that, so I have a feeling that they will tell Kristin [Chenoweth] and me that we're too old.

Finally, is there anything you'd like to say to your LGBT fans?

First, I would want to say thank you for all their support and their love. But more importantly than that, I want to say hang in there. It feels like there is a lot of change going on—five steps forward, three steps back. It feels like something special is happening, even if it feels like it's been an eternity for them. But that we're out here supporting them and trying to spread a consciousness to evoke change, and I just admire all of their strengths and their fight for an equal world.

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

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DE. LIGHTFUL.

In 'Gringa' author Melissa Hart strives to be like her mother

You thought you knew everything. When you were a kid, knowledge came so easily. An answer to everything sat on your lips at all times, and there was little anybody could tell you that you didn't already have locked in your brain. Oh, sure, your unbelievable brilliance got you in trouble now and then, because you could never resist taking advantage of that keen intelligence. Indeed, you never let anyone forget that you knew it all.

But you didn't know what you didn't know.

In the new memoir *Gringa: A Contradictory Girlhood* (Seal Press, sealpress.com) by Melissa Hart, youthful innocence morphs into understanding for a girl torn between many worlds and the adults who love her.

When Melissa Hart was in grade school, her mother fell in love with the bus driver who picked Melissa's younger brother, Tim, up for school each day. Smitten, Melissa's mother packed up her children and a few belongings, left her husband, and moved in with the bus driver in a nearby town.

The bus driver's name was Patricia.

When Melissa's father finally found the family, he brought the police, who removed the children from the house. A judge, later saying that being parented by two women was "unnatural," gave custody to the father. Melissa's mother was allowed to see her children twice a month.



Hart-warming: Melissa Hart writes a "warm, funny, loving memoir."

But for Melissa and her siblings, it wasn't enough.

They longed to be with their mother and the fun she offered. Life with her was an adventure. Not so with their staid, stern father

and his new wife.

Through her childhood, Melissa, aching for her mother, strived to emulate her. She tried hard to like girls, then eventually realized "you can't alter nature." But adolescence with a lesbian mother and an unconventional family wasn't easy.

"I had a vaudevillian great-grandmother who wore silk robes over hoary overalls,

a grandmother who made Smurf costumes for a living, and a lesbian mom who subscribed to *Ms.* and *Mother Jones*. I was screwed," Melissa said.

Then, at a sophomore-year party, when a quinceañera's mother asked, "*¿Quién es la gringa?*" ("Who is the white girl?"), the Spanish-speaking, culture-confused, WASPish ghost-white former lesbian wanna-be understood the question's deeper meaning: who was she, anyhow?

The answer lay in another country, in another lifetime.

I have two words for *Gringa: A Contradictory Girlhood*: De. Lightful.

Part coming-of-age story, part pop-culture for late-Baby-Boomer-early-Gen-Xers, author Melissa Hart writes about what it was like to be the child of a parent who came out of the closet at a time when homosexuality was extremely taboo in much of the country. It was—and consider this a warning—a time when pejorative words were much more common and casually used than they are now. Hart also abundantly recalls being a teen during the late '70s/early '80s and the acute embarrassment that inherently comes with living that age.

If you're up for a warm, funny, loving memoir that's relatively quick and definitely easy to enjoy, pick up this one. *Gringa: A Contradictory Girlhood* is one I know you'll like.

Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was three years old, and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 11,000 books.

ReadOut Shorts

Something to Declare:
Good Lesbian Travel Writing
Edited by Gillian Kendall
Terrace Books (wisc.edu/wisconsinpress)

These days of Twitter, IM, and immediate communications is pushing us from the reflective "why am I here" travel experience to the "hey, look where I'm at!" sort of trip. Good travel writing—the kind that makes being in your chair as wonderful as being on the road—is fast disappearing. Here you will find stories of internal

exploration and discovery set against new places, new people, and new experiences. The writing is top-notch, the scenes interesting, and the reflection a two-way street. It's enough to make me write a few postcards.
—Review: Angel Curtis

Stiletos and Steel
Jeri Estes
jeriestes.com

Antihero, anyone? Travel back to San Fran's Tenderloin in the 1960s and enter a world of butch pimps, femme hustlers, and another chapter in the "we had to fight for our turf back then" story. A modern noir, this book has it all—characters you can care about and a story



that keeps the pages turning. That being said, this may be the best book you can't read this season: the writer and her girlfriend refuse to settle for a small publishing company and are trying to influence mainstream publishers to pick up her debut novel by sending it to reviewers. —Review: A.C.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The pictured cover is a mock-up cover, which could change when the book is published. At press time, Howard Chaykin (comic book writer and artist) was considering a collaboration with Estes. To read updates on *Stiletos and Steel*, visit myspace.com/jeriestes and jeriestes.com. →

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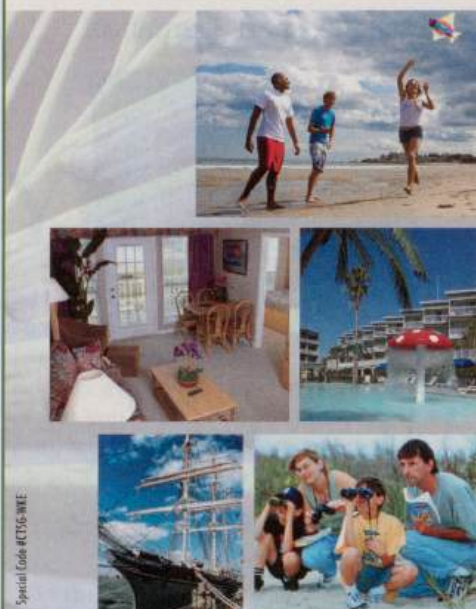
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ReadOut Shorts continued from page 80

Recycler

Lauren McLaughlin

Random House (randomhouse.com/kids)



Okay, girls, you young ones "have your period" every month (subtle gloating here). Imagine that instead you spend those four days as a fully equipped young man. Add in the fact that your young man self and your best friend are in love. For extra-added pain, you can't remember what you (he) does these days. This fun, easy read goes beyond a cool plot and a predictable story to a quiet exploration of how we learn to accept all of our parts. —Review: A.C.

Ties That Bind: Familial Homophobia and Its Consequences

Sarah Schulman

The New Press (thenewpress.com)



Sarah Schulman—one of my favorite thinkers, activists, and writers—here explores gay marriage as a way to obtain relief from systematic family oppression. She starts by looking at individual homophobia, makes the connection to "the personal is political," and ties the whole mess back to the larger community. Not only does Schulman show "how gays and lesbians are treated IN families is far more influential . . . than how we are treated AS families," she offers a strategy for change that might actually work. This is a major new work in the analysis of the oppression we all face daily. —Review: A.C.

I Shudder: And Other Reactions to Life, Death, and New Jersey

Paul Rudnick

Harper (harpercollins.com)



Introduced with his quizzical forewarning, "All of the fictional pieces are true," here are 15 essays penned by one of our time's most gifted playwrights and screenwriters. You'll ache with laughter—and other emotions—at this glimpse of Rudnick's growing up in New Jersey, behind-the-scenes goodies from the sets of his products, *Sister Act* and *Addams Family Values*, and more. —Preview: Nancy Ford

Elton John: The Bitch Is Back

Mark Bego

Phoenix Books (phoenixbooksandaudio.com)



Elton John: The Bitch Is Back is filled with all of the addictions, the self-doubts, bad toupees, affairs, and scandals—but also with the triumphant later years, the coming-to-terms with his sexuality and the establishment of a happy and healthy private life.

The author interviewed a number of celebs, including Alice Cooper, Mary Wilson of the Supremes, Angela Bowie, and Randy Jones of the Village People, among many others. —Preview: Troy Carrington ■



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IT'S TAPAS TIME!

*Tintos Spanish Restaurant & Wine Bar
offers small bites and great wines*

Step inside Tintos Spanish Restaurant & Wine Bar, tucked into the backside of River Oaks Shopping Center in the old Backdoor Sushi locale, and you'll find a soothing dark-wood décor with modernist bullhead art and minimalist lighting sconces. It's at once chic and comforting.

But wait. There's also blood-stirring strains of recorded flamenco music—if not live gypsy guitarists, singers, and dancers—and spicy dishes to tantalize the taste buds. Tintos (Spanish for a wine) is an elegant blend of tradition and contemporary, both in flavors and atmosphere. And its customers reflect that spirit: from the Hindu regulars who come for the vegetarian tapas to the young girls-night-out crowd that comes for the Wednesday night ladies half-price bubbly.

Tintos, which opened in June, joins the roughly 10,000 other eateries in Houston. But Tintos is already making a mark, wowing River Oaks neighbors and those searching for good wines and fun food. Tapas, Spanish appetizers or small plates traditionally served with wine and port in Spanish cafes and bars, are a dining option whose timing may be perfect for the current climate.

"Tapas are a good option," says owner Alberto Alfonzo. "You eat less and it's cheaper, too," although you can certainly fill up if you're trying to eat your way through the 52 different tapas Tintos offers on a daily basis. But for most folks one or two are the way to go, and the dishes are better if you're sharing several with a table of friends. The seafood paellas are the priciest, though still under \$20, but most are around half that price. And lunch is a great time to sample the menu here, when 15 items are offered for \$9 or less.

The 42-year-old Alfonzo, who spent the last 18 years as a corporate "restaurant fixer" for Landry's Restaurant, Inc., and The Tasting Room, also serves up a super Sunday brunch with bottomless pitchers of sangria, paella, Spanish omelets, and even blueberry pancakes. "You know, they eat pancakes in Spain. Spaniards eat corn flakes, too," laughs Alfonzo, although most



Good wine, no bull: Tintos' fine wines (inset) are perfectly matched with the tapas crowd.

of the dishes he's created skew toward the traditional tapas, but with a hint of his South American upbringing.

I grew up in Venezuela," he says. "It's like a little Madrid—every Sunday you go and eat paella and listen to the music." Which is exactly what he's recreated at Tintos, where Sunday brunch includes live flamenco with that side of paella (or pancakes). But there are some other not-to-be-missed menu items here.

The *empanadas de bacalao* are truly tasty, two little pastries filled with salt cod and pimento aioli. The rabbit tenderloin with roasted peppers, *conejo al cazador*, is a rare treat, but there's also quail and baby lamb skewers. There are plenty more seafood dishes, vegetarian tapas, meats and cheese plates, as well as soups like the hearty seafood stew, salads, and some wonderful sandwiches served with a side salad and truffle fries. The *Pepito* of sliced sirloin with aged Mahón cheese is very popular. You can even get desserts from flan to chocolate shooters. And, of course, beer and wine.

"The wine list is about 40 percent Spanish," Alfonzo says, "with a lot of cava. I like the bubbly. But we also have some good Napa wines." Tintos is also a retail wine outlet, which means if you don't finish your bottle, you can cork it and take it home. And if you really like it, you can buy a bottle or a case to go. One whole wall of

the dining room is a wine rack, made by Alfonzo, who did a lot of the remodeling work himself. He designed the outdoor patio, which is one of the most lovely in town, with its lush foliage and three rock ponds with gurgling fountains. Alfonzo plans to offer outdoor cooking classes there soon.

He also plans on expanding the Tintos concept to five other cities and creating a new restaurant before he retires. Sort of.

Ultimately he, wife Ideania, and their 13-pound Yorkie, Bruno, want to end up in Costa Rica. "But I'll still cook," he says. "I want a little place where you bring your fish in and I'll cook it for you!"

In the meantime, Alfonzo spends most of his waking hours at Tintos. Going from restaurant employee to restaurant owner has been a big change.

"It's a big responsibility," he says. "There's a lot of fear, but I'm doing what I love. I can't wait to wake up every day and come here and create a new dish!"

Visit Tintos Spanish Restaurant & Wine Bar at 2015 W. Gray St., 713/522-1330, tintosrestaurant.com. Tintos is open for lunch and dinner daily and Sunday brunch. A private dining room is available for parties.

Marene Gustin also writes about HAPI, a new animal advocacy group, in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

AMUSE BOUCHE

As fun as it is flavorful, the 'Fearless Critic: Houston Restaurant Guide 2010' serves up sweet praise and searing critiques of 450 H-town eateries.

Just last year, Houston was humiliatedly awarded the title of Fattest City in America for the third year in a row. Flabby gothams and lipo-obsessed zip codes everywhere laughed, and wheezed their own flabby sigh of relief because their big asses had dodged the overweight bullet. Say what you will, but we know the real reason our fair city can pack on the poundage. Houston boasts some of most delectably reliable—and adventurous—cuisine in the country. And, honestly, most of us are not as obese as the bell curve busters would have anyone believe. How can we be when we're all too busy acrobatically hopping from favorite greasy spoon standby to dicing-edge James Beardworthy bistro? Ask anyone who's moved from the Lone Star and they'll agree, mourning our truly diverse fare. Even gastronomic epicenters like LA, San Fran, New York, and New Orleans salivate at our culinary prowess and head-spinning examples of delicious, Texas-sized showing off in the kitchen. But sampling the bounty of our fair city is a big bite to try to swallow.

Helping you wade through cuisine both humble and haute is the latest edition of the *Fearless Critic Houston Restaurant Guide*. A phalanx of seriously qualified (but never snobby) foodies sample more than 450 local eateries and sum up their clever, shrewdly observed critiques to save you the financial heartache of an overpriced, under-seasoned meal and the cruel heartburn of

Fearless Critic



a rank one. The writing is precise and vigorously entertaining, whether they're slobbering over Marco's or trashing Collina's. You can skip the lengthy reviews if you like, but when each of the page-long summaries is this entertaining, that would be like eating the bread basket and ignoring the mouthwatering dinner to come. Why not enjoy the real dish which, in this case, is the zesty, tart analyses. Still, for the word dieters in the crowd, *Fearless* handily boils down their thoughts into a quick and easy diagnostic, rating food, "feel," average bill, restaurant type, cuisine served, and even a log-line summary for the ADD diner.

Fifteen bucks might seem a lot to pay for a restaurant run-down. But if you've ever shelled out significant green to feast on a mediocre meal, this engagingly written meal bible is worth every penny. The manual will validate your discerning palate, warn you of cuisine gone wrong, and, like aromas wafting from an adventurous kitchen, entice you into exploring places your taste buds have yet to experience. —Steven Foster

Available at all major Houston-area bookstores, several grocery stores and specialty markets, and amazon.com. ■

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Calendar of Events

Compiled by Nancy Ford

Local Boy Makes Good

Sunday in the park
with BILLY STRITCH

What started with a country-club gig when he was 12 has unfolded into a career that's arguably the envy of every starry-eyed musician hoping to make it to the Big Time.

After maturing into legal saloon-employee age in the

mid-'80s, Sugar Land native Billy Stritch honed his considerable skills by gigging Houston's sacred gay cabaret performance spaces like Rascals (now The Gables luxury apartments), Missouri Street Station (now Riva's Italian Restaurant), and The Copa (now Dessert Gallery). The piano man gained credibility and notoriety by positioning himself on stage with local esteemed vocalists, Sally Mayes, Sharon Montgomery, and Rebecca Plant.

Soon, following every accompanist's fondest show-biz dream, Stritch graduated by moving to the Big Apple. When a certain legendary Broadway babe stumbled in upon his lounge act one fateful evening, he immediately became her award-winning composer, arranger, back-up vocalist, and jazz pianist.

The babe? Liza. Yes, the Liza—as in Minnelli.

Since making that storybook hook-up, he has provided accompaniment to Bernadette Peters, Christine Ebersole, Sally Mayes, Linda Lavin, and a host of other Broadway babes, even picking up a Grammy in 1994 for penning the enduring Reba McEntire/Linda Davis vehicle, "Does He Love You?"

Fresh from touring Australia with Ms. Minnelli, this month Stritch brings his oh-so-smooth sound to Miller Outdoor Theatre, performing standards and show tunes with the University of Houston Jazz Orchestra. Expect him to roll out jazzy new tunes from his latest CD, *Billy Stritch Sings the Mel Tormé Songbook*.

November 15, 7:30 p.m., Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park, 100 Concert Dr. Free. milleroutdoortheatre.com.

—Nancy Ford

NOVEMBER

FILM

Wide Awake explores filmmaker Alan Berliner's lifelong obsession with insomnia. Nov. 7, 8pm. Frenetic Theater, 5102 Navigation Blvd. aurorapictureshow.org • 713/868-2101.

16th Annual Texas Filmmakers Showcase spotlights the best short films in the state. Nov. 8, 5pm. Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. mfah.org • 713/639-7300.

Cinema Arts Festival Houston celebrates and illuminates the vitality and diversity of the City of Houston. Nov. 11–15. Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. mfah.org • 713/639-7300.

What If, Why Not: Underground Adventures of Ant Farm. Filmmakers Laura Harrison and Elizabeth Federici, and Ant Farm's Chip Lord and Curtis Schreier attend. Nov. 12, 7 pm. University of Houston College of Architecture Auditorium, entrance 18. aurorapictureshow.org • 713/868-2101.

Dance on Camera Festival, presented by FreneticCore, features award-winning international dance films. Nov. 12–15. Frenetic Theater, 5102 Navigation Blvd. freneticcore.net.

INFO NEEDED FOR YOUR EVENT LISTING:

a few lines of info about your event; date/time; cost; location/address; organization name; and two phone numbers—one for OutSmart to reach you for questions and one for OutSmart readers to get more info on your event. **E-MAIL INFO TO:** calendar@outsmartmagazine.com. **MAIL INFO TO:** OutSmart Magazine, 3406 Audubon Place, Houston, TX 77006. **FAX INFO TO:** 713/522-3275. **NO LISTINGS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE DEADLINE DATE—5 P.M., TUESDAY, NOV. 10.**

The Big Lebowski Bash includes live music by Picture Book, Human Bowling, costume contest, and more. Nov. 13. Event, 7:30pm; movie, 10pm. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. discoverygreen.com • 713/400-7336.

The Red Shoes combines dance and film for the grand finale of the Cinema Arts Festival. Nov. 15, 6pm. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. discoverygreen.com • 713/400-7336.

Dance Salad Festival presents filmed excerpts from the spring 2009 Dance Salad performances. Nov. 18, 6:30pm. Museum of Fine Arts, Brown Auditorium, 1001 Bissonnet. dancesalad.org.

Movies Houstonians Love presents *Big Night*, Voice Restaurant's Michael Kramer's favorite film. Nov. 30, 7pm. Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. mfah.org • 713/639-7300.

PERFORMING ARTS

Kavakos plays and conducts Mozart with Houston Symphony. Nov. 1. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org • 713/224-7575.

The Elixir of Love, Gaetano Donizetti's comic masterpiece, Through Nov. 7. Houston Grand Opera. Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas. houstongrandopera.org • 713/228-6737.

Mary Poppins. The original Super Nanny. Through Nov. 8. Broadway Across America. Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 800 Bagby. broadwayacrossamerica.com • 713/622-7469.

Gruesome Playground Injuries by Rajiv Joseph explores why people hurt themselves for love. Through Nov. 15. Alley Theatre, Neuhaus Stage, 615 Texas Ave. alleytheatre.org • 713/220-5700.

Lohengrin. Richard Wagner's classic that made "Here Comes the Bride" famous. Through Nov. 15. Houston Grand Opera. Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas. houstongrandopera.org • 713/228-6737.

The Lighter Side of the Recession. Sketch comedy about the current economic climate. Through Nov. 21. Radio Music Theatre, 2623 Colquitt. radiomusictheatre.com • 713/522-7722.

The Story of My Life. A rich musical about two childhood friends. Through Dec. 6. Theater Lab Houston, 1706 Alamo. theaterlabhouston.com • 713/868-7516.

The Legend of Yin & Yang, sung in Mandarin and English, combines hip-hop dancers with Eastern Chinese acrobatics. Nov. 18, 8pm. Houston Baptist University Morris Cultural Arts Center. yingyangshow.com • 281-239-8888.

A Little Day Music, a free concert by Da Camera of Houston. Bring your lunch. Nov. 4, noon. Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave. dacamera.com • 713/524-5050.

Manon. Jules Massenet's operatic masterpiece. Nov. 5–7, 12–14. Opera in the Heights, 1703 Heights Blvd. 713/861-5303.

Mary Wilson, formerly of the Supremes, sings with Houston Symphony's Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pops. Nov. 6–8. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org • 713/224-7575.

If It's Monday, This Must Be Christmas. A Yuletide whodunit. Nov. 6–Dec. 5. Theatre Suburbia, 4106 Way Out West Dr. theatresuburbia.com • 713/682-3525.

ComedySportz improvisational comedy's 19th anniversary. Nov. 7, 8pm. Benefits The Rose. ComedySportz Arena, 901 Town & Country Blvd. comedysportzhouston.com • 713/868-1444.

Moulin Rouge Gala. A fundraiser for Mildred's Umbrella Theater Company. Nov. 7, 7pm. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. mildredsumbrella.com.

The Recycle Club. Travesty Dance Group/Houston presents hip-hybrid happening featuring dance theater, video projections, and more. Nov. 7, 8pm. Barnevelder Theater Houston, 1016 W. Temple St.

Cirque Shanghai-Bai Xi. Chinese acrobatics. Nov. 7–8. The Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. thegrand.org • 800/821-1894.

Getting Married. George Bernard Shaw's matrimonial comedy. Nov. 7–Dec. 13. Main Street Theater, 2540 Times Blvd. mainstreettheater.com • 713/524-6706.

Elemental Soundings. Asian influences in American music presented by Aperio, Music of the Americas. Nov. 12, 7pm. Rothko Chapel, 1409 Sul Ross. aperioamericas.org.

Trey McIntyre Project stars the former Houston Ballet choreographic associate. Nov. 13. Society for the Performing Arts. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. spahouston.org • 713/227-4SPA. (See page 59 for an interview with Trey McIntyre.)

Rachmaninoff's First Symphony, presented by Houston Symphony. Nov. 13–15. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houston-symphony.org • 713/224-7575.

The Nerd. Larry Shue's 1981 frenetic comedy. Nov. 13–Dec. 19. Company OnStage, 536 Westbury Square. 713/726-1219.

Festival of Lights at Moody Gardens includes *The Gift of Christmas Live*, an exhilarating family musical. Nov. 14–Jan. 2. One Hope Blvd. Galveston. moodygardens.com • 800-582-4673.

ABBA Mania celebrates the music and style of ABBA. Nov. 18, 8pm. Miller Outdoor Theatre, 100 Concert Dr. milleroutdoortheatre.com • 281/573-3386.

Miracle on 34th Street. Valentine Davies and George Seaton's wistful Christmas story. Nov. 18–Dec. 20. Texas Repertory Theatre Company, 14243 Steubner Airline Rd. texreptheatre.org • 281/583-7573.

Panto Sleeping Beauty. Kenn McLaughlin and music by David Nehls' holiday panto. Nov. 18–Jan. 3. Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Pkwy. 713/527-0123.

A Christmas Carol: The Musical. Masquerade Theatre's take on the Dickens classic. Nov. 19–21, 27–29. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713/861-7045.

Das Lied von der Erde by Mahler, performed by Houston Symphony. Nov. 19, 21–22. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houston-symphony.org • 713/224-7575.

Rita Rudner. The classy, dry comedian. Nov. 21. Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. Galveston. thegrand.org • 800/821-1894.

Pablo Mayor and Folklore Urbano. A 12-piece ensemble presents modern Colombian music. Nov. 21, 7:30pm. Miller Outdoor Theatre, 100 Concert Dr. milleroutdoortheatre.com • 281/573-3386.

A Christmas Carol—A Ghost Story of Christmas. A take on Dickens' holiday classic. Nov. 21–Dec. 27. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. alleytheatre.org • 713/228-8421.

Christmas With Great Aunt. A family holiday musical by Houston playwright Thomas Meloncon. Nov. 21–Dec. 27. Ensemble Theatre, 3535 Main St. ensemblehouston.com • 713/520-0055.

Classics by Schubert, Prokofiev, and Rimsky-Korsakov performed by Galveston Symphony Orchestra. Nov. 22, 7pm. Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. Galveston. thegrand.com.

The Producers. The live version of Mel Brooks' hysterical classic. Nov. 27–Dec. 20. Playhouse 1960, 6814 Gant St. ph1960.com • 281/587-8243.

A Broadway Christmas Carol combines Dickens' classic tale with song parodies of Broadway show tunes. Nov. 27–30. Island East End Theater Company, 2001 Post Office St. Galveston. islandetc.org • 409/762-3556.

The Nutcracker. choreographed by Ben Stevenson. Nov. 27–Dec. 27. Houston Ballet. Wortham Center's Brown Theater, 501 Texas Ave. houstonballet.org • 713/227-2787.

A Fertile Holiday. Radio Music Theatre's tribute to the holidays. Nov. 27–Jan. 9. 2623 Colquitt. 713/522-7722.

The Nutcracker Suite. a wacky version performed by the Invincible Czars. Nov. 28, 7:30pm. Discovery Green's Anheuser-Busch Stage, 1500 McKinney. discoverygreen.com • 713/400-7336.

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

After the Rain King by Steph DeFerie. Nov. 6–8. Main Street Theater Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose Blvd. mainstreettheater.com • 713/524-6706.

Afternoon of the Elves, a children's play directed by Daria James. Nov. 7&14. Main Street Theater Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose. mainstreettheater.com • 713/524-6706.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, directed by Rebecca Greene Udden. Nov. 27, Dec. 5&12. Main Street Theater Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose. mainstreettheater.com • 713/524-6706.

RADIO

After Hours: Queer Radio with Attitude features the QM2 (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Carper. Sunday mornings, 1–4 am. KPFT 90.1 FM • kpft.org • 713/526-5738.

Queer Voices. Features, news, music, interviews, reviews, and commentary. Monday nights, 9–11 pm. KPFT 90.1 FM • kpft.org • 713/526-4000. →




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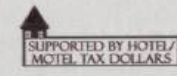
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iPhone It In. iPhone users can now download Jason & deMarco's new iPhone application by visiting the app store and searching for jandd. The gay Christian pop singers also appear in concert with a full band at Unity Church of Christianity's Celebration Music Service. **Nov. 6, 8 p.m.** 2929 Unity Dr. • unityhouston.org • 713/782-4050.

Pretty Pictures. Openly gay artist David Aylsworth exhibits works in geometric shapes, thick, colorful paint, and lyrical titles that produce lush riffs on abstraction. **Nov. 6-Jan. 2.** Inman Gallery, 3901 Main St. • inmangallery.com • 713/526-7800.

Gay and Thespian. Unhinged Productions' artistic director, Joe Angel Babb, leads Acting Basics, a free workshop designed to liberate the actor inside of you. **Nov. 7, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.** Houston GLBT Community Center, 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. Register at comeunhinged.com or 832/250-7786.

A Gay Page-turner. Openly gay New Orleans crime writer Greg Herren signs and discusses *Murder in the Garden District*, his new Chanse MacLeod novel. **Nov. 7, 4:30 p.m.** Murder By The Book, 2342 Bissonnet • murderbooks.com • 713/524-8597.

Is That a Crown on Your Shoulder or Are You Just Happy to See Me? Empire of the Royal, Sovereign and Imperial Court of the Single Star present its annual Emperor and Empress XXVI candidate announcements and show, billed as "a fun-filled evening of glitz, bling, and glamour." **Nov. 7, 8 p.m.** EJ's Lounge, 2517 Ralph St. • ersicss.org.

Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church presents Welcome MAT (Movies And Things), a monthly film series focusing on the LGBT community. This month's movie is *Before Stonewall*, a documentary chronicling the life and struggles of gays and lesbians beginning in the 1920s until the Stonewall revolt in the 1960s. **Nov. 8, 1 p.m.** 1900 Bering Dr., Room 205. Free, with a light lunch available for purchase • emersonhouston.org • 713/782-8250.

You Want Fries with That? Resurrection MCC's Labor of Love Concert & Raffle features singers Clay Hardy, Rosemary Smith, and Strange, drag performances, and more. Purchasing a \$50 raffle ticket gets you a chance at the \$2500 grand prize. Benefits Resurrection MCC Ministries. **Nov. 8, 3 p.m.** Bayou City Bar & Grill, 2409 Grant • resurrectionmcc.org.

Love. On the Duck. All warmed up from her emcee gig for last month's Houston Women's Music Festival, Texas rocker Ginger Leigh returns to the Mucky Duck's listening room for an evening of original tunes. **Nov. 10, 7:30 p.m.** 2425 Norfolk • mcgonigels.com.

Light It Up. Illuminations Project, an annual music, dance, and drag showcase, features performers from the Houston area helping to bring awareness to AIDS. Hope Stone, Houston Metropolitan Dance Company, City Ballet of Houston, Regina Dane, Lone Star Lariats, Psophonia Dance Company, Dance of Asia America, Uptown Dance Company, Kimberly Anne O'Neil, Second Generation Dance



Not So Alien. Movie Night at Resurrection screens *Prayers for Bobby*, an award-winning film starring Sigourney Weaver about a mother's remorse after the suicide of her gay son. In the above photo, Mary (Weaver) gives her son Bobby (Ryan Kelley) a new Bible and asks him to pray to be cured from being gay. **Nov. 6, 7 p.m.** Free. Resurrection MCC, 2025 W. 11th St. resurrectionmcc.org • 713/861-9149.

Company, Clay Hardy, and Houston Fly Boys. **Nov. 11, 7:30 p.m.** Hobby Center for the Performing Arts Zilkha Hall, 800 Bagby. \$35. Benefits Montrose Counseling Center and Gulf Coast Archive Museum • illuminationsproject.org.

Who Are You Wearing? Enjoy the photographers as you walk the red carpet at Platinum One Properties' Red Carpet Happy Hour. **Nov. 12, 6:30 p.m.** Meteor, 2306 Genesee St. Benefits Montrose Counseling Center • 281/991-1692.

No Script, No Problem. Improvisational maven Ruth Shauberg leads a two-hour workshop for beginning improvisers covering basic rules, how and when to break them, gaming, and theory. Presented by Unhinged Productions. **Nov. 16, 7-9 p.m.** Houston GLBT Community Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd, Suite 207. Register at comeunhinged.com or 832/250-7786.

Swinging Sisters. The 2009 PGA Tour Championship, one of the nation's most prestigious women's golf tournaments, features a field of 120 of the top Ladies Professional Golf Association golfers in the world, a \$1,500,000 purse, and a unique format presenting a cut after 36 holes to the low 70 professionals and an additional cut after 54 holes to the low 30 pros. If you're a golf enthusiast, all that likely makes sense to you. **Nov. 17-22,** at The Houstonian Golf & Country Club, 12600 Houstonian Dr., Richmond • lpgatourchampionship.org • 832-532-4848.

On the Heels of President Barack Obama's promise to Judy and Dennis Shepard that he would make sure the federal hate crimes bill becomes law, Theatre New West (TNW) presents *The Laramie Project*. The play focuses on the aftermath following the murder of Matthew Shepard. Artistic director Joe

Watts says TNW also seeks artists interested in exhibiting works related to human rights issues during the run of the play. **Nov. 19-Dec. 13,** Frenetic Theatre, 5102 Navigation • theatrenwest.com • 713-522-2204.

More Theatre New West News. Joe Watts says he is accepting submissions from the community that address "coming-out stories" for a major production to be produced in the summer of 2010. If you have a 10-to-12 minute original, unique, compelling, funny, sad, and/or tragic coming-out story (and who doesn't?), Watts wants to hear from you. Songwriters are also asked to contact Watts about the possibility of writing an original song for each of the stories • theatrenwest.com • 713/522-2204.

Major Mardi Gras Munchies. Carl Han's 4th annual culinary fundraiser whips up authentic New Orleans cuisine, including gumbo, sausage red beans and rice, and bread pudding. **Nov. 21, 12:30-3 p.m.** Montrose Counseling Center's GLBT Cultural Center of MCC at 401 Branard St., 1st floor. \$10. Benefits HATCH. RSVP by Nov. 13 to info@carlsjourney.com.

PLANNING AHEAD
World AIDS Day. Annually commemorated worldwide, World AIDS Day highlights the progress made in the battle against HIV/AIDS and serves as a reminder of how much still needs to be accomplished in the fight against the disease. AIDS Foundation Houston's 2009 World AIDS Day luncheon honors PWA Holiday Charities with its Shelby Hodge Vision Award, with Chevron Corporation being honored for its dedication and long-standing support of AFH. (See *AIDS Watch*, page 18.) Presented by Chevron. **Dec. 1, 11:30 a.m.** Benefits AIDS Foundation Houston. Four Seasons Houston, 1300 Lamar St. 713/623-6796, ext. 278 • aidshelp.org.

But Where Is Her Lover, Cindy? SIN Houston, the "hottest and largest lesbian dance party in Texas," brings power lesbian couple Elizabeth Keener (*The L Word*'s "Dawn Denbo") and Jamie Lauren (*Top Chef*) to party with the women of the Bayou City. Benefits a local charity donating toys to needy children. **Dec. 5, 9:30 p.m.-2:30 a.m.** The Drake, 1902 Washington Ave. • thedrakebar.com.

Holiday Garland. Kindred Spirits Foundation presents *The Judy Garland Christmas Special*, an interactive screening of the original 1963 telecast comedically narrated by *OutSmart*'s Nancy Ford. Features a light buffet, holiday raffle, and music by special guests. **Dec. 6, 5-8 p.m.** In-N-Out Nightclub, 1537 N. Shepherd Dr. \$20. Benefits AssistHers, Bering Support Group, Houston Buyers Club, and Lesbian Health Initiative. Details: kindredspirithouston.org.

'Til There's a Cure. Resurrection MCC and its community partners present Community World AIDS Day Service, which reflects on how HIV and AIDS affects friends, family, community, and world. Presented by the Affirming Ministerial Alliance of Greater Houston. **Dec. 6, 6 p.m.** Resurrection MCC, 2025 W. 11th St. • resurrectionmcc.org • 713/861-9149. ■

ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

Perspectives 167: Jason Villegas combines wall murals, video, soft sculpture, and performance. Through Nov. 1. Contemporary Arts Museum, 5216 Montrose. Details: camh.org • 713/284-8250.

Josephine Meckseper. Works engaging leftist theories and politics in a consumerist reality. Through Nov. 14. Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston's Fine Arts Building. blaffergallery.org • 713/743-9971.

Jon Pylypchuk. Works drawn from the animal world. Through Nov. 14. Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston's Fine Arts Building. blaffergallery.org • 713/743-9971.

L'Heure Bleue. Michael Crowder's works in cast glass and other materials. Through Nov. 14. Wade Wilson Art, 4411 Montrose, Suite #200. 713/521-2977.

Reduced Visibility. The intersection of abstraction and political subject matter in contemporary art. Through Nov. 15. Museum of Fine Arts' Glassell School of Art, 5101 Montrose. mfa.org • 713/639-7500.

Galveston ArtWalk includes Chuy Benitez: *Summer in the City* and Mark Schatz: *Earth Below Us*. Through Nov. 22. Galveston Arts Center, Strand and 22nd St. galvestonartscenter.org • 409/763-2403.

When Gorillas Shoot Pigs. Howard Sherman's third solo exhibition. Through Nov. 28. McMurrey Gallery, 3508 Lake St. mcmurreygallery.com • 713/523-8238.

Joaquin Torres-Garcia: Paintings in Houston Collections and Constructing Abstraction with Wood, works by the avant-garde artist. Through Nov. 29. Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. mfa.org • 713/639-7300, 713/639-7379 (Spanish).

La Muerte No Anda en Coche/Death Doesn't Drive a Car. Armando Rodriguez's colorful faces and skulls. Through Nov. 30. Canal Street Gallery, 2219 Canal St. canalstreetgallery.com • 713/223-2219.

Texas Masters Series: Rachelle Thiewes and Celebrating Our Creative Spirit: Texas Federation of Fiber Artists. Through Dec. 24. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, 4848 Main St. craftthouston.org • 713/529-4848.

Cool Globes: Hot Ideas for a Cooler Planet features 50 colorful, super-sized globes depicting everyday solutions to global warming. Through Dec. 31. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. coolglobes.com.

Arts of Ancient Viet Nam: From River Plain to Open Sea. presented by Museum of Fine Arts and Asia Society, New York. Through Jan. 3. 5601 Main St. Details: mfa.org • 713/639-7300, 713/639-7379 (Spanish).

The Moon: "Houston, Tranquility Base Here. The Eagle Has Landed" celebrates the 40th anniversary of the lunar landing with photographs by astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. Through Jan. 10. Museum of Fine Arts' Audrey Jones Beck Building, 5601 Main St. mfa.org • 713/639-7300, 713/639-7379 (Spanish).

Rock, Scissors, Paper features works in found paper by five artists. Through Jan. 10. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, 4848 Main St. craftthouston.org • 713/529-4848.

Vanishing Worlds: Art and Ritual in Amazonia celebrates life in the rainforest. Through Jan. 10. Houston Museum of Natural Sciences, One Hermann Circle Dr. hmns.org • 713/639-4629.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Exhibition. Costumes, props, and set dressings from C.S. Lewis' literary world. Through Jan. 18. Houston Museum of Natural Science at Sugar Land, University Blvd. @ New Territory Blvd. hmns.org • 713/639-4629.

Matthew Day Jackson: The Immeasurable Distance explores positive evolutionary developments resulting from stress. Through Jan. 17. Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose. camh.org • 713/284-8250.

Besa: Muslims Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust is a photographic exhibition depicting stories of Albanian Muslims who saved Jews from extermination despite great danger to themselves. Through Feb. 7. Holocaust Museum Houston, 5401 Caroline. hmh.org • 713/942-8000.

David Aylsworth. Works in paint. Nov. 6-Jan. 2. Inman Gallery, 3901 Main St. inmangallery.com • 713/526-7800.

Beth Secor. Works in needlepoint. Nov. 6-Jan. 2. Inman Gallery, 3901 Main St. inmangallery.com • 713/526-7800.

Brush Strokes for Four Legged Friends, a reception with Winter Street Studios artists. Benefits Texas No Kill animal shelter. Nov. 7, 6-9pm. 2101 Winter St. texas-no-kill.com.

Voices Breaking Boundaries: Living Room Art: Honoring Dissent/Descent features works by Tehmina Ahmed, Chuy Benitez, Rosalinda Bustamante, Ben De Soto, Bryan Parras, Beena Sarwar, Jiny Ung, and Sehba Sarwar. A Pakistan Live Broadcast production. Nov. 7, 8pm. Home of Sehba Sarwar and René Saldivar, 6411 Jefferson St. vbarts.org • 713/524-7821.

Donna Rosenthal and Jen Balazina. Works by glass, cord,

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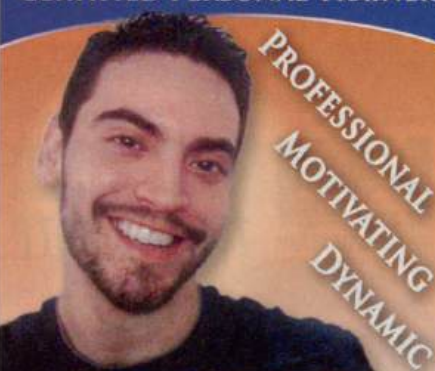
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and hardware. Nov. 7-28. Koelsch Gallery, 703 Yale. koelschgallery.com • 713/862-5744.

Dogs and Goats Over the Harvest Moon combines works by Jim N. Hill and Chris Menconi. Nov. 7-Dec. 3. Archway Gallery, 2305 Dunlavy St. archwaygallery.com • 713/522-2409.

Fabergé: Imperial Jeweler to the Tsars features more than just jeweled eggs. Nov. 13-April 4. Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Herman Circle Drive. hmns.org • 713/639-4629.

Joseph Marioni, paintings in red and blue. Opens Nov. 19. Wade Wilson Art. 4411 Montrose, Suite #200. 713/521-2977.

Via Colori, a street painting festival, features 200 artists, live music, food, and more. Nov. 21-22. Sam Houston Park, Bagby @ McKinney. Benefits Center for Hearing and Speech. houstonviacolori.com.

Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America through Galveston chronicles immigration through the Port of Galveston, a major gateway to American immigration. Nov. 22-Sept. 11. Moody Gardens, One Hope Blvd. in Galveston. moodygardens.org • 800/582-4673.

DAILY

Nov. 7

Out of the Darkness Community Walk, a 3-5-mile scenic walk, benefits American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. 9am. Stude Park, 1030 Stude St. outofthedarkness.org.

Life Is Living Launch. Choreographer and poet Marc Bamuthi Joseph leads conversations about urban environmentalism and sustainable living, with entertainment by MC Lyte. Presented by UH Mitchell Center for the Arts. 11am-3pm. Discovery Green. 1500 McKinney. Free. lifeisliving.org/core.

Murder in the Garden District. New Orleans crime writer Greg Herren signs and discusses his new Chance MacLeod novel. 4:30pm. Murder By The Book, 2342 Bissonnet. murderbooks.com • 713/524-8597.

Nov. 13

Building Faith: Church, Mosque, Synagogue; Visiting Houses of Worship. Holocaust Museum Houston's guided tour of the Islamic Da'wah Center. 10am. 202 Main St. hmh.org • 713/942-8000.

Nov. 14-15

11th Annual Historic Downtown Lofts Tour includes The Thompson Lofts, The 2208 Postoffice Street Lofts, and The Nathan Building Lofts. 10am-5pm. downtowngalveston.org • 409/763-7080.

Nov. 19

Houston Eye Associates Optical Center's Frame Show features designer and exclusive frames from Gucci, Marchon, Prada, Dolce & Gabbana, Silhouettes, Fendi, and Dior. 5420 Dashwood Dr., Suite 101 • 713/668-9118.

Nov. 19-22

57th Annual Theta Charity Antiques Show presents antiques from 50 dealers from around the world. George R. Brown Convention Center, 1001 Avenida de las Americas, Hall D. thetaantiquesshow.com.

Nov. 25

22nd Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony with music by Austin's Invisible Czars. 11am. Wortham Theater Center Grand Foyer, 501 Texas Ave. houstonballet.org.

Nov. 26

The Ice at Discovery Green. Holiday skating on Kinder Lake presented by the *Houston Chronicle*. Through Jan. 18. \$10 includes skate rental and tax. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. discoverygreen.com • 713/400-7336.

Daily (Mon.-Fri.)

HIV Testing. Free HIV testing, with no gold card or donation required or requested. 9am-1pm. HCHD Thomas Street Clinic, 2015 Thomas St. • 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 locations. • **MONDAYS**: ALL STAR NEWS AND VIDEO EMPORIUM, 3415 Katy Frwy & Studewood, 4-8pm; GEORGE SPORTS BAR, 617 Fairview, 6-10pm. • **TUESDAYS**: 611 HYDE PARK PUB, 611 Hyde Park, 4-8pm; MIDTOWN SPA, 3100 Fannin, 4-8pm. • **WEDNESDAYS**: CLUB HOUSTON, 2205 Fannin, 8pm-12am; EJ's, 2517 Ralph, 10pm-1am. • **FRIDAYS**: MIDTOWN SPA, 3100 Fannin, 5-9pm; EJ's, 2517 Ralph, Fri. 10pm-1am. • Free, confidential syphilis testing is also offered. HIV and syphilis testing are offered at 215 Westheimer, Monday-Thursday, 11am-7pm, and Friday, 11am-5pm. 713/830-3070.

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 (Sundays)

The Women's Group, a feminist group for all women. Nov. 15, 10:45am. Chef Monica Pope discusses her philosophy of food. First Unitarian Universalist Church's Sojourner Truth Room, 5200 Fannin. 713/529-8571.

Weekly (Mondays)

TG Support Group. Helping TransGenders Anonymous is a facilitated support group for all transgenders, supporters, family, and significant others. 7-9pm. TG Center, 713 Fargo. transthouston.com • 713/520-8586.

Weekly (Tuesdays)

Houston Roller Derby Rec League. Skate to train or just recreationally with the women of the Houston Roller Derby. 7:30-9:30pm. Dairy Ashford Roller Rink, 1820 S. Dairy Ashford St. houstonrollerderby.com.

Weekly (Thursdays)

GLBT-Friendly Depression & Bipolar Support Group. 7:15-8:30pm. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold, room 232. Free. 713/526-1018.

Weekly (Sun., Wed., Sat.)

Love and Rackets. Houston Tennis Club welcomes players and enthusiasts of all skill levels. Sundays, 9am-noon; Wednesdays, 7:30-9pm; clinics, every Saturday 9-10:30am. Memorial Park Tennis Center, 1500 Memorial Loop. Annual membership, \$30; court fees, \$3 per session. houstontennisclub.org.

Monthly (1st Sun.)

Free Legal Consultations for PWAs. AIDS Foundation Houston and Katine & Nechman L.L.P. offer 30 minutes of free legal consultation on any legal issue to persons with HIV and AIDS, by appointment. Katine & Nechman, 1111 North Loop West, Suite 180. lawkn.com • 713/808-1000.

Monthly (1st Fri.)

First Friday Happy Hour. Northwest Corner, a social and civic GLBT organization for Houstonians living northwest of Loop 610, meets. Time and location TBA. NWCorner.org.

Transgender Center presents a monthly barbecue, with vegetarian food available. BYO beer and wine. 7-11pm. \$10. 713 Fargo. tgctr.org.

Monthly (1st Sat.)

First Saturday Arts Market. Local artists display and sell original works of art, and local musicians entertain. 11am-6pm. Wind Water Gallery, 548 W. 19th St. Free. yalestreetmarket.com.

Monthly (2nd Sat.)

Second Saturdays at Winter St. Studios. Meet and hang with artists in the studios marked by a large red dot on or near the door. 1-6pm. Winter St. Studios, 2101 Winter St. winterstreetstudios.net • 713/862-0082.

Monthly (2nd Tues.)

Community Center Dinner Night, presented by Houston GLBT Community Center. Participants are responsible for their own meals. 6:30pm. West Gray Café, 415 W. Gray. houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org • 713/524-3818.

Monthly (3rd Sun.)

LOAF Meet and Greet. Lesbians Over Age Fifty meet for munchies and fellowship; bring some of both. 2pm. 1034 West 17th St.

Monthly (3rd Wed.)

Bingo with the Divas, hosted by An' Marie Gill & Jessica Van Shelton. 8-10pm. Benefits Bering Omega Foundation. Tony's Corner Pocket, 817 W. Dallas St.

Monthly (4th Wed.)

Lesbian Dinner Group. Single and coupled women come for a meal but stay for the camaraderie. 7:30pm. Cafe Express, 1422 W. Gray. lesbian.dinner.group@gmail.com.

Monthly (3rd Thurs.)

Share with PFLAG Houston in a safe, confidential setting. 7:30pm. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church's Chatham Room, 1805 Alabama St. pflaghouston.org.

PLANNING AHEAD

The Sound of Music Sing-A-Long, presented by Theatre Under the Stars. Dec. 2. Angeika Film Center, 510 Texas St. tuts.com • 713/558-8887.

Life Is Happy and Sad, a musical by Daniel Johnston presented by Catastrophic Theatre. Dec. 2-19, 8pm. DiverseWorks ArtSpace, 1117 East Freeway. diverseworks.org • 713/335-3445.

Dianne Reeves: Christmas Time Is Here. Music based on the eminent jazz vocalist's Christmas recording. Dec. 4, 8pm. Da Camera of Houston, Wortham Theater Center's Cullen Theatre, 501 Texas Ave. dacamera.com • 713/524-5050.

Homes for the Holidays, Houston Heights Association's holiday home tour. Dec. 4-5. Heights Neighborhood Library, 1302 Heights Blvd. houstonheights.org • 713/861-4002.

36th Annual Dickens on the Strand celebrates the holiday season in grand Victorian style with Victorian bed races, an exhibit from the Charles Dickens Museum in London, and other events. Presented by Galveston Historical Foundation. Galveston's downtown district. Dec. 4-6. Galveston.com.

A Decade of Dissent: Voices Breaking Boundaries 10-Year Anniversary, a celebration of art and activism. Dec. 5, 7pm. Houston Institute for Culture, 708-B Telephone Rd. vbbarts.org • 713/524-7821.

Literary Contest. The Saints and Sinners GLBT Literary Festival's First Annual Short Fiction Contest is soliciting original, unpublished short stories between 5,000 and 7,000 words with LGBT content on the broad theme of "Saints and Sinners." The contest is open to authors at all stages of their careers and to stories in all genres. Deadline, Jan. 2. sasfest.com.

CraftTexas 2010. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft calls for entry for the sixth in a series of juried exhibitions showcasing the best in Texas-made contemporary craft. Deadline, March 1. callforentry.org • 713/529-4848. ■

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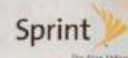
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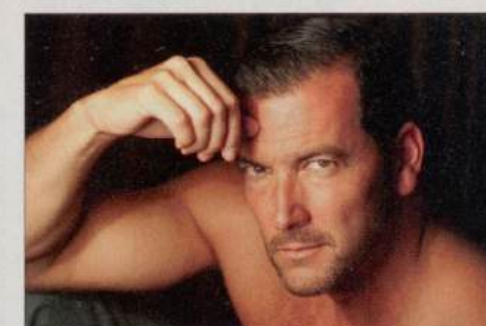
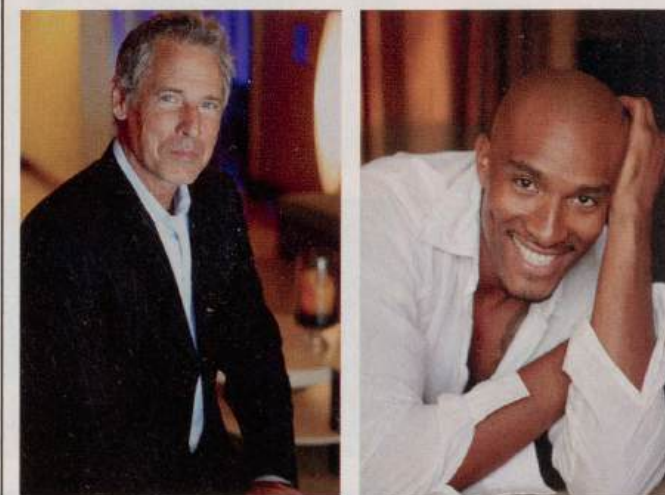
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Business News

by Nancy Ford

A FRIEND IN TIME OF SORROW. Veteran Houston funeral director Stan Ford recently announced a newly formed partnership with Allen Dave Funeral Directors and Cremation Tribute Center offering funerals, cremations, and life insurance. In partnering with Allen Dave, Ford brings concierge service at affordable prices through a locally owned independent funeral home. Ford, who began his career with Earthman Funerals in January of 1981, marks his third decade serving families throughout Texas at a time when great empathy is needed. Also an active community leader, Ford has served as president of Dignity Houston, co-chaired Houston Gay Pride Parade, and served on the Mayor's City County Panel on AIDS, which gave birth to Thomas Street Clinic. stanfordtributes.com • 713/443-3333

CHIEF FUNDRAISER. The 2010 International Board of the Association of Fundraising Professionals has announced it has appointed Sean D. Carter as one of the newest additions to its 35-member international board. Elected to the District H position, Carter represents Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona. Currently chief development officer for the Rothko Chapel, Carter is a founder of the Imperial Court of Houston fundraising and performance group.

CHOPPER SERVICE. Rotor Envy Helicopters, "the most luxurious facilities of any helicopter service company in the area," has expanded its flight services to two types of Robinson helicopters: one that seats two people and one that seats four. Employing the newest and most updated equipment, the small boutique company offers an affordable array of services, including sightseeing, romantic proposal flights, flight training, photo flights, and more, says chief says pilot, Kelley Bishop. 11210 Blume Ave. • 832/221-0943.

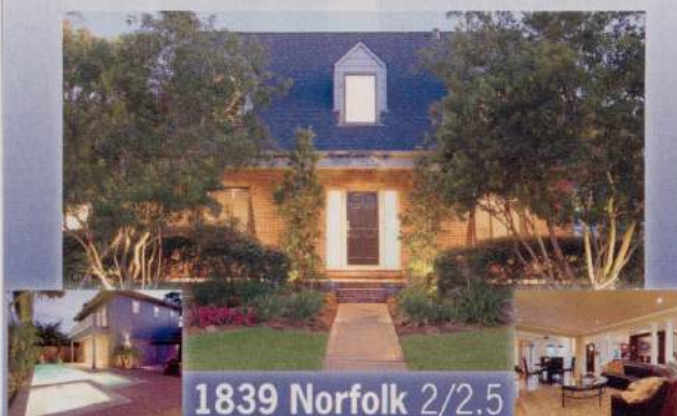
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CURVE AHEAD. Curve magazine, the nation's leading national publication for lesbians, has ranked Gay Yellow Pages founder and owner Laura Villagran in the number 3 slot in its annual list of Top 10 Lesbian Business Owners. Founded in 1990 and based in Houston, Villagran's LGBT-friendly business directories earn in excess of \$2 million annually, and are available online in more than 40 markets. gayyellow.com. ■

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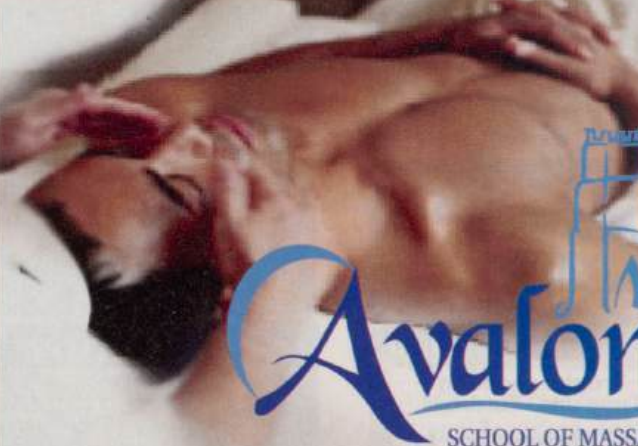
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BAR & CLUB GUIDE

Houston

AZTECA'S VIP LOUNGE

The talented DJ Rocky B holds court and spins for "the best girl-4-girl night in Houston," held each Friday atop this Greenway-area Mexican restaurant. 2207 Richmond Ave. Details: throbparties.info.

BAYOU CITY BAR & GRILL

Experience a new attitude and new menu at this trendy Montrose spot. Open Tuesday through Sunday (till 6 a.m. on Friday and Saturday) for lunch, dinner, and after-the-bars-close dining. 2409 Grant St. • 713/522-2867 • bayoucitybar.com.

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 Kaumba Latin night on Sun. Happy hour, 8-10 p.m.; free cover before 11 p.m. 710 Pacific St. • blurbar.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 • brbhouston.com.

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 Frwy, 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.

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 • ej'sbar.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; Steak Night is Sun., 3-7 p.m. 617 Fairview • 713/528-8102.

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, auto seating, and daily drink specials. 1537 N. Shepherd Dr. • 713/589-9780.

BEHIND THE BAR

WHO: Sean Steensen

WHERE: South Beach
810 Pacific • 713/529-STROBE

WHAT'S UP: Still the hottest nightclub in Houston and beyond, South Beach is the anchor for the 800 Pacific Street Block Party, which spontaneously erupts every Saturday night due to the area's plentiful bars.



JR'S BAR & GRILL

With house emcee Kafi, 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

Gorgeous men of Marwatch and Muscles in Action rinse down in the newly added "Meteor Shower" stall, with VJ's Tad Dvorak, Chris Allen, and Joe Ross playing top billboard videos every night in this posh but comfy lounge on the downtown edge of Montrose. 2306 Genesee • meteorlounge.com • 713/521-0123.

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

Stoddy 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 • southbeachnightclub.com.

TC'S

New owners, Tim and Corry, have revamped the deep-Montrose neighborhood bar, erasing any hint of its former occupant, Cousin's. Numerous flat-screen televisions and day-long drink specials highlight the updated décor. 817 Fairview • 713/526-2625.

TONY'S CORNER POCKET

This comfortable club located close to downtown has one of the friendliest bar 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 pm. Opens daily at noon. 817 W. Dallas. 713/571-7870 • tonyscornerpocketbar.com.

THE USUAL

Formerly a house of ill repute, this lesbian-owned neighborhood bar now has plenty of repute, especially on Wednesday, when "Her Usual" night packs in the women. Enjoy drink specials, dancing, karaoke, and gazing at the downtown skyline from the spacious front deck. 5519 Allen St. theusualpub.com • 281/501-1478.

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. 247041-145N, Suite 103. 281/298-9035 • www.ranchhill.com • myspace.com/ranchhillsaloon.

Humble

WHISPERS

Northerly GLBTs meet at this comfy neighborhood bar that offers pool, darts, video games, karaoke Thursday, and dancing. 226 First St. • 281/359-2900 • whispersbar.com.

Galveston

3RD COAST BEACH BAR

Enjoy the best gay view of the Gulf from inside the spacious club as well as outside on the upstairs and downstairs decks, with Recesson Buster Power Hour Thursday, 9 'till 10 p.m., and \$1 mimosas on Sunday. 31st and Seawall Blvd. • 409/765-6911.

CLUB GROOVE

This spacious second-story club where gay and straight patrons mix comfortably boasts 5,000 square feet of dance and lounge space. Drag and live performers entertain on two stages. 2409 Market • 409/789-9134 • myspace.com/groovegalveston.

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.

Beaumont

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.

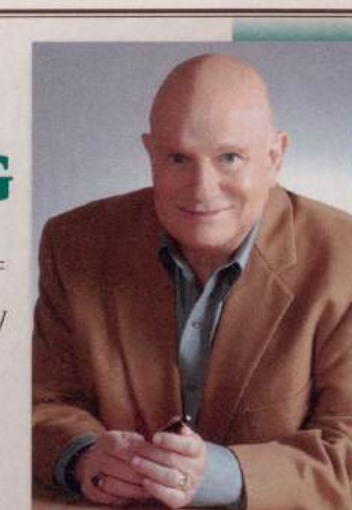
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The place to hang for food, fun, and booze in a newly renovated pub, in good weather or bad. Open every night from 7 pm-2 am. 630 Orleans • 409/835-4243.

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 Agrieland, "our venue is always packed with the hotties," the owners promise. 121 North Main • 979/823-6174 • haloclubs.com.

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Our November is certainly ushering in a busy month. First, the time change and then the physical changes we all have to go through to readjust. • Saturn, planet of responsibility and discipline, has entered Libra for the first time in 28 years. This will have us reassessing our relationships, both personal and national, for the next two years. And Neptune, planet of dreams and self-delusion, has gone direct after its yearly four-month retrograde cycle. This can be creating a time for rest and retreat for those Aquarians who are born in the later part of the sign. And least of all, Thanksgiving is upon us. Many will want to spend time in smaller groups rather than in large family gatherings. Feelings are very sensitive and tempers can be short. This is an especially good time to watch how much alcohol you drink. • Good days for this month are the 2nd, 5th, 9th, 10th, 25th, and the 29th. Days to keep your expectations very realistic are the 1st, 4th, 8th, 11th, 15th, 19th, 26th, and the 30th. • The Sun begins her journey in Scorpio and enters Sagittarius on the 21st. Mercury is also there in Scorpio but enters Sag ahead of the Sun on the 15th. Venus moves out of her home sign of Libra and into Scorpio on the 7th. Mars remains in Leo, Jupiter in Aquarius, Saturn in Libra, Uranus in Pisces, Neptune in Aquarius, and Pluto in Capricorn.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). This month you really focus on your money, who you share it with, and how they spend it. You may be impulsive in your spending and angry at others who spend money without your permission. A new theme has begun with your evaluating all relationships. Initially, it is about what boundaries you set and enforce. The rest of the time is about improving the ones that aren't working. Your children or own inner child will be a lot more demanding this month. There could be some power struggles with your children. Life eases up some by the end of the month, but make sure that you don't put too much pressure on yourself at Thanksgiving or you will not like the holiday time.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). Your primary interest this month is about relationships. And you will be wanting to spend some time with your loved one and reconfirm that emotional and physical bond. If all is not so happy in your partnership, then the issues will come to the surface so you can address them. Watch your feelings during the holiday. You are more sensitive than usual and may overreact, especially in a family environment. Health takes your attention as you try to figure out the best way to improve your existing health conditions.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). You will be putting out lots of different fires this month, both at home and at work. And during the holiday time, you want to make sure that you don't over-stress yourself. You won't be acting very well if you do. You are being pushed for deadlines in your work, and you certainly have taken on more than you can reasonably do, but that won't stop you. You are susceptible to colds and flu this month. Choose your company wisely during the holiday so that you keep a good healthful environment. Relationships are next on the list as we get closer to the end of the month.



SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). This is your annual birthday, or solar return, as we say in the astrology biz. This is your time to review the decisions and plans you made last year at your birthday, and then to come up with a new set of directions for this year. Most of you will be ready for this task. For those of you born at the end of the sign, this is a time of deep introspection and not a time of decision-making. This is a good month to start new projects, especially around career or job hunting. You are better at meeting new people this month. This can be very helpful for meeting new clients or meeting someone new to date.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). For most of the moon kids, this is a month of relaxing and getting in touch with personal enjoyment and pleasure. This will help with your holiday time. In the back of your crab brain, you are beginning to really consider your career and the direction it is heading. You will notice the shortcomings of your current plan by the end of the month. If you have already started making some definite changes in the direction, you will not feel so much pressure. Some of you will take on a totally new career or may have to change as your industry shifts or even comes to an end.

LEO (July 23–August 22). Mars, planet of action and confrontation, is in your sign until the end of June 2010. Normally Mars visits a sign for 45 days. This year, Mars goes retrograde in your sign in December. You will feel more self-aware to potentially selfish. Existing relationships can be troublesome if you are avoiding dealing with the problem. With this visit from Mars, you won't be able to avoid them. And exercise programs, or some way to release this extra energy you have, would be good. Otherwise, you may be exploding at some unsuspecting person who just happens to cross your path. Family visits will be tense unless you keep your visit short and as you attempt to remain detached.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). Communications will be your concentration for this month. It will be very important to you to get your message out and to get it out clearly. You will be having a more serious demeanor for the month. You are paying more attention to your financial picture and, more important, you are actually doing something about it. Waiting will only make things worse, especially next year at this time. The holidays with family members may be the best time you have had in a couple of years.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). Saturn has moved into your sign for a 2 1/3-year visit. Saturn's impulse is to have you review the choices that you

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID EDUARDO FLORES PEREZ

have made over the years. Fix the ones that are not working, throw out the ones you can't fix, and find some new ones to replace your old decision. You may be very hard on yourself at this time. Don't let your inner critic ride roughshod over you. Watch your money this month. You could be impulsive in your spending. You are a lot lighter by the holidays.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). This is the calm before the storm. You are not as social as you have been and should be taking some rest before we get to the holiday time and, ultimately, your birthday period. Keep your schedule reasonable and watch what company you put yourself into. You will be more susceptible to their negative influences. You are reviewing your friendships and group associations. Some will go by the wayside, as you are not getting from them what you had expected. By the time Thanksgiving arrives, you will be once again terminally perky.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). This month begins a stressful time for you. And we could see some of this stress reach a head near the end of the month. This may affect your holidays, so you may want to have flexible plans for the holiday fete. This can be a career crisis time for some of you, as you are having to move from what you were comfortable with and stepping into a job with much more responsibility and/or power. For those of you who are older, this could be a time of retirement. These events are out of your hands and don't reflect your work quality. You have to renew yourself in your career, and expect to be looking for a new one.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). Your career and social responsibilities and your relationships are so active this month. Many of you are feeling ready to launch a new career or revamp the one you have. Watch your interaction with your co-workers—you could come on strong or even pushy, even if your ideas are good and what is best for them. This is also an excellent time for networking or promoting yourself or business. Relationships are needing some spicing up. Don't let a fight be the only way that need shows itself. If you are single, this is a great time to market yourself. Your sexual energies will be strong, and we will see you.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). This would be a good month to take some time and relax. As we enter 2010, you are going to be so busy that you may not have much time to rest. Despite the Thanksgiving holiday period, you are in the mood to watch your diet and do some exercise. It would be good to start that now. Be sure that you don't overdo it, because you will want to. Relationships with co-workers can be more tense than usual. You may feel you have to wear kid gloves as you smack them across the face. It is that show of caring and respect that makes Pisces so loving. Career becomes your focus as the holiday season begins. Don't take on all the work during the holidays, because we will let you.

Read Lilly Roddy's forecast for all of 2009, which appeared in OutSmart's January issue. For more astro-insight, log on to lillyrodgy.com.

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Photos by Dalton DeHart



Kenneth Lester, Melissa Pinasco, and Ryan Fugate in Fugate's studio at Winter Street Annual Open Studios and Artists' Exhibition, October 3.



Victor Juarez, Marilyn Oshman, and Wayne Blasat at the Orange Show's Angels & Demons 2009 gala, September 13.



Tim Pugh, Tonya Hyde, and Corey Collins at TC's grand opening, October 10.



Bayou City Womens' Chorus at the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, October 3.



AssistHers at OutSmart's Gayest & Greatest Awards 2009 at South Beach, October 2.



Gary Wood, Bryant Johnson, Anthony Dolgner, Brandon Carroll, Geoffery Lawrence, Travis Jenner, and Ernie Manouse at Houston Comes Out Pride Houston event, October 10.

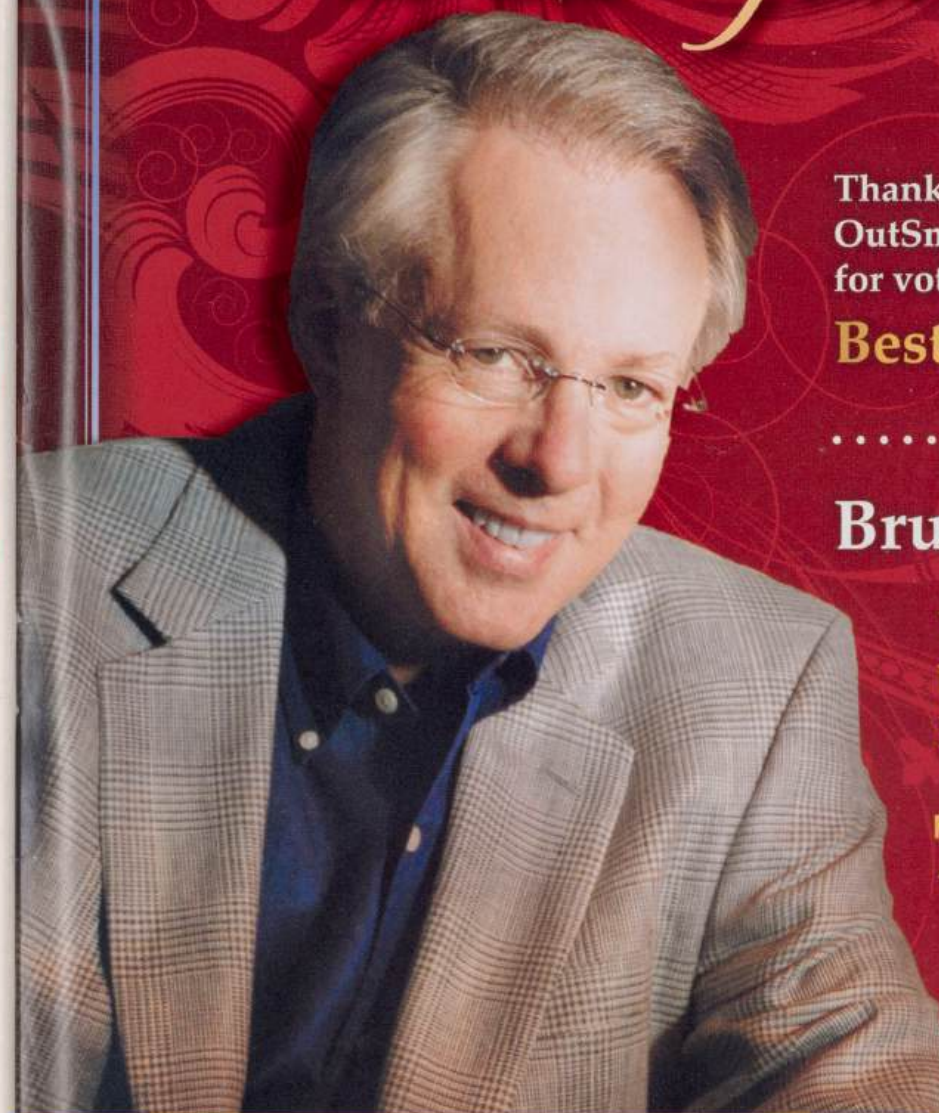


Robert Hines, Connie Moore, Kiyona Corpening, Jason Stephens, Debbie Hunt, Lisa Mace, and Joe Wiese at the Houston Pride Band 2009-2010 season kickoff, September 30.



Flyboys of Flag Troupe Houston at fundraiser car wash at Mary's, October 10.

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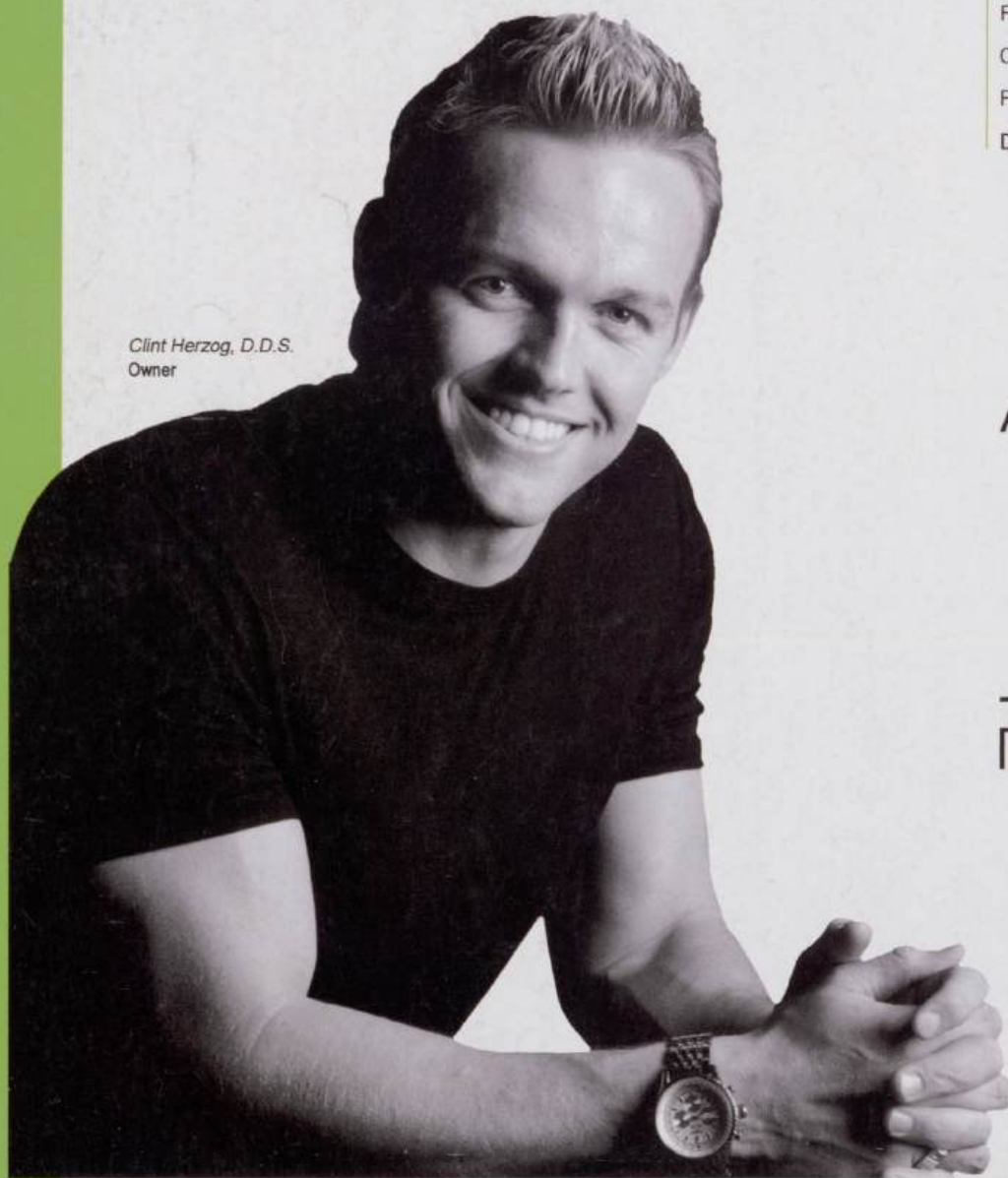
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