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OutSmart

AUGUST 2013

ALL AMERICAN BOY

COUNTRY SENSATION
STEVE GRAND



CINDY PRUITT
HOUSTON'S OWN INDIE STAR



MICHAEL GOTT
UNITY'S MUSICAL MINISTER

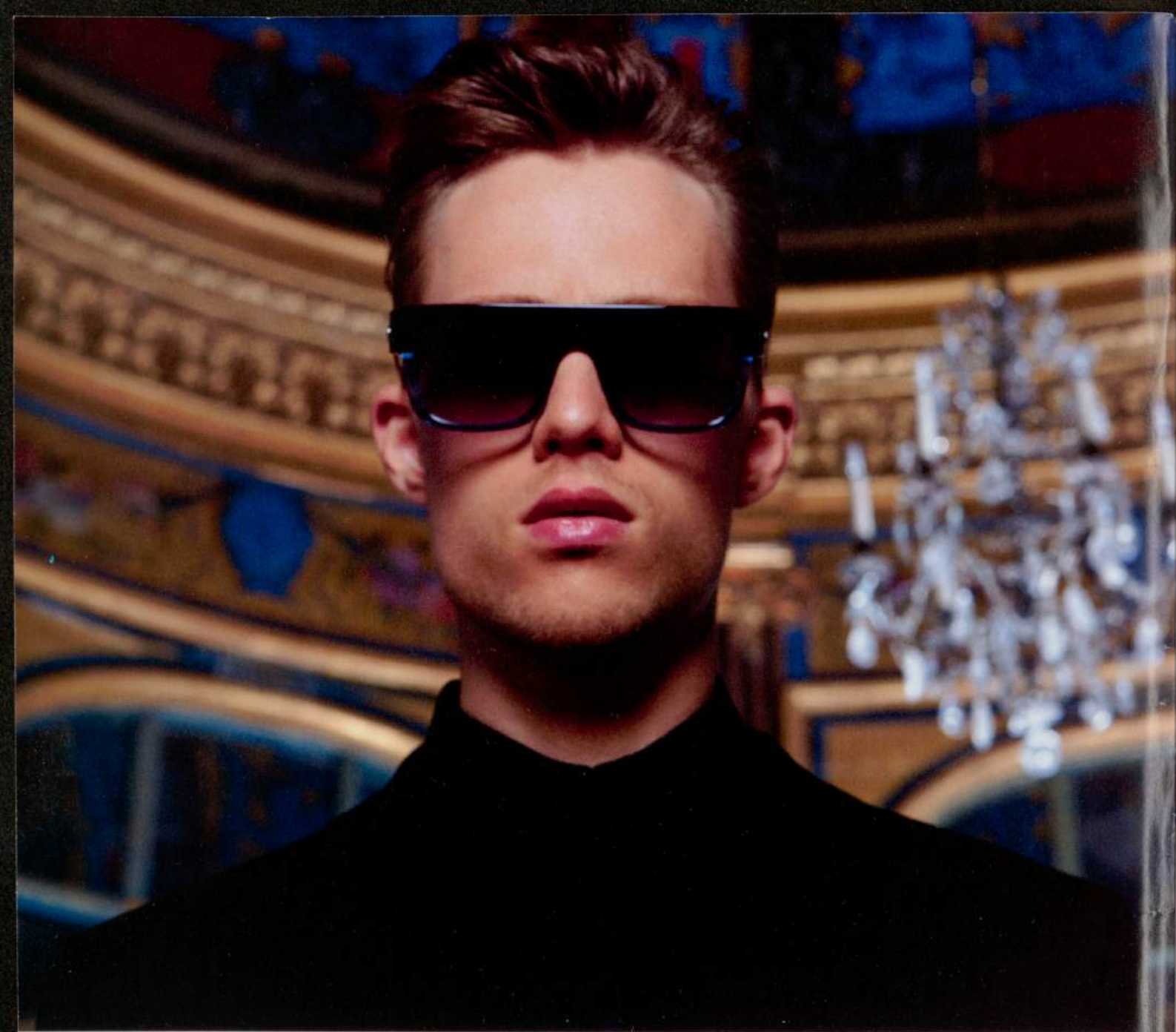


VICCI MARTINEZ
THE WOMAN BEHIND THE VOICE

THE **MUSIC**

ISSUE

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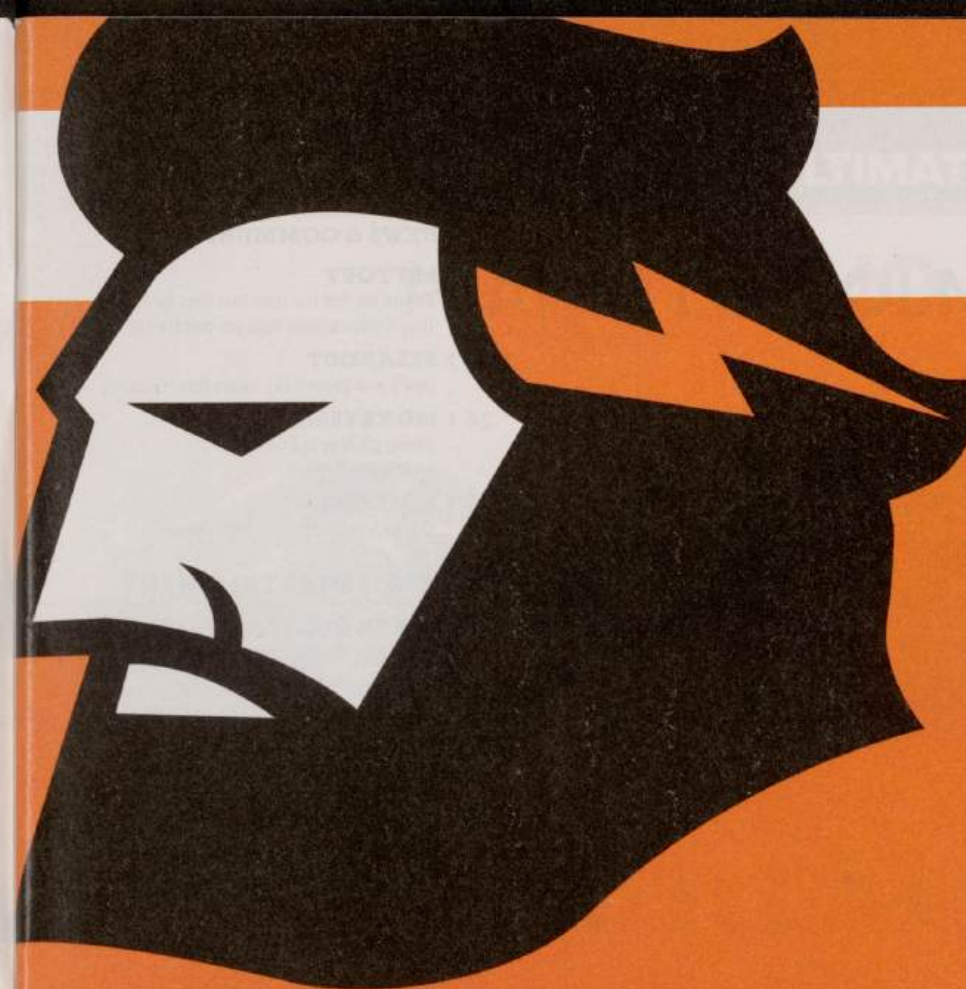
The 2013 Pride Festival and Parade on June 29



ABOUT THE COVER

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3406 Audubon Place • Houston, TX 77006
713/520-7237 • 713/522-3275 Fax

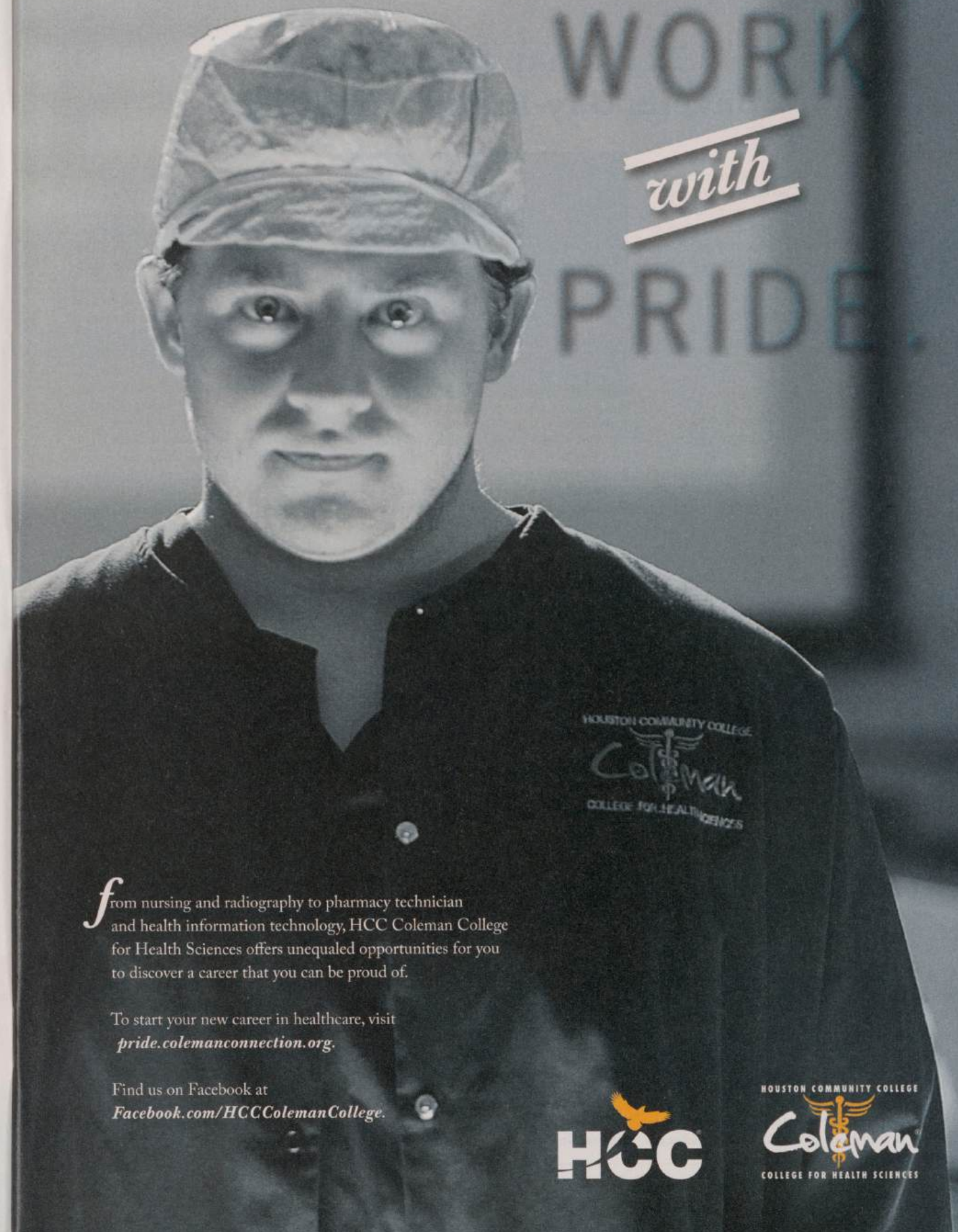
Subscriptions: \$27/12 Issues, \$48/24 Issues

E-mail: letters@outsmartmagazine.com
Website: www.OutSmartMagazine.com

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U.N. Human Rights Office Unveils Gay-Rights Campaign

by David Crary, AP

Amid a surge of antigay violence and repression in several countries, the United Nations' human rights office on Friday launched its first global outreach campaign to promote tolerance and greater equality for lesbians, gays, transgender people, and bisexuals.

Called Free & Equal, it's an unprecedented effort by the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights to change public attitudes around the world on issues that have bitterly divided the U.N.'s own member states.

The multi-pronged campaign—announced at a news conference in Cape Town, South Africa—will include videos and public-service announcements distributed through social media, a new website, a series of fact sheets, and engagement by celebrities well-known in different regions of the world.

"Changing attitudes is never easy. . . . It begins with often-difficult conversations," said Navi Pillay, the high commissioner for human rights. "And that is what we want to do with this campaign. Free & Equal will inspire millions of conversations among people around the world and across the ideological spectrum."

There were multiple reasons for choosing South Africa as the news conference venue. It is Pillay's home country, and is a leading nation on a continent where discrimination and violence against LGBT



Major ally: Archbishop Desmond Tutu says, "I would not worship a God who is homophobic, and that is how deeply I feel about this."

people is widespread.

In Cameroon, for example, two men were sentenced to prison recently for gay sex, and a gay rights activist was tortured and killed in July in an attack his friends suspect was related to his activism. South Africa, in contrast, does not criminalize homosexuality and allows same-sex marriage, yet is plagued by extensive antigay violence, including frequent rapes of lesbians.

However, the new awareness campaign will extend worldwide, reflecting the challenges faced by gays in many countries.

In Russia, President Vladimir Putin recently signed a law that will impose hefty fines for holding gay pride rallies or providing information about the gay community to mi-

nors. In Haiti, gay-rights leaders say their community has been targeted by a recent series of threats. In Montenegro, several hundred people attacked the Balkan nation's first-ever gay pride rally, throwing rocks and bottles at activists while some yelled, "Kill the gays."

"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights promises a world in which everyone is born free and equal in dignity and rights—no exceptions, no one left behind," Pillay said. "Yet it's still a hollow promise for many millions of LGBT people forced to confront hatred, intolerance, violence, and discrimination on a daily basis."

Among the dignitaries throwing their support behind Free & Equal was retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who in the 1980s was a prominent leader of the struggle to end South Africa's apartheid system of racial segregation and white-minority rule.

"I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven . . . I mean I would much rather go to the other place," Tutu said at a recent news conference. "I would not worship a God who is homophobic, and that is how deeply I feel about this."

The paramount anti-apartheid leader, ailing former South African President Nelson Mandela, also has been an inspiration for Free & Equal, according to Charles Radcliffe, a spokesman for the U.N. human rights office. *More News →*

Gay Marriage in Hawaii Worth \$217M in Tourism

by Oskar Garcia, Associated Press

A new economic analysis from the University of Hawaii says legalizing gay marriage in the state would boost tourism by \$217 million over the next three years. The study from the university's Economic Research Organization says that would boost state and local general excise tax revenues by \$10.2 million from 2014 through 2016.

Previous estimates on the effect gay marriage would have on tourism were less specific because two U.S. Supreme Court cases were pending.

The study's author, professor Sumner LaCroix, said the recent decisions that affirmed federal benefits for married same-

sex couples and rejected a law that halted gay marriages in California now give a clearer picture, but the issue is time sensitive because of pent-up demand for same-sex marriage. "If Hawaii waits to adopt same-sex marriage, it will not realize these gains," LaCroix said in the analysis. "They will be lost forever, diverted to other states that recognize marriage equality."

Since the Supreme Court rulings last month, advocates of gay marriage have been pushing for a special session in Hawaii to push for more than the civil union law that is already in place. But legislators from the House and Senate told the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* this week they don't have the two-thirds support needed to call themselves back into session, and Gov. Neil

Abercrombie has not signaled whether he will call for a special session on his own.

A proposed constitutional amendment died in committee in the House earlier this year, while a Senate resolution passed asking for more study on the issue. The Legislature reconvenes its regular session in January.

Most of the added visitor spending would come from couples from other U.S. states that have legalized gay marriage who might plan a destination wedding or honeymoon in Hawaii, LaCroix said. He estimated \$166 million would be spent on marriage ceremonies and honeymoons.

LaCroix said nearly two thousand same-sex couples living in Hawaii could be married by the end of 2016. ■

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LGBT Organizations Seek Justice for Trayvon Martin

by Megan Smith

Nearly two weeks after a jury deemed George Zimmerman "not guilty" of the second-degree murder of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin, LGBT rights organizations continue to argue that justice for Martin is not just a race issue, but also a matter of equality for all.

On July 15, thirty-five LGBT organizations, including GLAAD, The Harvey Milk Foundation, The National Center for Lesbian Rights, BiNetUSA, and The Trans People of Color Coalition, issued an open letter on justice for Martin. "Every person, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity,

must be able to walk the streets without fear for their safety," the letter read. "Justice delayed is justice denied, and in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 'a right delayed is a right denied.' We honor Trayvon by seeking justice for all people."

This same notion seems to echo from Martin supporters across the country. During a rally for justice in Washington DC, Dr. E. Faye Williams, national chair of the National Congress of Black Women, said, "I want to see my brothers and sisters in the LGBT community stand up for the memory of Trayvon Martin."

"Trayvon could have been any gay or lesbian kid of color," Rev. Meredith Moise of Baltimore added in a late July interview with the *Washington Blade*. "The LGBTQ

community must show solidarity by raising voices against racial profiling and bias. It is also time that we look at racism within the LGBTQ community and make a commitment to end racism within our own ranks."

Following the Zimmerman verdict, openly gay ESPN columnist and writer LZ Granderson described his reactions as the father of a young, African-American son in a CNN opinion piece. Granderson explains that just hours before the verdict, he and his partner were discussing how to prevent their son from being shot while jogging in their upper-middle class, predominantly white neighborhood. "I promise you, it was a very real conversation," he said in his commentary. "After the verdict—it came as a punch to the stomach—we thought maybe it was best if he only ran inside the gym. Trayvon could have been my son—and that scares the hell out of me. If, during this sixteen-month ordeal, that thought never crossed your mind, then you have no idea what it is like to be the parent of a young black male in America."

On July 19, President Obama mirrored Granderson's sentiments in an impromptu speech addressing the Zimmerman decision. "You know, when Trayvon Martin was first shot, I said that this could have been my son," Obama said. "Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me thirty-five years ago. And when you think about why, in the African-American community at least, there's a lot of pain around what happened here, I think it's important to recognize that the African-American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and history that doesn't go away."

As of July 23, federal officials were still deciding whether or not to pursue a civil rights case to determine if Zimmerman violated Martin's civil rights when he shot the teenager.

Until then, LGBT rights organizations stand with Martin. "Our own community crosses every other line of diversity in this country," Rick Rosendall, president of the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance, told the *Washington Blade*. "We are connected to one another inextricably, like it or not. And we damn well better stand together or we will have hell to pay." ■

Community

On Saturday, July 20, the Montrose Softball League presented checks to this year's beneficiaries, Pet Patrol and Legacy Community Health Services, at their awards banquet held at Hughes Hangar on Washington Avenue. Pictured (softball members are in blue shirts) are (l-r) Ryan Abarca, Tori Williams representing Pet Patrol, Henry Gonzales, Christopher Garrett representing Legacy, and Peter Robledo.



Legacy Community Health Services held the Ms. Mint Julep "Party with a Purpose" on July 21 at Rich's on San Jacinto. This year's annual fundraiser that benefits Legacy's HIV/AIDS programs netted \$50,000. Pictured (l-r): event co-chairs Ms. Mint Julep 2007 George Burch, aka Ginger Grant, and Bryan Hlavinka; honorees Ben Montalbano, Lavita Marks representing AssistHers, and Rusty Mueller, aka Crystal Rae Lee Love.

On July 20, the Montrose Softball League presented both Dalton DeHart and John Cox Appreciation Awards for their tireless coverage of MSL events at their annual awards banquet at Hughes Hangar. Pictured (l-r): *OutSmart*'s very own Dalton DeHart, Brian Crumby, John Cox, and Peter Robledo.



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STRIBILD does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. To control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses you must keep taking STRIBILD. Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to reduce the risk of passing HIV-1 to others. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

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

STRIBILD can cause serious side effects:

- **Build-up of an acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include feeling very weak or tired, unusual (not normal) muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold especially in your arms and legs, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Serious liver problems.** The liver may become large (hepatomegaly) and fatty (steatosis). Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice), dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored bowel movements (stools), loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach pain.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking STRIBILD for a long time. In some cases, these serious conditions have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.

- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** If you also have HBV and stop taking STRIBILD, your hepatitis may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking STRIBILD without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health. STRIBILD is not approved for the treatment of HBV.

Who should not take STRIBILD?

Do not take STRIBILD if you:

- **Take a medicine that contains:** alfuzosin, dihydroergotamine, ergotamine, methylergonovine, cisapride, lovastatin, simvastatin, pimozide, sildenafil when used for lung problems (Revatio®), triazolam, oral midazolam, rifampin or the herb St. John's wort.
- **For a list of brand names for these medicines,** please see the Brief Summary on the following pages.
- **Take any other medicines to treat HIV-1 infection,** or the medicine adefovir (Hepsera®).

What are the other possible side effects of STRIBILD?

Serious side effects of STRIBILD may also include:

- **New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do regular blood and urine tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with STRIBILD. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking STRIBILD.
- **Bone problems,** including bone pain or bones getting soft or thin, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.
- **Changes in body fat** can happen in people taking HIV-1 medicines.
- **Changes in your immune system.** Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new symptoms after you start taking STRIBILD.

The most common side effects of STRIBILD include nausea and diarrhea. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or don't go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking STRIBILD?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. STRIBILD may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how STRIBILD works. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist. Do not start any new medicines while taking STRIBILD without first talking with your healthcare provider.
- **If you take hormone-based birth control** (pills, patches, rings, shots, etc).
- **If you take antacids.** Take antacids at least 2 hours before or after you take STRIBILD.
- **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if STRIBILD can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking STRIBILD.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk. Also, some medicines in STRIBILD can pass into breast milk, and it is not known if this can harm the baby.

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

Please see Brief Summary of full Prescribing Information with **important warnings** on the following pages.

STRIBILD is a prescription medicine used as a complete single-tablet regimen to treat HIV-1 in adults who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before. STRIBILD does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.

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Brief summary of full Prescribing Information. For more information, please see the full Prescribing Information, including Patient Information.

What is STRIBILD?

- **STRIBILD is a prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in adults who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before.** STRIBILD is a complete regimen and should not be used with other HIV-1 medicines.
- **STRIBILD does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** You must stay on continuous HIV-1 therapy to control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses.
- **Ask your healthcare provider about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to others.** Do not share or reuse needles, injection equipment, or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them. Do not have sex without protection. Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.

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

STRIBILD can cause serious side effects, including:

1. **Build-up of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis).** Lactic acidosis can happen in some people who take STRIBILD or similar (nucleoside analogs) medicines. Lactic acidosis is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Lactic acidosis can be hard to identify early, because the symptoms could seem like symptoms of other health problems. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms which could be signs of lactic acidosis:**

- feel very weak or tired
- have unusual (not normal) muscle pain
- have trouble breathing
- have stomach pain with nausea or vomiting
- feel cold, especially in your arms and legs
- feel dizzy or lightheaded
- have a fast or irregular heartbeat

2. **Severe liver problems.** Severe liver problems can happen in people who take STRIBILD. In some cases, these liver problems can lead to death. Your liver may become large (hepatomegaly) and you may develop fat in your liver (steatosis). **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms of liver problems:**

- your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice)
- dark “tea-colored” urine
- light-colored bowel movements (stools)
- loss of appetite for several days or longer
- nausea
- stomach pain

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking STRIBILD for a long time.

3. **Worsening of Hepatitis B infection.** If you have hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection and take STRIBILD, your HBV may get worse (flare-up) if you stop taking STRIBILD. A “flare-up” is when your HBV infection suddenly returns in a worse way than before.

- Do not run out of STRIBILD. Refill your prescription or talk to your healthcare provider before your STRIBILD is all gone

- Do not stop taking STRIBILD without first talking to your healthcare provider
- If you stop taking STRIBILD, your healthcare provider will need to check your health often and do blood tests regularly for several months to check your HBV infection. Tell your healthcare provider about any new or unusual symptoms you may have after you stop taking STRIBILD

Who should not take STRIBILD?

Do not take STRIBILD if you also take a medicine that contains:

- adefovir (Hepsera®)
- alfuzosin hydrochloride (Uroxatral®)
- cisapride (Propulsid®, Propulsid Quicksolv®)
- ergot-containing medicines, including: dihydroergotamine mesylate (D.H.E. 45®, Migranal®), ergotamine tartrate (Cafegot®, Migergot®, Ergostat®, Medihaler Ergotamine®, Wigraine®, Wigrettes®), and methylergonovine maleate (Ergotrate®, Methergine®)
- lovastatin (Advicor®, Altoprev®, Mevacor®)
- oral midazolam
- pimozone (Orap®)
- rifampin (Rifadin®, Rifamate®, Rifater®, Rimactane®)
- sildenafil (Revatio®), when used for treating lung problems
- simvastatin (Simcor®, Vytorin®, Zocor®)
- triazolam (Halcion®)
- the herb St. John's wort

Do not take STRIBILD if you also take any other HIV-1 medicines, including:

- Other medicines that contain tenofovir (Atripla®, Complera®, Viread®, Truvada®)
- Other medicines that contain emtricitabine, lamivudine, or ritonavir (Combivir®, Emtriva®, Epivir® or Epivir-HBV®, Epzicom®, Kaletra®, Norvir®, Trizivir®)

STRIBILD is not for use in people who are less than 18 years old.

What are the possible side effects of STRIBILD?

STRIBILD may cause the following serious side effects:

- **See “What is the most important information I should know about STRIBILD?”**
- **New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys before you start and while you are taking STRIBILD. Your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking STRIBILD if you develop new or worse kidney problems.
- **Bone problems** can happen in some people who take STRIBILD. Bone problems include bone pain, softening or thinning (which may lead to fractures). Your healthcare provider may need to do tests to check your bones.
- **Changes in body fat** can happen in people who take HIV-1 medicine. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck (“buffalo hump”), breast, and around the middle of your body (trunk). Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The exact cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known.
- **Changes in your immune system** (Immune Reconstitution Syndrome) can happen when you start taking HIV-1 medicines. Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections that have been hidden in your body for a long time. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you start having any new symptoms after starting your HIV-1 medicine.

The most common side effects of STRIBILD include:

- Nausea
- Diarrhea

Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

- These are not all the possible side effects of STRIBILD. For more information, ask your healthcare provider.
- Call your healthcare provider for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking STRIBILD?

Tell your healthcare provider about all your medical conditions, including:

- If you have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis B infection
- If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if STRIBILD can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking STRIBILD.
 - There is a pregnancy registry for women who take antiviral medicines during pregnancy. The purpose of this registry is to collect information about the health of you and your baby. Talk with your healthcare provider about how you can take part in this registry.
- If you are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you take STRIBILD.
 - You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.
 - Two of the medicines in STRIBILD can pass to your baby in your breast milk. It is not known if the other medicines in STRIBILD can pass into your breast milk.
 - Talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements:

- STRIBILD may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how STRIBILD works.
- Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you take any of the following medicines:
 - Hormone-based birth control (pills, patches, rings, shots, etc)
 - Antacid medicines that contains aluminum, magnesium hydroxide, or calcium carbonate. Take antacids at least 2 hours before or after you take STRIBILD
 - Medicines to treat depression, organ transplant rejection, or high blood pressure
 - amiodarone (Cordarone®, Pacerone®)
 - atorvastatin (Lipitor®, Caduet®)
 - bepridil hydrochloric (Vasacor®, Bepadin®)
 - bosentan (Tracleer®)
 - buspirone
 - carbamazepine (Carbatrol®, Epitol®, Equetro®, Tegreto®)
 - clarithromycin (Biaxin®, Prevpac®)
 - clonazepam (Klonopin®)
 - clorazepate (Gen-xene®, Tranxene®)
 - colchicine (Colcris®)
 - medicines that contain dexamethasone
 - diazepam (Valium®)

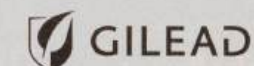
- digoxin (Lanoxin®)
- disopyramide (Norpace®)
- estazolam
- ethosuximide (Zarontin®)
- flecainide (Tambocor®)
- flurazepam
- fluticasone (Flovent®, Flonase®, Flovent® Diskus, Flovent® HFA, Veramyst®)
- itraconazole (Sporanox®)
- ketoconazole (Nizoral®)
- lidocaine (Xylocaine®)
- mexiletine
- oxcarbazepine (Trileptal®)
- perphenazine
- phenobarbital (Luminal®)
- phenytoin (Dilantin®, Phenytek®)
- propafenone (Rythmol®)
- quinidine (Neudexta®)
- rifabutin (Mycobutin®)
- rifapentine (Priftin®)
- risperidone (Risperdal®, Risperdal Consta®)
- salmeterol (Serevent®) or salmeterol when taken in combination with fluticasone (Advair Diskus®, Advair HFA®)
- sildenafil (Viagra®), tadalafil (Cialis®) or vardenafil (Levitra®, Staxyn®), for the treatment of erectile dysfunction (ED). If you get dizzy or faint (low blood pressure), have vision changes or have an erection that last longer than 4 hours, call your healthcare provider or get medical help right away.
- tadalafil (Adcirca®), for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension
- telithromycin (Ketek®)
- thioridazine
- voriconazole (Vfend®)
- warfarin (Coumadin®, Jantoven®)
- zolpidem (Ambien®, Edlular®, Intermezzo®, Zolpimist®)

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine. Do not start any new medicines while you are taking STRIBILD without first talking with your healthcare provider.

Keep STRIBILD and all medicines out of reach of children.

This Brief Summary summarizes the most important information about STRIBILD. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can also ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for information about STRIBILD that is written for health professionals, or call 1-800-445-3235 or go to www.STRIBILD.com.

Issued: August 2012



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by
Susan
Bankston

Excuse Me . . .

but the state that lives for Mardi Gras thinks that rainbow flags are over the top?

You gotta love Louisiana. Well, you don't, but I do, because it's the foreign state to our right, and it never occurred to you that anything could be to the right of Texas, did it? And, I have to admit that my daddy was born in New Orleans. My family tree doesn't fork too well, which explains why some of my family couldn't read a map to get to Texas.

Here's an honest-to-gosh true story that you can read on the electric Internet or the print newspaper called *The Advertiser* in Lafayette, which I think is the paper of record for the *noblesse ancienne* of the bayou. *Noblesse ancienne* either means "old nobility," or it's a cream sauce

at Paul Prudhomme's restaurant—I can't remember which, and it probably doesn't matter much.

Pride Day in Lafayette was held at a public park, and the celebrants hoisted a rainbow flag up the flag pole. In order to do this, none of the Ameri-

"Green said he's not against the gays but is against the act itself."

can flags were removed or flown below the rainbow flag. Korean War veteran Ray Green says he was offended that this flag was on public property. Deeply and painfully offended.

"I did not go overseas and fight for our country so that we could come back and be subject to something like that,"

Green said. "Several of us [veterans] feel that the flying of this flag is a poke in the eye of a way of life."

Dude, it's a flag. It has a rainbow. It's pretty. That's all. It's not like the old days, Ray. Raising the rainbow flag for a day does not have military implications. The park has not been conquered by the gays. There is no occupying force of LGBT commandos dug into foxholes in the park, peering through Dolce & Gabbana binoculars while contemplating fresh evils. Although, if they wanted to, a group of LGBT commandos could easily conquer the park. I mean, Ray needs to realize that a whole bunch of gay folks also served in the military to fight for their way of life. But if →



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LeftOut continued from page 18

celebrating their way of life in the land of the free is taken as a poke in the eye, then so be it. Sometimes people need a poke in the eye to clean off the cobwebs.

Ray continues in the hometown newspaper: "That has offended many, many, many veterans. It offended me," he said. Let's see, Ray, at the demonstration against the gay flag, there was you and there was . . . well, you. I'll even let you count yourself twice. Oh hell, go big or go home, Ray—there was you, you and you.

The newspaper continues: "Green said he's not against the gays but is against the act itself." Well then, Ray, do not do that act. Seriously. Do not do it. You're thinking about it, aren't you?

And you gotta wonder which act he's referring to. Nathan Lane in *The Birdcage*? Ellen DeGeneres? The entire *South Pacific* cast?

Okay, I know that's not what he's talking about. He's talking about hairdressing, isn't he? Dirty, disgusting, perverted hairdressing. Ray, quit thinking about "the act itself." You have spent way too much time on that. Then he puts icing on the gay cake by adding, "And I'm against the possibility of them getting together for another demonstration and taking down the American flag."

And, Ray, I am against the possibility that you might strip yourself nekkid except for some boobie beads and a Duck Dynasty T-shirt and parade down I-10 singing about Marie Laveau. So we better not let you outta the house. Apparently, just because you haven't done something before now, doesn't mean you won't.

When asked if he had considered that by not allowing any flag but the American flag in public places, then the POW/MIA flag would be outlawed—along with the LSU and Mardi Gras flags—Ray said he wasn't wild about that, but democracy is worth it.

In that case, God help him if somebody ever takes Ray to Six Flags Over Texas in Arlington. Seeing a Spanish Flag, a Mexican Flag, and a French Flag next to the U.S. and Texas flags may give him a stroke. Although somehow I'm betting Ray is probably in the age group that doesn't need to be riding roller coasters anyhow.

Oh, and also please don't tell him that although one of the six national flags over Texas was the Confederate flag, they don't fly that one at Six Flags, for what should be obvious reasons (but possibly aren't to him). And also don't tell him about Six Flags Fiesta Texas in San Antonio. In fact, let's definitely not bring up Six Flags at all.

Susan Bankston lives in Richmond, Texas, where she writes about her hairdresser at The World's Most Dangerous Beauty Salon, Inc., at juanitajeane.com.

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by
Blake
Hayes

How's Your Gaydar?

Let nature take its course

"I have the worst gaydar ever!" How many times have you heard that? (And how many times was it from a frustrated girl who had dated a gay guy?)

What is it that gives you good—or bad—gaydar? Gaydar, a combination of "gay" and "radar," is "the ability to recognize homosexuals through observation or intuition," according to Merriam-Webster.

"Well . . . are you ovulating?" Believe it or not, at least one study has shown that women who are ripe for reproduction have a better-tuned gaydar during that time of the month.

Researchers at the University of Toronto showed forty straight women pictures of equally attractive men of varying sexualities, and the ladies closest to peak ovulation—those with the best chances of getting pregnant—had the best gaydar!

Isn't that fascinating? Nature gave women the ability to sort out the most promising mates at the perfect time. (The study also found that female strippers make more tips when they're ovulating.)

So, is being able to distinguish between gays and straights an evolutionary skill, designed to help women procreate more efficiently? Maybe! But for the most part, I think gaydar evolved as an equally important LGBT skill: survival. It's a way for us LGBT folks to identify others like us—the ones we can flirt with without risking a punch to the face.

But how does gaydar work? Is it based purely on stereotypes? We use a handful of cues to figure out who's gay and who's not—how they

talk, or walk, or what they wear, or if they make eye contact *just* long enough. And according to another study, it's also based on facial structures.

Men have a larger width-to-height ratio in the shape of their face, which is apparently caused by testosterone being released in adolescence, the study published in the journal *PLOS ONE* explains. These researchers speculated that a feminine or masculine facial structure impacts people's perception of sexuality, or gaydar. They found people could distinguish between gays and straights based *only* on faces (with hair obscured and no jewelry) with 60 percent accuracy.

That may not sound *that* impressive, but 60 percent is statistically significant since it is "several times above the

"With more Internet matchmaking and less real-life meeting and greeting, will gaydar go the way of the Dodo bird?"

margin of error," the researchers wrote in the *New York Times*. So, yes—"gay face" could actually be a real thing!

Now I'm no scientist, but I would hypothesize that more attractive people (gay or straight) tend to have more accurate gaydar. (How many times have you stared down someone attractive of the same sex, or at least maintained longer eye contact than a heterosexual person would have?)

As being gay has become increasingly acceptable in recent years, I suspect that, as a species, we're getting better at our gaydar skills. Sure, there are still the oblivious people, but as gay has become mainstream, most folks have learned which cues to look for, with more accuracy—right?

What is the future of gaydar? If it becomes less risky to hit on a straight guy (and who hasn't done *that*?!), is this skill going to become less and less important?

One thing that's probably killing gaydar: smartphone apps like Grindr. Part of the fun of being gay is the

challenge of seeking out other gays in a heterosexual world! When you can just open an app where *everyone* on the list is gay (or . . . "straight but curious on the DL") and willing to mingle (just maybe not with you), there's no need to exercise your internal Doppler. With more Internet matchmaking and less real-life meeting and greeting, will gaydar go the way of the Dodo bird?

Gaydar can sometimes be a bad thing, though: think of how often LGBT folks are discriminated against even if they're not "out." Sadly, that's also based on gaydar.

A gay couple I met at a rally after the landmark Supreme Court DOMA decision had faced that situation years ago when they first moved to Houston.

It was 1970, and when they tried to rent an apartment together, they were turned down. "We don't rent to two gentlemen," they were told. They were *not* at all open about their sexuality, but the perception that they were gay still resulted in discrimination.

Forty-three years later, this is still a problem. In the state of Texas (and many others), two men can *still* be denied an apartment because they are perceived to be gay. They can also be fired from their jobs for the same reason.

Oh, and if your own gaydar is pinging off the charts after reading this, I'll just go ahead and confirm it now: Duh.

Blake Hayes is the morning host at Mix 96.5 KHM.

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by
Grace S.
Yung, CFP

Saying Goodbye to DOMA

What it really means

The LGBT community recently celebrated an historic victory over DOMA, the infamous Defense of Marriage Act that excluded same-sex couples from taking part in many financial and tax-related benefits that are automatically afforded to heterosexual married couples throughout the U.S.

Yet, while the ruling is an extremely positive move in the right direction, it will also lead to some highly complex financial planning needs for gay couples who reside or own assets in the thirty-plus states that do not currently recognize same-sex marriage.

Benefits and Drawbacks of the DOMA ruling

The DOMA ruling brought some valuable protections, as well as recognition, to many same-sex couples. For instance, couples may now file joint federal tax

"Even though married same-sex couples are now able to file federal taxes jointly, doing so could actually mean taking an even bigger tax hit."

returns, receive survivor's benefits on pensions, and obtain Social Security benefits based on their same-gender spouse's work history.

Some of the biggest inroads will be felt in areas such as:

• Estate Taxes

Prior to the recent DOMA ruling, only heterosexual couples could pass wealth to their spouse upon death completely free of estate taxation. Same-sex

spouses may now enjoy this privilege as well. This could potentially save thousands—or hundreds of thousands—of dollars in tax liability for a surviving partner. In Edie Windsor's case, she was able to recoup \$363,000!

• Rollover of Retirement Savings

Opposite-sex married couples enjoy certain privileges when it comes to rolling over retirement savings in accounts such as IRAs and 401(k)s. Now,

same-sex couples may also be allowed to roll a partner's funds into their own retirement account without the need to begin taking distributions immediately.

• Gift Taxation

Similar to estate taxes, legally married spouses can pass an unlimited amount of assets to each other throughout life, without the need to pay gift tax. Now, many same-sex married couples can also do the same. Prior to the victory over DOMA, if one partner in a same-sex marriage purchased a home and then added his or her partner to the deed, a gift tax based on half of the home's purchase price would have been due.

• Social Security

The victory over DOMA also means that same-sex couples will be more secure in terms of their partner's Social Security benefits. For example, the surviving spouse in a same-sex marriage will now be allowed to claim Social Security benefits if his or her deceased partner earned more. In this case, the surviving partner will be able to claim either their own Social Security benefits—based upon his or her own earnings history—or claim 50 percent of the deceased partner's benefit amount.

• Medicaid

The ruling will also have an effect on eligibility for expanded Medicaid benefits. As Medicaid qualification is based on both the size and total income of a household (in relation to federal poverty guidelines), the effect on married same-sex couples could be mixed—depending on the couple's total amount of income and assets.

• Medical Decisions

In the states that recognize same-sex marriage, the DOMA ruling also means that one's partner could be treated as the next of kin for purposes of making medical decisions, as well as the sharing of medical information under HIPAA.

From a tax and financial standpoint, the DOMA victory is huge. However, one of the most important aspects to the ruling is that, even though federal benefits are now available to partners who are legally married in states that recognize same-sex marriage, it does not force the states that don't sanction it to honor such benefits. In other words, a couple could have rights to federal benefits but not to state benefits.

For example, if a couple is married in California, but they later move to Texas, the partners may not be eligible to receive tax-free wealth transfer upon death—or many of the other tax and financially related privileges that heterosexual couples automatically have access to. →



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The Challenges Still Ahead

While this victory over DOMA signals a positive movement for those in the LGBT community, it may also make financial planning for same-sex couples a bit more complicated—especially for those who live in (or own assets in) more than one state.

For example, prior to the DOMA ruling, partners in a same-sex marriage were not required to list (for tax purposes) the property or assets that were held by their significant other. Now, however, the recognition of marriage at the federal level will require the listing of all assets and property considered to be community property under state law.

This can have an especially detrimental effect on those couples who own substantial assets—and could signal the loss of one or both partner's homestead exemption, depending on their state of residence and their property ownership/titling.

Given some of the potential financial drawbacks, it is important that couples contemplating marriage carefully consider all angles prior to heading to the altar. It also means that couples will really need to weigh their options in terms of what will work out best financially going forward. For example, even though married same-sex couples are now able to file federal taxes jointly, doing so could actually mean taking an even bigger tax hit—especially for high-income earners.

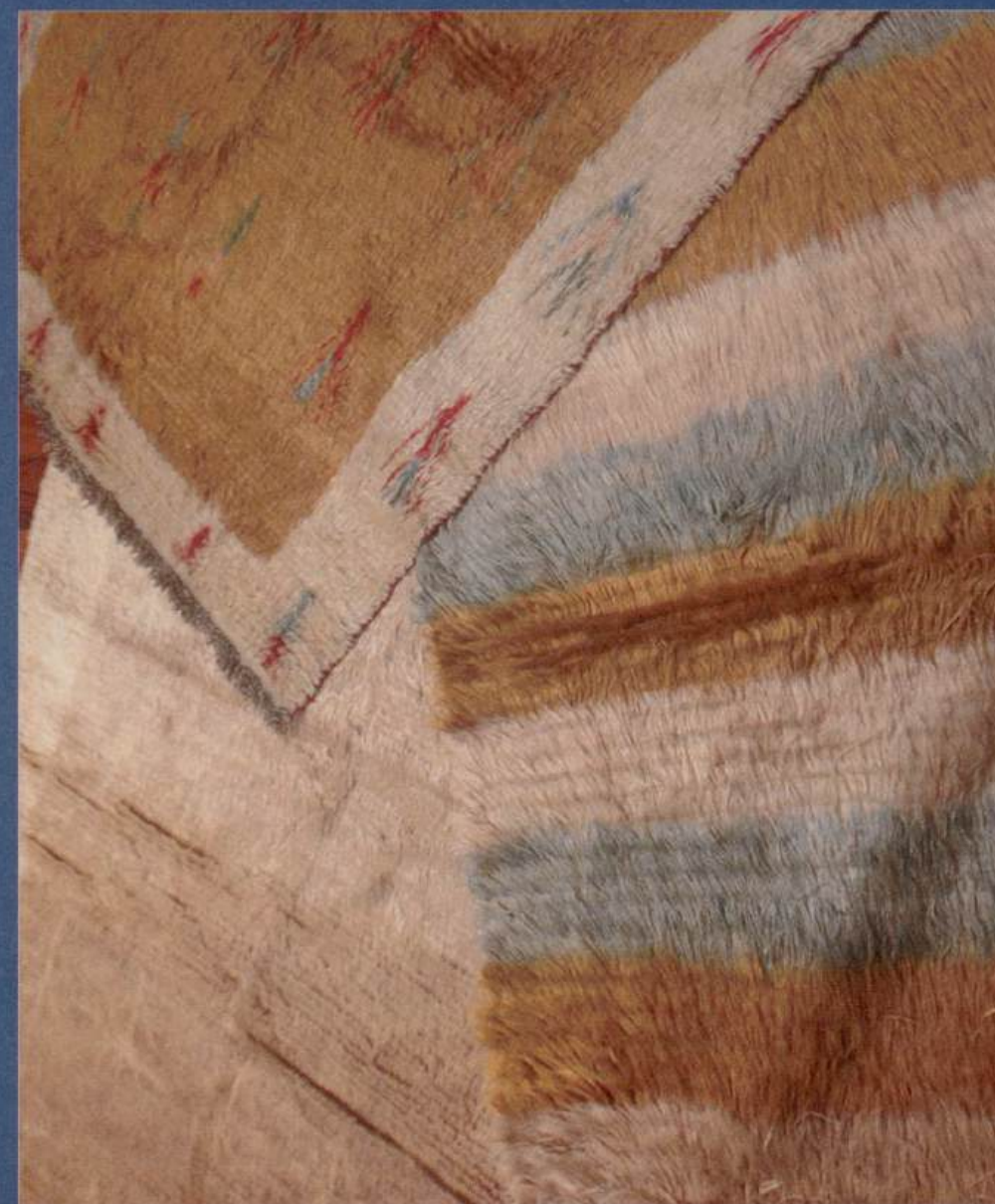
This also means that same-sex couples who are married should add an extra layer of “just in case” protection when it comes to their tax and financial affairs. These protections may include setting up a domestic partnership agreement, creating health-care proxies, and titling real-estate and financial assets jointly.

For this reason, it is essential that all tax and financial planning be done by a qualified professional who has knowledge of tax and financial planning concepts, as well as which strategies would be the best fit for couples and individuals with diverse planning needs.

Grace S. Yung, CFP, is a certified financial planner practitioner with experience in helping domestic partners plan their finances since 1994. She is a principal at Midtown Financial LLC in Houston.



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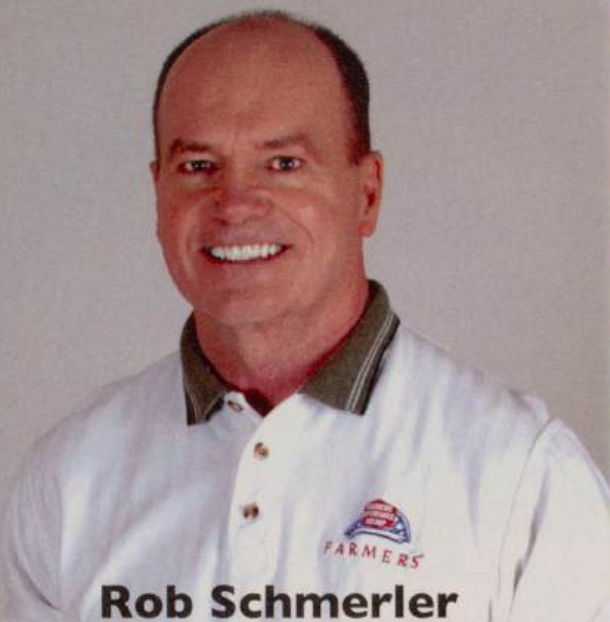
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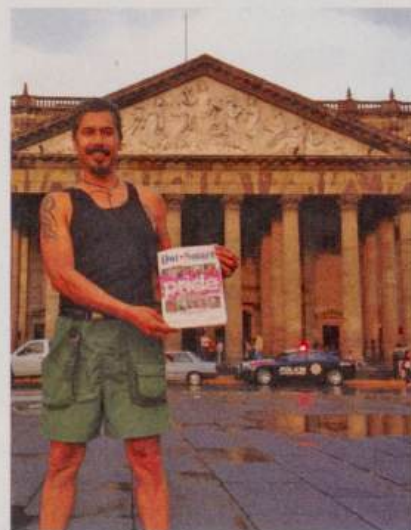
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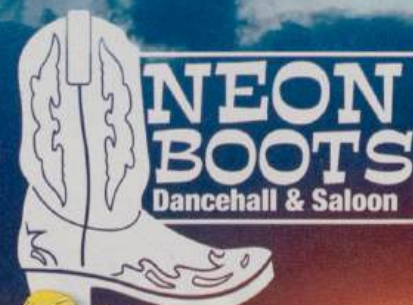
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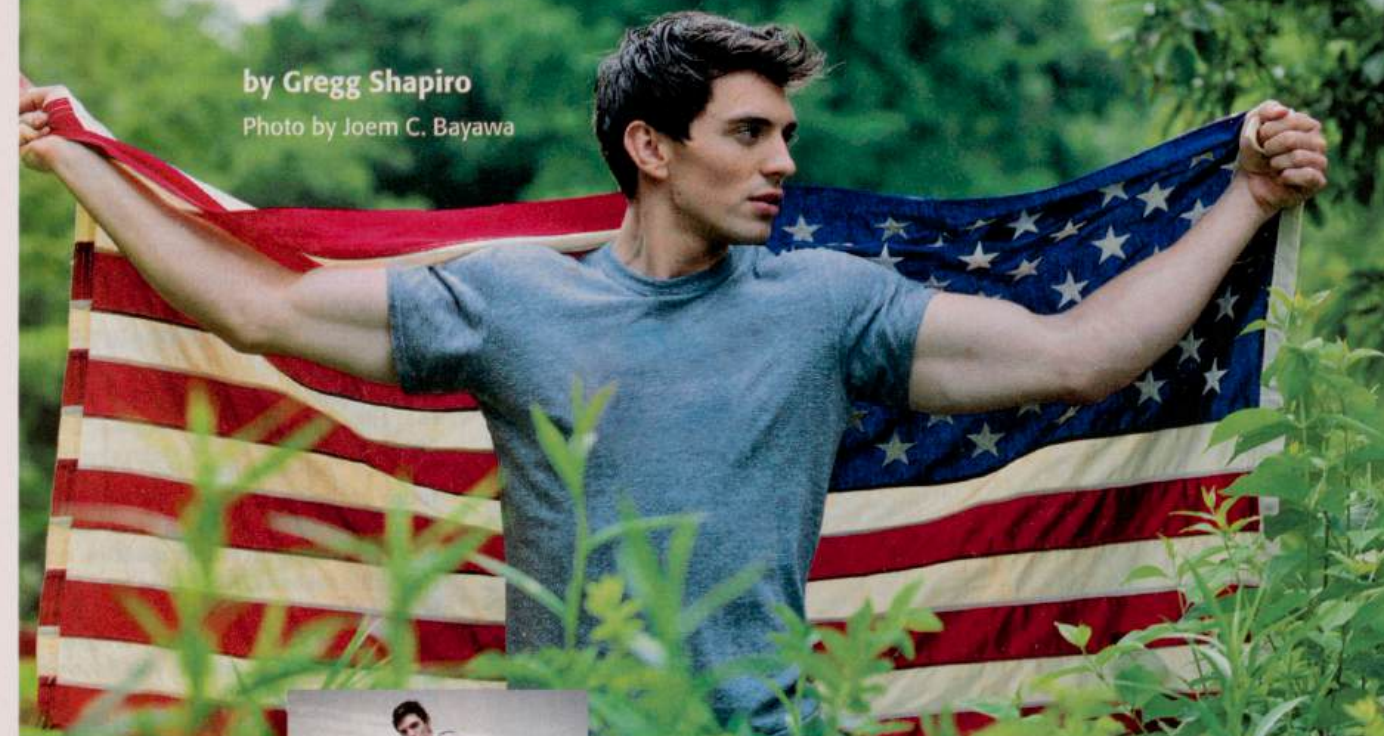
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'All-American' Sensation

An interview with singer/songwriter Steve Grand

by Gregg Shapiro

Photo by Joem C. Bayawa



In these days of instant Internet celebrity, overnight sensations are a dime a dozen. But Chicago-based gay singer/songwriter Steve Grand seems to be an exception with his song "All-American Boy" and its accompanying video. Sure, he's breathtaking to look at, and that doesn't hurt. He's even put in time as a model. More than just a pretty face and body, Grand is a musician with a message. Striking a chord across boundaries, Grand's song and video of unrequited love, set to an unlikely country music beat, has found a devoted audience and earned more than a million views on YouTube. • On the (boot)heels of this viral video, Grand has received attention and coverage from a variety of sources, including the *Huffington Post*, *Good Morning America*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, not to mention numerous LGBT websites and publications. A proudly gay voice for his generation and others, Grand is still getting used to being in the spotlight. I spoke with him



about the experience, his music, and his future.

Gregg Shapiro: Steve, how does it feel to be a YouTube sensation?

Steve Grand: More than anything, I'm just grateful my song has reached so many people so quickly. And reached people that it has meaning for—people that feel the same way I felt and who resonate emotionally [with the song]. That's all I hoped for.

That's all you can hope for as a songwriter, as one who makes music and performs. As far as being a YouTube sensation goes [laughs], I am more than one song and one video. I certainly hope that this is just the very beginning—the tip of the iceberg—of a career. Because that's what I got into this to do—not to be a flash in the pan, [but] to continue to create good music that resonates with people emotionally.

Is there anything in your background or training as an artist and performer that

prepared you for this moment?

I started taking piano when I was six years old. When I was four, I started making models of pianos out of cardboard. I was so fascinated even with just the aesthetic of a piano. I was obsessed with [the *Peanuts* character] Schroeder and his piano. I would go through different phases as a kid, as we all do, and I would get obsessed and driven to be creative. Whenever I would get into something, I would want to replicate it, express it in my own way out of cardboard. My parents

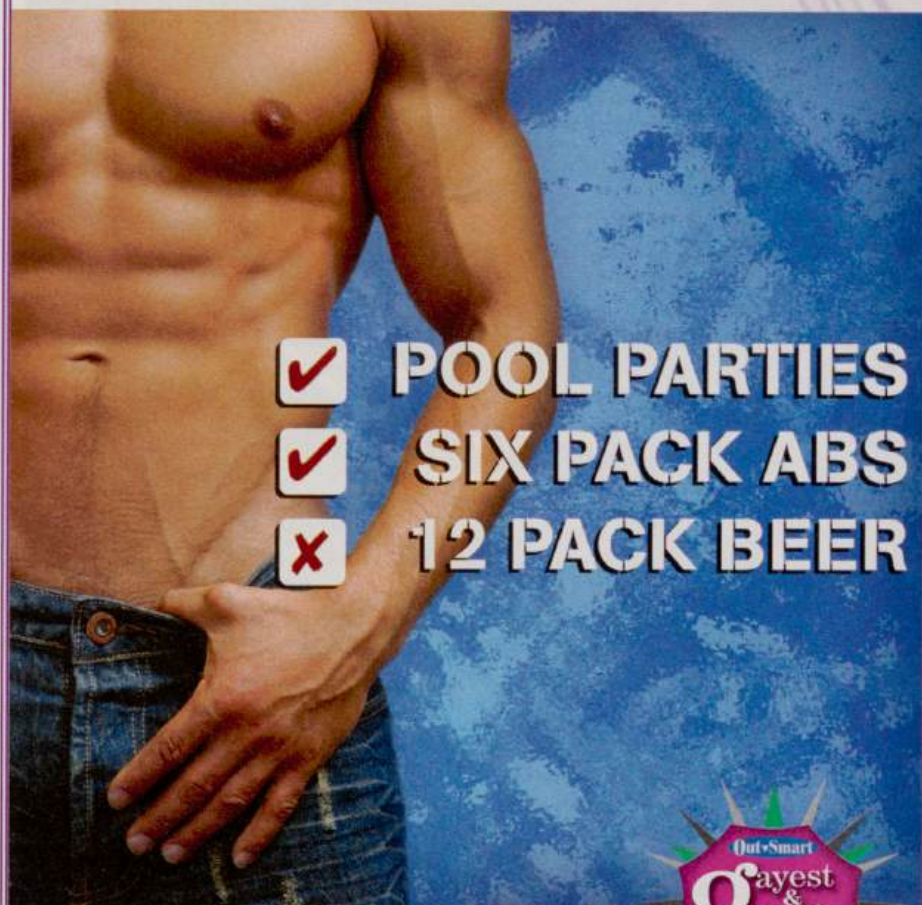
picked up on it, and they got us this old, shitty upright piano, and we all started taking lessons. I was the one that was really into it,

especially the piano. I took music classes in high school. →

"I was always crushing on the straight guy. I think it's always been there because I grew up in a place where gay people weren't visible. I was always crushing on my best friends."



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'All-American' Sensation

continued from previous page

Did you give piano recitals?

At a local church, but it wasn't a contest and I wasn't being evaluated by someone from a university or something. My teacher was a stay-at-home mom, a very talented woman. I didn't really understand music theory until I was a teenager, and then everything started to click. When I started to play guitar and started to listen to rock music, there was a guitar teacher who really helped develop my ear and helped me listen to things and feel things out. I feel like I have a really good [combination] of traditional, classical training balanced with playing by ear. I can read charts and sight read to some degree, and I also know what chords are being played when I listen to a song on the radio.

Because "All-American Boy" has a touch of twang, the song is being pigeonholed as country and even led to you receiving a favorable mention on a Nashville website. But being an openly gay musician in Music City can still be risky, as we saw when Chely Wright came out as a lesbian. Do you have any thoughts about that?

I never set out to write a country song. I would never dismiss [that] if it sounds like country to some people. That's fine. At the heart of it, country music is good storytelling and "All-American Boy" is a story. So I think that's where that comes from. I also think the imagery in the video leads people to give it that title. Even if I am labeled as a country singer, which isn't a label I gave myself, I certainly wouldn't want to take away anything from the brave men and women who came before me.

"All-American Boy" could just as easily have been arranged as a power pop tune, an acoustic folk number, or an electronic dance track. Right?

With that in mind, are there plans for the song to be remixed for club play?

I'm going to let people do what they want with it. I'm not skilled enough to make that happen by myself. I would be open to hearing what that would sound like. I'm a songwriter. What I think a good song is is a song that can be totally stripped down to just vocals and piano or vocals and guitar—the raw, basic elements—and it still sounds beautiful. I think that's one of the ways you know you have a good song. That's something I always try to do in my writing. I think the songwriting should transcend any sort of trendy sound. So

I would be up to hearing how [a remix] sounds. [Laughs] I'm a little nervous, but I'm not above that or anything. Of course it would be really cool to hear it.

Have you written and recorded any other songs?

Yes. I've been writing since age eleven, so I have lots of music that I've written. I've been recording for a long time, too. I'm always changing my mind, and I obsess over certain parts. Sometimes I'll do a vocal take three hundred times, so things kind of take me a while. But I do have a lot of songs recorded. From the response I got here, it's obviously inspired me and influenced what will come next.

Are you being inundated with offers from record labels, and if so, are you taking them under consideration or would you prefer to remain an independent artist?

I definitely don't want to close the door to any opportunities or offers at this point. So I'm keeping an open mind. I believe that we're in a day and age where we can do it independently. There are pros and cons on both sides. You have to consider who you are as an artist, what you want to be and what kind of impact you want to have. Ultimately, that all plays into the decision I'll have to make. I don't want to be rushed along into making a decision about something I worked toward my whole life. That's absurd. I will be the one to decide when I make those moves. I've concentrated on the people for whom the song has already resonated and struck a chord with. I want to honor them and continue to give them my best work, work that's from my heart and soul.

You mentioned the impact that the song has had. For a lot of LGBT folks, "All-American Boy" is instantly relatable because everyone has had the experience of being attracted to or falling in love with someone straight or unattainable. How personal is that experience for you?

Wow! What a good question. We've all been there, and I mean gay, straight, bi—whoever you are. We've all fallen for someone that we can't have, but it especially rings true in the specific story for LGBT people. It is the story of my life since I was thirteen. I was always crushing on the straight guy. I think it's always been there because I grew up in a place where gay people weren't visible. I was always crushing on my best friends. I think that's the case, probably, for a lot of us. The song isn't about anyone specific. It's the accumulation of experiences. I definitely knew the story, as far as the →

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'All-American' Sensation

continued from page 33

video goes—all the imagery and things like that. I had a very particular vision in mind. I think all of that was influenced by everything I've been through, growing up and having this happen to me over and over again.

What kind of advice would you offer in that situation?

[Laughs] Hold on and don't make yourself f---ing crazy. It's tough, but it's going to happen. It's a part of life. Unless you're in a world that's exclusively gay, which I think few of us are, it's going to happen. I think there's a great power in being able to express it. I needed to get the song off my chest because I feel like that's how I reconciled how I felt. I think it has helped people. I've read their messages saying "Thank you for telling my story," and then they tell me what happened to them with their guys. I try to play therapist. [Laughs] As a songwriter and performer, you get to play a lot of different roles that I'm in various stages of being ready for.

Because of your religious upbringing and what you went through with your

family and ex-gay therapy, you are being looked up to as a symbol of strength and overcoming the odds. What does that mean to you?

It's very flattering to be a symbol of anything like that. To some degree I feel like, wow, I can't live up to that. [Laughs] Don't put me in a position to be a role model. But the story is true. I don't want to let people down. I got into this to play music as a way to express myself and tell stories. My focus now is not letting down the people who put their trust in me, and being there for them.

You had a gig performing at The Joynt in Chicago. Did you ever play originals, or did you stick to cover material?

If people asked for them, I would sometimes play originals. But I never played "All-American Boy," though. [Laughs]

Have you gotten any feedback from your followers at The Joynt?

Yes, some. I had regulars who would come and see me all the time. I've gotten some really positive feedback, and that's been really cool.

What is the next step for you professionally?

I'm trying to build a team now, because this is a little bigger than one or two people can handle. Trying to put together a team of

people who know, respect, and can see my vision and can help point me in the right direction so that I'm staying true to myself and true to my art. Then I want to start releasing more music. It's a lot, and I'm just going, going, going right now. It's going to be a while before I get a real vacation. [Laughs]

As we speak, you are at the airport on the way to New York. Have you been recognized?

Not so far. In my hometown I have, by people I don't know. [Laughs] But not at the airport in my gym shorts—my hair looks terrible and I'm wearing an old T-shirt—not that I've been aware of, at least.

Finally, Steve, there is a famous tagline from the Diana Ross movie Mahogany which goes "Success is nothing without someone you love to share it with." Do you share your success with someone you love?

I have lots of people that I love that have been there supporting me. Yes, I'm sharing it with my family and my close friends. I'm lucky enough to have quite a few people.

Gregg Shaprio also writes the GrooveOut column in this issue of OutSmart.

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Alexis Hollada

Houston's transgender metal goddess

by Jef Rouner



It's hard to think of a more stereotypically male music genre than heavy metal. The scene is full of folks like Lemmy Kilmister and Dave Mustaine screaming full-throated rage and sex anthems in wide aggressive stances, daring you to escape from their concerts with your hearing intact. By definition, it is the music of tough guys, bikers, and the like. The few women who have made a mark in metal tend to be eye-candy fantasy vixens who play to the same fantasies their male counterparts conjure up.

In such an environment, you might think that a transgender person would face a wall of opposition, negativity, and attack. In the case of Alexis Hollada, you would be wrong. She and her band, Project Armageddon (in which she uses the stage name Doomstress Alexis), have steadily risen through the ranks to become one of Houston's best metal acts, and her status as a transgender front-woman has made her more of an object of support and adoration than scorn.

"I'm very open about it," says Hollada via phone. "I mean, I don't open my

conversations with, 'Hi! I'm Alexis and I'm transgendered,' or anything, but I don't hide it at all. The vast majority of the people that I talk to after shows have never met a transgendered person before, and I'm happy to erase stereotypes. Show that we're not an alien race. We're just people."

Hollada grew up around music, and idolized her older brother who was a major metal fan. He would make her tapes that she would wear out, and she drew her first audience in kindergarten when she would sing Judas Priest's "Some Heads Are Gonna Roll" during recess. As she grew older, she turned her appreciation for Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden into a creative drive of her own, teaching herself guitar at the age of seventeen.

But a love of music and a desire to pursue it as an occupation wasn't the only thing Hollada was experiencing as a teenager. It started in the sixth or seventh grade, when Hollada began to come to terms with the fact that she was responding more to advertisements meant for women than those meant for men—especially the ones for clothes. She wanted to cross-dress, but feared being considered abnormal in the small town she lived in outside of Cleveland, Ohio. →

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Alexis Hollada continued from previous page

It wasn't until Hollada moved to Houston that she actively began asserting her female identity through attendance at fetish events.

"People were so open at these places, and weren't judging," says Hollada. "Getting involved in that scene and experimenting helped me. As time went on, I became comfortable with being obsessed with being this person in that environment."

Though she started out as a guitarist, Hollada eventually evolved into a bass player. Her home was a frequent jam spot for fellow musicians, none of whom could play bass, so she became proficient with the instrument out of necessity. Eventually the bass—along with her operatic, wailing voice—became her primary instrument, and allowed her to emulate her personal hero Steve Harris of Iron Maiden, who in addition to his bass playing is the primary songwriter for the famous metal act.

Hollada founded a band called Anathematize, playing operatic metal at Zelda's to small crowds of friends—but it's her current work with Project Armageddon that is taking off. The band is a stripped-down doom metal act that calls to mind classic epics like Sabbath's "War Pigs." They released their debut album *Tides of Doom* in 2011, and it was eight songs of pure, unbearable desolation that showed tremendous promise.

For a band that sports only three members, Project Armageddon has a very big sound, though it remains curiously empty to echo the themes of religious destruction and natural devastation that form the core of the band's lyrical themes. Hollada oversees a host of apocalypses throughout the sprawling compositions, and her songs have a bold simplicity and redundancy that heightens the hopelessness, rather than using bloated

tunes with needlessly intricate progressive solos.

That's not to say that her bandmate Brandon Johnson doesn't work wonders with a guitar line, or that drummer Raymond Matthews can't craft intricate thunder. They most certainly can, but Project Armageddon speaks best when it hurls its slow, baldly stated prophecies at the listener.

Though her Nostradamus-like verses are stellar, it's the strange, Philip Glassian instrumental tracks that pepper *Tides of Doom* that stand out. "Call to Piety" and "Upon Solace's Shores" are brief, ambient gems with a distinctly Celtic flavor, serving as needed breathers from assaults on the senses like "Into the Sun" and the title track. Moments like this bring to mind the neo-folk brilliance of bands like Awen, and are a part of what gives Project Armageddon an edge over more traditional metal acts.

That edge has led to some great opportunities. Hollada and her boys play regularly all over town to increasingly larger crowds, and they've toured Texas once already. SXSW invited them to participate, as did 420 Fest, and more touring and recording is on the horizon. Hollada has also signed a deal with fashion designer Suzi Fox, who crafted a custom vinyl outfit for her appearance at SXSW based on a Project Armageddon fan contest where Facebook users could vote on the type of outfit to be crafted. Shiny black vinyl won by a comfortable margin.

Not everyone, though, accepts Hollada as a transgender figure in the metal community, regardless of talent. She's been the victim of cyber attacks from other figures in the international metal scene, based entirely on her gender iden-

tity and not on her playing or singing. In all of these instances, Hollada's fans have rallied behind her to heap scorn on bigoted messages and comments left on Facebook.

One particularly vicious assault came from Kurt Van Lifeson of the Toronto-based Free Range Humanz, who inundated Hollada's Facebook page with hate speech. More than two hundred metal fans from Houston and beyond, including many fellow musicians, responded with hundreds of comments offering encouragement and support. The gestures, especially from so many non-trans peers and acquaintances, left her deeply moved.

"Dude was trying to cut me down, belittle me through his prejudice, and all it did was put me in a spotlight," says Hollada.

More than anything, Hollada hopes to use her openness, and the acceptance of her transsexuality, to inspire others who feel intimidated or ashamed. She was hesitant to fully begin transitioning until she read an interview with Dan Martinez, now Marissa Martinez of Cretin, who revealed her desire to undergo gender reassignment surgery in the pages of *Decibel* magazine. She knew her career might suffer, but felt it had to be done because her life as a married man was caught in a sad spiral going nowhere. For Hollada, it laid her path clear.

"I read that and thought, 'F-k yeah. I can do this,'" says Hollada. "I haven't looked back since. Hopefully someone reading this will have the same kind of moment."

Jef Rouner is a music and pop culture writer for Houston Press and Houston Chronicle, and the author of The Bible Spelled Backwards.

The Proof Is in the Pruitt

Houston indie goddess

From her early musical beginnings as a fifth-grade clarinet player, local indie pop and soul artist Cindy Pruitt knew she would one day make it to rock stardom.

Pruitt, best known for her role in Houston's all-girl band Fluff the Kat, is hardly your average singer-songwriter. Her vocals and guitar sound are raw and pure, with none of the digital effects that



have become all too popular in today's pop music scene. Don't think that makes her bland, though. While performing, Pruitt uses a loop pedal and other techniques to create an all-out one-woman show.

She has recently released a four-track EP sampler as a preview to her upcoming album. Each song is laced with a smooth 1960s and '70s flare, which probably comes from listening to her mom's records as a child. The two would play these records over and over, taking turns singing backup vocals. "I started hitting the open mics around Houston and started writing songs soon after,"

Pruitt says in an interview with the *Houston Press*. "I was very fortunate to make lots of incredibly talented friends along the way and I would soak up anything they cared to share, from advice to new riffs."

The EP's standout track,

"Epiphany," is currently nominated for Best Local Song for the Houston Press Music Awards. Pruitt herself is also nominated for Best Female Vocals and Best Songwriter.

When she's not busy performing solo or with Fluff the Kat, Pruitt is also an accomplished music engineer and producer at her Montrose studio, Smiley Face Records. She was even named one of the top five music producers in the city by CBS Houston in 2013.

In addition to her profound passion for music, Pruitt also has a deep love for the LGBT community, with a previous solo performance at the 2008 Houston Pride Festival and group performances with Fluff the Kat at the 2009 and 2010 festivals. "As the 'honorary lesbian' in my cover band, Fluff the Kat, I have a tremendous gratitude and affection for the gay community, which has been exceptionally supportive of my music," she tells the *Houston Press*.

Pruitt's EP sampler is available for download through her website, cindypruitt.com. —Megan Smith

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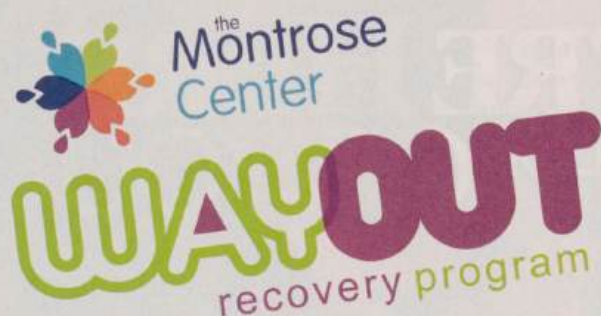
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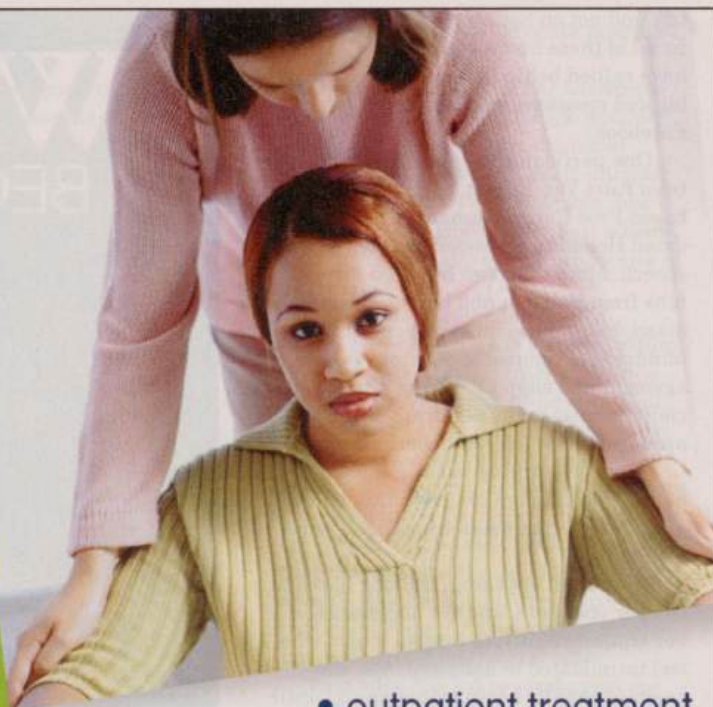
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Vicci's Voice

An interview with out singer/songwriter Vicci Martinez

by Gregg Shapiro

Vicci Martinez had been at it for a while as an independent musician before she achieved the recognition she deserved. Having had mixed experiences with other TV talent competition shows, Martinez found her groove on the 2011 season of NBC's *The Voice*. Championed by musician and *Voice* judge Cee-Lo Green, Martinez went on to place third on the show. The increased attention and acclaim not only substantially increased the size of Martinez's following, but it also earned her a major-label record deal. The resulting disc, *Vicci* (Universal Republic), on which she "makes a statement" and "takes a stand," serves as a showcase for her talents as both a singer and songwriter.

Gregg Shapiro: Vicci, I'd like to begin with your "My Journey" essay in the *Vicci* CD booklet. How important was it for you to include a statement such as this in the booklet?

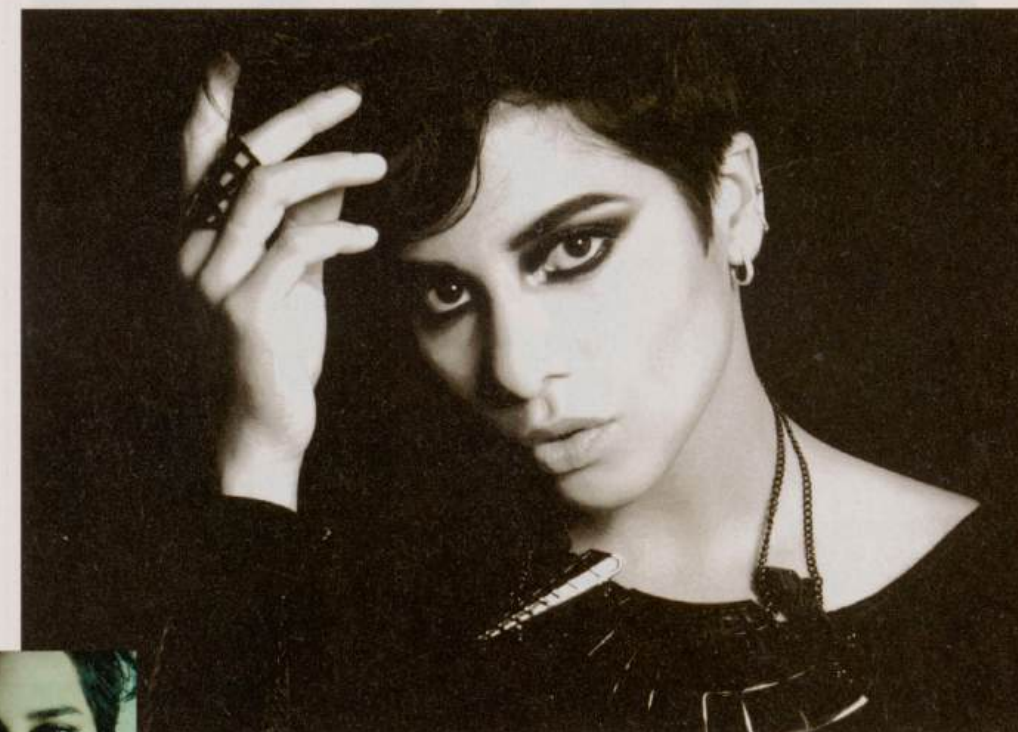
Vicci Martinez: My manager and I thought it would be a cool idea, because this was my first major-label debut album—that's why it was self-titled. People who have followed my career in the past [know that] I wear my heart on my sleeve, so a lot of people know me personally as well. I wanted to give the new audience a look into my life and where these

"I wanted to give the new audience a look into my life and where these songs are coming from and just who I am."

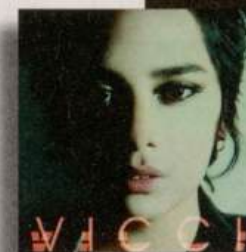
songs are coming from and just who I am. I think there's something special, at least for me, when I know more about an artist. It helps with that connection. To connect with the audience is one of the things that's so important to me.

Do you think that your coming out at the age of sixteen was in any way influenced by the fact that you were a performer and saw that it was better to come out sooner rather than later?

I had seen Ellen DeGeneres and Melissa Etheridge go through that. I didn't want to deal with that in my life. I wanted to come forward straightaway. That way, any audience I would gain would like me for me. I wouldn't have to go through that issue with people not [liking me or] the music because of that. I wanted to be upfront right away.



Vicci is out: she first sang onstage at the age of sixteen; now, at twenty-nine, she has earned a major-label record deal. Inset: her self-titled disc.

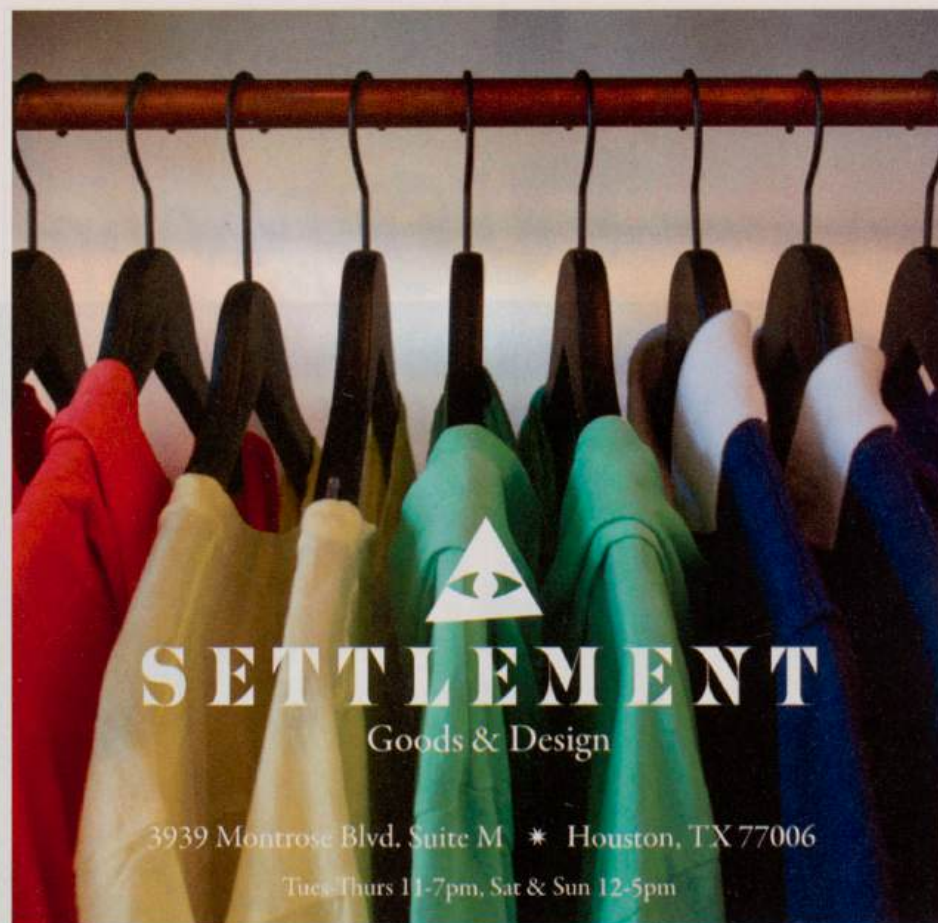


You mentioned Ellen and Melissa. Were there queer musicians whose coming-out experience you looked to for guidance or as an example?

I've met some great artists through Olivia Travels—some older women who shared their stories with me. It's inspiring to see what they've done for other gay people and people in general out there. [Their legacy is] something that I want to continue.

What would it mean to you to be considered a role model?

I'm happy to—that would be great. Music is a platform to say what you believe. You can share your feelings as well. There are opportunities to give people encouragement to do the same. When I was a kid, I would hear love songs that talked about admitting that you are in love with someone. I remember hearing those songs →



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Vicci's Voice

continued from previous page

and those words and going to school the next day and being like, "I'm in love with you." [Laughs] Dumb little things like that, that would give you the spark to go and do something yourself. If I can do that, I'm happy to. That's why it's important to me to have positive and inspirational messages in my songs as much as possible.

You also write honestly about participating in a TV talent show. Do you think that shows such as *The Voice*, on which you appeared, are here to stay and will be the way that audiences are introduced to new performers for years to come?

I think it's definitely a platform that a little while ago used to be looked at negatively—even by other artists themselves. I was actually nervous about doing it. When I let go of the ego part of it, I was just going to go and be myself on the show. "I'm going to be out; I'll let people know I'm gay. I'll let people know the songs I want to sing and the way I want to look, and all that." It was a huge opportunity. With that, I got signed, and I'm still being treated just like any other artist on our roster. [Talent shows are] something that more artists like me, that were maybe shy about it, are going to continue to use. It's definitely working.

Would you say it was an easy transition to go from indie to major-label artist?

For me, I was ready to go to that next level. I had been running the ship for a long time. Financially, it's hard to get your band on the road. It's still financially hard. I'm getting the exposure with radio, but you still have to invest in your brand, you still have to go out there and do a lot of things for free. Going on TV and radio shows, you don't get paid for that. But that's the other side of it. Reaching a large audience is very important, so I'm happy with it.

You co-wrote a majority of the songs on your most recent disc, your major label debut *Vicci*. What is involved in that process, and does it vary from collaborator to collaborator?

It definitely does. What I realize, too, is that in collaborating with these people it's going to be my story, so I kind of have to figure out how I want it. Even if I'm going into their space and their studios, I have to be comfortable as well. When we narrowed it down to the people I actually worked with on the album, it was [with] those people that I felt I could be myself and be comfortable and be heard. That's

why the stories came out, and it was easy. It was easy to do because I was working with those right people.

Do you think you'd collaborate with some of these same people again?

Absolutely.

In what ways would you say that the *Vicci* CD differs from your previous releases?

[It's] definitely a lot more radio-friendly, I would say. There are a lot more pop elements on the album, which is something I wanted to do. A lot of the production [happened while I was in the studio] because I wanted to learn how to do those things. Having all of those opportunities, being on a major label and having a bigger budget to get a record done, I went for it. I said, "Okay, whatever I can do, I want to do."

Have you started thinking about or writing songs for the next disc?

Yes, definitely. There is a couple that we have written. I'm not sure if they'll be used. We're just starting now and getting ideas flowing. Knowing the direction that I want to go in will make the process not so hectic when I finally sit down and do it.

Gregg Shapiro also interviews Steve Grand in this issue of OutSmart magazine.



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Unity's Musical Minister

Michael Gott is spiritually in tune

by Shirley Knight



I gotta be me: Michael Gott says that music is "a way of connecting and expressing. It's transcendent."

From there, Gott moved on to swanky listening rooms such as the Mansion on Turtle Creek. He formed a trio, began touring, recorded albums, and wrote a musical called *All Stressed Up with Nowhere to Go*. One of his favorite places to play was at Vanessie of Santa Fe, which he calls "the last great American piano bar."

During this time, Gott was also playing in a hotel where Billy Joel was staying. Joel came in, picked up a CD, and said, "You're good." Gott said, "So are you." Joel later joined Gott at the piano, harmonizing on the song "When You Wish Upon a Star."

Gott says he makes his best music when he's most authentic—when he's conveying "a real experience of emotion in my life. When something comes from a kernel of emotional truth in us," he continues, "the listener can feel that."

While playing in a gay piano bar, Gott was discovered and hired by a minister from the Center for Spiritual Living in Dallas.

"I began a path of personal growth and development," Gott says, which included recovering from substance and alcohol abuse.

Gott says he resisted the call to the ministry at first because "if you're on a plane and someone asks what you do, if you say you're a musician, that's cool. If you say 'I'm a minister,' that's not cool." Gott is part of a movement called New →

Michael Gott has gone from being a barefoot schoolboy in rural Oklahoma to being the featured artist in gay piano bars and a minister who travels the world. Along the way he has recorded ten albums, written two musicals, and sung a duet with Billy Joel.

"Music is pre-verbal," Gott says. "We're not the only species that sings or has music. It's a way of connecting and expressing. It's old and deep in us. It's transcendent. It moves us out of the mundane parts of life. Music is a powerful tool," he continues. "It moves the energy around in a room faster than anything else."

Gott became the pianist in his church at the age of twelve. In high school, there were only forty-three people in his graduating class, and the school was too small to have a choir. "Now I'm grateful for that small-town-America upbringing," he says,

recalling the freedom of being gone on his bike all day. "At the time," however, "I had a deep sense of inferiority. I knew there was this bigger, broader world out there, and I wanted to be out there in it."

Gott attended Oral Roberts University, where abstinence with the opposite sex was affirmed and encouraged. Shortly after arriving at the Christian school, however, he fell in love with his first boyfriend. While there, he found "a sort of secret society," and he remains "incredibly close" to those college friends to this day.

After earning his bachelor's degree in music and beginning graduate school at North Texas State in Denton, he dropped out and got his first paying gig, which was in a gay piano bar in Dallas. Gott says that in the early nineties there were four or five gay clubs in Dallas, such as Bill's Hideaway, that formed a circuit for musicians.

Billy Joel came in, picked up a CD, and said, "You're good." Gott said, "So are you."

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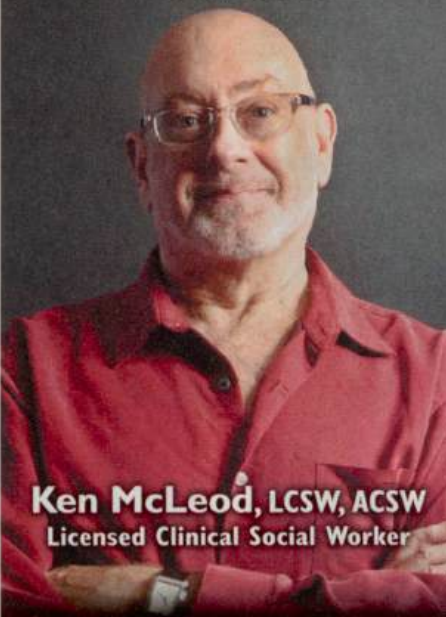
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Unity's Musical Minister

continued from previous page

Thought, which he says is "for people who are spiritual but not religious."

As part of this movement, he's been invited to play in London, Switzerland, the Ukraine, Canada, Mexico, and all over the United States, sharing the stage with best-selling authors such as Deepak Chopra, Marianne Williamson, and Dr. Wayne Dyer.

Since 2011, Gott has been the assistant minister and choir director at Unity Houston, a church he calls "very well known in New Thought circles—iconic, large, and very successful with a diverse congregation." He directs a service called Wednesday Night Live that he enjoys because it's casual, relaxed, spontaneous, and only one hour long. "We try to keep the message based in real life," he says, "so that spiritual principles can be taken up and applied."

When asked if his sexuality was ever an issue at Unity, he says, "Never. It has about as much relevance as my hair color. I was prematurely gray in my thirties," he explains, "so it was interesting, and people would talk about it, but it is just part of me being me."

Gott encourages anyone who has been hurt by religion to find "a spiritual community that affirms who you are. The churches and synagogues and mosques are in need of our gifts," he says. In Gott's view, "We're uniquely gifted, and when we can be our authentic selves, it gives other people permission to be their authentic selves. It's like ripples on the water. It keeps expanding."

Gott believes that by coming out, gay people have "caused a cultural shift toward greater acceptance of our differences and greater affirmation of life. We are witnessing a major social transformation driven by gay and lesbian people. We stand in the gap between traditional gender roles, and we get to step out and be in that slightly set-apart place, which can be a really good thing."

As for future goals, Gott says he would like to develop more relationships between Unity and the community. "I love Houston," he says. "I love the cultural richness and diversity."

"Unity is a great place to get married," he adds. "We do the ceremony with love and respect and a deep knowing of its importance, and I look forward to the day when we can do it with legal standing, too."

Shirley Knight is a founder of The Athena Art Project, a nonprofit community arts organization.

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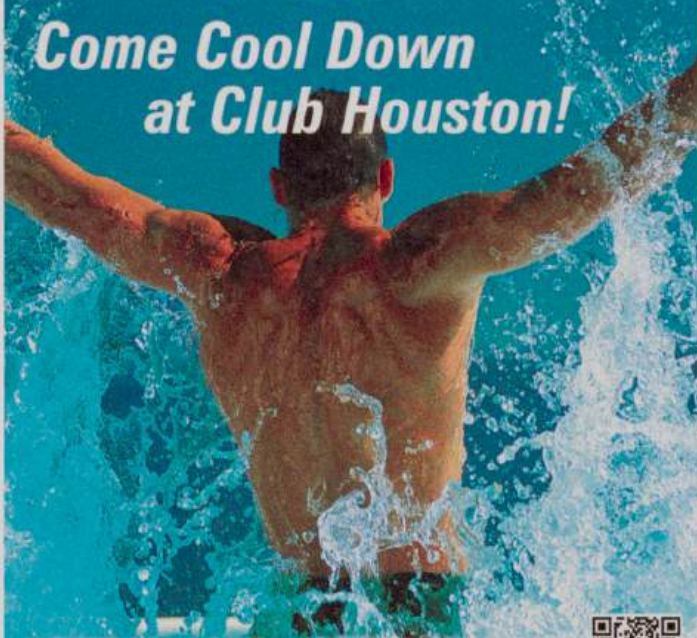
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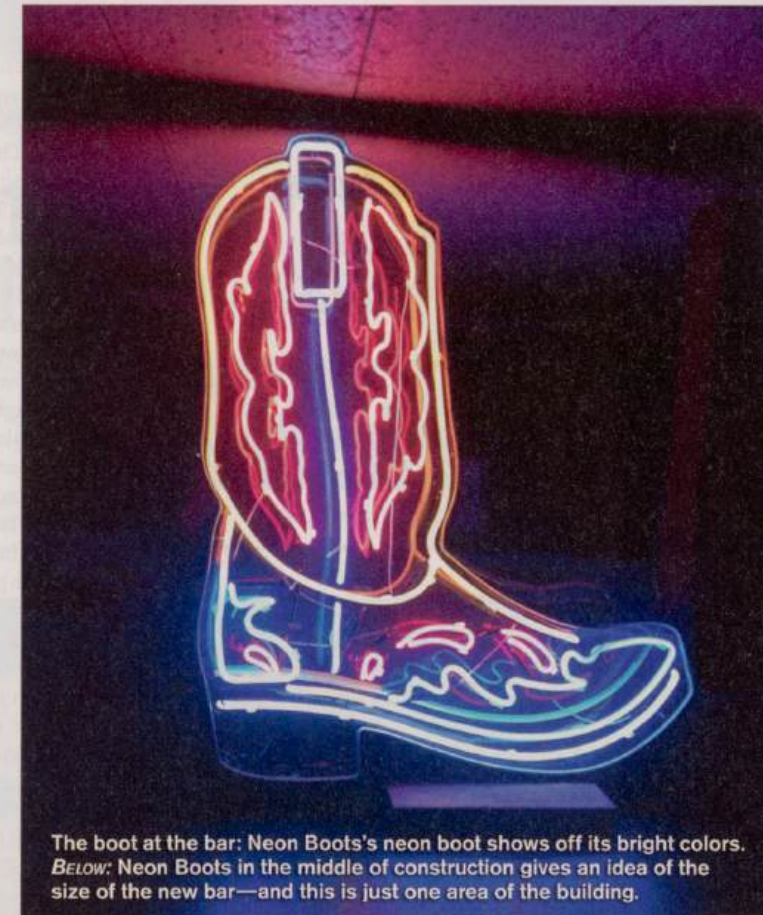
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Dust Off Your Hat and Boots!

New Houston LGBT country-western bar is the largest in Texas

by Karen Derr



The boot at the bar: Neon Boots's neon boot shows off its bright colors. Below: Neon Boots in the middle of construction gives an idea of the size of the new bar—and this is just one area of the building.

If you've been heartbroken over the closing of the Brazos River Bottom in March, despair no more. A new country-western bar just for you is opening this month. Neon Boots Dancehall and Saloon is located at 11410 Hempstead Highway, between Antoine and 34th Street—yes, outside the loop, but not too far. Just past the Northwest Mall, the location is only seven miles from the heart of the Montrose area.

Neon Boots resulted from a collaboration of six devout country-western dance enthusiasts and BRB orphans: Jim Moore, Jim Gerhold, Debbie Diane, Rodney Myers, Jim Daily, and Ron McLeroy. Jim Daily, who was a patron at the BRB for about twenty-five years, says, "Houston has supported a gay country-western dance bar for decades, so we believe

we are filling a vacant niche, rather than competing with other bars." The partners seem fit to be tied at having nabbed a venue any Texas music buff would be proud to have.



"With over ten thousand square feet in the building and the two patios, there will be a space for whatever mood you're in."

The location, steeped in country-music history, will lay claim to the title of the largest LGBT country bar in Texas.

Neon Boots was formerly the Esquire Ballroom, which opened in 1955 and headlined country music legends including Patsy Cline, George Jones, Charlie Pride, Loretta

Lynn, and Willie Nelson. The play *Forever Patsy Cline* is about a chance meeting with a fan who became a lifelong friend when Patsy played at the Esquire, and Willie Nelson is said to have gotten his first break at that club. His song "Nightlife" is reported to be inspired by his time working there in the 1950s. The huge oak dance floor is the

original, and the stage is where Patsy Cline belted out Willie's hit song "Crazy." The Esquire Ballroom, which closed in 1995, was a Houston institution that held many fond memories for Houston country music fans. General Manager Robert Harwood, who previously managed and tended bar at the BRB, says Neon

Boots is dedicated to offering something for everyone. While it's definitely a gay bar, he stresses that everyone is →

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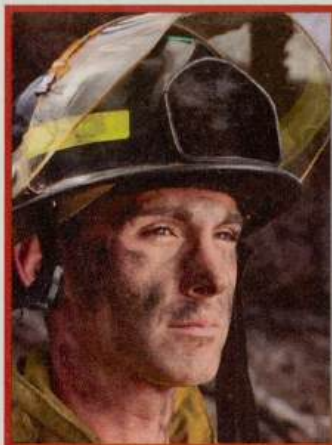
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Dust Off Your Hat and Boots!

continued from previous page

welcome. With over ten thousand square feet in the building and the two patios, there will be a space for whatever mood you're in. In addition to the dance floor, there is a raised area with tables that will have table service, and three bar areas. The Esquire Room will be a quiet area with views of the dance floor where patrons can relax around a separate bar and juke box. It will also offer fine wines by the glass and display historic club memorabilia.

Activities planned include weekly karaoke, live music, dance lessons, horse-shoes, gay bingo, drag shows, and Sunday benefits. The partners envision Neon Boots being a destination club and tourist attraction. They are already advertising in regional publications, so travelers can add this Texas-size club to their itineraries.

Neon Boots visitors are first struck by the abundant free parking—rare in the Houston club scene. The interior décor is Texas country western through and through. A cedar wall greets you, and the colors of the Texas flag are the predominant theme. The table-service area is front and center, and is probably the best place to view the dancers. The club has the capacity for 750 guests, and the parking lots will be patrolled at night by security in golf carts to make sure everyone is safe and comfortable.

The owners fully expect to attract more than just gay clientele, and they stress that everyone is welcome as long as they are friendly and respectful of same-sex couples dancing. With the popularity of shows like *Dancing with the Stars*, interest in couples dancing is definitely back in fashion. The club will offer free dance lessons early in the evening so that guests are ready to show off their moves by the time the dance floor gets crowded. They plan to offer two-step, waltz, swing, and line-dance lessons.

While filling a void, the Neon Boots Dancehall and Saloon owners stress that they won't try to recreate the BRB. They hope to be a Houston destination for all kinds of Texas country-western fun, while giving BRB orphans a place to reconnect. Owner Jim Gerhold says, "We know we'll need to offer the community something we can be proud of and something that will be above the ordinary."

You can follow the opening-month plans of Neon Boots at neonbootsclub.com.

Karen Derr is a Houston-area Realtor and the founder of Karen Derr Realty, now Boulevard Realty. She writes and speaks about home and small-business topics.

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A Dream in the Making

Michelle Tellison overcomes challenges to achieve her goal

by Megan Smith

Photo by Yvonne Feece

When Michelle Tellison was born in Bay City, Texas, the doctors found that she had all ten fingers, all ten toes—and cerebral palsy.

After Tellison moved to Houston with her family at age six, she explains that her schooling was not a smooth experience. Her condition—a disorder of movement, muscle tone, or posture that is caused by injury or abnormal development in the immature brain, most often before birth—affects her speech and requires her to use a wheelchair. Many schools, including her own, did not have adequate cerebral palsy support services.

On top of her schooling troubles, Tellison realized around age eight that she had an attraction to other girls. At fifteen, she came out as a lesbian.

Now at age forty-eight, Tellison doesn't let ableism, homophobia, or hardship stop her. She is able to use public transportation to get around town and, after some difficulty, has found an apartment that accommodates her needs. "I live by myself," Tellison says. "I am very independent."

However, despite having her high school diploma, Tellison's disability has prevented her from holding a steady job. She currently lives on a fixed income of \$500 per month. "And that's really hard to live on," she says.

Although she receives some financial help from loved ones, Tellison strives to become more self-sufficient. "I do have friends and family that help sometimes, but I don't want to depend on them all the time," she says.

Now at age forty-eight, Tellison doesn't let ableism, homophobia, or hardship stop her.

To achieve better financial stability, Tellison dreams of becoming an entrepreneur and developing an at-home business. Her current idea is to sell T-shirts that have to do with twelve-step programs and recovery. Sober for twenty-two years and an active member of Alcoholics Anonymous,

Tellison has been asking others on her Facebook page to submit their favorite recovery slogans for these future shirts. Her personal favorite is "One day at a time."

A big fan of solving mysteries, Tellison is also very interested in research and private investigation (P.I.) work. She believes this is another way for her to earn a little extra money. "I will find stuff that is difficult to find," Tellison says. "I love everything about P.I. work, and I have had a couple of freelance cases, but nothing real, no real job. I know how to locate people and I know how to use a computer."



Sweet dreams: Michelle Tellison takes it one day at a time.

Advances in technology have helped her communicate and stay connected with others more efficiently, Tellison says. She believes it will also help her build her client base once she has her business up and running.

Tellison has set up an online donation page—including a video that tells her story and plan—for anyone who wants to contribute to her entrepreneurial dream. She is currently a little over \$100 short of her \$500 goal. Those interested in donating can do so at gofundme.com/1x282w.

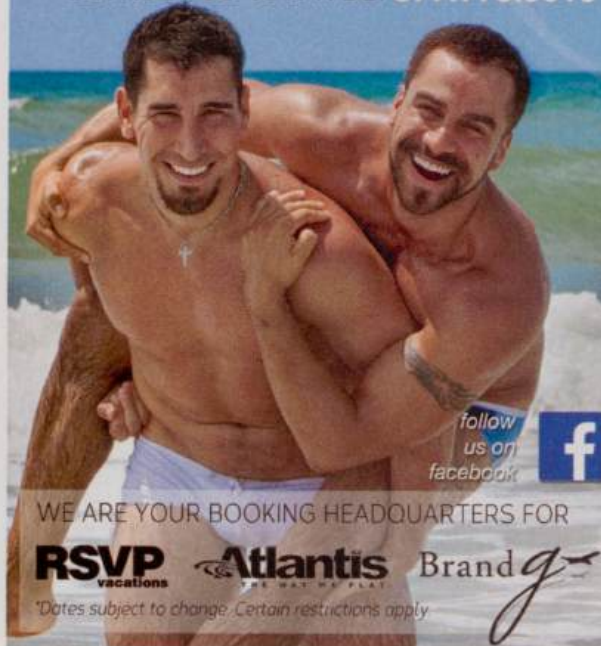
"I really believe that I could have a little home-based business," Tellison says. "I believe I can do that."

Megan Smith also writes about Cindy Pruitt in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

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Can You Spare Some Air?

Drift diving in Cozumel

by Dick Dace

One of the first things a diver learns is to never dive alone. Every tank has two regulators in case something goes wrong. Diving is a dangerous sport, and there are no shortcuts when it comes to safety. Make a plan. Dive the plan. And always dive with a buddy.

So what is a single gay diver without a buddy to do?

Call Greg Hamman.

"Undersea Expeditions is an alternative to traveling by oneself," Hamman explains. "We offer single divers the option of a roommate-matching service, so they don't have to pay the 'single upcharge,' and we welcome non-diving gay or gay-friendly friends and partners. We host women-only, men-only, and mixed trips around the world, and have a great time."

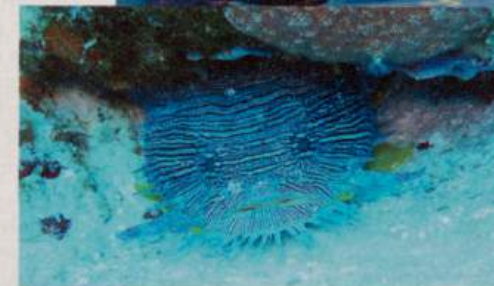
Being a gentle giant of linebacker bear beef, when Hamman makes that claim you can easily believe it. His big-brother/protector demeanor is so sincere that it's clear clients are in for a fun trip, and a safe one. Hamman is obviously a man who knows what he's doing—an old salt who has happily drunk the tropical Kool-Aid and is more than ready to baptize you in it.

"Traveling together also provides all of us with a safer experience where diving may be challenging, or where one would not likely travel alone," Hamman adds.

Hamman began diving in 1996 and became a scuba instructor in Australia



Undersea divers (l-r) Scott Pitkethy, Greg Hamman, and Ron Maynard in Fiji.
INSET: the rare and elusive blue toad fish.



in 2004, specializing in teaching buoyancy skills in one-on-one training sessions. He began to dream of a life beyond selling software soon after discovering Undersea Expeditions.

"I dove with them in Roatan and Palau, and soon became good friends with owner Chris Winkle, who created Undersea Expeditions in response to the homophobia he experienced with other groups."

Over the years, Winkle became Hamman's mentor, offering excellent career advice.

"In 2004, like Victor Kiam, the man who said he liked Remington razors so much that he bought the company, I bought Undersea Expeditions because I loved it so much. It's a full-service, professional gay travel agency with a focus on diving. This is what I want to do the rest of my life—make people happy while diving."

With an average eighty percent return rate, happy is almost an understatement.

"We help many groups around the world book trips," Hamman explains, "by negotiating with travel destinations to ensure a welcoming and fun adventure for all."

Hamman has honed his craft with homo-tourist-friendly precision. Before he chooses a hotel, dive shop, or live-aboard ship, he has a conversation with the general managers and owners to make sure their entire staff understands just who and what his groups are all about.

"We don't want someone asking 'Where's your wife?' because it makes everyone uncomfortable. I want them to know that we are fun and sometimes →

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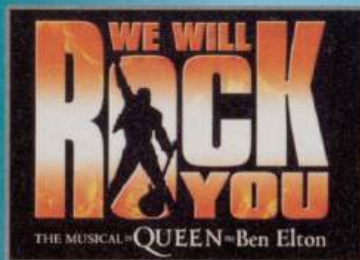
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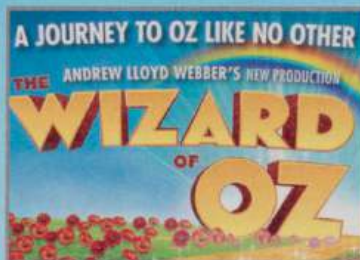
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Can You Spare Some Air?

continued from previous page

flirty, and not your typical group."

After twenty-two years in business, destinations seeking gay tourists are contacting him in droves. His response is polite but businesslike.

"That would be great," he says to them. "Tell me, what is it about your hotel/dive club/destination that makes it appealing to gay travelers?"

After a stumbling silence, the replies are eye-rollingly predictable. "Unfortunately, they often don't know anything about the gay adventure traveler other than their reputation for [having lots of] disposable income."

For the Undersea Expeditions Cinco de Mayo 2013 Dive Trip, Hamman chose Cozumel, an island off the Yucatan coast that has been famous for diving since French oceanographer Jacques-Ives Cousteau discovered the Palancar Reef in 1954. Prior to that, Cozumel (or Cuzamil in Mayan, meaning "land of the swallows") was known as Mexico's largest Caribbean island and the sanctuary of the Mayan goddess of fertility, Ixchel—making it a major destination for religious pilgrimages. Today, divers from around the world can be found playing on both sides of the ocean's surface.

Hamman also chose the Occidental Grand, a Mexican five-star all-inclusive hotel, located about twelve miles from downtown Cozumel. It is in the middle of a lush green tropical garden, complete with two pools and four restaurants, one right on the beach and three by reservation only. There is also the requisite dive shop and the not-so-usual resident iguanas that are (trust me) not pets! Since I was traveling alone, Hamman matched me with a roommate who also became my dive buddy. Tommy Wilburn, who has more than seven hundred dives under his weight belt, is a certified master diver and a rescue instructor—the perfect dive buddy for anyone.

Hamman arranged for our group of thirty divers to enjoy two morning dives for five days, with the option to add twilight and night dives. Our group was divided between two boats, the Dolphins and the Turtles. On our boat, we were split into two groups led by dive masters Osvaldo Herrera and Humberto Coot Poot, aka "Lobo." His humor and playful interaction with our group caused us to become quite fond of him.

Between eleven drift dives in the national marine park, our dive master Herrera guided us from Palancar Reef and Shallows to the French Lady and Columbia Reef, where we saw swimming and sleeping nurse sharks, barracudas,

families of giant lobsters (some up to fifteen pounds) hiding in their shallow caves, six-foot-wide stingrays, nine-foot-long sleeping eels, and thousands of Technicolor fish, straight from Disney central casting, that seemed to glow in the bright sunlight-diffused sea.

While we all knew that Cozumel was famous for its drift diving, it was a new experience for most of us. And frankly, "drift diving," which conjures up images of the gentle aquatic equivalent of a relaxing breeze, could not be more incorrectly named.

With the current so strong, drift diving often makes you feel like storm-tossed flotsam or, as was often the case with me, like a stringless marionette having an undersea seizure. And I was not the only diver struggling with the ocean's power. Sometimes it took all our strength to keep from being pushed into the reefs—and each other. They may call it drift diving, but I call it current surfing. One must grab the "wave," hang on, and pray! Add to that the thermoclines, where super-cold layers of water add a frigid accent to the currents, and each dive experience became a wild undersea roller-coaster ride.

Herrera, who spent four years leading dives in Playa del Carmen before moving to Cozumel two years ago, has recently completed his teaching certification because he wants to share the beauty under the sea with everyone. "We all must follow the rules to protect the reef," he said. As a single man, he dreams of traveling the world and one day getting married. His passion to protect the reef came through loud and clear one day, when he evicted a photographer who was destroying coral while trying to capture the perfect photo of one of Cozumel's rare and elusive blue toad fish. "I wish I could ban that person from diving forever," he said as he tried to control the anger in his voice. "This reef is our life! Respect it or get out!"

On another dive, while Herrera was guiding us through a tunnel of coral where sharks and lobsters slept, he spied a lion fish, an invasive non-native fish that is destroying the reef. He promptly speared it with his dive knife, chopped it up and fed it to an eel and its scavengers. While no sea creature will eat a live lion fish, there's no lack of takers for dead ones.

The Occidental Grand, a fairly new hotel, was very beautiful, and its grounds were meticulously maintained by an army of gardeners. The walks were swept several times a day, and fresh hibiscus flowers were often left in our rooms, along with a veritable zoo of towel sculptures—an elephant, a swan, and even an octopus who took up half the bed. Having assumed these were all gifts from our maid, we →

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Can You Spare Some Air?

continued from previous page

later discovered that this cotton cloth origami was the work of one woman whose sole job was to create towel sculptures for every room on the property.

While researching for this trip, I came across a report from Fox News Latino, which stated that since January 2, 2012, "Gay and Lesbian couples can now get legally wed in paradise. Same-sex marriage has become legally recognized in the Mexican Caribbean resort towns of Cancun and Cozumel by entering into a civil code marriage [sic]."

When I spoke with the Occidental Grand's manager Ricardo Torres about gay guests getting married on his property, he countered emphatically.

"Gay marriage is not legal here, despite what Fox News Latino has reported." Then Torres's tone softened slightly. "However, anyone can have their friendship or relationship blessed anywhere on the property, on the beach, or in one of our four restaurants, with a reception for up to 130 guests—but not by a Catholic priest."

Around six o'clock one evening, a few of us ran into each other on the walkway to the dinner buffet. One of our group, my

new BFF Ida Franklin, turned to us and said that she could not face another buffet meal, and invited us to drive into the city and dine at Guido's, her favorite Italian restaurant.

Located on the main road near the cruise ship terminals, Guido's dining room was in an open-air courtyard, cooled with a battalion of fans. The garlic bread was a very thin wood-fired pizza, just the right amount of charred blisters with succulent pillows of garlic-infused cheese. The Margherita pizza was perfection, as was the grilled filet with a side of risotto. The brick wood-fired oven redfish, gently brushed with olive oil served with al dente pasta, was dreamworthy. Our wait staff was most helpful, friendly, and courteous.

Our "dessert" on the way home, however, was another flavor entirely.

On the way back to the hotel, we were pulled over by the police. One in our group spoke passable Spanish and acted as our de facto interpreter. The officer stated in Spanish that he needed to see Franklin's driver's license. The officer stepped away from the car for a moment, then came back to say that the license could be picked up the next day at the police station. When Franklin asked in English why we were stopped, the officer said, in English, "Speeding."

When she asked in English how much the fine was, he responded in perfect, un-accent-

ed English, "Forty bucks." Franklin then asked in English if it was possible to pay the fine tonight.

"Yes, but I cannot give you a receipt." If his English was any more perfect, we would have suspected he was from Des Moines.

Naturally, we all chipped in to pay the fine and drove slowly back to the hotel while we all tried to figure out how to say "we just got rolled" in Spanish. We all decided to refer to the incident as DWT—driving while a tourist—and agreed we were victims of a forty-dollar shakedown.

Next time, I'll opt for the flan instead of the fine.

When Hamman thanked all of us at our farewell dinner for attending and announced upcoming new trips—Thanksgiving week on the island of Saba, New Year's aboard the Atlantis Azores in the Philippines, and a week in Belize next May—I became suddenly very hungry for another Undersea Expedition.

And that was just fine by me.

Dick Dace was the guest of:
• Undersea Expeditions, underseax.com
• Occidental Grand, occidentalhotels.com/resort/occidental-grand-cozumel
• Dive Palancar, divepalancarcozumel.com
• Guido's Restaurant Bar, guidoscozumel.com

Dick Dace "does lunch for a living" as the principal of *The Epicurean Publicist*.

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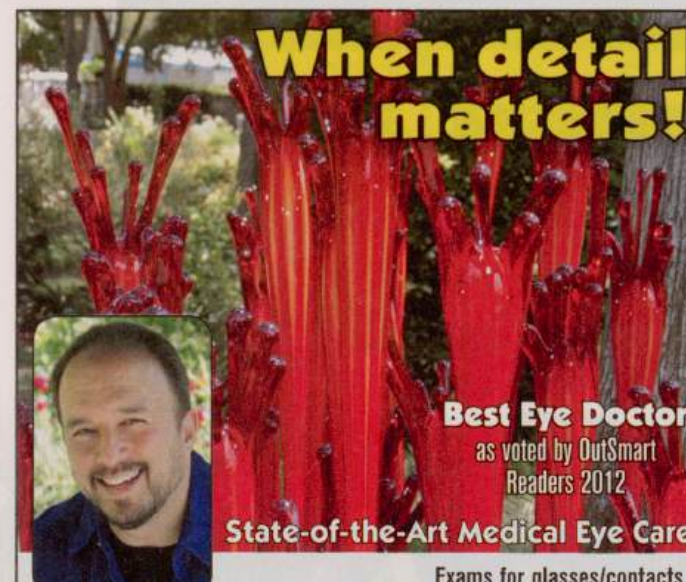
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Web TV continued from previous page

college professor, picks up where Dr. Ruth left off. Habib, who's sexy even with his clothes on, is also funny, wise, and quite articulate. In this web series, ironically produced by Logo, Habib answers viewers' questions about sex and sexuality. Topics have included straight crushes, sexual racism, "Should I have sex with my ex?", and foot fetishism. (The good-natured Habib tried to set an embarrassed viewer at ease regarding the latter.) Got a question for the sexpert? E-mail Habib at tips@newnownext.com. Wanna watch? Log onto nnnext.com.

Where the Bears Are
Like big, hairy guys? You'll find them in abundance in this cross between *The Golden Girls*, *Murder She Wrote*, and the Sunday beer bust at your favorite leather bar. As they search for Mr. Right, our delightful bears manage to crack a murder mystery! Filmed on location in Silverlake, Los Angeles's "other" gay neighborhood. See it at wherethebearsare.tv.

Happy viewing!
David-Elijah Nahmod lives in San Francisco. His eclectic writing career includes LGBT publications, monster magazines, and the Times of Israel.

Color Me 'Orange'

Gaiety abounds in Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black*



Women in prison: the cast of *Orange Is the New Black* includes Natasha Lyonne (as lesbian ex-addict Nicky, third from left) and trans woman Laverne Cox (as trans woman Sophia, combing hair).

"You've Got Time" is the new made-for-Netflix track by the indie-folk singer Regina Spektor. It's also the theme song for the new, critically acclaimed show *Orange Is the New Black*. And if you've got time this summer, you should watch this new Netflix original series. Released on July 11, and already renewed for a second season, it's worth

the watch. A series about women in prison, the show offers a diverse cast and many intriguing story lines to follow.

You meet characters like Piper (Taylor Schilling), who is an "ex-lesbian" and goes to jail because of her involvement with an international drug cartel; Nicky (Natasha Lyonne, from an old gay favorite *But I'm a Cheerleader*), a lesbian ex-addict; Sophia (Laverne Cox), a trans woman who used to be a firefighter and struggles with her wife and son; and Daya (Dascha Polanco), who deals with a forbidden interest in a prison guard (Matt McGorry), as well as serving her prison time in the same institution as her mother. And those are just a handful of the characters—there are more characters to fall in love with, more stories to piece together.

Though each story draws viewers in and creates sympathy for each inmate's predicament, it's not just full of warm, fuzzy feelings—this series also tackles issues such as relationships, drugs, abuse of authority, and even racism.

Orange chronicles the interwoven lives of the inmates in a humanizing and touching manner. It's a show you are sure to get hooked on. —Aisha Bauderdaben

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Jimmy Fallon

(Late Night with Jimmy Fallon, 7/17/13)

"Here's some big news out of England. Today [July 17, 2013], Queen Elizabeth officially legalized gay marriage in Britain. Or as she put it, 'You know, it doesn't always have to be tea and crumpets. Sometimes it can just be two crumpets.'"

Dan Cathy (COO, Chick-fil-A)

Re: Dan Cathy's tweet in response to the DOMA verdict.



dancathy Influential

Sad day for our nation; founding fathers would be ashamed of our gen. to abandon wisdom of the ages re: cornerstone of strong societies.

17:34 hours ago · 46,449 · 13 Retweets · 0 Favorites

Laverne Cox

(actress, producer, transgender advocate, and star of Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black*)
(*The Advocate*, August/September 2013)

"In black male drag, I noticed white women cross to the other side of the street and clutch their purses even tighter."



Natasha Lyonne

(*Out*, June/July 2013, Benjamin Solomon)

Re: her lesbian role in the Netflix series *Orange Is the New Black*.

"These characters are human beings. If they're gay, so be it! How many times do we need to see a Kinsey scale to realize that sexuality is fluid? I remember when I was in your magazine [*Out*] for *But I'm a Cheerleader* [2000]. I can't believe how little shit has changed."



Lady Gaga

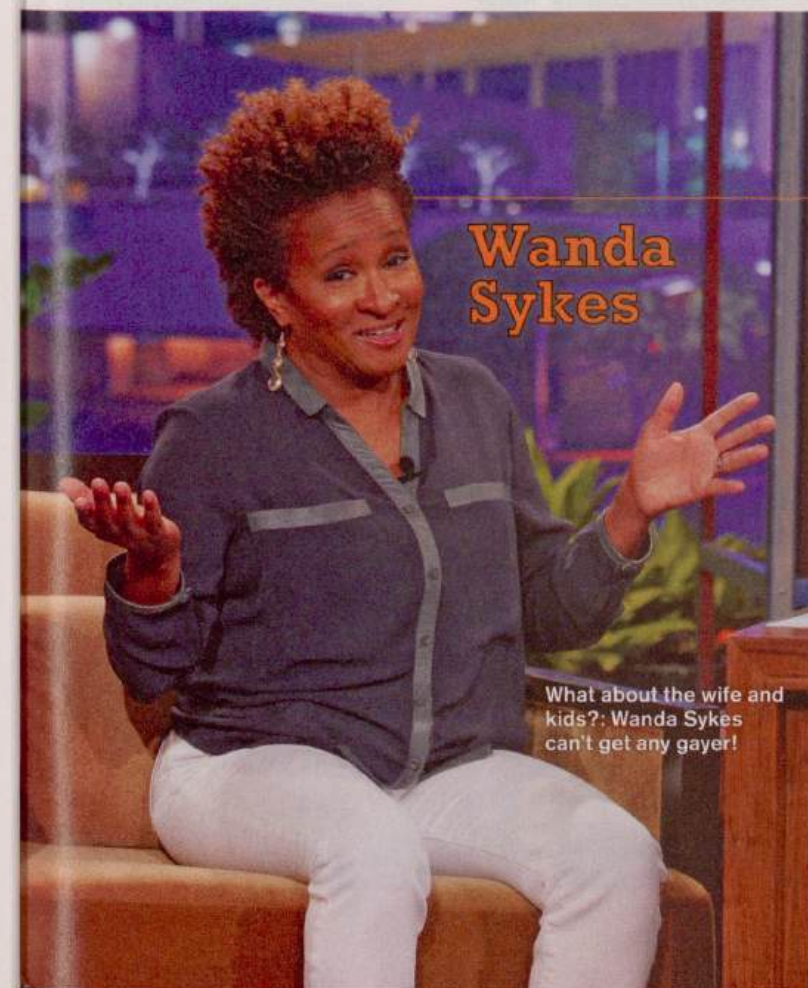
O'er the land of the free?: Lady Gaga gives the National Anthem a gay twist.

Henry Rollins (radio host, writer, actor, publisher, activist, musician)

(*LA Weekly*, 7/4/13)

Re: the DOMA verdict.

"Justice Scalia, you got beat. It happens. He should be reminded that he doesn't serve the people, he serves the Constitution. I don't understand what part of the 14th Amendment isn't clear to him. Scalia talks in obtuse legalese, which I think is intended to leave many people nodding politely while they inherently understand that he's full of it. Term limits, please."



Wanda Sykes

What about the wife and kids?: Wanda Sykes can't get any gayer!

Queer Quotes

Compiled by
Blase
DiStefano

While holding a rainbow flag and singing the National Anthem at the New York City Gay Pride Parade's Kick-Off Rally on June 28, 2013, Lady Gaga changed "star-spangled banner yet wave" to "star-spangled flag of pride yet wave." And instead of ending the song with "home of the brave," she finished off with "home for the gay."

Allen West (former U.S. Republican congressman from Florida)

(Facebook, 7/1/13)

Re: Lady Gaga's National Anthem word changes.

"Having served in the US Army for 22 years alongside some very brave men and women, I find Lady Gaga's defiling of our National Anthem reprehensible. We are the land of the free because America has always been the home of the brave from Lexington and Concord to Kandahar. This young lady should be taken to Ft. McHenry and given a history lesson as to why Francis Scott Key wrote those words incredible words [sic]. In this week where we remember the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg and the 237th anniversary of our Independence is further evidence of the level of ignorance and disrespect some have for our national character. She and all those who cheered her abomination should be ashamed and apologize to every serving and retired member of our Armed Services. But perhaps I ask too much. . ."

(*The Advocate*, August/September 2013)

In a lot of my appearances I talk about my wife and kids. What's funny is that I would get off stage and someone would say, "You know, I really thought you were hilarious and all, but you didn't really make a statement for gay rights." Like, jack-ass, I just did a whole f--king hour about my wife and kids. You can't get any gayer than that.

Miley Cyrus

(Toronto Sun, 7/16/13, Jane Stevenson)

When I cut my hair, "everyone said I was a lesbian, but I'm like, 'Being a lesbian isn't a bad thing. So if you think I look like I'm a lesbian, I'm not offended. You can call me much worse.' I've been called much worse. Being a lesbian is a compliment more than what else they call me."



by
Megan
Smith

DVD Shorts

Tales of the City



Based on the groundbreaking novel by Armistead Maupin, *Tales of the City* ("One of the ten best miniseries"—*Entertainment Weekly*) follows a colorful cast of characters living at 28 Barbary Lane in anything-goes 1970s San Francisco. The all-star cast includes Olympia Dukakis (who recently starred as Brenda Fricker's lover in *Cloudburst*), Emmy-winner Laura Linney, Thomas Gibson, Billy Campbell, Paul Gross, Parker Posey, Chloe Webb, and Barbara Garrick. The series received universal acclaim when it debuted in 1994, and remains a television landmark. The twentieth-anniversary DVD two-disc set includes all six episodes, plus bonus audio commentaries with the writer, director, and stars Dukakis, Linney, and Garrick; thirty-six minutes of behind-the-scenes location and rehearsal footage, and more. Available August 27 from Acorn (acornonline.com). —Troy Carrington

Girls: The Complete Second Season



Created by and starring Lena Dunham, *Girls* was the winner of two 2012 Golden Globe awards—best musical or comedy TV series, and best performance by an actress (Dunham) in a musical or comedy TV series. The cast also includes out actor Andrew Rannells as Dunham's ex-boyfriend-now-gay-roommate. This season, Rannells switches sides to see what it's like with a woman. In real life, Rannells says, "I personally have never had sex with a woman. I'm more of what you call gold-star gay. I'm purebred." Available August 13 from HBO Home Entertainment (hbo.com). —T.C. ■

'Free Angela'

Power to the people

In 1970, nothing scared the United States government more than a woman of color who was a member of the Black Panther Party, a vocal feminist activist, and an open communist. Angela Davis was all of those things. In her documentary *Free Angela and All Political Prisoners*, director Shola Lynch delves into the life of this world-renowned political activist and scholar.

After spending time as a graduate student in Europe, Davis was recruited to be an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA). Her first lecture drew two thousand students who were all curious about this controversial professor. Despite positive student response, the University of California Board of Regents fired Davis from her post for her affiliation with the Communist Party. This incident was only the beginning of Davis's controversies.

Soon after, violence and death struck at the Marin County courthouse. Radical activist Jonathan Jackson, a friend of Davis, attempted to negotiate the freedom of the Soledad Brothers—which included his brother George—by kidnapping Judge Harold Haley. A shootout occurred and four men, including Haley and Jackson, were killed. Two guns used in the incident were registered in Davis's name—guns she had bought for protection after receiving death threats during her days at UCLA.

Davis was immediately accused of kidnapping, murder, and conspiracy. She sought refuge underground, was placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list, and was presumed guilty.



Controversial: in *Free Angela and All Political Prisoners*, Davis goes from professor to prison... and finally to freedom.

But, as one of Davis's supporters stated, "What they're doing to her is an exaggerated form of what happens every day to black people in this country. Would you give yourself up to the vultures?"

Hundreds of "Angela Davis-es" were arrested—any woman of color who had a similar Afro hairstyle was suspect. When finally arrested, the police insisted on checking Davis for her signature front tooth gap to prove that she was the real deal.

From there, the film details her twenty-two-month prison experience. During this time, the "Free Angela and All Political Prisoners" campaign spread across the world. Davis insisted on having "all political prisoners" added to the slogan—she would not forsake her activism for others despite her own imprisonment.

Although Davis came out as a lesbian in 1997, her history proves that sexuality can be fluid. What sets this documentary apart from others is its in-depth look at the relationship between Davis and George Jackson. Previously described as solely political, it is revealed

that her love for Jackson was actually quite intimate—an FBI statement notes that the two were caught "kissing" and "fondling" in prison. "Sexuality was a very low-key thing in the Party," Robyn Ceanne Spencer, a member of the Black Panther Party, wrote in her essay "Engendering the Black Freedom Struggle." "It was just natural that women had women lovers and men lovers at the same time."

Rich with amazing historical footage and interviews of Davis's friends, family, and fellow Party members, the documentary ends as Davis is unexpectedly acquitted. The final imagery of Davis with her fist raised in salute truly exemplifies what it means to give power to the people.

Megan Smith also writes about Cindy Pruitt in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

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by
Gregg
Shapiro

Lesbian Listening Party

August sizzlers

GrooveOut Shorts

Sylvester

Mighty Real: Greatest Dance Hits

The one-and-only Sylvester had twenty-four Top 40 singles on Billboard's multiple charts, and he was

arguably the first openly gay artist in disco music. He also talked about having AIDS when the subject was taboo. He died at the age of forty-one, and upon his death he bequeathed royalties from the sale of his music to benefit the AIDS Emergency Fund and Project Open Hand. This CD includes a previously unreleased version of "You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)." Fantasy/Concord Music Group (concordmusicgroup.com). —Suzie Lynde

Empire of the Sun
Ice on the Dune

In this installment of the Empire of the Sun saga, Emperor Steele and Lord Littlemore face a challenge in their bid to restore peace to the world, one thousand years in the future. Astralwerks (astralwerks.com). —S.L.

New Broadway Cast Recording
Pippin

The revival includes Andrea Martin's Tony Award-winning performance of "No Time at All." The CD contains bonus tracks and a deluxe booklet. Pippin won four Tony Awards, including Best Musical Revival. Ghostlight Records (sh-k-boom.com). —S.L.

If anyone has a right to sing the blues, it's queer blues belter Candye Kane. A pancreatic cancer survivor, Kane has traveled a bumpy road personally and professionally, but is, as her 2000 disc declared, *The Toughest Girl in the World*. That spirit shines through on her latest disc, *Coming Out Swinging* (Vizztone). Teaming up once again with young guitar wonder Laura Chavez, Kane wails and works her way through a set of thirteen tracks, nine of which are original compositions. Knockouts include "Au Revoir Y'all" (sung mostly *en français*!), the anthemic "Rise Up!" and the intoxicating "I'm the Reason Why You Drink," as well as Kane's swinging interpretation of "Marijuana Boogie."

Women's music legend Tret Fure is now in her fifth decade as a recording artist. At her most prolific in this current century, Fure has released half a dozen discs since 2001, the latest being *A Piece of the Sky* (Tomboy Girl). She uncovers the mysteries of our bodies, souls, and hearts on the title cut and makes an unexpected (and lovely) reference to "Somewhere



over the Rainbow" in "Bluebird," a song about giving love another chance. "The Zen of Being" brings a whole new perspective to calendars and the march of time. "Bucket of Tears" is the tearjerker its title implies. The bouncy "The Artist Way" is the kind of personal career statement that only Fure could make, and "My Best" is the result of her reflecting on having lived a full and creative life. To close the disc, Fure digs into her personal record crates with "That Side of the Moon," a song that originally appeared on her

1984 *Terminal Hold* album.

Like Kane and Fure, out singer/songwriter Michelle Malone has been all over the record label map, even recording for Arista (the Lenny Kaye-produced *Relentless*), as well as Walter Yetnikoff's Velvel (*Beneath the Devil Moon*) and Amy Ray's Daemon. *Day 2*, released on her own SBS (Strange Bird Songs) label, co-produced by fellow Georgia native Shawn Mullins (of "Lullaby" fame) and Gerry Hansen, finds Malone going deeper into her southern roots. On "Other Girls," Malone conjures Lucinda Williams at her most raucous. She proudly displays her political side on "Immigration Game" and

then gets personal on the smoldering "Marlboro Man" and the heavenly "St. Peter." "The Auditor" and "Wasted on You" are proof that Malone has maintained her sense of humor after all these years.

There's nothing remotely resembling the sophomore slump on lesbian singer/songwriter Julia Weldon's awesome second disc *Light Is a Ghost* (juliaweldon.com). An exceptional songwriter and musician, Weldon offers new hope for the next generation of queer female performers, writing with a maturity that belies her youth. It's hard not to be effusive after listening (repeatedly) to songs such as "Meadow," "Went to My Woman," "Careful in the Dark," "You Never Know," and "Soon." Julia Weldon, who doesn't shy away from queer subject matter in her songs (the amazing "All I Gave Her" and "All the Birds"), is an artist with whom you will want to become well-acquainted—and the sooner the better.

For the complete article, including CSS's *Planta and We Are/She Is's* Name Game, log on to *OutSmartMagazine.com*.

Gregg Shapiro is a regular contributor to *OutSmart* magazine.

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Kit van
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Can the conflict between fundamentalist Christianity and homosexuality be resolved?

ReadOut Shorts

Maxie Mainwaring, Lesbian Dilettante
Monica Nolan



The campy parodies of lesbian pulp novels continue! Maxine was leading the life of a family-financed dilettante until an ill-timed kiss forces her to break from her family. A series of adventures in making a living, determining the identity of the "Queenpin" running the local bar-controlling mob, and chasing true love follows. This series is simple fun and the perfect read for a too-hot summer day. Kensington (kensingtonbooks.com). —Angel Curtis

Tell the Wolves I'm Home
Carol Rifka Brunt

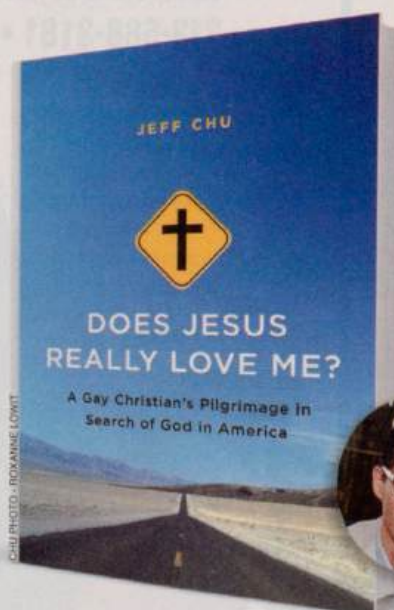


This might be the best debut novel of the year. The author weaves together ideas about what it means to be a family and how one grows up against the backdrop of 1980s New York. The rippling, resonating effects of an uncle's death against an individual's experience, a family's cohesion, and a community struggling to understand it is done in a seamless, masterful fashion that leaves this reviewer waiting for more. Dial Press Trade Paperback (randomhouse.com). —A.C.

Brazos, Carry Me
Pablo Miguel Martinez



This stunning debut collection is a fine addition to this year's selection of inspired works by Texas writers. Each and every line is a treasure to be savored, the use of language is evocative, and the work of getting feelings down on paper succeeds. Kórima Press (korima.press.com). —A.C.



Does Jesus Really Love Me?
Jeff Chu
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Americans have long been fascinated by the individual's search for spiritual epiphany—that moment when truth is found and commitment possible. Literature of this sort dates back to early pagan texts. The 1678 publication of *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan in England, along with the arrival of this nation's Pilgrims and Calvinist Puritans seeking a purer form of Christianity, are all evidence of people seeking religious direction to ease their doubts—an idea firmly embedded in the American psyche.

After last month's celebration of the nation's birth, the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, the repudiation of DOMA by the Supreme Court, and the remarkable Wendy Davis filibuster of an abortion bill in Austin, Americans surely feel a sea-change coming in their quest to make the early ideals of this country become reality. After all, if one had to boil "American culture" down to two traits, they might well be Americans' love of having lots of room around them and their distaste for taking orders.

In reading through Jeff Chu's book *Does Jesus Really Love Me?*, I sensed yet another journal of a classic American spiritual quest, akin to the Knights of the Round Table riding into misty myth seeking the truths of the Holy Grail. Chu's book looks for confirmation that the conflict between fundamentalist Christianity and homosexuality can be resolved, thus giving him peace.

The grandson of a Baptist preacher in China, Chu grew up in a strict Southern Baptist religious home with parents who emigrated from Hong Kong in 1969. He attended Westminster Christian School, went to chapel weekly, and was assigned to read the Bible and other books that described "how demons are everywhere." Eventually, he felt it was all "like reading someone else's mail . . . ultimately secondhand and indirect."

What Chu wanted, he writes, was "to know faith for myself." Standing in his way was a familiar barrier—he already knew he was gay and would therefore be considered an outsider in many churches and religious gatherings. So he set out, as both pilgrim and journalist,

on a quest to understand how people who read the same book and followed the same God could have so many conflicting beliefs about Christianity and homosexuality.

His early research, completed before he set out on the road, found that "about three-quarters of Americans identify as Christian," though only a third of those say they're regular churchgoers (a precipitous decline in attendance since the 1990s, when one study found that about half of Christians reported regular attendance). So Chu decided "to embark on a year of travel, asking the questions that have long frightened me. My hope was to find some answers at last, to crisscross America as well as the spectrum of American Christianity."

As a Southern Baptist, Chu went first to Nashville, which he calls "the Protestant Vatican," where he found that Belmont University, a private Christian institution, had just fired varsity soccer coach Lisa Howe after she came out. Howe, then, provided the first interview in his book. More bemused by her predicament than enflamed with activist zeal, Howe discussed how people not only attacked her and her partner, Wendy Holleman, but also their daughter, who was denounced by "Christians" even before she was born.

Chu then sought out Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, who had "talked his way to prominence in right-wing Republican politics." In his interview, Land was →

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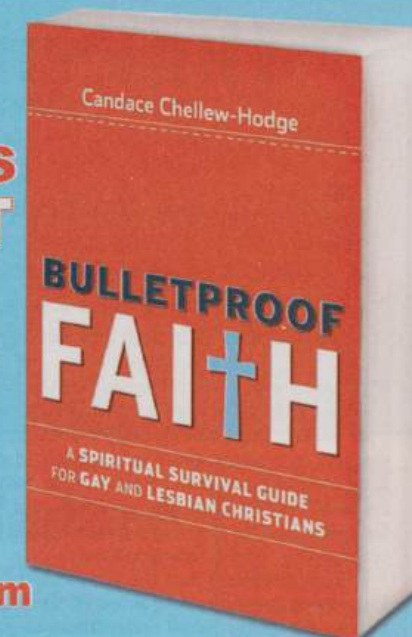
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ReadOut continued from page 78

particularly fierce on sexual morality, equating homosexuality with promiscuity and leaving Chu with the chilling statement, "There is no crueler trick played by the devil than to have it called 'gay.' My observation is that it's obviously a pretty sad lifestyle." Once again, the subtext here is that being gay is a choice, and not inherent in an individual's personality.

Chu goes on to interview a wide variety of people struggling with the religious and political blowout from the conflict. He meets with Westboro Baptist Church leaders (yep, the "God Hates Fags" folks), goes to Metropolitan Community Church services, and gets insulted by Ted Haggard, who clearly has continuing unresolved issues of his own. As page after page flew by, I felt Chu's book was a sad litany of people whose lives had been disrupted, and sometimes destroyed, by the teachings of churches pretending to be supportive and loving.

The American gay writer and critic Dan Savage, who reviewed this book for the *New York Times Book Review*, excoriated Chu for letting the Westboro people slip by with little criticism, while complaining about "an older man at MCC who winked at him" and "another who hugged him a moment or two longer than necessary."

Savage continued, "If encountering a couple of creeps in the [MCC] pews means an entire church can be dismissed, what do we do with the Roman Catholic Church, where ordained creeps have molested countless children?"

But Savage also credits Chu with having written "a fascinating, thoughtful, and important book," published at a time when "the issue of what to do with LGBT people is tearing Christian denominations apart." While I both agree with Savage and sympathize with Chu, this is a journey that will never end once one is on the path. It seems to be utterly impossible to even try changing the immovable and politically useful right-wing position that gays are bad people who make poor life choices. It will take more than "spiritual seekers" to sort things out; any attempt at change will require tough political organizing.

But Chu's book did make me appreciate a cartoon that appeared in the *Houston Chronicle* a few days after DOMA was set aside. An angel is peeking down at Earth over the side of clouds as God sits behind him. The angel reports, "The sanctimonious are in distress, calling on you for lightning bolts." God replies, "Sorry. Today I only have rainbows."

Kit van Cleave is a freelance writer living in Montrose. She has published in local, national, and international media.



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Calendar of Events

Compiled by
Marene
Gustin

Theater District

Time for the annual open house

It's one-stop shopping at the 20th annual TransCanada Theater District Open House on August 25. Head on downtown to the Theater District for a Sunday of family fun and learn about Houston's nine major performing arts organizations: Alley Theatre, Texas Energy Broadway at The Hobby Center, Da Camera of Houston, Houston Ballet, Houston Grand Opera, Houston Symphony, Society for the Performing Arts, Theatre Under the Stars, and Uniquely Houston. Enjoy backstage tours, live performances, a musical petting zoo, and chat with costumed characters. It's a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon, plus arts organizations are offering one-day-only



Graceful as a swan: artists of Houston Ballet in Stanton Welch's *Swan Lake*, which runs in 2014 at Wortham Theater Center.

specials on season subscriptions, and trolley rides are free between the theaters, although most are within walking distance. Based on past events, about 15,000 folks are expected to show up and support our fabulous downtown Theater District, the second largest in the nation. Find out more at downtownhouston.org. —Marene Gustin

AUGUST

PERFORMING ARTS

- **THROUGH AUGUST 4**
Agatha Christie's The Hollow. This thriller is part of the Alley Theatre's Summer Chills program. Get your tickets at alleytheatre.org.
- **THROUGH AUGUST 11**
Wicked. This offering from Gexa Energy Broadway at the Hobby Center really is wicked. Get ticket information at broadwaycrossamerica.com/houston.
- **THROUGH AUGUST 18**
Avenue Zoo. Daily performances of this puppet and live-actor show from Theatre Under the Stars about animals and conservation are held twice daily at the Houston Zoo. See houstonzoo.org for details.
- **THROUGH AUGUST 24**
Tamarie Cooper's Old as Hell! Yeah, you know this is gonna be funny as hell. Visit the company website at catastrophictheatre.com.
- **THROUGH AUGUST 24**
Little Nell, Orphan Girl. A summer melodrama by Theatre Suburbia. See theatresuburbia.org for details.
- **THROUGH SEPTEMBER 1**
The Marvelous Wonderettes: Caps and Gowns. Head back to 1958 and catch up with Betty Jean, Cindy Lou, Missy, and Suzy as they look back on their final year in high school and ahead toward their bright futures (and a Wonderettes wedding) in song, of course! For more details visit stages theatre.com.
- **AUGUST 2-11**
Houston Shakespeare Festival. The University of Houston's annual festival presents *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *As You Like It* at Miller Outdoor Theatre. See milleroutdoortheatre.com for details.
- **AUGUST 13**
Chucho Valdez & the Afro-Cuban Messengers. A free concert at Miller Outdoor Theatre. See milleroutdoortheatre.com for details.
- **AUGUST 14 & 15**
Journey through China III. A free interactive dance event at Miller Outdoor Theatre from Dance of Asian America. See milleroutdoortheatre.com for details.
- **AUGUST 16-18**
Houston Young Playwrights Exchange. Alley

Theatre stages new works by six local teens. See alleytheatre.org for details.

- **AUGUST 25**
Theater District Open House. Annual event for arts organizations downtown. Meet the artists, see the season calendars, buy tickets, and more. See lead article above.
- **AUGUST 29-31**
The Rite of Summer. FreneticCore premieres this at Wortham Center's Cullen Theater featuring performances by guest companies Psophonia Dance Company and Urban Souls Dance Company. See freneticcore.net for more.
- **AUGUST 30**
Golden Dragon Acrobats. Free performance by this amazing troupe at Miller Outdoor Theatre. See milleroutdoortheatre.com for details.
- **AUGUST 31**
Mercury @ Miller. Mercury's season kicks off with a free concert at Miller Outdoor Theatre. See mercuryhouston.org.

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY

- **THROUGH AUGUST 17**
Indo Mix (paintings of Muriel White) and **Clouds, Pickups, and Coming Attractions** (landscapes by Katie Maratta), both exhibits at McMurtrey Gallery. See mcmurtreygallery.com for details.
- **THROUGH AUGUST 18**
Byzantine Things in the World. Featuring works that date from circa 9,000 BCE to the present, but focusing on The Menil's rich collection of Byzantine art, the exhibition juxtaposes more than seventy remarkable objects, reawakening a sense of how people in late antiquity experienced art and bringing Byzantium's aura into the present day. See menil.org.
- **AUGUST 2-11**
Kelly O'Connor's Rock City. The Galveston Arts Center proudly presents O'Connor's newest series of large-scale collages and totemic sculptures. Details at contemporaryartgalveston.org.
- **THROUGH AUGUST 25**
Faking It: Manipulated Photography before Photoshop. Digitally altered photographs are commonplace now, but they're nothing new. The ability to modify camera images is as old as photography itself—only the methods have changed. At the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. See mfah.org for details.
- **THROUGH AUGUST 30**
Late Surrealism. This small and focused exhibition constitutes a fascinating aspect of Menil Collection holdings, specifically some of the most stunning drawings by Arshile Gorky and Mark Rothko. Visit menil.org for details.
- **THROUGH AUGUST 30**
Soo Sunny Park: Unwoven Light. A new installation for Rice University Art Gallery is a suspended, undulating structure made from shaped sections of chain-link fencing. See ricegallery.org for more.
- **THROUGH SEPTEMBER 6**
In My Nature: Thirty Years of Work. A retrospective exhibition of Rice University Professor Emerita Darra Keeton's work. See arts.rice.edu for details.
- **THROUGH SEPTEMBER 8**
The Tool at Hand. The exhibition showcases the wonder of the process of making and, at the same time, sparks an important conversation about the nature of skill, production, and tool use today. See craft-houston.org for details.
- **THROUGH SEPTEMBER 22**
James Turrell: The Light Inside. A special exhibit of Turrell's light-based installations at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. See mfah.org for details.
- **AUGUST 2 & 9**
Salon des Refusés 2013. Features two separate exhibitions curated from artwork rejected from Lawndale Art Center's The BIG Show, at BLUEorange. See blueorangehouston.com for details.
- **AUGUST 2-SEPTEMBER 29**
In Residence: Work by 2012 Resident Artists. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (HCCC) presents an exhibition of work created by artists who began their residencies at HCCC in 2012. Details at craft-houston.org.
- **AUGUST 3-SEPTEMBER 5**
Wood You Believe It. Archway Gallery presents an

exhibit by Paula Hayman. Details at archwaygallery.com.

• AUGUST 24

Artwalk. Galveston's art galleries and businesses open their doors to the public for an evening of art viewing and hors d'oeuvres amid the Victorian architecture of downtown Galveston. See galvestonartscenter.org for details.

RADIO

After Hours: Queer Radio with Attitude features the QMZ (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Carper. Sunday mornings, midnight-3am. KPFT 90.1 FM • kpft.org • 713/526-5738.

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

FILM

• AUGUST 14-24

Free Movies at Miller Outdoor Theatre. Check out the free outdoor movie nights with such offerings as *Second-hand Lions*, a *Grease* sing-a-long, and the *Men in Black* trilogy. See milleroutdoortheatre.com for details.

AND OTHER FUN THINGS

• AUGUST 17

Student Collage Workshop. The Galveston Art Center offers a workshop by collage artist India Coleman. See galvestonartcenter.org.

• AUGUST 18

Rainbow Fishing Club. Get ready for an all-day fishing spree from this LGBT club. Hop aboard a double-decker deluxe fishing boat that heads out into the Gulf of Mexico for fun and fishing. Reservations/info to get on mailing list: rainbowfishingclub@hotmail.com or John at 713/523-6381.

ONGOING

• 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. GREENSPRING: 281/445-4553. HUNTSVILLE: 936/295-6396. LUFKIN: 936/634-8446 x223. ROSENBERG: 281/342-3950. STAFFORD: 281/494-9848.

• 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 (MON.-FRI.)

HIV Testing. Houston Area Community Services (HACS) offers free, confidential HIV testing with results in less than one minute on a daily basis (Mon-Thurs: 9 am-6 pm, Fri: 8 am-5 pm). No appointment necessary. 2150 West 18th St. (Heights area). HACS Testing Calendar with additional outreach locations: hacstx.org/testing.html. Contact HACS about testing: hacstx.org or 713/426-0027.

• DAILY (MON.-FRI.)

HIV Testing. Legacy Community Health Services provides free rapid HIV testing with results in 20 minutes at the following locations on a weekly basis. **MONDAYS:** LEGACY MONTROSE CLINIC (1415 California St.), 11am-6pm; LEGACY LYONS CLINIC (502 Lyons Ave.), 1-5pm; GEORGE SPORTS BAR, 6-9pm; EJ's, 9pm-12am • **TUESDAYS:** LEGACY MONTROSE CLINIC, 11am-6pm; LEGACY LYONS CLINIC, 1-5pm; MIDTOWNE SPA, 5-9pm; 611 HYDE PARK PUB, 6:30-9pm • **WEDNESDAYS:** LEGACY MONTROSE CLINIC, 11am-6pm; LEGACY LYONS CLINIC, 1-5pm; WALGREENS-MONTROSE, 4-8pm; CLUB HOUSTON, 6-10pm; Crystal Night Club, 10pm-2am • **THURSDAYS:** LEGACY MONTROSE CLINIC, 11am-6pm; LEGACY LYONS CLINIC, 1-5pm; WALGREENS-LYONS, 2-5pm; MIDTOWNE SPA, 5-9pm; GUAVA LAMP, 6:30-9pm; RIPCROD, 6:30-10pm • **FRIDAYS:** LEGACY MONTROSE CLINIC, 11am-4pm; CLUB HOUSTON, 1-4pm; LEGACY LYONS CLINIC, 1-5pm; TC'S SHOWBAR, 4-8pm TONY'S CORNER POCKET, 4:30-8:30pm. • **LEGACY TESTING CALENDAR:** <http://www.calendarwiz.com/calendars/calendar.php?crd=legacytesting&v=1>.

• WEEKLY (SUNDAYS)

The Women's Group, a feminist group for all women. 10:15am. First Unitarian Universalist Church's Sojourner Truth Room, 5200 Fannin St. • 713/529-8571.

• WEEKLY (MONDAYS)

EMBody: Whole Health, Wellness and Resiliency peer group. 2pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

LBT Breast Cancer Survivors Support Group. 5pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037. →

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INFO NEEDED FOR YOUR EVENT LISTING: a few lines of info about your event; date/time; cost; location/address; organization name; and phone number.

E-MAIL INFO TO: calendar@outsmartmagazine.com. **MAIL INFO TO:** OutSmart Magazine, 3406 Audubon Place, Houston, TX 77006. **FAX INFO TO:** 713/522-3275.

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Calendar continued from previous page

EMBody: Introduction to Yoga. 6pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

Depression Bipolar Support Group. 7pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

Helping TransGenders Anonymous. a facilitated support group for all transgenders, supporters, family, and significant others. 7pm. 604 Pacific St. • tgctr.org.

Fathers First. Houston's original gay fathers group supports gay dads who are dealing with coming-out issues, and family and life challenges after being married to a woman. Meets every Monday except holidays. 7:30pm. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold St., Room 230 • fathersfirstofhouston.com.

• **WEEKLY (TUESDAYS)**

EMBody: Mindfulness, Well-Being, Stress Reduction. 11am. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

HIV Support Group Lunch Brunch. 11am. Bering Memorial UMC, 1440 Harold, Room 214 • 713/526-1017, ext. 202.

HATCH's Transgender Support Group and Speak Out for Youth. 5pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

• **WEEKLY (WEDNESDAYS)**

Gulf Pride for Youth. a support group for GLBTIQA youth ages 13-20. 6-9pm. 707 23rd St., Galveston • gulfprideforyouth.org.

HIV Support Group BSSG. 6:30pm. Bering Memorial UMC, 1440 Harold, Fellowship Hall • 713/526-1017.

Zumba exercise class with Crystal Wall. 6:45pm. House of Dereon Media Center, 2204 Crawford St. • 713/772-5175.

Houston Pride Band seeks all brass, woodwind, and percussion players of all skill levels for rehearsal. 7:30pm. Bethel UCC, 1107 Shepherd Dr. • 713/315-2525 • houstonprideband.org.

• **WEEKLY (THURSDAYS)**

Center HIV Support Group. Facilitated support group for HIV-positive individuals. 6pm. Houston GLBT Community Center, Historic Dow School, 1900 Kane St. • houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org • 713/524-3818.

Southern Country. a country-and-western dance troupe, offers free dance lessons. 8:30 p.m. Brazos River Bottom, 2400 Brazos St. • southerncountryhouston.com.

• **WEEKLY (FRIDAYS)**

HATCH Youth Group. 7pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

• **WEEKLY (SUNDAYS)**

HATCH Youth Group. 6pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

• **SEMI-MONTHLY (1ST AND 3RD FRI.)**

Positive Brothers United. a social/support group for GLBT, HIV-positive men of color. 6pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • csmithpbu@yahoo.com • 713/454-7548.

• **MONTHLY (1ST SUN.)**

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) Houston provides educational presentations of LGBT topics, small-group confidential discussions, and supportive fellowship. 2pm. St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 S. Main St. • pflaghouston.org.

• **MONTHLY (1ST THURS.)**

OutLater. Gay fathers meet to discuss parenting, divorce, family, dating, relationships, and more. • facebook.com/outlater • outlater@resurrectionmcc.org.

• **MONTHLY (1ST SAT.)**

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

First Saturday Queer Bingo benefits Houston GLBT Community Center. 4:30pm. Houston GLBT Community Center, Historic Dow School, 1900 Kane St. • houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org • 713/524-3818.

• **MONTHLY (2ND TUES.)**

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 • info@lawkn.com • 713/808-1000.

• **MONTHLY (2ND THURS.)**

Ryan White Planning Council. 11:30am. 2223 W. Loop South • rwpchouston.org • 713-572-3724.

SPRY Potluck for Seniors. 4pm. Montrose Center,

401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

National Leather Association-Houston. Movie night. 7pm. Montrose Center, Room 106 • 832/744-8607.

• **MONTHLY (2ND SAT.)**

AssistHers helps lesbians coping with life-threatening illnesses by providing non-medical assistance. Volunteers meet for fellowship and education followed by lunch at a local restaurant. 9:30am-noon. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold St. • assisthers.org • 713/521-4628.

National Leather Association-Houston. Leather craft class. Noon. \$20+materials. Locations vary. bihouse@comcast.net.

• **MONTHLY (3RD SUN.)**

LOAF Meet and Greet. Lesbians Over Age Fifty meet for munchies and fellowship. 2-4pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • loafhouston.org • 281/467-2578.

• **MONTHLY (3RD TUES.)**

Affected Community Committee of the Ryan White Planning Council. Noon. rwpchouston.org • 713-572-3724.

• **MONTHLY (3RD WED.)**

Log Cabin Republicans. Theo's Restaurant, 812 Westheimer • facebook.com/groups/102199491979/?ref=ts.

• **MONTHLY (3RD THURS.)**

HIV Testing. 1pm. Houston GLBT Community Center, 1900 Kane St. • houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org • 713/524-3818.

SPRY Counseling Center. 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

EMBody: Understanding Mental Health Issues. Rotating topics: addiction, depression, anxiety, bipolar. 5pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

EMBody: To Cook or Not to Cook. Demystifying raw foods. 6pm. Montrose Center, 401 Branard St. • montrosecounselingcenter.org • 713/529-0037.

Share with PFLAG Houston in a safe, confidential setting. 7:30-9pm. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church's Chatham Room, 1805 W. Alabama • pflaghouston.org.

• **MONTHLY (3RD FRI.)**

Triple D: Dykes, Dinner, and Discussion offers dinner and conversation about health, family, dating, equality, community awareness, and freedom of speech. 7pm. Houston GLBT Community Center, 1901 Kane St. • houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org • 713/524-3818.

• **MONTHLY (3RD SAT.)**

Discovery Green Flea by Night. Local music, kids' activities, bicycle repair workshop, and 40+ vendors selling vintage clothing, antiques, collectibles, jewelry, and more. 6-10pm. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney St. • discoverygreen.com • 713/400-7336.

• **MONTHLY (4TH SUN.)**

Share with the Clear Lake satellite of PFLAG Houston in a safe, confidential setting. 2-4pm. Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church Fellowship Hall, 17503 El Camino Real, Clear Lake • pflaghouston.org. ■

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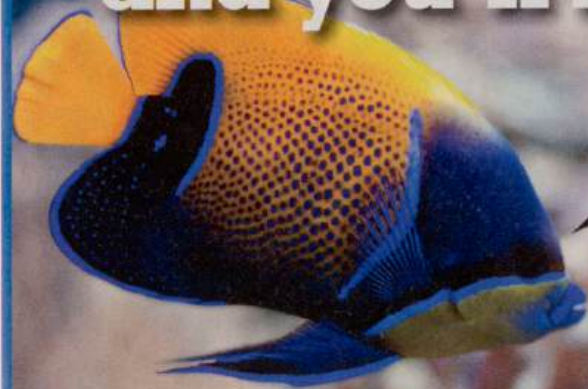


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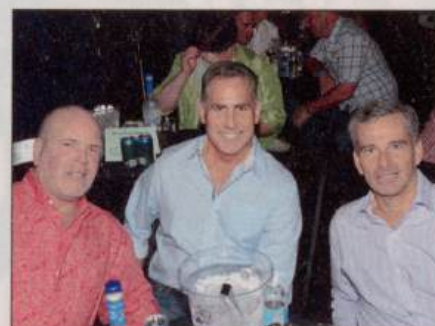
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Formerly In-N-Out, this comfortable club located in the northern Heights is a convenient alternate to inner-Montrose haunts. Patrons journey past the comfy seating and romantic lighting to find a spacious patio where they sometimes fire up the barbecue grill. 1537 N. Shepherd • 713/426-1315.

BAYOU CITY BAR & GRILL

DJ Wild and DJ CJ provide tunes for this lively, down-home bar in the heart of Montrose known for its cheap drinks, Wednesday's steak night, and Thursday's 25¢ wings during happy hour. 2409 Grant St. • bayoucitybar.com.

BLUR

This multi-level dance club features an expansive patio upstairs lounge and balconies that overlook the Pacific St. traffic. Ladies enjoy Wet and Wild Wednesdays, 18-year-olds are welcome on Thurs., resident DJ Lorenzo spins Wed.-Sat. nights, DJ Pollo spins Karumba Latin night on Sun. Happy hour 8-10pm; free cover before 11pm. 710 Pacific St. • blurbar.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 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 • 713-278-2582 • crystaltheclub.com.

CROCKER BAR

Resident DJ Johnny spins on Fri. and Sat. nights at this comfortably remodeled Montrose nightspot that also offers karaoke on Tuesdays and Thursdays and extended happy-hour prices throughout the week. 2312 Crocker • 713/529-3355.

THE EAGLE

Houston's newest dance club for masculine men is full of private nooks and crannies for dancing and cruising. Resident DJs JD Arnold and DJ Rudy man the turntables. Fri. and Sat., 9pm-afterhours; Sun., 6pm-afterhours. 213 Milam St. • eaglehouston.com • 713/236-8777.

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 • ejbar.com.

F BAR

Award-winning DJs spin nightly at this "boutique nightclub" that offers elegance without arrogance and features a stage, dance floor, VIP area, glass-encased quiet bar, and attractive patio. Tues. and Sun. drag shows feature frequent special guests. 202 Tuam St. • fbarhouston.com • 713/522-3227.

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 3pm with dart and pool tournaments; Steak Night is Sun., 3-7pm. 617 Fairview • 713/528-8102.

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BEHIND THE BAR

WHO: Alyse Anderson

WHERE: Ranch Hill Saloon
24704 I-45N, Spring • 281/298-9035

WHAT'S UP: Happy Birthday RHS—12 years in August! This fun, northside casual bar always has something fun. From Sunday Fun Day to Tuesday's Karaoke to Dance Friday and great drink specials, too!

GUAVA LAMP

This trendy and friendly video and cruise bar gets busy during happy hour and stays busy 'til closing. Karaoke on Wed. and Sun., sometimes offering prizes, always packs the place. 570 Waugh Dr. • 713/524-3359 • guavalamphouston.com.

JR'S BAR & GRILL

With house emcee Kofi, OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest reigning drag champion, this Montrose standard offers drag and strip shows throughout the week, karaoke Thurs. and Sun., plus pool tables, male dancers, and award-winning cocktails. 808 Pacific St. • jrbarandgrill.com • 713/521-2519.

METEOR

The men of Manwatch and Muscles in Action rinse down in the "Meteor Shower" stall in this posh but comfy lounge on the downtown edge of Montrose, accompanied by DJ Tad on Fri. and DJ Jimmy Skinner on Sat. Open Thurs.-Sat. 2306 Genesee St. • meteorhouston.com • 713/521-0123.

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

Jerry Atwood, Clay Howell, Neil Massey, Steve Wheaton, and Roger Woest take turns at the keys at this comfortable neighborhood piano bar. 1419 Richmond Ave. • 713/520-8446.

MONTROSE MINING COMPANY

Studly male dancers bump and grind every night at this leather/denim spot, offering Montrose's lowest vodka drinks with Trash Disco Sundays. The two-tier back patio bar provides a perch for viewing the Pacific Street scenery. 805 Pacific St. • theminehouston.com • 713/529-7488.

NEON BOOTS DANCEHALL & SALOON (Coming Soon)

Country is back! Houston's new gay country & western dancehall is located at the Historic Esquire Ballroom and is opening this summer. 11410 Hempstead Hwy • neonbootsclub.com.

THE RIPCORDER

This well-kept, multi-roomed leather bar for men and their friends boasts a busy patio, especially on the weekends. The Black Hawk Leather shop is located inside the club, providing BDSM essentials. 715 Fairview Ave. • 713/521-2792 • theripcord.com.

RUDYARD'S

The eclectic British pub is known for its craft beers as well as for the burgers. Most weekends you'll find up-and-coming local bands rocking the house. 2010 Waugh Dr. • rudyardspub.com • 713/521-0521.

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 mega-dance club is a frequent winner of OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest awards, with Billboard contributor DJ Jimmy Skinner spinning on Fri., and DJ Joe Ross playing pop & dance music videos on Sat. No cover before 11pm. 810 Pacific St. • sobehouston.com • 713/529-SOBE.

TC'S SHOWBAR

New owners Tim and Corey 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 • tcshowbar.com.

TONY'S CORNER POCKET

This comfortable club located close to downtown has one of the friendliest bar staffs in town, both inside & outside at its patio bar. The raised

stage where local charities perform also features an amateur dance contest each Thurs., Fri., & Sat. at 11pm. 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 Wed., when "Her Usual" night packs in the women. Enjoy drink specials, dancing, karaoke, & gazing at the downtown skyline from the spacious front deck. 5519 Allen St. • 281/501-1478 • theusualpub.com.

VENUS

Houston's newest, hottest lesbian nightclub in midtown. This 21+ venue offers beautiful bartenders, incredible drink specials, & sexy shot girls while keeping it classy. Everyone is welcome. The event calendar is full of themed nights, DJ Athens & DJ Zane headline, and a killer Sunday Funday. Thurs.-Sat., 9pm-2am, for nights of pure equality. 2901 Fannin • 713/751-3185 • venus-houston.com.

VIVIANA'S

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

Beaumont

ORLEANS STREET PUB AND PATIO

The place to hang for food, fun, and booze in a newly renovated pub, in good weather or bad. Open every night from 7pm-2am. 650 Orleans • 409/855-4243.

Bryan/College Station

HALO VIDEO BAR

The only LGBT dance club in Bryan/College station, this sleek spot is open Thurs.-Sat. Smack in the middle of Aggieland, "our venue is always packed with the hotties," the owners promise. 121 North Main • 979/823-6174 • halobcs.com.

Clear Lake/Webster

CLUB PRIDE

An acronym for "People Representing Individuality, Diversity, and Equality," Club Pride offers a near-Gulf Coast alternative with Karaoke Wednesdays, Flashback Thursdays, Forbidden Fridays with DJ Que, and Taste the Rainbow Saturdays. 229 E. NASA Pkwy. • clubpridehouston.com • 281/557-4800.

Galveston

3RD COAST DOWNTOWN

Just because its owners moved the club from its longtime Seawall location, it doesn't mean it's not still one of the most popular spots for Galveston's LGBTs. Its new "urban chic" look maintains its tropical flair. 2416 Postoffice St. • 409/765-6911.

PINK DOLPHIN

A familiar name returns to Galveston's roster of gay bars, with new owner Tom Long. The friendly, neighborhood BYOB spot offers affordable tables and an off-the-Seawall, downtown-based island escape. 1706 Tremont St. • 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.

STARS BEACH CLUB

The island's newest entry into its ever-growing roster of gay bars is energized by visually stunning touches of light throughout. DJ Joe Rios spins for the spacious club, which also offers ample outdoor seating. 3102 Seawall Blvd. • 409/497-4113 • starsbeachclub.com.

Spring

RANCH HILL SALOON

With its two pool tables, 52-inch plasma televisions, and large dance floor, this popular northside spot also offers Humpty Hump Wednesdays with DJ Brian Moya & a monthly drawing for a flatscreen TV. 24704 I-45N Suite 103 • 281/298-9035 • ranchhill.com.

THE ROOM

Northside LGBTs relax on couches and enjoy multiple television screens, pool tables, & an ample dance floor where famed local DJs Triple-S and Dylan Barnes rotate to provide the music on Retro Fridays, New Mix Saturdays, & Trash Disco Sundays. Open daily. 4915 FM 2920 #148 • theroombar.net.

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by
Lilly
Roddy

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

August is a busy month, and the New Moon makes us just wanna have fun

As August opens, we are in a time of decision-making as a result of Mercury going direct at the end of July. This will make August a busy month as we feel the pressure to get on with our lives. There is more tension during the last half of the month, especially the 21st through the 26th. Face the things that need attention and let the rest go. The New Moon in Leo on August 6 will make us want to be more playful and have more fun. Find your own passion. On August 20, the Full Moon in Aquarius will open up our social lives and introduce us to new groups and potential new friendships. Take some time to slow down at the end of the month.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). You continue to be focused on home, family, and real estate. This can be a good time to have a family reunion, reconnect with people from your childhood, and create a stronger emotional foundation. You'll accomplish this by cleaning out your past and living a healthier emotional life. This is a great time to look for a new job or career if you're feeling restless. Find some time for you and your partner near the end of the month.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). Your communication skills are really highlighted this month. You'll find that making your point is especially easy, even with difficult topics. You are more energetic this month as you set your sights on new goals and possible career moves. You are moving slowly and carefully, and you can look for this forward movement to continue through the end of the year. Home and family take the spotlight as you get to the end of the month. Home repairs may be on your menu.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). As the month opens, you are back to being busy as you continue the process of cleaning out and reorganizing. Your focus during the first half of the month is on making better use of your resources. This can be a great time to promote yourself, an idea, or even a book. You've been speaking with great authority, and that is making more people listen to you. At the end of the month you'll need some rest and retreat!

CANCER (June 22–July 22). This is the month for the Moon Kids to take action on their dreams and ideas, and you'll have extra courage to face any fears that may arise. With Jupiter (planet of growth and expansion) in your sign until next July, you are feeling more optimistic and positive about your life. You are focused on your resources,

figuring out how to make the best use of them. This can be a time when you'll want to get your financial picture in better shape. Relationships can be testy at the end of the month, so make sure you don't neglect that part of your life.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). The area of friends and organizations is very active this month. This can be a great time to get involved in a business or social organization. Expect to find yourself in a leadership position if you do get involved. This can also be a time to promote your career or to meet potential new romantic partners. Toward the end of the month, you will need some time to get away from it all—especially from the 23rd through the 26th. Just make sure that you are staying connected to your inner self and your spirit's calling. Schedule time for a spa retreat!

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). Career opportunities are really opening up to you this month. With Jupiter, planet of good fortune, in your career sector for the next year, it's a great time to really promote yourself or your ideas. This can be a time when you want to travel more or go back to school to pursue something you've always wanted to do. You have been in a clearing-out phase to prepare for this new time. Friends can be especially important to you this month. Relationships are tense near the end of the month. Just say what you mean so people won't have to guess.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). With Saturn going direct in your sign, you are back on track and moving forward with your plans. Saturn makes us look at our lives in long-range cycles. We can clearly see where we have been as we look toward new ambitions. You are certainly ready to take a leadership role in this process. You're being driven by a strong need to respond to your community. You'll be in the spotlight for the next two months, commanding more attention when you speak. Make sure you wear something sparkly!

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). You are in more of a social mood this month. Going on a trip out of town to break up your routine would be very good for you. Your magnetic energies are also stronger, and that will help draw



people to you during August. You seem to be able to get to the heart of the matter much more easily. Your career energies are a bit off, and you are not as sure about things as you once were. Let your heart guide you in a direction that inspires you. This will give you back the pep you've been missing. Make sure you take some time for yourself from the 23rd through the 27th.

LEO (July 23–August 22). You are still in a rest-and-retreat mode as the month opens. You will be more energetic after August 9, and especially after the 27th. You may have been feeling "stuck," especially during July. You are moving now—not too fast, but you are moving. You continue to be in an evaluation phase as you look at people, things, and ideas. What really makes your life more secure? You won't have time for anything that doesn't pass the test.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). This continues to be a very active month for you Sea Goats out there. There is a lot of focus on relationships during August. If you are single, this is a good time to get out in the dating market. If you are involved, this can be a great time to rejuvenate your relationship. If your current relationship is over, things will move along more quickly toward a final resolution. All relationships are

under scrutiny this month—business, romance, and close friendships. This is a good month to follow your instincts.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). You have been reorganizing your work area and finding ways to make things as efficient as you can. You are now back to working on your future plans and long-term career goals. Relationships are coming into better focus as the month progresses. You need to look at doing something fun or different, especially toward the end of the month. If your relationship is feeling too routine, you or your partner could become angry or irrational. You are needing some renewal there. Address the problem and avoid the drama.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). The energies for all of the water signs are very positive now. This can be a very good time for the planets to help you find faster and easier resolutions to your problems. You are in a very creative period this month. It is a great time to express your inner child and do something that just makes you happy. Your own children could be doing very well at this time. Relationships become more of the focus toward the end of the month. Make sure that you and your partner really have some time to share. Otherwise, somebody will be feeling very cool and distant.

Read Lilly Roddy's 2013 forecast at OutSmartMagazine.com. For more astro-insight, log on to lillyrodgy.com.

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OUT IN HOUSTON



Jason Gallegos, Javier Ramirez, Robin Brown, Frankie Quijano, Mayor Annise Parker, and John Nechman at screening of the movie *Breaking Through* at River Oaks Theatre, June 26.



Candidate for City Council at Large Position 2 **Jenifer Rene Pool** (in black suit) and supporters at campaign press conference, July 11.



Boy of Montrose 2012 **Christopher Garrett** and Boy of Montrose 2013 **John Franklin**.



Jerry Award winners for their contribution to the softball league: **David Wong** and **Corey Allen** at Montrose Softball League Awards Banquet.



Mark Eggleston and **Darrin Brindle** at City Hall rally celebrating Supreme Court ruling on DOMA, June 26.



Mary Lampe, **Charlie Vaughn**, **Olivia Kuan**, **Rachel Boyle**, **Michelle Mower**, **Kristian Salinas**, and **Stephanie Saint Sanchez** at the QFest 2013 Launch Party, sponsored by Southwest Alternate Media Project (SWAMP) at Chelsea Grill, July 20.



Javier Ramirez, **Tom Fricke**, **Paul Stone**, **Robin Brown**, **Ezra Crum**, and **Wayne Graham** at Pride Houston's "DineOut with Pride" at Gratifi Kitchen, June 24.



Participants in the **Tim Brookover** Community Roundtable, July 20.



Frankie Quijano, **Special K**, and **Tim Wilde** with the models at Pride Houston's "Rock the Runway," June 25 at South Beach.



Performers of "Christmas in July" held at South Beach, July 7.



Pepe Serna, **Hans Payan Geler**, **David Sanford**, **Daniel Zamora**, and **Jumper Maybach** (in front) at Jumper Maybach Art opening at Heights Art Studios & Gallery, July 20.



Leo Mata, **Stefano Ballesteros**, **Mayor Annise Parker**, **Omar Zavala**, **James Lee**, and **Luis Zarazua** at the "Hispanic Caucus Event" at Casa Grande, July 16.

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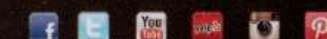
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