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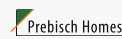
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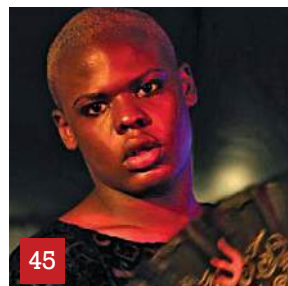
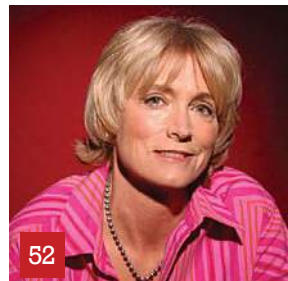


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**TRAE CROWDER,
AKA THE LIBERAL REDNECK.**
(SEE PAGE 35.)

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of *Grey Gardens:
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- **Charles Swan** hopes to enjoy California sunshine for the July 6 debut of *Grey Gardens: The Musical* at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles. Read about Swan at OUTSMARTMAGAZINE.com.
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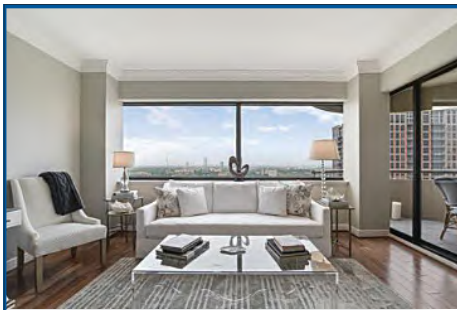
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Publishers of OutSmart Magazine
3406 Audubon Place • Houston, TX 77006
713.520.7237 • 713.522.3275 Fax

Subscriptions: \$30/12 Issues, \$58/24 Issues

E-mail: letters@outsmartmagazine.com

Website: www.OutSmartMagazine.com

OUTSMART is published monthly. Estimated readership in Houston and surrounding areas is 60,000. OutSmart Media Company is not responsible for claims and practices of advertisers. The opinions and views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the staff or management of OUTSMART. Inclusion in OUTSMART does not imply sexual orientation. ©2016 by OutSmart Media Company. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without permission of the publisher is strictly prohibited. Unsolicited material is accepted. No manuscript returned without SASE.



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Mayor Turner Announces LGBTQ Task Force

By John Wright

During the June 15 vigil at Houston City Hall for the 49 people murdered at a gay Orlando nightclub three days before, Mayor Sylvester Turner pledged to “give meaning and value to every community.”

Less than a week later, Turner backed up his statement by announcing the formation of an LGBTQ Task Force—the first in the city’s history—to make recommendations to his office.

In a statement provided exclusively to OutSmart, Turner said the idea for the Task Force came from the LGBT community, and he envisions it functioning like the mayor’s Hispanic Advisory Board, by “providing a conduit for communication.”

“It’s important to me to be able to hear from all groups because not only is Houston diverse, we are also inclusive,” Turner said. “As I stated at the Houston Stands With Orlando Vigil, as long as I am mayor, we are going to stand together.”

It wasn’t immediately clear who will serve on the Task Force, or how many members there will be. At a June 24 press conference in advance of Houston’s LGBT Pride celebration, Turner said he expected to announce the Task Force members sometime the following week.

“Now, more than ever before, we have to rededicate ourselves to the fight for equality and inclusion,” Turner said. “I believe government can lead the way.”

Transgender activist Lou Weaver, who was working with the mayor’s office to set up the Task Force, said he expected members to meet for the first time before the end of July.

The goal of the Task Force, Weaver said, is to “let the people running the city know what it’s like to be an LGBT person here in the City



MEGAN SMITH

Standing Together

On June 24, Mayor Sylvester Turner held a press conference to announce the creation of an LGBTQ Task Force—the first in the city’s history—to make recommendations to his office concerning the needs of the LGBT community.

of Houston, and what some of the topics that come up on a daily basis are.”

Those topics, Weaver said, likely will include not only LGBT-specific issues, but also things like homelessness and immigration.

“It’s intersectional work,” he said, adding that the goal is for the Task Force to be as diverse as possible.

Creation of the Task Force marks Turner’s first major LGBT initiative since taking office in January—two months after voters overwhelmingly repealed the city’s Equal Rights Ordinance, making Houston the nation’s largest city without a nondiscrimination law.

Janice Evans, a spokeswoman for the mayor, said in an email concerning the Task Force that resurrecting HERO is “not something that’s being worked on right now,” adding that Turner is still focused primarily on the city’s pension woes.

Weaver said he believes it’s unlikely the Task Force will take up HERO, adding that he’s unsure what specific policy issues the panel might address. But he said it’s important for the LGBT community to be visible in the wake of the terror attack at Pulse Orlando, the largest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

“We have to be able to utilize this momentum and recharge our movement,” Weaver said. “The Task Force will be a part of that.”

Houston will become the second major city in Texas with a standing LGBT Task Force. Dallas mayor Mike Rawlings’ LGBT Task Force has pushed through several initiatives in recent years, leading to that city’s first-ever perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign’s 2015 Municipal Equality Index (MEI), which rates cities according to LGBT inclusion.

Houston, meanwhile, received a score of 48 out of 100 on the 2015 MEI—the lowest score among the nation’s 10 largest cities.

In addition to lacking a nondiscrimination ordinance, Houston lost points on the MEI for not having LGBT liaisons in the police department or mayor’s office, and not offering transgender-inclusive healthcare to employees.

In January, when Turner told OutSmart his top priorities during his first six months in office would be pensions and potholes, he also pledged to address the MEI score.

Weaver said he believes Turner, whose office organized the City Hall vigil attended by 15 City Council members, is off to a good start with the LGBT community.

“I think he’s got a lot on his plate with flooding and other things, but he hasn’t forgotten us,” Weaver said. “Obviously, it’s going to be hard for anyone to follow in Annise Parker’s footsteps, but he’s doing it.”

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Amidst Recovery, A Chance to Reinvent

New downtown banner project celebrates Houston's diversity.

By Terrance Turner

Houston is a city on the mend. After the failure of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO), which was rejected by voters in November, Houston's reputation for diversity was threatened. At the time, then-mayor Annise Parker said, "I fear this will have stained Houston's reputation as a tolerant, welcoming global city." *The New York Times* published an editorial under the headline "In Houston, Hate Trumped Fairness." It blasted the law's opponents—Gov. Greg Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, and Houston lawyer Jared Woodfill, who led the anti-HERO campaign—as "latter-day Jim Crow elders." The editorial board did not mince words: "Their demagoguery is egregious because it preys on some of the most vulnerable people in our society."

While the media firestorm surrounding



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The "Figurative Poetics" project includes quotes from prominent Houston figures such as Beyoncé, Neil Armstrong, and *Houston Chronicle* columnist Lisa Gray.

the ordinance didn't jeopardize Houston's status as the 2017 Super Bowl host, Human Rights Campaign president Chad Griffin wrote a letter to NFL commissioner Roger Goodell shortly after the vote. Griffin called for an emergency meeting to address the ordinance. "Houston is now the only major city in the nation without nondiscrimination protections," Griffin stated. "It is also the largest city in Texas without such a measure; Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, and Fort Worth all have nondiscrimination protections like this on the books. . . [T]he repeal of HERO was a tremendous setback for fairness, justice, and equality throughout the region."

The HRC made its displeasure clear with its 2015 Municipal Equality Index, which rates cities "on the basis of their inclusivity of LGBTQ people

continued from page 91

COMMUNITY

Photos by Dalton DeHart



Out for Education held its 2016 scholarship presentations on June 12 at the Alley Theatre. Pictured are scholarship recipients.



The Montrose Softball League Association held its "Jocks in Dresses" pageant on June 4 at South Beach. Pictured are the **Knights** and **DKnights** softball teams, winners of Jocks in Dresses.



The Brighter Future Foundation presented GCAM with a check on June 17 at JR's. Pictured are **Jason Gallegos, Chip Ware, Cristina Martinez, Judy Reeves, Adam Richardson, Karen Morry,** and **Kirk John Barilleaux.**



The "Coming Out in Church" panel discussion was held on June 11. Pictured are **Michael DeVoll, Ellis Montes, Sara Fernandez,** and the Very Rev. **Barkley Thompson.**



Lesbians Over Age Fifty held their Pride Kick-Off party on June 19. Pictured are **Arden Eversmeyer, Sara Fernandez, Sandi Glorfield, Charlotte Avery, Michelle DeGraffenried,** and **Marshella Abrams.**



On June 24, the City of Houston held its Houston Stands with Orlando press conference at Sam Houston Park. Pictured are Mayor **Sylvester Turner**, Police Chief **Martha Montalvo**, Mayor Pro-tem **Ellen Cohen**, and other speakers.



The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston held its "Turn Around the World" Pride concert on June 4 at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church. Pictured are members of the chorus.



Pride Houston held its 2016 Rock the Runway fashion show on June 23 at Audi Central. Pictured are the evening's models and emcees.

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Looking Inward...

during a time of hate.

By **Barrett White**

Photo by Victoria Kennedy

When I was 23, 49 people were gunned down in a massive, senseless hate crime.

I had moved out of my parents' suburban house a little over a year earlier. Not only did I move into the city, but I was blocks away from what they call "the gayborhood." After a life of uncertainty and confusion, I came out when I was 19—and no, it wasn't easy; it took three years before I felt any sense of peace. I think because of that, I generally kept my sexuality to myself.

My social media presence consisted of vague Facebook posts about something LGBT+ now and then. That was about the extent of it. I never said "boyfriend" on social media. Strictly gender-neutral things like "boo," "bae," or whatever, to keep from coming out to people who may not know already (such as extended family members on Facebook who don't know me well in real life).

I don't know why I was afraid to be out to more people. Did I think it would change their minds about me? Make them think less of me? What was it? I don't know. Looking back, if they had reacted negatively, would I even want them around?

But I digress.

On June 11, 2016, I was downtown at Discovery Green watching out country singer Billy Gilman perform at the pre-Pride Rainbow on the Green celebration. I left early to see a friend compete in a drag competition (which he won) and then joined him at a restaurant where the staff embraced us wholeheartedly. They knew all my friends and congratulated our beautiful drag-queen cohort, with the winner still in full costume and a winner's sash. I



Refusing to Hide

After the Orlando massacre took the lives of 49 of our LGBT brothers and sisters, one thing became clear—we cannot let those who hate our existence dictate what we can and cannot do.

was so comfortable being in such a loving and tolerant part of the city.

That Saturday night, we left the restaurant discussing what we'd do the next day, because, after all, Sunday was the Tony Awards (which about half of us considered our annual go-to-church event) and *Game of Thrones* (which all of us considered the highlight of every week). We planned watch parties and parted ways.

About the same time my best friend was dropping me off at my car downtown in the middle of the night, 49 people were being shot to death 960 miles away at a gay nightclub in Orlando. Another 53 people would be hospitalized. All for no other reason than that they were non-straight or allies, and had a taste for nightlife. Some media outlets are refusing to call it a hate crime, but the gunman's father recalled an incident in which the gunman (whose name doesn't matter) saw two men kiss in Miami, which infuriated him. This wasn't random. He travelled to Orlando to terrorize a specific minority group.

Though nearly 1,000 miles from those gay family members, I felt their loss so, so hard.

James Corden and several winners at the Tonys expressed their grief in speeches and with ribbons pinned to their shirts.

It's 2016. The Stonewall Riots were almost 50 years ago.

I'm not necessarily going to blow up your newsfeeds with rainbow flags 24/7, but I no longer feel the need to hide myself or give myself this grief. To play linguistic acrobatics with every online update I write when something wonderful happens with my boyfriend. This year we'll be celebrating our fourth anniversary, but I'm sure some of my friends and distant family weren't even sure that I'm with someone.

I ought to celebrate my life, because clearly nothing is promised to me. I ought to not let those who hate my mere existence dictate what I can or cannot do.

We flew again after September 11. We went to the movies again after Aurora, and we continue to send our children to public schools (or attend them ourselves) in spite of... everything.

I can and will live in this world that was →

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LOOKING INWARD . . .

continued from page 14

taken from my LGBT family in Orlando.

I am a writer and I will continue to write. I am a consumer of art and I will continue to support that community. I am a Houstonian. I am a journalist. I am a storyteller. I am someone's son, brother, cousin, nephew, grandson, friend . . . and boyfriend. And I, like those 49 people and millions beyond these borders, have a life that matters. I will continue to live it, regardless of what immoral opposition there is to our colorful culture of happiness, acceptance, love, and struggle.

Does writing this make me a target? Well, maybe. Would keeping quiet keep me safe—or if not safe, maybe at least safer? Perhaps.

But I would rather be living as an authentic human who has a complicated life—of mountains and valleys, hills and creeks, triumphs and shortcomings—than to be someone who remains holed up in his own head, too worried about the world to experience it.

My community is not one that you can knock down or beat. You've done it so often that you've taught us to fight.

"We're here. We're [still] queer. Get used to it."

Barrett White is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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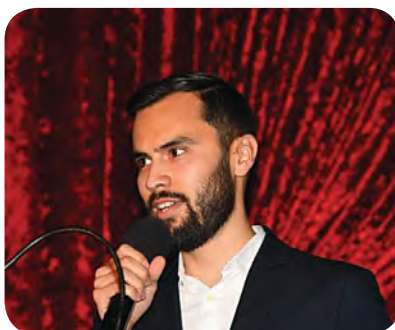
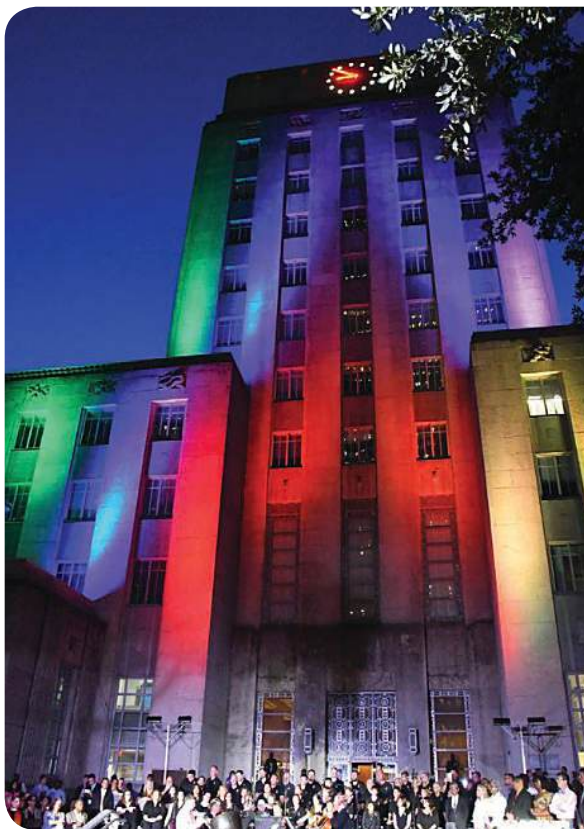
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Real Possibilities

Houston Mourns Orlando

To honor those lost in the tragic Pulse shooting on June 12, 2016, Houston's LGBT community and allies banded together to pay their respects. Thousands attended various vigils held at Hermann Park, Houston City Hall, The Montrose Center, Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, South Beach, and more. Together we stand, united in love against hate.

Photos by Dalton DeHart, Donna Adair, and Javier Fernandez



Gun Safety...

is an LGBT issue.

By Kris Banks

As the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community moves from mourning the Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando to finding solutions that will prevent anything like this from ever happening again, our first instinct is to ask why this happened. That instinct is rooted in our desire to stomp out the cause.

Whenever an act of mass violence like this occurs, the most common reasons given are hate and mental illness. In this case, it looks like both might be applicable.

The problem is, addressing either issue is unlikely to prevent LGBT people from being shot up in some other nightclub. I would suggest we would benefit more from asking *how* it happened.

It happened because a person had a gun who should not have had one.

What should be evident from this massacre is that the LGBT community is especially vulnerable to gun violence, and we should be joining the fight for better regulations on who has access to guns and what kinds of guns should be available.

I certainly understand the instinct to take a stand against hate. Fighting against bigotry has been the single largest struggle in the LGBT community for decades, and we should never give up. But it's not the fight we need right now to prevent future massacres.

Much has been made of the killer's connections to ISIS, a group that has been responsible for horrific actions against LGBT people in other parts of the world. Texas Sen. Ted Cruz put out a statement saying that if we really wanted to help the LGBT community, we should act against ISIS.

While ISIS is indeed a notorious antigay organization, the killer's connections to ISIS were at best tenuous. They didn't order him to act, and they certainly didn't sell him the gun. And regardless, blaming this on ISIS or radical Muslims is to pretend that eliminating that source of anti-LGBT hatred would improve



Time for Reform

Following the Pulse tragedy, it is crucial for the LGBT community to galvanize behind the fight for stricter regulations on gun access.

things. The reality is that the Southern Poverty Law Center has identified 48 active anti-LGBT hate groups in the United States—one of which is based in Houston. Most of them sincerely believe that they reflect the teachings of Christianity, not Islam.

It's not just fringe organizations that contribute to homophobia and transphobia, though. How many times did we hear Cruz and other Republican presidential candidates take potshots at the transgender community with cheap applause lines during the Republican primaries? The Texas Republican Party platform, passed in May, calls for forcing transgender people to use the wrong bathroom and calls homosexuality "contrary to the fundamental unchanging truths."

We can and should condemn hatred everywhere we see it—against our community, and against others. But hatred is pervasive in our society. Even as they were condemning the violence, powerful anti-LGBT politicians like Speaker Paul Ryan and Florida governor Rick Scott could not even bring themselves to mention our community, posting #prayfororlando as if the killer shot up a club there to protest Disney World.

The need to stop these killings is urgent. But if we haven't yet been successful in rooting out bigotry from elected officials in some of the highest offices of the land, how are we going to stomp it out of the darkest corners of society where these mass killers reside?

Yes, let's work to eliminate hate and bigotry. But as the Pulse massacre demonstrated,

we are targets of violence now. During the AIDS crisis, we fought for long-term social change—but we also fought for survival. "Fund prevention and treatment right now, so our people stop dying." In the same vein, we need to organize immediately to keep weapons away from those who would target us. If we don't prevent them from getting the weapons they need to inflict their damage, more LGBT people will die.

And what about that other go-to whipping-boy culprit we hear about after every mass shooting? Improving mental-health treatment is an inadequate solution that misses the point entirely. Yes, we should fund our wholly insufficient mental healthcare system. But what of the fact that people who suffer from mental illness are—by a huge, huge ratio—more likely to be a *victim* of violent crime than a perpetrator? And what do we propose beyond that? Locking up everyone whom we believe to be mentally ill? That suggestion—often made by people who want to protect the "civil liberties" of gun owners—is horrifying. We should know, since it wasn't long ago that being gay or transgender was considered a mental illness.

We can work forever to stamp out bigotry. We can do everything we can to spot and treat mental illness. But we will get rid of neither. And as long as hate exists in this world, and as long as people who suffer from deep paranoia and delusions have the capacity to turn that hate into the deaths of dozens within minutes, populations vulnerable to hate will be easy targets. And if the LGBT community didn't →



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GUN SAFETY . . .

continued from page 18

know (after centuries of violent oppression) that it's still a target for hate, it knows it after Orlando. That's why the LGBT community must stand strong for sensible gun-safety reform.

LGBT victims of gun violence are not limited to those killed in Orlando. We know of the inordinately high rate of transgender people who are murdered around the globe. In 2015, at least 18 transgender people were murdered in the United States. At least half of those died after being shot.

It's time for the LGBT community to stand behind the efforts of organizations like Americans for Responsible Solutions—groups fighting for better gun safety regulations. It's time for LGBT political organizations to ask candidates and elected officials to support sensible reforms on guns.

It's time to insist that gun safety is an LGBT issue—like marriage equality, fighting workplace discrimination, HIV, and any other issue that directly and disproportionately affects people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender. If we don't participate in the fight to find a solution, we will be the victims again.

Banks is the former president of the Houston GLBT Political Caucus.



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Tamarie for President

Why the hell not!?



That's right—vote for your favorite quirky talent Tamarie Cooper as she brings her 19th Tamarie performance to Catastrophic Theatre! Cooper, also the associate director of the company, has been delighting audiences with her shows for almost two decades, but this one promises hilarity that resonates during an election year. It's an entirely original, full-scale musical comedy extravaganza where Tamarie throws her hat into the ring and promises to make America

totally awesome while singing "Born Again Texan," "Barbie Sex Boat," "Food Love," and "Old Glory" (the penis flag song)! This is one campaign you don't want to miss. It's all going on at Midtown Arts & Theatre Center Houston, or as we like to call it, the MATCH. Pay-what-you-can tickets are on sale now (seriously, they would like a \$35 donation, but they're willing to take whatever you've got), but if you can afford it, get a ticket to the dress rehearsal July 7. Those tickets are for underwriters of the show and start with a \$50

single or a \$250 sponsorship, but you get to see the dress rehearsal up close, enjoy a pre- and post-show party, dinner, and an open bar. Sponsorship packages (depending on cost) also include multiple tickets to the event, T-shirts, cast recordings of past shows, and campaign swag (you know you want that!). Go to catastrophictheatre.com to buy dress-rehearsal tickets, or match.org to get tickets to other performances.

—Marene Gustin

Tamarie for President!
(Greatest Hits, Volume 2)
July 8–August 6
matchhouston.org

📻 Radio ★ Performing Arts 📷 Art & Photography ↻ Ongoing + Other Things 📅 Save The Date

1

Jurassic World ★ The blockbuster seen outdoors on a big screen! milleroutdoortheatre.com

2

Johnny Rivers ★ The "Secret Agent Man" singer performs live. milleroutdoortheatre.com
MFA Café + Check out the new week-end brunch at the museum. mfah.org/dining



4

Freedom over Texas + Fireworks, food, and Darius Rucker at Eleanor Tinsley Park.
Houston Symphony ★ Free: the 1812 Overture and fireworks at Hermann Park. milleroutdoortheatre.com

5

Flow 📺 thru Sept. 18 A fiber exhibit by Korean artist Jae Ko. camh.org

6

Wicked ★ thru Aug. 14 Oz before Dorothy, with music. Tony winner. broadwayatthehobbycenter.com
Butterfly Project 📺 thru 31 Hand-made butterflies commemorate children who died in the Holocaust. hnh.org

7

Matthew Ronay & Hilary Loyd 📺 thru Oct. 1 Two new exhibits. blafferartmuseum.org
Wings of Wonder + thru Aug. 20 A new live bird show. moodygardens.org

8

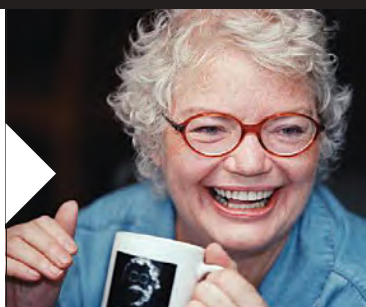
Tamarie for President ★ thru Aug. 6 The only sensible choice. (See above.) matchhouston.com
Zoo in You 📺 thru Sept. 11 Exhibit explores microscopic world that lives in all of us. thehealthmuseum.org

9

Shrek the Musical ★ *thru 31* The ogre sings! mainstreettheater.com

10

Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-A Wit of Molly Ivins and RFK: A Portrait of Robert F. Kennedy** ★ *thru Aug. 14* Main Street Theater alternates these two fab productions for the summer. mainstreettheater.com



12

Comedian Louis C.K. ★ Hilarity ensues. nrgpark.com
Million Dollar Quartet ★ *thru 17* Smash-hit musical. tuts.com
Agatha Christie's Spider's Web ★ *thru Aug. 14* alleytheatre.org

13

Charlotte Potter: Glass Armory 📺 *thru Sept. 3* Solo exhibition investigates the physical manifestation of identity through the intersection of glass and the body's largest organ and protective barrier, the skin. crafthouston.org

14

Walagante ★ Part of Rothko Chapel's monthly free concerts, this Houston-based ensemble uses drums and maracas to play music of the Americas. rothkochapel.org

15

Infinite Pause: Photography and Time 📺 *thru Sep. 5* Nearly 50 works that offer a snapshot of time's relationship with photography. mfah.org

16

A Wolverine Walks into a Bar ★ New play by Jaston Williams. (See page 51.) thegrand.com
Twenty Five: A Conclusion 📺 Exhibit celebrates Clint Willour's retirement. galvestonartscenter.org

17

Crosstown Traffic 📺 *thru Aug. 28* A summer exhibit seen through the glass wall at the Rice Gallery. ricegallery.org



19

Children's Hilltop Festival *thru 22* ★ Four wonderful family plays presented at Miller Outdoor Theatre. milleroutdoortheatre.com

20

High Society: The Portraits of Franz X. Winterhalter 📺 *thru Aug. 14* An exhibition of 45 paintings by the renowned portraitist of 19th-century European aristocracy. mfah.org

21

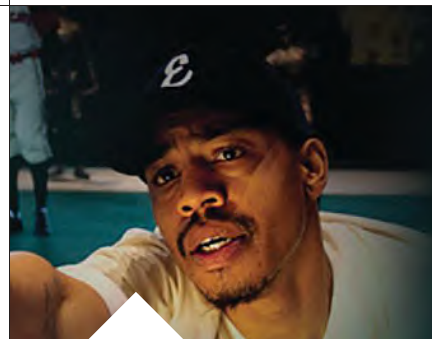
Put Me Down Gently: A Cooler Place and I'm Afraid I Can't Do That 📺 *thru Aug. 6* Works by Sheila Pepe and Sondra Perry. diverseworks.org

22

Princess Ida ★ *thru 31* A comic opera. gilbertandsullivan.org
Pitch Perfect ★ Monthly outdoor movie. greenstreetdowntown.com
Michelle Moran + Hear all about her new book. murderbooks.com

23

Distant Worlds ★ Concert features music from Final Fantasy franchise. houstonssymphony.org
Vicki Lawrence: A Two-Woman Show ★ Lawrence as herself and her Mama character! thegrand.com



25

This Side of the Rainbow + *thru 28* An LGBTQI experience for teens. thissideoftherainbowteens@gmail.com

26

Malala Yousafzai: The Girl Who Was Shot by the Taliban + Come hear the youngest Nobel Peace Prize recipient in history speak live. ticketmaster.com

27

On this day in 1967, Queen Elizabeth II decriminalized homosexuality.

28

Satchel Paige and the Kansas City Swing ★ *thru 31* A jazzy play about the lives of players in baseball's Negro League in the 1940s. ensemblehouston.com

29

Houston Shakespeare Festival ★ *thru Aug. 7* This year it's *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Henry Vin* in the park. milleroutdoortheatre.com

30

Kusama: At the End of the Universe 📺 *thru Sept. 18* Museum of Fine Arts Houston presents this exhibit of the work of contemporary artist Yayoi Kusama. The exhibit began in June. mfah.com



Save the Date

Side by Side ★ *Aug. 6* Jazz artists Dave Koz (who is openly gay) and David Sandborn perform at the Brown Theater. davekoz.com

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Calendar of Events

continued from page 23

Wicked

July 6–Aug. 14

6–Aug. 14

Oz before Dorothy, with music. Don't miss this Tony Award-winner, back by popular demand! So, so much happened before the *Wizard of Oz*: two girls meet, one—born with emerald-green skin—is smart, fiery, and misunderstood, while the other is beautiful, ambitious, and very popular. How these two grow to become the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda the Good Witch makes for what *USA Today* calls “the most complete—and completely satisfying—new musical in a long time.” broadwayatthehobbycenter.com

Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-A** Wit of Molly Ivins and RFK: A Portrait of Robert F. Kennedy

July 10–Aug. 4

10–Aug. 4

Main Street Theater alternates these two fabulous productions for summer entertainment. Sara Gaston portrays the legendary Texas wit in this play celebrating Ivins' courage and tenacity, while Joel Sandel plays the title role of RFK in a play that focuses on the last four years of the doomed Kennedy's life. Both plays are part of Main Street Theater's 40th-anniversary season. mainstreettheater.com

Comedian Louis C.K.

July 12

12

This American talent does it all: stand-up, writing, directing, and acting. You've seen him in the semi-autobiographical *Louie* on FX, and you're about to see (hear) him in the highly hyped *Secret Life of Pets* coming out this month. (He's the voice of the Jack Russell Terrier.) He's a very funny man whose stand-up reflects his beliefs, spouting his defense of same-sex marriage and his negative view of capitalism. In 2001 he recorded a performance here titled *Live in Houston* that was a riot. How good is he? He's been nominated for 30 Emmy nominations for his comedy writing and shows. Just go. nrgpark.com



Mala Yousafzai

July 26

26

Sick of the hateful news and fear-mongering politics? Come hear the youngest Nobel Peace Prize recipient in history speak live. Malala Yousafzai is one of the most inspirational young women alive, having survived a shot to the head by a Taliban terrorist who tried to silence her views on educating women in Afghanistan. She is a gentle advocate for freedom, education, and love. Her movie *He Named Me Malala* is an international success, and her live speaking engagements are sold out around the globe. She is a true inspiration in scary times. ticketmaster.com



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America's Epidemic

Not one more.

I'm the humor columnist. I try to be funny. My deadline is the 15th of each month for the following month, meaning my deadline for this month was three days after the Orlando massacre.

I can't be funny.

My heart is not simply broken, it is shattered. I, better than most, understand what those left behind are feeling. I lost my damn-near-perfect 26-year-old adult child to cancer. My son died in my arms 15 years ago, and I cry a little every day because I miss him more than I ever thought possible. I never got over having him, and I will never get over losing him.

After my son died, many people had trouble making eye contact with me. I have come to understand that they feared what they would see in my eyes: a wound that never heals. The depths of a joyless soul. Hell. They feared they would see hell in my eyes.

Yet even with my personal experience, I cannot in my worst nightmares come close to imagining living with the horror that your child died alone, afraid, and in pain while texting you for help.

Forgive me, my beloveds, but I do not want to pray one more time that this never happens again, or try to celebrate love and light a candle. I want to scream, and scream, and scream, and . . .

This must stop. It is an epidemic.

There is one constant in the slaughter of elementary-school children in Newtown, the movie theater showing *Batman* in Aurora, the college campus in Oregon, and the county health workers in San Bernardino. That constant is a military weapon named the AR-15. The murderers did not share the same religion or the same motive.

The AR-15 has one use: war. The one thing those murderers had in common was that they were able to legally buy a weapon of war and declare war on the rest of us.

A gun is at war with us.

The NRA calls the AR-15 "America's Rifle."

I need to take a minute to scream.

I believe—even without conclusive evidence at press time—that the people at Pulse were

Who is the bad guy? The shooter or the man who stands and applauds the shooter?

targeted because they are gay.

When Texas Lt. Governor Dan Patrick tweeted the morning after the slaughter at Pulse, he obviously thought gays had been targeted, too. I know he did, because he tweeted a verse from the Bible—"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

Patrick later claimed he had sent out a pre-scheduled regular Sunday-morning tweet. That is difficult for me to believe, because all of his other regular Sunday-morning tweets have a large comment saying, "Have a blessed Sunday!" This one did not.

And why should we expect a tiger to change his stripes just because it would be horrifically cruel to act like a tiger? Dan Patrick has made a career railing against LGBT Texans. He is the crowned prince of the transgender bathroom crusade.

I am a woman of faith. I am not perfect, like the Super-Deluxe Brand-New-and-Improved Christians. I sin and fall short of the glory of God daily, sometimes hourly. I will freely admit that I have backsliding blisters on my butt. Dan Patrick shames my faith.

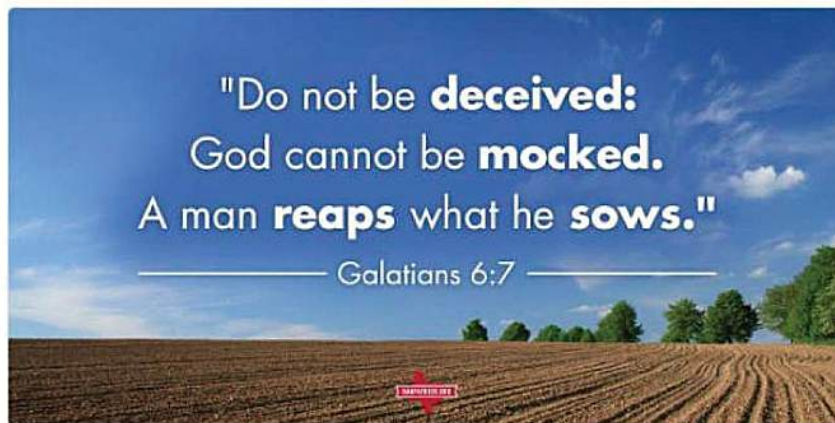
There were gay people during Jesus' time.



Dan Patrick
@DanPatrick



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RETWEETS
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LIKES
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7:00 AM - 12 Jun 2016

Gay isn't some new fad we created just to piss off teevee evangelists. Yet, Jesus had nothing to say about gays. He did, however, have a whole lot to say about judgmental parasites.

You tell me: who is the bad guy? The shooter or the man who stands and applauds the shooter?

I have a Bible verse of my own for Dan Patrick: Proverbs 17:5. ". . . he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished."

I know I can go back to writing funny again, but not today. By the way, his name is Chip. My son's name is Chip. He died 15 years ago, and I still say his name out loud every day.

Two final things:

1. Do not let the National Rifle Association buy your congressman or woman with 30 pieces of silver covered in the blood of the Orlando victims. Do not stand for it.

2. Listen up: after what happened in Orlando, I never want to hear another word about transgender people being the big danger in bathrooms. Not another damn word.

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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Climbing Mount Everest

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Climbing Mount Everest represents the absolute pinnacle for many people. Getting to the peak of the world's highest mountain is an extremely enviable feat—and one that many will even risk their very lives for. But did you know that most of the people who die trying to climb Mount Everest actually don't do so on the way up? They die on the way down.

An analogy can be made about the way we plan for our retirement, as opposed to what happens after we get there. For example, we are constantly taught the strategies for saving and investing “for the future.” Many of us put funds into an employer-sponsored retirement plan. And some might even work with a personal financial advisor, trying to move toward that ideal “number” that will get us to our goal—the “summit.”

But then what?

Unfortunately, what many people don't often plan for are the pitfalls that can happen on the way down. Dangers such as costly health issues, bear markets, and changes in the tax or Social Security laws. And many of us are even more unprepared to turn those savings that we've accumulated into a lasting stream of income that will support us for the remainder of our lives.

Strategies for Getting Down the Other Side of the Mountain

Perhaps you have saved and invested very successfully all of your life. But on the day that you retire, all of that changes. This is because on that day, you will need to start relying on those savings for your ongoing income stream.

Because people are living so much longer today, income in retirement needs to last much longer than it did several decades ago. Your money will not only need to be stretched out for an indefinite number of years, but it will also need to keep up with rising inflation so that you can continue to purchase goods and services in the future.

You will also need to ensure that you are



prepared for any pitfalls that could pop up along the way. Just like those who are climbing back down a snow-covered mountain, you never know what to expect. For example, Boomer retirees can encounter any number of issues that can cause a shift in retirement spending—or worse, a drain on assets saved—if not properly prepared for.

One of the most costly issues is healthcare—whether it's your own, your spouse's, or that of a loved one. Unfortunately, many people often find out too late that Medicare only covers a bare minimum when it comes to long-term care costs. With regard to basic hospitalization and doctor visits, Medicare can require high out-of-pocket co-payments and deductibles.

If you become ill, or if you end up becoming a care provider for a loved one who becomes ill, you could find that your spending will increase and cause you to deplete your portfolio faster than you had originally intended.

The same could hold true if an adult child falls on hard financial times and needs to move back home. Expenses could rise, causing a shift in withdrawal rates. Depending on the situation, you could even find yourself having to go back to work on a part- or full-time basis in order to make up for the shortfall.

If you have all—or even some—of your portfolio invested in the stock market, there will still likely be volatility after you've retired. But unlike during your working years, a bear market can have a drastically different effect on your portfolio when you are taking withdrawals. A market decline in any given year could cause

your portfolio to run out of money much earlier than initially anticipated.

For example, during our “accumulation” years when we are saving, we are taught to focus on average returns. While these are important, as you get closer to retirement, even just one bad year can have a significant effect on the amount that you will be able to draw

from for your stream of retirement income.

Because of that, it's important to consider moving more of your overall assets into lower-risk vehicles. That way, you will potentially be better able to generate the income you will need.

You'll need to anticipate changes in various laws as you work your way through retirement. One law that recently affected retirees decreased their benefit payout for some Social Security recipients. For example, married couples used to take advantage of Social Security's delayed-retirement credits simultaneously, allowing one spouse to let his or her credit build up while at the same time receiving the other spouse's benefits. Under a new law that was passed in November 2015, this strategy is no longer allowed.

What If You Haven't Saved Enough?

In some cases, an investor may look up at the summit of the retirement mountain and discover that they just haven't saved enough to maintain the lifestyle that they had envisioned. If this is you, you're not alone. We Americans aren't good savers. According to a U.S. Government Accountability Office analysis of households with members who are age 55 or over, almost 29 percent have no retirement savings or traditional pension plans. In other instances, we may have saved enough, but we overspend.

In either of these cases, you will need to take a really hard look at spending and determine what is—and what isn't—necessary. You may also need to look at other strategies, too, →

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continued from page 28

such as delaying your anticipated retirement date, delaying receipt of your Social Security benefits, or possibly working part-time during at least part of your retirement years.

Depending on your particular situation, diversifying your income stream can also be beneficial. For example, some investors find that rental income provides a good source of incoming cash flow in retirement.

Creating an Efficient Income Stream

Although many things have changed throughout the years in terms of the way we receive retirement income, the good news is that there are things you can do to set up and control your own personal plan now. Many of these things even come with tax advantages.

One important item to keep in mind is to consider strategies now that will be tax-efficient later. For example, Roth IRAs, Roth 401(k)s, and other Roth IRA alternatives can provide you with tax-free income in the future.

With a Traditional IRA and 401(k), because your contributions are typically made with pre-tax income and the growth is tax-deferred, your withdrawals will come out as taxable income—which can make a big difference in your living expenses in retirement. So having some income sources that are tax-free can really make a difference in your net retirement income.

Working with an advisor who is knowledgeable on tax-efficient retirement strategies can help you to set up a future income plan. Having a good, solid plan can also help you shield your retirement nest-egg from potential dangers such as disability, long-term care, or critical-illness expenses that can quickly deplete your long-term savings.

The Bottom Line on Climbing Your Personal Mount Everest

Just like climbing a snow-covered mountain, you need to be well-prepared for retirement. This not only means accumulating assets, but also planning for any pitfalls that could jeopardize the income stream you will need for the rest of your life.

Having an advisor who is well-versed in all stages of retirement planning can be valuable. And working with a professional who is focused on the LGBT community is also key, as they will be more in tune with issues that can affect your specific planning needs.

Personal finance-related questions may be emailed to grace.yung@lpl.com.

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 and was recognized as a "Five-Star Wealth Manager" in the 2014 September issue of Texas Monthly.

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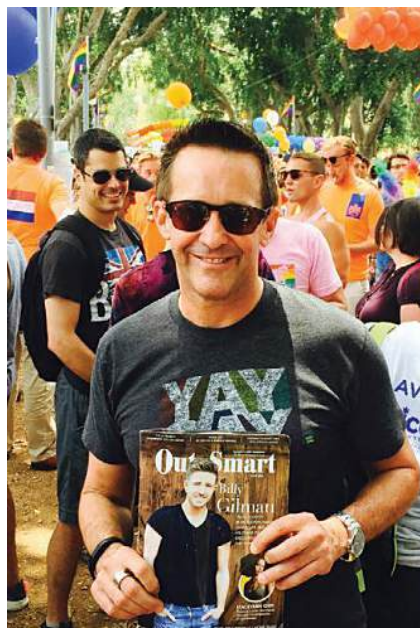
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FOR YOUR CALENDAR

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



OutSmart's 20th Annual Gayest & Greatest Readers' Choice Awards

Two rounds of voting this year. Nominate your favorites July 1-10 then come back and vote for your favorite nominee to win July 11 to August 18. Visit OutSmartMagazine.com to vote.

July 17: Mint Julep 2016 presents "The Best Little Drag Show In Texas" benefitting Legacy's HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs. INFO: legacycommunityhealth.org/mintjulep

July 22-24 & 29-31: The Gilbert & Sullivan Society presents Princess DA. INFO: gilbertandsullivan.org

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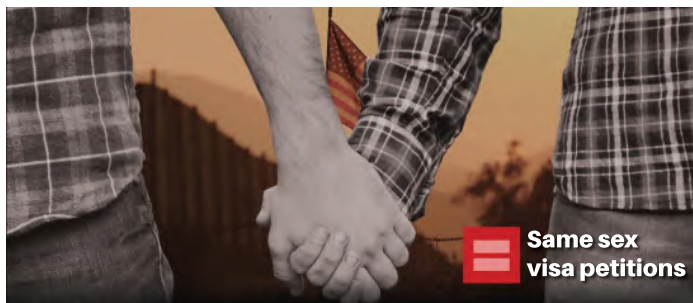
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The Liberal Redneck

Comedian Trae Crowder gets serious.

By **Blase DiStefano**

Photos by Jason Grindle

A friend showed me a viral YouTube video of a young, nice-looking redneck male going off on other rednecks for freaking out about the “trans in bathrooms” issue. I was confused at first because this man—Trae Crowder—was obviously very knowledgeable, but *what* he was saying seemed diametrically opposed to the *way* he said it. How could that voice be coming from such an intelligent man?

If you haven’t heard of Trae Crowder, you should do yourself a favor and go online to search “trae crowder youtube,” then watch any number of videos (averaging maybe two minutes each). The aforementioned “transgender bathrooms” video is priceless: “Child molesters are not gonna prey on a kid in broad daylight, in public—especially not with their mouth-breathing troglodyte daddy 12 feet outside the door just *dyin’* to punch something different. It don’t make no sense.” There are two reasons you may not have found that very humorous: one, it makes sense, so it’s just real, not necessarily funny; and two, you’re reading it, not *hearing* it. This ally to the LGBT community has succeeded in creating a character who says the opposite of what you would expect a redneck to spout.

I spoke on the phone with Trae Crowder, the real person behind the Liberal Redneck, about growing up poor, a gay uncle, and changing attitudes in Southern cities. It was not what I was expecting to hear.

Blase DiStefano: I Googled the definition of “redneck” and what I got was “A working-class white person, especially a politically reactionary one from a rural area.” So that sorta sounds like you, although I guess you’re the extreme opposite of what that implies.



It’s as if a liberal married a redneck and had Trae Crowder, who was blessed with the best of both worlds. That he is an ally to the LGBT community is a plus.

Trae Crowder: Typically, it’s in the exact opposite direction. Basically, that’s it in a nutshell.

Where are you living?

I’m in east Tennessee, right outside of Knoxville.

Is that where you were born?

No. Originally, a really small town in Tennessee called Celina. People 40 miles away from Celina have not heard of it—and I’m not joking. No one in Texas will have heard of it. We don’t have any traffic lights there.

That is *small*.

It’s so rural there that the Celina hospital doesn’t do deliveries. So I was actually born in a neighboring town. Dad drove my mom to a hospital in a neighboring town for me to

be born . . . literally just to be born. I was born there, they left the hospital, and they drove back to Celina.

And when were you born?

1986. So I was 30 in April.

What was your childhood like?

I grew up super, super poor. My mom and dad got divorced when I was seven. My mom had issues with drug addiction, so I was mostly raised by my dad, who owned a video store—if you remember what those are. That was alright for a while, but the economy of the whole town went to jig ‘cause the nerve center of the town was a big textile factory that moved to Mexico in the mid ’90s. My dad was a good dad, though—we were just extremely poor in a rural area. →

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THE LIBERAL REDNECK

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Were they liberal?

My mom, I don't know what her political beliefs are. She was not the type to sit around and talk with her friends about foreign policy. *[Both laugh]* My Dad, though, was a very open-minded person. He's pretty redneck, but he's also a super music buff. Loved rock and roll. But also, his only brother, my uncle, is gay, and I imagine that has a lot to do with it. They never really talked about it that way, like, "Yeah, I feel this way because your Uncle Jim is gay," but I'm just saying they were super, super close.

How was he treated?

My grandpa didn't really talk about it openly, but my uncle and his partner were always around. So *[their being gay wasn't]* really weird to me. The only thing, like I said, you didn't really talk about it openly around my grandpa, but other than that he was cool with it.

So how did you even know they were gay, since they didn't talk about it?

My dad told me and my sister when I was about eight or nine. They knew we were gonna start hearing about it from people, so they explained what *[being gay]* was.

So that's pretty much the reason why you defend queers.

Yeah. The thing of it is, I lean left on pretty much everything. I'm not super-hardcore gun control, but I just don't think anybody should just buy a goddamn A-K 47 either. I focus my attention on other things that I think might actually f--king change.

The gun laws aren't likely to change anytime soon.

Exactly. For everything else, though, I'm very left or liberal-leaning. The only thing I'll get passionate about or offended by is the LGBT stuff, because of my uncle. I take it personally when people start talking about gay people being *[an]* abomination or a crime against nature—shit like that.

You grew up knowing what your uncle is like, so you know that's not true.

Exactly. I love my uncle and he's one of the sweetest f--king people on the planet Earth, so when people say that shit about gay people, in my head I hear it as them talking about my uncle. So I'm like, "F--k you, you don't even know my uncle." People are like, "Oh, I don't mean your uncle. Those are just my beliefs." You can't just say shit like that about people, then try to act like you didn't. That's really f--ked up.

If they are making a generalization, they do mean your uncle, because he's gay.

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Exactly.

So your “Liberal Redneck” character is kind of an extension of Trae Crowder.

Very much so. Pretty much the only thing that makes the character different from me as a person is that if I’m just talking to someone else cordially and casually about political things, I’m not going to f--king scream in their face about what I know is wrong. That would be shitty. But my Liberal Redneck character is a lot more aggressive and in your face, and that’s on purpose because that’s how rednecks act about things. That’s the only part that’s not the way I actually am. It’s just an exaggeration.

Assuming that you do some of this stuff in your stand-up, don’t you get heckled?

Honestly, probably not as much as you’d think.

Do people know what they’re coming to see then?

No, no. Here’s the thing. I preface this by saying that I do not pander to crowds, but at the same time, if I’m in a certain type of venue with a certain type of crowd, there will be jokes that I’m like, “I’m clearly not doing that joke tonight. They’re gonna hate it.” But it’s not like I have my regular set and my Larry the Cable Guy set. I also talk about growing up poor and things like that—not super-politically charged, but still very real. I’ll do shit like that, but I won’t do my Bible material.

But I still do a lot of that material in the South, for younger crowds. I’ve found younger crowds are pretty much fine with that kind of left-leaning and political-type stuff, making fun of religion and the Bible, or whatever—even in smaller towns like Cookeville, Tennessee, which is where I went to college. That’s been my experience, anyway.

That sounds logical, because young people are usually more open and they’ve learned so much more than we did.

People are out now, and people might have an experience like mine where they actually know that gay people are not f--king demons or whatever.

Do you have any idea what the Pride parade is like in Knoxville?

It’s definitely not huge, because Knoxville’s not that big of a place. Knoxville, from what I’ve heard, is relatively gay-friendly. I’ve seen articles and lists that had Knoxville on it. In my experience as a comedian, I really think it’s more about cities vs. rural vs. the country, [both] in and out of the South. Knoxville isn’t super-metropolitan, but our mayor is a Hispanic woman who is very gay-friendly.

The cities are not super-redneck or conservative or crazy at all. All these local or state- →



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THE LIBERAL REDNECK

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level politicians that make these crazy-ass laws are usually in [rural] districts that are gerrymandered around.

So what is your take on Trump?

I can't f--king stand him. I don't even have to consider his policies or anything. I mean, I try to be fair, but I think his policies are awful. What I'm saying is that I don't even have to get to his policies to hate Donald Trump. I'm only 30 years old, so in my entire living memory Donald Trump has existed literally just to be made fun of. He has been a national punch line—a laughingstock—my *whole* life. Now all of a sudden everybody's acting like, "That's not true anymore, and he can be the goddamn president of the United States." He has been a clown for 30 years, and now they're like, "No, he's the man for the job," and it just blows my f--king mind.

My mind too, because there is a possibility he could win.

It scares the shit out of me. But I did have to make a little bit of a concession recently: Trump had the largest margin of victory in my home county than anywhere else in the state of Tennessee—and in most places in the entire Southeast. So when that happened I posted something

on Facebook about how just ashamed I was, like "What the f--k, are y'all serious?"

My point was this: some old-money, super-wealthy Yankee from f--king New York knows nothing about our people, what it's like, what our struggles in life are like, and what to do about it.

That was my stance on it, and then I read this article that was in a very legitimate publication. This very liberal-leaning writer said that it's time to stop completely discrediting all these [unemployed rural] people as lunatics because we need to acknowledge something very important. (In that article he actually brought up my home county, because of that textile mill there that went out in the '90s and *decimated* the place—unemployment goes up, drugs get worse, crime goes up, and all that shit is true. My hometown went to shit all because that factory left.)

One of Trump's biggest things is bringing jobs and manufacturing back to America. He harps about that a lot, and people in these places have seen firsthand the effects on their lives. I read that article and I had to concede: "Okay, some of us on the left, myself included, might need to stop brushing this dude off."

So the obvious next question is, "What about Clinton?"

I'm not crazy about Hillary, but I'm pragmatic. I know a lot of millennials who are like, "It's Ber-

nie all the way" to the point where they hate Hillary. I'm not crazy about Hillary, but if it's Hillary versus Donald Trump, I'll take Hillary for 30 years over four years of Donald Trump. I've got some reservations about her as a candidate, but the choice is still very clear.

It didn't occur to me, until I saw your videos, that there might be such a thing as a liberal redneck.

The thing is, I've heard that from a lot of people. I've gotten a lot of hate mail, but I've gotten a whole lot more supportive messages from people. There are some outliers among all different types of people, but the two biggest groups that have reached out to me positively have been LGBT people and other liberal Southerners, who have been like, "Man, I'm a liberal, grew up in the South my whole life, and I really just appreciate you letting people know we're not all f--king crazy redneck hicks down here. I really appreciate you breaking that stereotype."

I don't know how many big Southern cities you've played, but it seems a lot of people would show up because there are a lot of other liberals.

Until this video went viral, *nobody* would show up. [Both laugh] So I don't know the answer to that question, but we're gonna find out.

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OUTSMART's Top Allies of 2016

Thanking our straight siblings for their support of the LGBT community.

By Megan Smith

In simplest terms, allies are friends. They laugh with us in times of joy, and shed tears with us in our darkest hours. And while our straight ally counterparts may not experience our same struggles, they support us unconditionally.

Allies exuberantly embraced us inside the chambers of City Hall after the passage of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance. They officiated at same-sex weddings—some of them 20 years in the making—after the Supreme Court's ruling on marriage equality. And they stood beside

us and mourned the loss of our LGBT brothers and sisters taken from us in Orlando—the prayers of these allies reflecting our own.

To say thank you to our straight friends, OUTSMART reached out to the community for nominations of allies making a particularly strong impact on the Houston LGBT community. Below, our nominees share tips for being a great ally, divulge details on how they first got involved with the LGBT community, and—in honor of this being our Fashion Issue—school us on their personal styles.

☉ Shelby Hansen



"I would describe my style as classically feminine," says Shelby Hansen, noting that her go-to outfit is an A-line dress, blazer, and ballet flats. "My favorite piece is probably the green-lace dress I wore when I met Hillary Clinton. It will always hold a special place in my closet!" Clinton isn't the only equality-minded candidate that Hansen has supported. She first became involved as an ally to the LGBT community when she volunteered on former mayor Annise Parker's 2013 re-election campaign. "I've always been an ally, but it was through Mayor Parker's campaign that I was able to get more involved and meet new people," she explains. "My LGBTQ friends inspire me. The struggles and hurdles the community faces every day have shown me just how far we've come and how much further we still need to go." Since then, she has gotten involved with the Houston Stonewall Young Democrats and has served as the organization's treasurer since March 2015. She also sits on the board of the New Leaders Council Houston, a nonprofit leadership program focused on preparing the

next generation of progressive leaders. Hansen believes that focusing on the safety of LGBTQ people and securing a citywide nondiscrimination policy is particularly crucial at this time, and encourages other straight allies to join the fight. "The easiest way to become an ally is to show up and ask how you can help," she says. "I think it's important to understand that your role as an ally is [to offer] unconditional support in your friends' fight."

☉ Fernando Aramburo

"I'd say I'm pretty traditional in style, but do my best to be well-dressed and well-groomed at all times," says Fernando Aramburo. "My favorite piece in my wardrobe would be my watches—I have several for different moods and different occasions." A Montrose resident for over 16 years, Aramburo has always made an effort to be connected to his community—including his LGBTQ friends. Aramburo served as a board member for Bering Omega Community Services for six years (until he reached his term limit) and helped spearhead the group's young professionals board, which he says led to "many rewarding and wonderful relationships with a greatly diverse group of people." Before having twins, Aramburo and his wife, Sarah,



also held infamous charity Halloween parties that were regularly attended by over 500 guests. "It was one of our favorites," he says. The couple's service to the community won them the title of Ally Grand Marshals for the 2014 Houston LGBT Pride Celebration. Now, Aramburo channels his energy into celebrating the diversity of Houston's art scene as a board member for the Art Colony Association, the group that hosts the Bayou City Arts Festival. "So many of the organizations and charities that support the community are starving for volunteers, and so greatly appreciate anyone who is willing to donate time to help their cause," he says. "There are so many opportunities to become involved, and one of the most powerful and easiest ways is to ask a friend in the LGBTQ community what they do to be supportive—and then join them!"

☉ Januari Leo

"You will not find me on an airplane in sweats!" laughs Januari Leo. "My daughter loves to point out that even if I'm going to the grocery store, I'm put together! For me, accessories are everything. I have a ton of jewelry that I've collected or have been given from all over the world. It doesn't have to be expensive—I prefer my pieces to be meaningful and somewhat sentimental." Leo, who was named Ally Grand Marshal of the 2013 Houston LGBT Pride Celebration, first got involved with the LGBT community in 1994 as a volunteer working with homeless youth in Austin. "A big component of that was HIV/AIDS education and prevention," she explains. "I met people who are still some of my best friends today. There's no reason they shouldn't be afforded →

OUTSMART'S TOP ALLIES OF 2016

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the same rights that I have as a cisgender, heterosexual woman." Leo is currently a member



of the Houston GLBT Political Caucus and, for the past five years, has worked in policy at Legacy Community Health. "One of the things I'm most proud

of was the role I played in implementing the inclusion of all-gender restrooms in our Montrose clinic," Leo says. "It's been about a year now, and I love when I see people taking pictures of the bathrooms, or get feedback on how appreciative they are." Not only was Leo also instrumental in the fight for the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, she is now working to strengthen the Fort Bend ISD nondiscrimination policy to include sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. Leo credits much of her motivation to her kids, ages 12 and 14. "They've grown up in the LGBT community and have become advocates themselves,"

Leo explains. "My daughter had her first friend come out to her in the sixth grade. They have multiple friends who are either gender nonconforming or transitioning. They were founding members of the Dulles Middle School Gay/Straight Alliance. And, yes, this is in the suburbs! I'm so proud of them, and feel that it is critical that we raise the next generation to continue the fight, no matter what that looks like."

🕒 **Jacqueline Martin**

"Every now and then I try to go for sexy, and it just doesn't work," laughs Jacqueline Martin, principal at JS Martin Associates, LP. "I have a work wardrobe that's very buttoned-up—very traditional jackets and suits. Casually, I'm a blue jeans and oversized sweater-type person. Then I have gala wear as well. But all of them—all of them—have to be comfortable." Martin says she can't remember a time she wasn't involved with the LGBT community. "I grew up in Austin," she explains. "And being a black woman in Texas, you were catching [discrimination] in every way. So it was very clear in my household that we didn't feel that we were second-class citizens, so we didn't treat anybody else like they were second-class citizens. I've known gay people all my life. I've been around everybody all my life. It's just how I was raised." She's supported and donated time to Equality Texas, the Victory Fund,



and the former Montrose Clinic (now Legacy Community Health), just to name a few. As a member of the corporate world, she also applauds companies that decide to form diversity groups that are inclusive of allies. "We've made great strides for the LGB community," Martin says. "But now, we've got to educate people on the trans community. Because once you meet a trans person, it's really hard to say, 'Oh, I don't like those people.' I think getting the message out that they're just people too is the big need right now."

🕒 **Rev. Jimmy Grace**

"I am actually a pretty lousy dresser—my wife will attest to that!" laughs Rev. Jimmy Grace, rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in the Heights. "When I am not at work, it is pretty much always T-shirts, shorts, and flip-flops."

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I have a Metallica T-shirt from 1988 that still fits!" Although Grace has only been with St. Andrew's for the past two years, he has always sought out parishes that were open and affirming to the LGBTQ community. "I have been involved with the LGBTQ community ever since I [became] aware that several members of my family identified themselves as part of this community," he says. "There are no second-class citizens for Jesus—all are welcome and included." Grace notes that while there are so many important issues currently facing the LGBTQ community, he is especially focused on alleviating queer youth homelessness. "Forty percent of homeless youth identify



Grace

as LGBT," he says. "This experience leaves these young people particularly vulnerable to mental and physical health issues, and leads to unfair criminalization of queer and trans youth. I think the best way for others to become allies to the LGBTQ community is to engage the community and get to know people who identify as LGBTQ. We have so much more in common than we have things

that distinguish us from each other."

☉ Mayor Pro-tem Ellen Cohen

"I tend towards classic pieces in bold colors," says Mayor Pro-tem Ellen Cohen. "My favorite item in my wardrobe is a necklace I received when I stepped down after nearly 20 years as CEO of the Houston Area Women's Center. It's a daily reminder to never stop fighting to give a voice to those our society tries to silence." Not only has Cohen been a beacon of hope for survivors of sexual and domestic violence, she's been a warrior for the LGBT community for decades. "The first time the movement for LGBTQ rights touched my life personally was when my cousin became one of the very first casualties of the AIDS epidemic in New York City," Cohen explains. "At the time, I served as executive director of the Houston branch of the American Jewish Committee [AJC]. The issue of LGBTQ rights was finally in the national spotlight, and at the AJC we began to advocate for same-sex partner benefits and other equality measures. During my time as the head of major nonprofit organizations and as a Texas state representative, I have been able to advocate for legislation addressing healthcare rights for domestic partners, bullying in Texas schools, and employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. As the Council member for Houston's District C, I was honored to serve as the Council whip

on the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance [HERO]. While HERO was unfortunately overturned after a deceitful misinformation campaign in 2015, I know these advocacy groups, and I will stand together and continue the fight against discrimination in our city." She currently partners with the Houston GLBT Political Caucus and the Houston Stonewall Young Democrats (among other progressive organizations) to ensure equality for all Houstonians. On how to be a better ally, Cohen says, "A small but important way to support the LGBTQ community is to stand up and say something when you hear others using slurs or other demeaning language in daily conversations. Allowing hate speech to seem normal can create a culture where hate crimes seem permissible. Of course, the very most important thing you can do as an ally is to vote!"

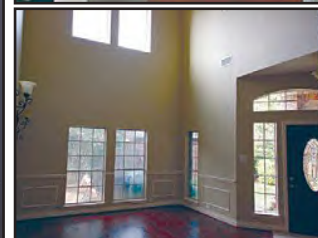


Cohen

☉ Jenni and Scott Tranweaver

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OUTSMART'S TOP ALLIES OF 2016

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closet to support her shopping habit," laughs Scott Tranweaver in regards to his wife's fashion sense. "Scott's chill style is a mix of surfing culture and yoga lifestyle," she replies. The vibrant couple may turn out some of the best noodles in town as the owners of Houston-favorite Jenni's Noodle House, but they also show unwavering support to their



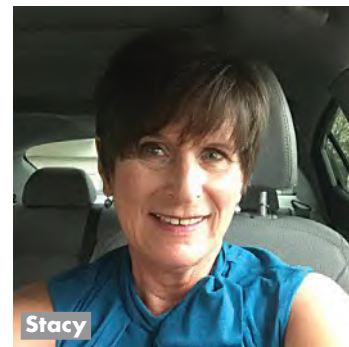
LGBT friends, family, and customers. "Without the fabulous support of the LGBT community when we first opened Jenni's Noodle House in 2002, our business may not have survived," they explain. "We believe in equality and try to make that a part of our business and hiring practices, our brand, and who we

are every day." The Tranweavers are longtime supporters of the Houston Rights Campaign, came out as local business allies during the fight for the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, and have sponsored various LGBT softball, football, and volleyball team events. Plus, in previous years, the restaurateurs' colorful and elaborate showing in the Houston LGBT Pride Celebration was awarded Best Costume and Best Float. "The easiest thing to do is to speak up for equality in your daily life every chance you get—walk the talk," the Tranweavers say. "An ally is one who will support, defend, and accept. So be an ally today to a child, friend, or stranger in need."

☉ Sandy Stacy

"I love long flowing dresses to lounge around in," says Sandy Stacy. "My favorite happens to be the one I'm wearing right now!" After moving to Houston in 1988, Stacy began working with Dr. Gordon Crofoot and was introduced to the LGBTQ community—as well as the HIV-positive community—for the first time. "While working for his medical group, I realized I wanted to help with more than scheduling appointments," Stacy says. "So, at 40 years old, I started school to become a registered nurse. When I graduated in 1994, I headed right to Montrose, first to volunteer at what was then the Montrose Clinic on Richmond, and then to look for work." The first job offer she received

was a staff nursing position at the Omega House AIDS hospice, which she promptly accepted. Stacy has now been with that care facility for 21 years and counting. "I am inspired daily by the love and giving nature of this community, and proud to be considered a part of it. Having attended and hosted many fundraisers for the different agencies and programs that I represented or supported, I once had a co-worker tell me 'You are a better gay guy than I am,'" she laughs. Outside of Omega House, Stacy served as president of Pet Patrol from 2013 until 2015, helping assist limited-income elderly and those affected by chronic or life-threatening illnesses to care for their beloved pet companions. She currently serves as a board member of Lazarus House, is an advisory member for the Texas Repository for AIDS, and is a member of both the Thomas Street Advisory Board and the Hospice Palliative Nursing Association. "I think aging is one of my greatest concerns [for the LGBT community]," Stacy says. "No one should have to go back into the





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closet to receive the care they need in the last years of their life."

☉ Michael Sibouyeh

"What can I say about my style? I got style!" laughs Michael Sibouyeh. "I'm not a fancy guy—my favorite clothes are T-shirts and jeans." Owner of Riva's Italian Restaurant, Sibouyeh's food is what's always in fashion. But this culinary connoisseur doesn't just make a mean meat sauce—he's been a longtime friend to the LGBT community. Through his work with Riva's, Sibouyeh has partnered with Stone Soup, helping to provide food assistance to HIV-positive individuals and their

families, as well as Bering Omega Community Services. "Since we first opened our doors, I've gotten to meet so many wonderful people—including our staff—who were involved in supporting the community,"

Sibouyeh says. "They were such great and positive role models and inspired us to get involved in helping those who are not as fortunate. One of the most important issues [out there]

is equal rights and equal opportunity for everyone, regardless of gender, race, or religion," he adds. "The easiest way to be an ally to the community is to offer acceptance, to be open-minded, and to get involved in local events."

☉ Angela Pisecco

"I know nothing about high-end fashion," says Angela Pisecco. "But I love dresses and fine antique jewelry." Pisecco explains that growing up, her mom and sisters had gay friends who were treated like family. "We also lost many of them in the '80s to AIDS and suicide," she says. In 1995, she was invited by a friend to see The Names Project AIDS Quilt exhibited in Dallas. "All of the beauty and love in those quilts spread across what looked like miles," she describes. "As far as you could see, quilts telling the story of the men who had died. I could not stop crying that Sunday afternoon, and I was forever changed that day because of the impact that exhibit had on me!" As someone who is sober and involved in the recovery world, Pisecco found community and support with LGBT folks at the Lambda Center when she moved to Houston. "Through my 18 years of attending meetings at Lambda, I have seen countless lives transformed," she says. "I know many people who came to us, ready to die from their addictions, who are now able to make choices about who they are and who they need to be. To see people transform from trying to



kill themselves to living life to its fullest is an honor." Even when her chosen Catholic faith turned her away for her support of marriage equality, Pisecco did not abandon her LGBT friends. Instead, she found an affirming Episcopal church to join. And she didn't stay silent when Chick-fil-A came out against marriage equality, either. "I watched the nation come out in droves to show their support against gay marriage, and I was furious," she says. "I posted on my Facebook, 'Y'all can do what you want with your money as you wrap the lines around Chic-fil-A, but I am becoming an HRC Federal Club Member today!' And I did." That year, she started volunteering with Harris County Democrats, the Human Rights Campaign, and the Council on Recovery. She attended the HRC Lobby Day in Washington DC in 2014, where she met with congressional →



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OUTSMART'S TOP ALLIES OF 2016

continued from previous page

representatives and their staffers about why they should support the current LGBT bills that were up for a vote. She also served as the HRC Houston Steering Committee co-chair until September 2015 and on the HRC board of governors until March 2016. Pisecco was a strong advocate for the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, has stood in solidarity with the transgender community for the past three years at the Houston Transgender Day of Remembrance, and participated in a "How to Be a Trans Ally" panel discussion with Houston trans activist Lou Weaver. "I do not worry about getting fired from a job that I love, for being straight," she says. "I do not worry about my safety when I go to the bathroom or sit in a restaurant, for being straight. I do not worry if my landlord will evict me for being straight. I do not worry about whether I can or cannot get proper medical care because I am straight. I have incredible LGBT friends in my life today. These are people who I love with all my heart and soul. So if the protections that I can count on as a straight person are not [there] for my LGBT family, then I think it's my job to speak out, loud and proud, until they are."



McWhorters

⊕ Taft and Dana McWhorter

"Our personal style is 'sexy, chic, and fun,'" says ally couple Taft and Dana McWhorter. For the McWhorters, being allies to the LGBT community is not just important, it's personal. The couple's 19-year-old son, Taylor, is gay. "We began having conversations with him on this subject when he was 11 years old," they say. "Since then, we have heard many horror stories of how parents can be judgmental. We wanted to be parents that love our children for who they are. So we began getting involved in the community, and we have loved every minute of it." Over the last seven years, the couple has supported Out for Education, the Human Rights Campaign, Hatch Youth, the Diana Foundation, and Bering Omega Community Services. "We believe that when someone is able to truly understand someone else's feelings, they are able to have a mature conversation about their needs," the McWhorters say. "By having empathy for the needs of others, we can stop arguing and put our energy into finding solutions. Find something that appeals to you and go get involved!" ■



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QFest Celebrates 20 Years of Queer Film

Houston's LGBTQ Film Festival returns July 21–25.

By Megan Smith

Talk about a party 20 years in the making! From July 21 to July 25, QFest will be marking their 20-year anniversary as Houston's premiere LGBTQ film festival. With over 25 film screenings (including one international premiere and three U.S. premieres) hosted by nine of Houston's finest cultural and arts venues, this year's lineup isn't one to miss.

The excitement builds starting on July 20 with the official QFest launch party at DiverseWorks, the festival's official hangout headquarters. Attendees are invited to mix and mingle with other festivalgoers while enjoying the art space's current exhibit by out lesbian artist Sheila Pepe.

The festival's lineup has been carefully curated to reflect the current climate facing the city's LGBTQ community, with respect to both the tragedy in Orlando and the defeat of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance. "Houston has become the epicenter of every campaign that centers around transphobia," says Kristian Salinas, QFest's executive director. "The anti-trans movement has really galvanized on the bathroom issue because [the entire nation] saw it succeed here. That's what's really motivating some of the programs this year—responding to that in an artistic and provocative way. To me, this reflects why this festival is



The Best of Queer Cinema

This year's QFest features over 25 film screenings hosted by nine venues. Both *AWOL* (top) and *Paris 05:59* will be screened at Rice Media Center.

still needed, why it's still relevant, and why it's deserving of support."

The festival's film tribute to 83-year-old Italian lesbian filmmaker Liliana Cavani exemplifies this response. Focusing on the

physical, emotional, and psychological aftermath of war, the three Cavani films being screened—*The Night Porter*, *The Skin*, and *The Year of the Cannibals*—explore the idea that even though traumatic events may be →

QFEST CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

continued from previous page

distant memories, the damage to the psyche remains. "This is someone who has always been ahead of her time," Salinas says of Cavani. "I knew it was time to do this tribute. We've been in the longest war in our history, and people are forgetting that. These films deal with that atrocity of what war is."

Continuing with this theme is *Next to Me*, from Serbian director Stevan Filipović. The film, which is having its international premiere at QFest, follows the story of Olja, a history teacher at a Belgrade high school. After her husband's controversial art piece causes outrage among Serbian nationalists, Olja is attacked by a group of masked hoodlums at her home. The next day, after she catches some of her students watching a cell-phone video of her attack, she realizes that they are the ones responsible. As we watch Olja's response unfold, the film lays out a critique of the dangers of mob mentality on youth. "This is a director who really has a grasp for current events, and relating them to young people," Salinas says. "It speaks to a much broader audience than a typical gay film."

Another standout is *Kiki*, a film by Sara Jordenö and Twiggy Pucci Garçon



📺 *Kiki*



📺 *Don't Call Me Son*

that takes an inside look into New York City's Kiki community, an offshoot of the city's colorful drag-ball scene. The Kiki scene not only includes some of the fiercest voguing competitions, but it also provides LGBTQ youth of color with a space and chosen family to call their own. "Many have called this the spiritual successor to *Paris Is Burning*," Salinas says.

QFest's lineup sports an impressive female-centric selection as well, with 11 of the festival's features directed by women. Lesbian highlights include *AWOL*—a short film turned full-length feature by director Deb Shoval—and *The First Girl I Loved*, an honest portrayal of self-discovery, first love, and knowing when to walk away. "I'm so excited for this year's lesbian content," Salinas says. "*The First Girl I Loved* is excellent—absolutely excellent."

"This year's festival is truly one of the best," he adds, noting that most selections won't be accessible on Netflix or other online platforms. "You're going to see films that you can't see anywhere else. I think that's very exciting—and allows for more discovery."

What: QFest 2016

When: July 21–25

Details/Tickets: q-fest.com



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SEPT.
13–25

NATIONAL
TOUR

An American in Paris
A New Musical

MUSIC BY: GEORGE GERSHWIN LYRICS BY: IRA GERSHWIN BOOK BY: CRAIG LUCAS

FEB. 21
–
MAR. 5

REGIONAL
PRODUCTION

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY: FRANK LOESSER BOOK BY: ABE BURROWS, JACK WEINSTOCK AND WILLIE GILBERT

OCT. 25
–
NOV. 6

REGIONAL
PRODUCTION

DREAMGIRLS

MUSIC BY: HENRY KRIEGER LYRICS AND BOOK BY: TOM EYEN

APR.
4–16

REGIONAL
PRODUCTION

Into the Woods

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY: STEPHEN SONDHEIM BOOK BY: JAMES LAPINE

DEC.
6–18

NATIONAL
TOUR

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QFest 2016

Schedule of Events

Wednesday, July 20

7 p.m. QFest Launch Party
• **DiverseWorks**
FREE

Thursday, July 21

7 p.m. *Other People*
OPENING NIGHT
• **MFAH**
\$10

Friday, July 22

7 p.m. *The Skin*
LILIANA CAVANI TRIBUTE
• **MFAH**
\$10

7:15 p.m. *Spa Night*
AMERICAN CENTERPIECE
• **Asia Society Texas Center**
\$10

7:30 p.m. *The First Girl I Loved*
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

7:45 p.m. *Kiki*
• **Houston Museum of African American Culture**
\$10

9:30 p.m. *Valley of the Dolls*
PATTY DUKE TRIBUTE
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

Saturday, July 23

12:30 p.m. *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*
DAVID BOWIE TRIBUTE
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

1:30 p.m. *Freedom to Marry*
• **Montrose Center**
FREE



Ⓢ Uncle Howard

The First Girl I Loved Ⓢ



3 p.m. *Liebmann*
(U.S. Premiere)
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

3:30 p.m. *Flaming Creatures*
JACK SMITH TRIBUTE
• **Aurora Picture Show**
\$10

5 p.m. *Don't Call Me Son*
(U.S. Premiere)
SPECIAL CENTERPIECE
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

5:30 p.m. *The Night Porter*
LILIANA CAVANI TRIBUTE
• **MFAH**
\$10

7 p.m. *AWOL*
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

7:30 p.m. *Next to Me*
(International Premiere)
INTERNATIONAL CENTERPIECE
• **MFAH**
\$10

8:30 p.m. *Search Engines*
• **Brasil Café**
\$10

9 p.m. *Paris 05:59 (Théo et Hugo dans le même bateau)*
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

Sunday, July 24

1 p.m. *Upstairs Inferno*
• **Resurrection MCC**
FREE

1:30 p.m. *The Cannibals*
LILIANA CAVANI TRIBUTE
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

2 p.m. *Uncle Gloria: One Helluva Ride*
• **Ripcord**
FREE

3 p.m. *Women He's Undressed*
• **MFAH**
\$10

3:30 p.m. *Cancelled Faces*
(U.S. Premiere)
EXPERIMENTAL CENTERPIECE
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

5 p.m. *Uncle Howard*
DOCUMENTARY CENTERPIECE
• **MFAH**
\$10

5:30 p.m. *Girls Lost*
SPECIAL CENTERPIECE
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

7:30 p.m. *Liquid Sky*
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

8:30 p.m. *Lazy Eye*
• **Brasil Café**
\$10

Monday, July 25

7 p.m. *Love Island*
CLOSING NIGHT
• **Rice Media Center**
\$10

*Schedule is subject to change.
For the most current films and times, visit q-fest.com.*

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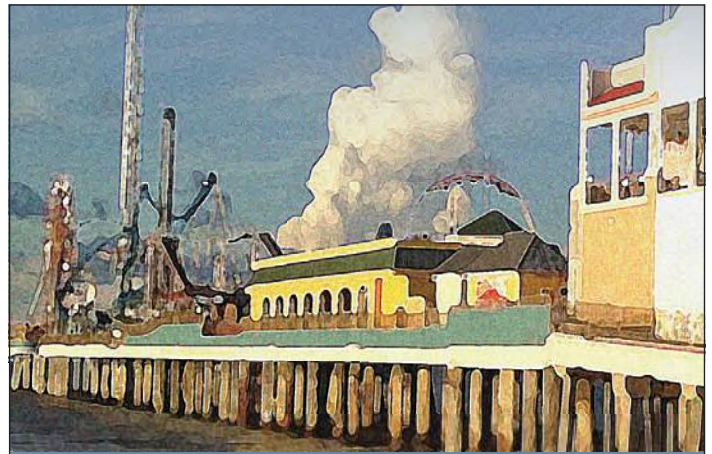
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Thank You, Vicki Lawrence

'Mama' brings her two-woman show to Galveston.

By Donalevan Maines

People ask Vicki Lawrence if her most famous character, Thelma Harper on TV's *Mama's Family*, tweets. Lawrence replies, "Only when she eats Mexican food."

Mama will speak for herself, thank you very much, when *Vicki Lawrence & Mama: A Two-Woman Show* comes to Galveston's Grand 1894 Opera House this month.

(Speaking of thanking Vicki Lawrence, did you hear Maya Rudolph and Tina Fey, on NBC's summer variety show, *Maya and Marty*, discussing female singer/comediennes who paved the way for them? In addition to Carol Burnett, Cher, and Barbara Mandrell and the Mandrell Sisters, Rudolph said, "Thank you, Vicki Lawrence." Fey added, "People don't say, 'Thank you, Vicki Lawrence' enough.")

I spoke with Lawrence by phone last month from her home in California. It was 8 a.m. her time, and she had been traveling, so I wondered how long she's been an early riser.

"Heh," she says. "The dogs are early risers." (She has a

Labrador retriever and a Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen.) "Mama's still in the suitcase."

Well, hell's bells, even in Houston it felt like the crack of dawn.

Lawrence appears as herself in the first half of the "two-woman show," regaling the audience (as she did me) with tales of how she was discovered and catapulted to fame on *The Carol Burnett Show*. "I talk about how I met Carol, got kidnapped by show business, and became a natural redhead," says Lawrence, who

"I talk about how I met Carol [Burnett], got kidnapped by show business, and became a natural redhead,"

also sings her biggest hit, *The Night the Lights Went Out in Georgia*, from 1973.

Lawrence was a senior in high school when Burnett replied to a fan letter from her by going to cheer on Lawrence as she competed in the Miss Fireball of Inglewood (California) pageant for the local firefighter's ball.

A very pregnant Burnett was going "to sneak in and sneak out," but when Lawrence won the contest, the mayor of Inglewood invited her onstage to crown her look-alike winner. "She was outed," says Lawrence. "I still have the picture from the newspaper of the mayor, Carol and her husband, and me getting my little crown."

When Burnett had her baby (daughter number two, Erin Hamilton, a singer who scored a number-one dance hit in 2008 with "The Flame 08"), Lawrence showed up at the

hospital, hoping to get a peek. "The nurses saw me and said, 'You must be her sister, Chrissy!' Nowadays, I would be arrested as a stalker."

When Burnett "got her tummy back," she launched *The Carol Burnett Show*, inviting Lawrence to play the character of her sister, Chrissy, in a recurring sketch ("Carol and Sis") based on Burnett's early adventures with her sister in the Big Apple.

"Carol had a show to run, but Harvey Korman took me aside and took me under his wing," says Lawrence. "He said, 'Forget stage right and stage left, you can't even find the toilet.' In the second season, they gave me a tiny part in a takeoff on *The Newlywed Game*, with Lyle Waggoner as the host. Carol thought it would be a good stepping stone."

By the time two writers presented Burnett with the sketch that would later become Lawrence's own show, *Mama's Family*, it didn't surprise Lawrence that she was cast as Eunice's →



CO STREET STUDIO

Vicki Lawrence and Her 'Mama'

The co-star of *The Carol Burnett Show* has even dabbled in political humor with her 2008 book *Mama for President: Good Lord, Why Not?*



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Dustin Tillman photographed by Bryan Anderson
Venue: Neon Boots Dancehall & Saloon
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THANK YOU, VICKI LAWRENCE

continued from previous page

mother. "I was always playing old ladies," she explains. "If Carol played Shirley Temple in a sketch, I would be the mean old schoolmarm."

How much makeup did it take to transform a 20-something Lawrence into Mama? "Absolutely none," she says, "which is frightening, actually." (No dummy, she married her makeup man, Al Schultz. They have two daughters.)

Of course, Lawrence adds pads to play Mama, explaining that the Burnett show's out costume designer, Bob Mackie, "is such a genius. He is great at making comedy bodies. We are losing this art form. Pretty soon, nobody will be making beanbag tits anymore."

Lawrence won the 1976 Primetime Emmy Award for Individual Performance in a Variety or Music Program for portraying various characters on *The Carol Burnett Show*.

Working with Burnett, Lawrence met the late female impersonator extraordinaire Jim Bailey, who sang live (Burnett also introduced him to millions of us in TV land), but it wasn't until her *Mama's Family* co-star, Dorothy Lyman, showed her fan letters that Lawrence learned what a hit her Thelma Harper character is in gay clubs.

A crowd favorite in the second half of the "two-woman show" is when Lawrence, as Mama, explains her take on gay marriage (but I will save that for Mama to tell). "I call it 'Mama's Logic,'" says Lawrence. "She has opinions. They are twisted and funny."

But as far as mentioning the Pride month attack in Orlando, Lawrence says it's too soon. "From the beginning, I said I want the show to be funny and take people away from everything happening outside," she explains. "I want to make you laugh with silly stuff. What happened in Orlando is still so incredibly depressing."

However, Mama might be tempted to say something about the upcoming presidential election. After all, she made the case for a President Thelma Harper in the 2008 book she co-authored with comedy writer Monty Aidem, *Mama for President: Good Lord, Why Not?*

"That was the first time Hillary ran, and the election season was so comical, but oh my God, this election is ever-changing," says Lawrence. "I don't even remember who the publisher of that book was, but I think we should re-release it, add a few chapters, and call it *I Told You So!*"

What: Vicki Lawrence & Mama:

A Two-Woman Show

When: Saturday, July 23

Where: The Grand 1894 Opera House,
2020 Postoffice, Galveston

Details: thegrand.com

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

Armed with Humor

Jaston Williams has got some amazing bar stories.

By **Donalevan Maines**

Photo by Rick Malone

Jaston Williams plays “an elderly gay man” (he’s what, 45?) who reminisces about the good ol’ days with a lesbian (played by Lauren Lane from TV’s *The Nanny*) in a scene from *A Wolverine Walks into a Bar*, which bows this month at the Grand 1894 Opera House in Galveston.

“They are delightful, old-school gay revolutionaries,” says Williams, describing two of the many colorful, quirky and endearing all-American bar patrons that he and Lane portray in the collection of short scenes that Williams wrote.

The Grand’s stage will be transformed into “a bar-like atmosphere” with a few audience members seated around small tables as part of the set, says Williams. He’s the out, lanky, drawling native Texan who shot to fame when he and heavyset Joe Sears co-wrote (with Ed Howard) and performed the gender-bending ’80s stage hit *Greater Tuna* and its popular sequels.

“Lately, I’ve become a monologist—for my entertainment—really fleshing characters out and letting them speak for themselves,” he explains. “I lived for 13 years in the French Quarter of New Orleans, so I’ve heard some amazing bar stories.”

Wolverine began with a tryout in San Antonio, with Williams performing monologues like conversations in a bar. “Each scene is told through the eyes of a ‘Barfly,’ who is almost like the Stage Manager in [Thornton Wilder’s 1938 classic play] *Our Town*,” he says.

When *Wolverine* was presented last fall in Austin, Lane joined the cast, with Williams divvying up the monologues between them, plus penning two scenes with both of them in it, including the reminiscing older gay man and lesbian.

“We still have the barfly,” says Williams, with Broadway veteran Kevin Bailey portraying that character in Galveston. “He ties each story together with ‘News of the Weird.’”

Williams turned 65 last month on June 28, the 47th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots that



Old-school Gay Revolutionary
Greater Tuna veteran Jaston Williams brings his latest characters to Galveston.

launched the modern gay-rights movement.

“One thing the play deals with is how easy it is to forget what it was like years ago for these pioneers,” explains Williams. “I teach several times a year at Texas Tech University and I always tell students, ‘You did not invent sex. I know you think you did, but you didn’t.’”

However, *Wolverine* isn’t just a history lesson; it’s also a drag show!

“I only get out of gender once,” laughs Williams, who donned drag to play some of *Tuna*’s most memorable characters, including bratty Charlene Bumiller, used-weapons saleswoman Didi Snavelly (“If we can’t kill it, it’s immortal”), Tastee Kreme waitress Helen Bedd, and snooty Vera Carp, vice president of the Smut-Snatchers of the New Order.

His distaff turn in *Wolverine* finds him as a sexually liberated old hipster. “She’s an old, old gal who has had a lot of fun in her life. She’s still good in the sack,” he says. “There’s nothing like old people talking dirty.”

Williams is married to Kevin Mooney, PhD, a musicologist who is a senior lecturer at Texas State University in San Marcos, where Lane is the Head of Acting. “Kevin is amazing,” says Williams. “He is a wonderful, gentle, loving, calming individual—everything I never looked for.”

Eight years ago, the couple moved to Lockhart, about 30 miles south of Austin, with their

son, Song, who is now 20.

“Kevin said, ‘This is going to be wonderful,’” recalls Williams. “I said, ‘Maybe. Maybe not.’” I’ve lived in small towns all my life, but Kevin is a city boy, from Omaha [Nebraska]. We came into town—two big gay guys with a Chinese orphan who is on the autism spectrum. I said, “That’s going to be a subject of conversation. They cannot imagine who we are.” I say we tried to give ‘em a break, but frankly, we dug right in, went anywhere we wanted, ate anywhere we wanted. People saw how we reared this child, and that we expected him to behave. We go to a little Episcopal church. All that hatred can be pushed on Fox News, but over time, when you see us with your own eyes, you can’t deny the kind of people we are. We’re the luckiest two men in the world. We know if we were to ever have an emergency, we could call anybody—*anybody*—in town, and they would come sit here with Song.”

What: *A Wolverine Walks into a Bar*

When: Saturday, July 16

Where: The Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice, Galveston

Details: thegrand.com or 800.821.1894

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OutSmart magazine.

Comedic Champ

Stand-up sensation
Poppy Champlin
returns to Houston.

By Josh Watkins

There is a story of intimacy and realness to be told by out comedian Poppy Champlin. With a mission to find joy and to give back through her routine, Champlin is promoting the differences and uniqueness of a queer perspective on stage.

Being classically trained in comedy, Champlin has honed in on her craft to become a master comedian who is comfortably ruthless on stage. She is happy to bring her Queer Queens of Qomedy tour through Texas once again, with a stop at Houston's own Neon Boots Saloon and Dance Hall on July 17.

Josh Watkins: You are originally from Rhode Island—quite a contrast to the Lone Star State. What is it about Texas that keeps you coming back?

Poppy Champlin: Well, I try to get into places that don't usually get too much queer content. But we did so well when we went to Neon Boots. It was a great turnout. We had a lot of fun. So if we could start building a base there, of course we're going to come back.

Your tour is carried exclusively by lesbian comics. How much does being a lesbian influence your comedy?

A lot—though I can see [the humor in other] things, too. Like, I have a garden and deer are jumping over the four- or five-foot netting. So I've come up with a new idea. I've actually surrounded my garden with bubble wrap, so if they step on that, it's gonna go "POP, POP, POP," and they're gonna run off! So that doesn't have anything to do with being gay, and I think that's



Queer Queen

Poppy Champlin joins fellow lesbian comedians Mimi Gonzalez and Sandra Valls on the Neon Boots stage on July 17.

funny. I always usually end on a more relationship focus, so you know what's going on with me and my girlfriend. It becomes very intimate and relatable.

What sort of struggles have you faced being a queer woman in comedy?

I came up in the '80s. When I moved to Chicago, I started at Second City. In improv, you didn't really come out. You left it out of the act. I never came out until 2000. Just being a woman—never mind being a gay woman—it was difficult to get headlining and feature spots. It was taboo. I didn't want to make the audience uncomfortable with my gayness, you know. So then the comedy starts to be filtered through that. I still have my own homophobia that can come up, and I hate that.

Have you noticed a shift in acceptance over the years?

Oh yeah. There's a big shift and a big acceptance. Straight people are getting tired of themselves, really. There's no more comedy left for them to enjoy, because it's all been done. The whole gay thing is a vein of comedy that they can mine and enjoy and listen to with an open mind and an open heart.

In stand-up, nearly the entire show depends on the audience. What would you say is your best memory with an audience?

In this business, they say you're only as good as your last show. I just had a run in P-town. It was so much fun, because it seemed like they just enjoyed me riffing with the crowd—doing little segments on New Hampshire, *Live Free or Die*, and *Orange Is the New Black*. One thing gets rolled into another. They really like that a lot.

Your comedy is so spontaneous, yet real. You don't hold back on stage. Where do you find your confidence?

The confidence really only came after years and years of doing it. I almost feel like this past weekend, I finally let myself admit that "I got this." God, from 1982 to 2016—it took a long time.

What do you do when you are not on stage?

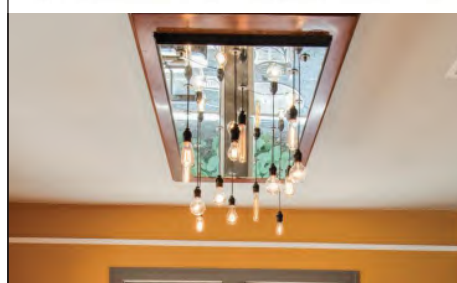
It's a big deal to bring my girlfriend with me to shows, 'cause I need to [hand out] flyers, I need to study, I need to eat right, and I need to work out. She's like, "Can we just go sit on the beach and have some lunch?" And I'm like, "Okay." And we did some shopping, and flyered as we shopped. You know, we can take care of ourselves and do our work and have fun. And wow, I learned how to balance it and make it work.

If you could sum up your comedy career so far in just five words, what would you say?

I would say *consistent, persistent, optimistic, finding the joy, and giving back.*

You can catch the Queer Queens of Comedy on July 17 at 5 p.m. at Neon Boots Saloon and Dance Hall (11410 Hempstead Highway), where Poppy Champlin will be joined by fellow Queens Mimi Gonzalez and Sandra Valls.

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Making ‘Overtures’

Houston Grand Opera raises the curtain on its new LGBT-friendly affinity group.

By Rich Arenschioldt

From the Act One synopsis of Houston Grand Opera’s 1995 world premiere of *Harvey Milk*: “Young Harvey, standing at the old Metropolitan Opera, wonders about the ‘men without wives.’”

Indeed, men with men at the opera has been the case for decades. Fast-forward 20 years, and some of those men are now married ... to other men!

Such is the current social libretto as Houston Grand Opera (HGO) entertains an audience partially composed of LGBT patrons and their friends. In a universe where everything is obtainable virtually instantaneously in digital form, opera companies worldwide struggle to address a triad of core elements needed to perpetuate live-performance art: relevance, accessibility, and sustainability. HGO has attempted to tackle all of these through various initiatives and the formation of groups like Overture that target specific markets.

David Krohn, associate development director for HGO, and Beau Miller, a local attorney and founding member of the Overture group, have a shared mindset: “It’s a more inclusive, broadly based entity than our previous endeavors,” Krohn says. “We’ve regrouped, and in so doing have reached out to a number of different leaders in Houston’s LGBT community. We wanted to gauge their interest in supporting a group such as Overture and, more importantly, determine what we could do to foster relation-



LGBT Opera Lovers Unite

Houston Grand Opera’s Overture group not only seeks to broaden the opera’s subscriber base, but to foster community amongst LGBT audience members.

ships utilizing this art form. Beau and others hosted roundtable meetings where we discussed HGO’s previous efforts and formulated some new ideas. Of course we want people to attend the opera, but we also wanted to develop a sense of community—creating something where people could experience HGO, but be motivated to [attend] as the result of a personal connection; one where friends *invite* each other to participate.”

Similar groups in other arts organizations work to coalesce patrons who already attend the performances. “However, Overture differs slightly,” Krohn says. “We wanted to focus our efforts on people who weren’t already attending opera—those new to this music.”

In order to maintain its status as a world-class opera company, HGO is constantly seek-

ing to broaden its subscriber base, which is its core source of ongoing support. “We wanted to create a forum that would achieve that, and simultaneously create a welcoming environment—a place where people would feel comfortable knowing that an evening at the opera doesn’t require a huge monetary investment and a tuxedo rental.”

“We started with a core group of individuals that had two things in common: they loved opera, and happened to be integrated into Houston’s LGBT community in various ways,” Krohn says. “We sought out not only music lovers, but people who were active in other local LGBT endeavors [such as The Victory Fund, Human Rights Campaign, and Lambda Legal]. What we found was that many of those people attended HGO performances, but had no idea

From Houston Grand Opera’s artistic and music director, Patrick Summers:

“An overture, in opera, is an artistic introduction to the unique world of a particular work, a menu of the feast to come! In that spirit, I am thrilled to welcome this new audience initiative for HGO. It is the perfect place for the LGBT community to unite in a love of opera and the inviting and fun social world that surrounds it. And it is particularly symbolic and personally moving to me that the cultural strides toward equality made in recent years mean that this group is inclusive and inviting to all who might want to give this overwhelming and enriching art form a try.”

that others did as well.

"We had begun working on this in 2015, and had planned a kickoff event in early 2016," Krohn continues. "However, one of the main supporters of this endeavor, [community leader] Tony Carroll, passed away quite suddenly this past December. Since Tony and his partner, Bruce Smith, had been part of this since its first incarnation and had agreed to host our initial event, we respectfully postponed." (In keeping with Bruce's unfailing commitment to a variety of LGBT endeavors, he did open his home just a few months after his partner's death to host a very successful kickoff party.)

"Though I had a musical background, through my association with HGO over the last few years I've developed a deep appreciation and love for opera." Miller says. "A group such as Overture, which provides an introduction to opera in a social setting, has given me the opportunity to introduce friends, colleagues, and associates to what HGO has to offer."

Given that the Wortham Theater Center is one of the world's best venues for opera, it's a natural assumption that Overture would find its home there. However, both Miller and Krohn don't want to be hamstrung by the carpet-colored concert hall. "Much of the feedback we received centered on the types of interactions and activities that Overture should foster," Krohn says. "We found that people didn't want to attend events solely connected to HGO performances. They wanted to do things at other times and in other venues—rehearsals, backstage tours, gatherings in private homes; anywhere that people socialize. Additionally, many HGO supporters typically only see each other on specific evenings, depending on their series subscription. Overture provides an opportunity for our entire LGBT audience base to meet and know each other. This creates a more cohesive community, as opposed to several smaller, separate groups."

Along with facilitating interactions among attendees, Overture hopes to dispel some prevalent myths about opera in Houston. "We want people to know that our productions are affordable," Krohn says. "You can attend a show for \$15—the price of a movie ticket. Additionally, everything associated with Overture is free."

"We are in the midst of planning next season's events, the first of which will be in September," Miller says. "We'll be focusing on a combination of interesting content—artists, directors, or members of a creative team—along with a great mix of people in unique venues. When you join us, expect to see a diverse group of LGBT folks, their friends, and fellow music-lovers."

You can follow the group on Facebook at facebook.com/HGOs-Overture-289085914763050.

Rich Arenschioldt is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

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Runway Ready

Fady Armanious, out creative director of Tootsies, talks about the future of Houston fashion.

By David Goldberg

Photo by Traci Ling

When it comes to looking the part, Houston's old-school society gals, bustling entrepreneurs, and even prom-queen hopefuls likely have one thing in common: that special little number they bought at Tootsies. Though the boutique has been around for decades, Tootsies has evolved over the past five years into a Texan hub for cutting-edge, fashion-forward couture, thanks in no small part to its out creative director, Fady Armanious. Known for his hyper-coordinated get-ups and pitch-perfect taste, Armanious has gracefully transitioned into the face of Tootsies since starting as store director in 2011. *OUTSMART* spoke with Armanious about his background, style, and even his tips for first-date dressing.

David Goldberg: What is going on at Tootsies right now?

Fady Armanious: Right now, I am working on the windows. We change them monthly for visual purposes, so we're working on finalizing a concept with the visual team. I'm also working on scheduling and getting ready for market, which involves traveling to New York, Milan, and Paris with the buyers to look at next season's fashions.

When I think of Houston high society, I think of a wealthy, conservative type. How would you describe high-society Houston women?

I'll describe them as feminine with an edge. They are stylish, they love fashion, they love high-end couture, and they understand the workmanship and the design that goes behind the garment, and why it's a piece of art.

Have they been welcoming to you?



Pitch-perfect Taste
Fady Armanious grew up in Cairo, Egypt, before moving to Houston 14 years ago. Armanious has been the fashion-forward face of Tootsies since he started with the store in 2011.

They have adapted pretty well, and they've completely, absolutely taken me in and accepted what I do. They're amazing. I love Houston, and most of the people in Houston are very friendly and very welcoming. I've never been to a house without feeling that way. Everybody has been smiley and happy to see me, and it's great.

What are your biggest pet peeves about the way people dress in Texas? I can tell you that mine is the burnt-orange UT color.

I relate to and accept a lot of different things, and I almost have to look behind whatever the situation is. People do things a lot of the time because it's in their comfort zone. Almost everything has a reason. I might not understand it yet in the moment, but I know there's a reason behind why they did it. So I try to just be open-minded about it and not let that get me all stirred up. How is that for a polite answer?

What drew you to fashion?

My mother was very stylish. She is very stylish. I remember growing up and seeing her in her dresses, with her hair and makeup, her heels matching the dress. I was always around her matching colors, and growing up it was almost in my daily routine.

When did you realize that this was your career?

It happened naturally. All of a sudden, I was in fashion and I didn't know what had happened. It was almost very normal. It just led the way. It's something that I said I was kind of comfortable with, but when you're young you think about what you want to do. I loved aspects of design and appreciated different things, but all of a sudden, I was in fashion.

What drew you to Houston?

I moved here about 14 years ago. I was born →

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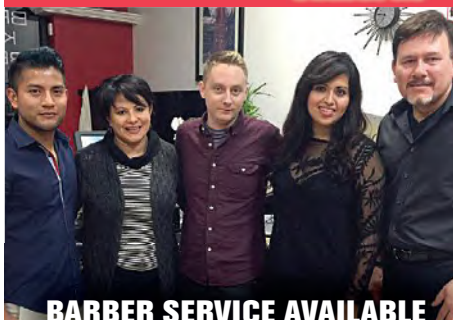


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RUNWAY READY

continued from previous page

and raised in Cairo, and then moved here. I did not come with my parents. I decided to come to Houston because I had an aunt who lived here. I came here first, and afterwards my parents came and joined us.

Were you out in Egypt, or did you come out in Houston?

In Houston. I was not out in Egypt, of course, at all. I don't think it's even an option.

Is that still the case?

I would say so. I don't think it's respected or talked about. It's nothing that that culture understands or accepts yet.

When did you come out after arriving in Houston?

Probably a year or two after I moved here.

So you had just come to the states, you came out soon after, and I assume you were already pretty stylish. What was your experience like with all that going on?

It was different. Clearly, I never knew there was a world outside of that [closeted lifestyle], that people were accepted, that there were bars and stores specifically for gay people. So it was just freedom. It was like there was another life after the lie.

With the ways that queer identity and gender fluidity are becoming broader and more accepted within mainstream culture, have you seen gender, sexuality, and androgyny change or evolve on the runway?

For sure. Androgyny is the perfect way to describe it. We've seen a lot of styles for women that are very male-inspired: the lower shoes, the flats, the pants, the hair, the suits. Even for men last season, most everything that walked the men's collections on the runway was very feminine. There were silk blouses, ruffles, florals, chiffon—all feminine fabrics. We saw floral jacquards and flower broaches in almost every silhouette, so it was very feminine-inspired—tons of ruffles, with the '70s vibe in many details.

Do you think that will reverberate into mass style?

Being in Texas, it's going to take longer. [Laughs] I can see it a teeny bit in Europe. Sometimes when it gets that extreme, it takes a while for people to catch on.

Sometimes when I dress flamboyantly, I feel vulnerable or scared of exposing myself. What is your advice for someone who may be afraid of showing their real style?

Do it. Life is too short. I treat every day as a runway. You get up and you make an effort to see

how you want the world to see you today. It's a stage that you're about to go on and perform, and you pick it based on that. You don't know where the day will take you. I do so much in my day: from lunch, to the store, to a trunk show, there are just so many things that I do. But I get up in the morning and [pick out] my stage outfit. Express yourself! In fashion, there is nothing that's wrong or right. It's just the way you feel, so just embrace it and express who you are that day.

What is your advice for a perfect first-date outfit?

I always like to play it down. However, people who know me know that I'm very out there, and a lot of my outfits are very runway, because it's what I do. But I want the world to see me that way. However, I want [a new romantic interest] to see me first for who I am, rather than be distracted by what I'm wearing. So if you go back to all my previous dates, it's basically a white shirt or a button-up (depending on where we're going), jeans, and an amazing pair of shoes. It's simple, it's easy, and it still shows that I'm in fashion.

What is the essential thing you bring to your job at Tootsies?

I bring freshness [and] newness. I bring relationships, especially with our clients and store vendors. I believe that people shop with people. Otherwise, they can get the products anywhere. It's a click online and they can have it delivered. It's at Saks or Neiman's—it's everywhere. But if they come to us, it's because of personal relationships and the experience that Tootsies has to offer. My job is to make sure that the [shopping] experience and customer service is over the top, and something you'll remember. You come in and have fun, shop, talk and laugh and drink, and walk out with a dress.

At Tootsies, we're always trying to think of different ideas to be fresh and new and relatable to 2016. We're always on the move, there's always going to be a surprise, there's always going to be the next big thing. I don't want to be flat, I don't want to be in a place where people just expect us. We should always have the bar raised—what our next level should be, and where we're going.

What is the key to your success?

Instincts are important. I say do what's right and learn from it. Don't make the same mistake twice. But be passionate: have one thing you're passionate about and go at it. Don't take no for an answer. I don't like the word "no"—it doesn't go with me. Communication is also a key to almost anything, from work to relationships.

This interview was conducted prior to the death of Tootsies founder and owner Mickey Rosmarin. Rosmarin unexpectedly passed away on June 17 following a heart attack. He will be greatly missed by the staff of Tootsies, friends, family, and the Houston fashion community.

David Goldberg is a regular contributor to OutSmart magazine.



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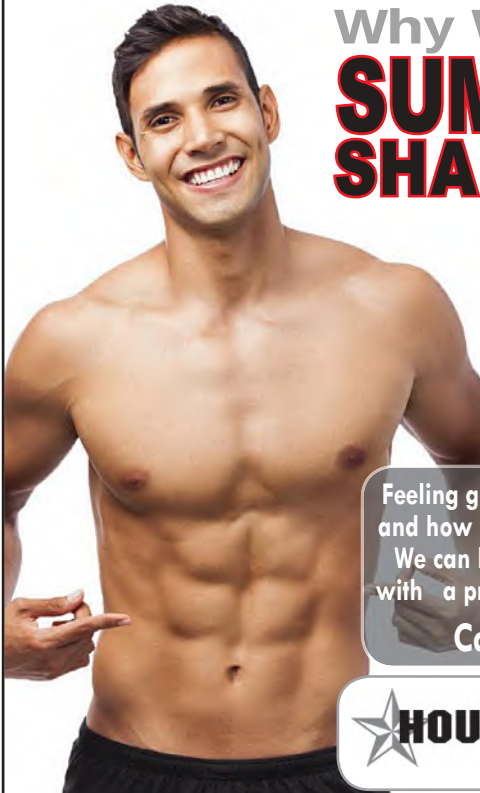
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Made in HTX

Out designer Steve Guthrie has plans to make Houston a mecca for clothes manufacturing.

By Donalevan Maines

Steve Guthrie has designs on making Houston a center for clothes manufacturing. The out designer of contemporary womenswear employed two shops in the Bayou City to assemble the new summer and fall items he will unveil at a pop-up show in Montrose on July 13. The garments weren't just MADE IN AMERICA, they were MADE IN HOUSTON.

"I could probably do it cheaper, remotely, in Chicago or New York, but I would not have the same control and access," he explains. "Here, I can go out on the shop floor and look at a seam; if it's not right, I can fix it then."

Without the advantage of being able to personally supervise the assembly of his collection, Guthrie explains, a problem could cause him to have to delay production or accept faulty merchandise.

Championing local manufacturing is just one key role that Guthrie plays in Houston's emerging fashion industry.

As a professor in the Lifestyle Arts & Design Careers Division at Houston Community College's central campus, Guthrie teaches aspiring designers how to make, market, and merchandise their work, and inspires them to take cues from their own cultural identities to produce apparel that's distinctly their own.

"My favorite course is a trends class," he says. "Some of my students are geniuses. They come up with things that are unlike anything else, anywhere." The school teamed up this spring with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, for a Fashion Week-style runway show. The student designers produced edgy, creative work inspired by the museum's recent *Sculpted in Steel* exhibit of Art Deco automobiles.

Guthrie's own "rockabilly" aesthetic as a fashion designer is a modern take on bad girls



The Stylish Professor

In addition to designing stylish contemporary womenswear, Steve Guthrie teaches in the Lifestyle Arts & Design Careers Division at Houston Community College.

from a more recent era. "Oddly enough, I grew up listening to Patsy Cline and Roy Orbison, who I adored," says Guthrie.

The Port Lavaca native also enjoyed growing up with his own personal seamstress. "My mother made clothes for me and my sisters," he says. "She was also a costumer who had a flair for the grandiose. I started sewing and patterning when I was 15; in my high school years, I made clothes for myself and my friends."

Guthrie laughs, confessing, "It was the new wave/punk era, so I made drop-crotch pants, Indian-inspired—a lot of black, baggy clothes."

Living in Bryan-College Station as a teenager, he says, "Houston was my playground, so I got to see how the cool kids dressed here. Houston has an underground movement that pushes the boundaries of fashion, making it their very own. I embrace that part of Houston as a fashion mecca."

While the Houston smart-set's gala fundraising season drives the local market for cocktail dresses and gowns, Guthrie says "there is a whole lot of artistry in ready-to-

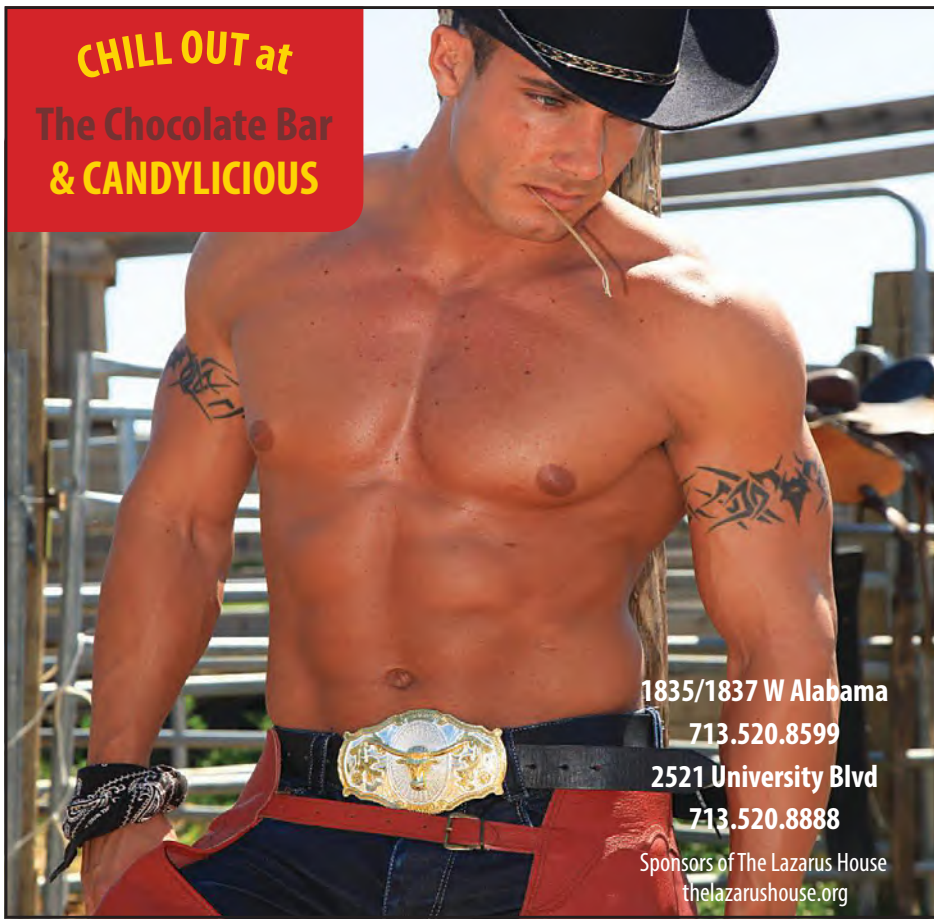
wear clothing, too. We do have 'it' here, but the only way to keep it is for people to buy local."

That brings him back to his push for supporting more local manufacturing, a convenience Guthrie became accustomed to when he spent a year in San Francisco as an assistant designer at Mansoor Scott, which produces a contemporary womenswear line of functional, everyday fashions.

"That is where I got the calling to do it," he says. "We did in-house design work in the studio I went to work at every day. I was the production facility liaison, and I would walk over and bring them a pattern for production. Those were sweet days. Returning to Houston, my whole goal was to do this locally. Of course, here it involves driving, but I take my patterns and materials from my studio at 59 and 610 to two production facilities in west Houston. My garments are made next to machines that make industrial garments and baby garments."

Guthrie, who is a "card-toting" member of The Chickasaw Nation of Native Americans, grew up in a number of foreign countries →

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MADE IN HTX

continued from previous page

where his father worked in the oil industry, including Malaysia, Mexico, and Ecuador.

After graduating from A&M Consolidated High School in College Station, Guthrie earned a degree in international business and business law with a minor in French in 1992 from Temple University in Philadelphia, then consulted in IT, oil and gas, retail-chain management, and project-management education.

The past 12 years, Guthrie has lived in Houston with his partner, Tom Combs.

Guthrie returned to college for a master's degree in instructional technology (education), followed by a master of fine arts in fashion design from the Academy of Art University.

In 2009, he debuted as a fashion designer under the moniker 4thWard, creating custom cocktail and formal attire for local and national clients before launching the first Steve Guthrie collection of contemporary womenswear in 2015.

His pop-up show on July 13 will be held at Focus, an eyewear shop "in the gayborhood" at 515 Westheimer from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., with his designs shown alongside items by Houston glove designer Damari Rubio.

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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Montrose's Leading Lady

Fashionista Victoria Hellyer shifts attitudes on transgender identity.

By **Barrett White**

Photo by FireHeart Photography

Navigating between the Galleria's construction scaffolding and the second-floor boutiques, the Starbucks at last came into focus. Sitting there at a table with flawless makeup, legs for miles, and a smile to make any Houston debutant jealous was the one and only Duchess of Montrose, Victoria Hellyer. With a charmed "Hello, handsome!" I was drawn into her world. Sipping lattes and exploring her fashion tastes, we traversed the Galleria discussing trends from shoes and skirts to River Oaks formalwear and community gala blues.

Hailing originally from the small town of Tarkington, Texas, Hellyer has come in to her own after moving to "the big city" and branding herself, her image, and her transgender activist duties as The Duchess of Montrose.

"I see Cait [Jenner] and I think, 'I want something less celebrity spectacle and more human,'" she says, hoping her accessibility and community involvement will be of aid to Houstonians who voted down last year's Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, the infamous "bathroom law" that fell victim to the smear tactics of the political right.

After dabbling with makeup and women's clothing for some time while still identifying publicly as male, Hellyer discovered what it meant to be transgender in her early adult years, prompting her to seek therapy in December 2015. She officially "came out" as transgender last February in the best way a millennial can: via Facebook. Her official



The Duchess of Montrose

While not a fashion designer herself, Victoria Hellyer has modeled in print and on the runway. Here she models a Magpies and Peacocks gown from their first bridal collection.

coming-out post, accompanied by a photo of her sporting a gorgeous up-do and gown, garnered an impressive 627 likes, 196 comments, and 11 shares as she promoted her authentic identity on social media.

"Above all else, I want to help people. I want to be accessible. My message for the LGBT community is 'Ask me. I want to inform.'"

Noticing the trend of transgender youth coming out at younger ages, Hellyer hopes to use her visibility to further the clear generational shift in attitudes about transgender identity. "I would love to see more books, like HRC gender-identity books, appearing at libraries accessible to children and young adults," she says, recognizing the importance

of having a sense of self from a young age.

Since her coming out, Hellyer has confidently succeeded in owning her identity. Immediately charismatic, she flipped her phone around to show me a recent photo-shoot image from an absolutely stunning Magpies and Peacocks promo for their first bridal collection, "Love Re-Heirloomed." Though not a fashion designer herself, Hellyer has found a place as a model, appearing in print and on the runway, stunning audiences and stylists alike with her poise and grace. She holds the unique distinction of having been the first transgender model for Pride Houston's Rock the Runway when she strutted her stuff at this year's celebration.

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MONTROSE'S LEADING LADY

continued from page 63

to call it home. I love how diverse it is," Hellyer comments. Her social circle includes many of Houston's elite socialites, and she idolizes Lynn Wyatt and Carolyn Farb.

The Duchess is more than just a pretty face, though—along with her looks and charm is a heart of pure gold. With determination and love (and better time-management skills than I have), Hellyer works tirelessly to give back to the community, both by sharing knowledge and monetary donations. Just this past year, Hellyer appeared with both Equality Texas' TransVisible Project and WIRED's Google Autocomplete Interview promoting trans visibility, which became a viral YouTube video. Next on her list is a trans clothing drive.

But just where did that Duchess of Montrose moniker come from? It's not as predictable as you might think. In the 2009 docudrama *The Young Victoria*, a woman calls out for action and stands up for good. When someone asks for the woman's name, a British official in the film proclaims, "That's the Duchess of Montrose!"

"I like to think I also stand up for what's right... It's hard being an enigma," she laughs.

Barrett White is a frequent contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.



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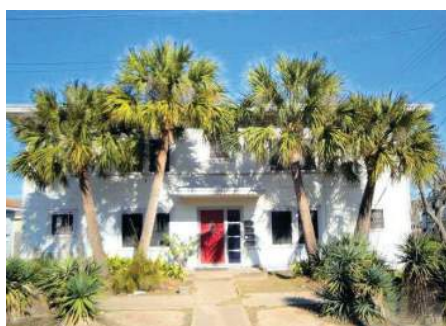
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Galveston's Invisible LGBT History

... Preservation Texas president says that's about to change.

By Brandon Wolf



While Galveston is synonymous with the word "beach," its other allure is its history—and the city's embrace of that history. Still, the island city's sense of LGBT history is practically nil. The same could be said about the entire state of Texas, where local LGBT history is, for the most part, unknown.

But a new initiative by Preservation Texas intends to begin closing that gap, says Dwayne Jones, a resident of Galveston and the current president of the organization. The openly gay native Texan has been involved in preservation work for the last 32 years. (Jones is also the executive director of the Galveston Historical Foundation, which is the oldest preservation group in Texas and the oldest local preservation organization in America, dating back to 1871.)

A Focus on LGBT History in Texas Begins

Preservation Texas is a private, 501(c)(3) educational organization that works to save historical sites in Texas. This summer, the

organization plans to launch an initiative to recognize historical sites important to Texas LGBT history. Evan Thompson, who is the executive director of Preservation Texas and also openly gay, says the first phase will be a Facebook page that will help people understand the project and allow them to suggest LGBT historical sites. Preservation Texas will follow up with an interactive map of Texas LGBT historical sites on their website.

Thompson says the organization first

began to think about their project after the National Park Service began an LGBT historical sites project two years ago. The park service solicited ideas from the public, and so far about 600 LGBT sites across the country have been identified. Five of those sites are in Texas. The national map includes courthouses where important gay-rights cases were decided, LGBT bars and community centers, and the homes of individuals important to LGBT heritage. The list of sites and the interactive →

Commemorating Gay Island History

From top: Dwayne Jones, executive director of both Preservation Texas and the Galveston Historical Foundation; homes of gay historian Jim Kepner located on (l-r) Avenue L, Avenue Q, and 53rd Street; the former site of the Rosenberg Gender Clinic (l), which operated until 2010; and Robert's Lafitte, the island's oldest continually operating gay bar.

GALVESTON'S INVISIBLE LGBT HISTORY

continued from previous page

map can be viewed at nps.gov/heritageinitiaives/LGBThistory/places.html.

Preservation Texas was also influenced by the LGBT history presentations that have become a regular part of national preservation conference agendas in recent years. Jones will be making a presentation at the 2016 National



Famous LGBT Islanders

L-r: lesbian rocker Gretchen Phillips (born 1963), openly gay football player Michael Sam (born 1990), and gay historian Jim Kepner (1923-1997) are all natives of Galveston.

Trust for Historic Preservation conference, to be held November 15-18 at the Houston Hilton Americas. Thompson says Preservation Texas also hopes to host an opening-night LGBT reception.

LGBT Historical Sites in Galveston

Several sites in Galveston provide good mod-

els for the Texas LGBT history project, demonstrating that hidden pieces of LGBT heritage are part of the history of several familiar buildings on the island.

• John Sealy Hospital at the University of Texas Medical Branch-Galveston

In 1965, the hospital began to see patients with gender-identity issues. In 1966, a 23-year-old underwent male-to-female sexual reassignment surgery (SRS). It was low-key and without media fanfare. In 1971, a second SRS was completed.

Houston transgender pioneers Toni Mayes and Phyllis Frye were both clinic clients in the early 1970s. Mayes underwent SRS in 1973.

In 1976, the Janus Information Facility was opened in a building off-campus, providing gender-identity information worldwide. Although UTMB initially funded the facility and its mailing costs,

they chose to close the clinic in 1980. That clinic building was later demolished, but the hospital where the pioneering surgeries were performed still stands and is now known as the John Sealy Hospital Annex. Located near 6th and Strand streets, it was likely built as a 1935 Works Progress Administration project. The reverse-cruciform hospital was once one

of the largest and tallest buildings in Galveston, but the structure has since been conjoined with new hospital additions and is now barely recognizable from the street.

• **Rosenberg Clinic** When UTMB's gender clinic closed, a private clinic was opened at 1103 25th Street. For years, it was one of the few gateways for persons seeking legal gender changes and/or sexual reassignment surgery.

Former Houstonian Jessica Wicks was a client in the 1990s. She recalls enjoying annual "reunions" where many past and present clients could meet and share experiences.

Although the clinic closed in 2010, the building that housed it is still standing and in excellent condition. The two-story blue-stucco structure features influences of the Prairie architectural style and was built circa 1915 in a residential area. One would never guess that it was once a clinic with an annual client base of 450 transgender individuals.

• **Kon Tiki** In 1966, the Kon Tiki bar opened, and over the next 40 years it was located at six different sites. After two of its locations burned to the ground, the club inadvertently became a symbol of gay survival.

From 1966 to 1969, the Kon Tiki operated at 800 21st Street. The location is now a parking lot. From 1970 to 1971, its address was 215 19th Street. That structure burned to the ground, and today a warehouse sits on the land. →

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GALVESTON'S INVISIBLE LGBT HISTORY

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Moving to 214 23rd Street in 1972, the club eventually expanded to include baths. The dance floor there was the Kon Tiki's signature touch—colored squares that flashed on and off to the music and displayed silhouettes of male genitalia. In 1983, the entire complex was lost to a fire caused by a gas leak in the wake of Hurricane Alicia. That site is now the lawn of an upscale café.

The bar opened again in 1984 at 111 23rd Street, a location now occupied by a Fud-druckers. The club then moved in 1985 to 2011 Market, directly behind the Galveston Opera House. That structure was also demolished and is presently a parking lot.

In 1987, the bar made its final move to 315 23rd Street, and remained open until 2006 when the owner died. That structure (which is now gutted and for sale) is the only one of the bar's six locations that survives, and dates back to around 1890 when it was a part of the three-story Marble Palace Hotel. (After a fire in the mid-1950s, the structure and a few neighboring buildings were rebuilt as "modern" storefronts. It was occupied by the Galveston Chamber of Commerce before the Kon Tiki moved there in 1987.)

• **Robert's Lafitte** The oldest continually operating gay bar on the island is Robert's Lafitte, which opened in August 1969. The club is located at 2501 Avenue Q, just a few blocks from the Galveston Seawall.

The club is named after the smuggler and pirate Jean Lafitte, who won a legal pardon by helping General Andrew Jackson defend New Orleans against the British in the final battle of the War of 1812. The name *Robert* was added to distinguish it from New Orleans' Café Lafitte in Exile, the oldest continually operating gay bar in America.

Robert's Lafitte survived Hurricanes Alicia and Ike, and is still in business today, nearly 47 years after its opening. The relaxed atmosphere, friendly staff, and superb drag shows have made it an institution for local residents and a popular attraction for beach-goers. The two-story, broad-front commercial building is clad in brick veneer and was built around 1920. The original storefront has been altered for various uses over the years

The Birthplace of Influential LGBTs

Lesbian rocker Gretchen Phillips was born in Galveston in 1963. Openly gay football player Michael Sam was born there in 1990.

But few people in Galveston or in the local LGBT community are aware that one of America's most important gay historians, Jim Kepner, was born in Galveston in 1923 and spent most of his early years there. He never knew his birth parents, who left him wrapped in newspapers under an oleander bush, possibly because

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A Gay Night Out in Galveston

The best island bar crawl around.

By Joanna O'Leary
Photos by Joanna O'Leary

The gay nightlife community in Galveston can be summarized in one famous Sister Sledge lyric: *We are family*.

Of course, in some ways it shouldn't be surprising that the various players, entertainers, dancers, venue owners, and patrons should know each other (and *well*), as Galveston is a relatively small weekend resort town with an even smaller permanent population. Walk into a gay bar any given Sunday (as this writer did), and it becomes immediately apparent that there is a definite "regular" contingent. But that doesn't mean out-of-town visitors will be excluded from the camaraderie. Quite the contrary, in fact—visitors (of all orientations) are welcomed with open arms and sometimes the offer of a complimentary group shot.

Begin your evening with a sunset stroll along the warm Gulf waters before savoring some of the seafood and Italian specialties, respectively, on offer at star restaurants such as **Gaido's** (with their award-winning pecan pie and deep-fried shrimp balls) or **Grotto Ristorante** (where you should try the snapper Siciliano). If you are with a "classy" partner or pal who insists on some culture before you indulge in bacchanalian carousing, enjoy a few romantic arias at the **The Grand 1894 Opera House** or sing along at one of the three musicals staged each summer at the beautiful **Moody Gardens**.

Then it's time for a nightlife crawl at some of Galveston's friendliest, sassiest, and most entertaining (not mutually exclusive characteristics, by the way) gay spots. First stop is the newly opened **Rumors Beach Bar**, where patrons of all ages sip tropical cocktails from a shiny center drink station against a backdrop of sleek blue lighting and posters of pin-up girls. The outside deck is perfect for people-watching on Seawall Boulevard. If the weather turns nasty, there are plenty of amusing diver-



Island Hot Spots

Whether you're looking for a night of wild dancing or a low-key game of pool, Galveston's gay nightclubs offer something for everyone.

sions inside—a pool table, weekend drag and dance shows, and on Mondays, even red beans and rice cooked by the owner himself. All by your lonesome? You won't be after an hour at Rumors, for it's more than likely one of the bartenders will take you under his wing and introduce you around.

Abandon the pleasantly mellow vibe permeating Rumors for the more raucous **Third Coast Bar**. Before and after the drag shows, DJs spin house music and pop in the cavernous space; also try hitting the club on one of their themed party nights. Third Coast has garnered special accolades for its cheap, strong drinks (\$5 Martini Madness!) as well as its zealous crowd that's eager to dance.

Next, take yourself and the gang to **Robert's LaFitte**, which has been serving Galveston's LGBTQ residents for over 50 years (and should therefore be considered hallowed ground). The interior decor is appropriately magical: Christmas lights, red-leather bar stools, American and rainbow flags hung side

by side (as they should be!), and a Betty Boop theme manifested in various forms. On weekends, the stars of the nightly comedy, dance, and music performances exchange hugs and smooches (and sometimes even a fireball shot) with loyal fans before retiring to the dressing room. If you're lucky enough to be invited backstage to observe the hair-and-makeup routines of nationally known performers such as Cici Ryder and others, you will see that these lovely ladies are more serious about glamour than the Kardashians.

The welcoming, playful atmosphere of Robert's LaFitte makes it difficult to drag (hah!) yourself out of there before midnight, but in the spirit of diversity, take a short walk to **23rd Street Station**. 23rd Street Station boasts equally attentive service and a gregarious (albeit more low-key) crowd. On any given night, entertainment options include Texas hold 'em, karaoke, exotic dancers, and shows featuring show-biz legends such as Misty Valdez. Plus, locals enjoy hanging out at →

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A GAY NIGHT OUT IN GALVESTON

continued from previous page

this welcoming space during the traditional 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. happy-hour time. In the next few months, the Station will also be showcasing a newly refurbished patio with barbeque on offer during the holidays and available to rent for private parties. Finally, those looking for love will be heartened to know that several couples about to celebrate multi-decade anniversaries claim 23rd Street Station as the site of their first meeting.

To refuel after all that revelry and soak up some of those powerful cocktails, end the night at **SkyBar** (open until 11 p.m. on Friday and midnight on Saturday) for killer spring rolls, shrimp tempura, and maybe just one sake bomb. Those with heartier appetites should try their seared tuna tataki or their creative Americanized sushi options such as the Galveston Sunrise or Keemah Sunrise rolls, both heavy on the avocado, mayonnaise, and fried bits.

Whew. Your whistle is whetted, your feet hurt, your belly is full, and your new friends are texting you to make sure you got home safely—and asking when you'll be back in Galveston. Not soon enough.

Joanna O'Leary is a freelance food and travel writer based in Houston. Her exploits are chronicled on brideyoleary.com.

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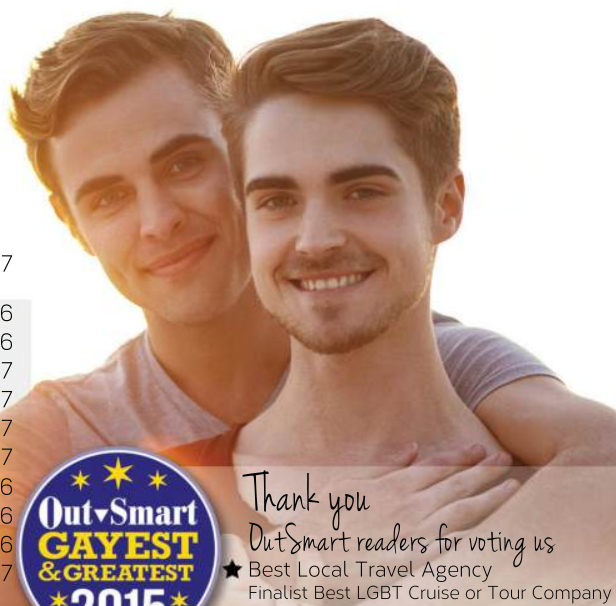
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Golden Myanmar River Cruise - R.V. Irrawaddy Explorer	*NEW*	Jan 30 - Feb 10, 2017
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Venice to Barcelona - Holland America Eurodam		Jul 29 - Aug 6, 2016
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Vintage-Home Visionaries

Baytown Realtor teams up with a Galveston home-restoration company.

By Donalevan Maines

Jeff Walters pounds the plaster off the walls of a dilapidated old house in Galveston to reveal gorgeous ironwork that has survived for more than a century. “I could not believe it myself, to find this still intact. It’s beautiful,” says the out manager of Virginia Malone & Associates in Baytown, as well as a new Galveston venture, Save 1900 Realty, that’s dedicated to restoring the island’s vintage homes to their original grandeur.

Growing up in Baytown, explains Walters, “My family would always tour the homes and mansions on Galveston Island. We used to drive around for hours looking at the old-world homes that survived the 1900 Storm.” However, many homes didn’t survive “The Great Storm,” as residents often call what was the deadliest hurricane in U.S. history. Or did they?

In January, Walters met Michael Cordray, a born-on-the-Island (BOI) resident of Galveston who owns a home-restoration company with his wife, Ashley. They flip homes by stripping them down to their birthday suits, often finding preserved patina, tiles, and stained glass from long ago, says Walters.

“When there’s no job beneath you, there’s no ceiling above you,” Cordray told Walters, who was so impressed by Cordray that he encouraged the young go-getter to study for a real-estate license.

“Six weeks later, he had it,” says Walters—who then had a reason to open a real-estate business on the island he’s enjoyed all his life.

“My first memory of Galveston was walking the Strand during Dickens on the Strand,” he says. “I loved all of the hustle and bustle of old-time England. Everyone was in wonderful



Restoration Dream Team

L-r: Josh Van Ness, Jeff Walters (out manager of Virginia Malone & Associates), and Save 1900 Realty agents Michael Cordray and Devin Hooper. *INSET:* Walters (l) with niece Crystal McDowell.

costumes, and there was music and entertainment on every corner. I loved the candy and ice cream of La King’s Confectionary and all of the shops offering seashells and trinkets. I always wanted to live in one of the old buildings.”

It was at the 1838 Michel B. Menard House that Walters met the Cordrays at “Menardi Gras,” which kicked off Galveston’s 2016 Mardi Gras festivities. The Greek revival-style structure—and oldest home on the island that’s still standing—is said to be the site of Galveston’s first Mardi Gras ball in 1856.

Walters is the youngest of five children born to the late oilman Burl Walters and an absent mother. “I was reared by my father, when he was in town; my grandmother, Lydia Scarborough; and my aunt, Virginia Malone, who is a real-estate broker. She obtained her license in 1957. I had a privileged childhood as far as being exposed to the finer things in life. I shopped and dined out from birth on, four days a week until I graduated from high school. As my friends can attest, I have maintained that tradition.”

He adds, “I knew I was gay in junior high, but I didn’t actively pursue that lifestyle in public. My best friend and I had a secret affair, not knowing that my grandmother knew the

tea. I was not out in high school, but I wasn’t closeted either; I was just me. I was not scrutinized by my peers like the nelly princesses running around the school. All everybody ever said was, ‘Jeff is different.’”

Walters lettered in track at Ross S. Sterling High School in Baytown, and he participated in many clubs and service organizations. “Key Club was my favorite. I was the treasurer and lieutenant governor for the Texas-Oklahoma district.

“Being reared in a real-estate family,” he adds, “I hated the business until I was in high school because I was always sitting in the car or at the office while my Aunt Jenny was writing contracts. When I was 18, I took a real-estate course at Lee College that was taught by the real-estate attorney who always did my aunt’s closings.”

Walters oversees five real-estate agents at Virginia Malone & Associates in Baytown, as well as three agents at Save 1900 Realty in Galveston. They include Cordray, out Galveston homeowner Devin Hooper, and Crystal McDowell, a niece of Walters.

“The Galveston office is a full-service real-estate firm,” says Walters. “We plan on helping transform and sell the island’s old, →



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VINTAGE-HOME VISIONARIES

continued from previous page

dilapidated homes and return them to their original glory.”

The Galveston Historical Foundation has already taken note of the progress that the Cordrays and Save 1900 Realty have made with their first efforts. “Ashley and I were honored to represent Save 1900, having been selected as a Galveston Landmark Commission Rehabilitation Award recipient,” says Cordray. “We are looking forward to many more incredible restorations.”

“I have my sights set on a three-story building on Mechanic Street right down from the Tremont Hotel,” says Walters. “It would make perfect lofts, with commercial retail or our office on the first floor. We are planning on two lofts on the second floor and one loft on the third, at prices ranging from \$500,000 to \$850,000.”

Walters says the LGBT community on Galveston Island is thriving and growing more each day. “You know how when the first gay couple moves into your neighborhood, the property values soar?” he explains. “Some stereotypes are true: we just have a natural flair for beauty and taste.”

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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Artistic Liberation in Marfa

Plan an offbeat getaway in West Texas.

By Joanna O'Leary

What happens in Vegas may stay in Vegas, but what happens in Marfa can *only* happen in Marfa, a truly singular West Texas town that has become a mecca for tourists seeking a travel experience way off the beaten path, as well as a refuge for minimalist artists. Although having a strict itinerary would be antithetical to the laissez-faire style of living that characterizes the Marfan existence, you should really, like, try to hit some of these points of interest (but you obviously don't have to) while you're there.

First, the place to stay (and see and be seen) in Marfa is the newly opened **Hotel St. George**. Appropriately named for the patron saint of chivalry, this luxurious lodging spot aims to cater to the Marfa visitor's every need via suites well-stocked with amenities (miniature fridges, separate entertainment spaces, plush robes, etc.) and decorated with furniture crafted by area designers. After check-in, belly up to the **Bar St.**

George to sip on celebratory bubbly (yay, you made it!) and to nosh on the voluminous charcuterie plate featuring chicken liver pâté, cornichons, jam, country ham, whole grain mustard, baguette toasts, and buttermilk biscuits.

The **Hotel Paisano**, perhaps Marfa's most storied accommodation, is also a great home base for your explorations.

Opened in 1930, the hotel served as the filming location for the cult Western drama *Giant* starring James Dean, Elizabeth Taylor, and Rock Hudson, so it attracts droves of film-history buffs. **Jett's Grill**, the hotel's signature restaurant, boasts an all-around solid Southwestern menu that is particularly well-known



CASEY DUNN

See and Be Seen

The new Hotel St. George features luxurious suites with furniture crafted by area designers.

for its lip-smacking pistachio-crust chicken fried steak.

Don't linger too long over the memorabilia and artifacts at the Hotel St. George and Hotel Paisano, because there are loads of delightfully weird sites that are best seen in the daylight

hours. I recommend first hitting two of Marfa's most prominent galleries, each housed in spaces equally as intriguing as the artwork inside.

Ballroom Marfa, in a former ballroom, showcases rotating visual exhibits and hosts educational sessions like a DJ camp, while the **Marfa Contemporary** highlights the modern work of international artists

in a repurposed garage whose entry is marked by an inverted automobile.

Next, make the half-hour drive to the quirky modern-art sculpture known simply as **Prada Marfa**. Look (but don't touch) the purses and shoes inside—these faux luxury goods are actually security devices designed to

alert authorities to potential vandals.

As the sun sets, head to Marfa's most eerie attraction: the "ghost" or "mystery" lights. Regularly observed on Mitchell Flats just east of Marfa, these fleeting yellow, orange, and occasionally green orbs have mystified casual observers since 2007. (Scientists, however, have concluded that they are just reflections from headlights of the cars on Route 67. But whatever—the lights are still enchanting and more than worth a gander.)

Marfan art comes in edible as well as audible and visual form, so in between gallery hopping and festival gallivanting, seek sustenance at one of the town's many unique eateries. Hot-and-ready Middle Eastern fare can be found at the **Food Shark** food truck, a favorite among locals and tourists alike for their overstuffed falafel and kebab wraps and rice plates dressed with possibly the best tzatziki sauce in West Texas. Seating options are unconventional and diverse—diners have the choice of chowing down on adjacent wooden tables or inside an abandoned school bus.

Another noteworthy no-frills hotspot is **Marfa Burrito**, which serves (you guessed it) breakfast burritos the size of small missiles filled with house-made salsa, stewed rice, →



Giant Attraction

The Hotel Paisano was featured in the 1950s classic Western film.

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ARTISTIC LIBERATION IN MARFA

continued from previous page

and assorted proteins (chorizo, eggs, steak, etc.). What is perhaps most endearing about Marfa Burrito is the home-style kitchen where the sweet staff rolls tortillas by hand. Tip: bring cash (credit cards not accepted) or ask frequent customer Matthew McConaughey to pay for your meal.

For fancy-schmancier dining and digs, head to **Cochineal** where acclaimed chef and owner Tom Rapp offers patrons an ever-evolving eclectic menu based on the availability of local raw ingredients. On any given night, you may have a choice of starters such as fresh-baked bread made with yeast cultivated in Marfa, or tender snails ensconced in melted butter and garlic. Recent entrées on special include duck breast with blueberry compote and rosemary mashed potatoes, and shrimp chowder accompanied by fingerling potatoes, shallots, and green peas. With only 30 tables, Cochineal fills up quickly, especially on weekends and during special events (see below), so make reservations.

And while any time is the right time to go to Marfa, there are certain annual highlights that you may want to organize your visit around. July is a particularly vibrant time to visit during the **Marfa Film Festival** that showcases shorts, features, music videos, and experimental pieces by cinematic visionaries from all over the globe. One distinctive and particularly enjoyable aspect of the festival is that films are shown one at a time rather than simultaneously. This slower pace means attendees don't have to choose one show over another, and it also allows for more socializing between shows. The 2016 festival (July 13–17) features an early-bird filmmaker pool party, which those in the know claim is the best way to cozy up to filmmakers and producers likely to become the Next Big Thing.

Music lovers, aspiring groupies, and a few folks verging on melomania trek to Marfa roughly two weeks later to enjoy the **Viva Big Bend Music Festival** (July 28–31). Concerts are held almost nonstop in venues small and large, kitschy and historic, such as the Gage Hotel, the Planet Marfa beer garden, and USO Hall. Tickets will likely sell quickly for this year's diverse lineup of performers, which includes Los Lonely Boys, Brandy Zdan, Zac Wilkerson, and Mike and the Moonpies; however, should your first choice be sold out, there are also several free daytime shows.

A mini-vacation in Marfa is pretty much guaranteed to leave you dazed and confused, in a good way—and fairly confident that while Austin may be keeping it weird, Marfa is keeping it downright bizarre.

Joanna O'Leary is a freelance food and travel writer based in Houston. Her exploits are chronicled on brideyoleary.com.

GALVESTON'S INVISIBLE LGBT HISTORY

continued from page 70

he was born club-footed.

Kepner began his involvement in the gay movement in 1950s Los Angeles by joining ONE Inc., a spin-off from the Mattachine Society. He was a regular contributor to *ONE Magazine*, often using pen names to give the appearance that more people were involved in the publication.

Kepner started collecting LGBT material, and in the late 1960s he moved the collection into a small Los Angeles storefront. The archive grew and changed names several times over the next four decades. It is now known as ONE Archive, the oldest LGBT archive in the nation.

Galveston phone directories show the Kepner family living at 3712 Avenue L in 1928, when Jim was five years old. The original center-hall cottage was built circa 1870, and was likely moved to its current location after the 1900 storm. It was placed on a wood-frame foundation that served as additional ground-floor living space under the elevated cottage.

In 1938 (at age 15), Kepner's address was 2312 53rd Street. A two-story, wood-frame dwelling there, built circa 1920, was likely an apartment house. It features influences of the International style, with a flat canopy cantilevered over the entry door. The building was likely altered when it was clad with asbestos-shingle siding.

By 1939 (at age 16), Kepner was living at 5225 Avenue Q. The structure there is a one-story bungalow-style home built around 1920, with an open porch that appears to have been enclosed. An undated ID card belonging to Kepner, now housed at ONE Archive, lists his address as 5225 Avenue Q, confirming that the Kepner listings in the phone book are for the same family.

Amazingly, all three structures still stand and have been renovated, so it would be a coming-full-circle tribute to Kepner if the boyhood homes of an LGBT historian are included in this LGBT Texas history project.

Saving our community's history has proven to be an enormous task, and has largely been limited to documents and memorabilia. Now the opportunity exists to add a new dimension to our story by identifying and preserving historical sites that anchor our legacy with even more clarity.

The author thanks the following people for their research that contributed to this story: Jo Collier in the Houston Public Library's Texas Room; J.D. Doyle, creator of houstonlgbt.history.org; Randy Pace, historic preservationist, author and historian; and Loni Shibuyama at ONE Archive.

Brandon Wolf is a frequent contributor to OUT-SMART magazine.



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A Natural Love

Shannon Hodgins and Michelle Caruso exchange vows in the great outdoors.



A Breath of Fresh Air
Shannon Hodgins (l) and Michelle Caruso met through an online dating site in 2013. The couple married in Big Sur in March 2016.

By Henry V. Thiel

Photos by Viera Photography

Shannon Hodgins met her future bride, Michelle Caruso, through an online dating site in 2013. Shannon, a Montrose resident and sixth-grade schoolteacher, and Michelle, a chronic-disease program manager, maintained a strictly electronic courtship for a good while. The delay was not the usual stranger-danger trepidation, however. Rather, the email exchanges were pleasantly successful in maintaining an increasingly flirty tone. Their face-to-face flirtation began when they agreed to meet at the Hans Bier Haus in Rice Village for drinks.

"I couldn't believe how fast the night flew," says Shannon. "I couldn't believe I had stayed out until 11 p.m." It should be noted that it was a school night. Still, even with classes the next morning, this was an extra-credit assignment that the middle-school teacher was happy to include in her schedule. The two began dating very soon after.

"The moment I knew I was going to marry Michelle was when I realized that my dog, Iggy, liked her more than me," shares Shannon, only half-joking.

Before going on a trip last summer to Scandinavia, Shannon began planning how she was going to propose. She worked with jeweler Herschel Teper, who owns Silverlust in Montrose, to create the perfect rings that would symbolize their love for eternity.

"We had talked about getting engaged soon," adds Michelle. "But for most of the trip, when I would bring the subject up, Shannon would change the conversation by saying,

"The moment I knew I was going to marry Michelle was when I realized my dog liked her more than me."

'Let's not ruin the trip by talking about this right now.'" *Ouch.*

Unbeknownst to Michelle, however, Shannon had been anxiously carrying both rings around with her everywhere they went. She was like a proposal scout continually on the lookout, scouting for the perfect spot and the perfect moment to pop the question. Finally, that moment presented itself.

Climbing to the top of a waterfall in Flam,

Norway, the couple was surrounded by an impossibly blue sky, spotted with just a handful of puffy clouds. They were alone in the world, surrounded by water, sky, and green trees that reached the heavens, and they had everything to themselves for one crystalline moment.

The moment couldn't have been more obvious.

Wrapping her arms around Michelle, Shannon confessed she'd been teasing her the entire trip.

"Look down," she told her, revealing an engagement ring, then asking, "Will you marry me?"

"Really?!" Michelle answered.

"Really?! Really?!"

And on Sunday, March 13, 2016, the couple exchanged vows in Big Sur. "We invited our immediate family to celebrate with us in the beautiful redwood groves of Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park," shares Michelle.

"Our close friend, Caitlin Brown, officiated our ceremony," adds Shannon.

"We chose this location because when we were backpacking in Big Sur during the spring of 2015, we fell in love with the →



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WEDDING GUIDE

continued from previous page

area," explains Michelle. "We also wanted to have a small wedding in the mountains during Shannon's spring break in March. While discussing our options, Big Sur immediately came to mind."

"It was a beautiful outdoor ceremony, even though it rained the whole time," laughs Shannon.

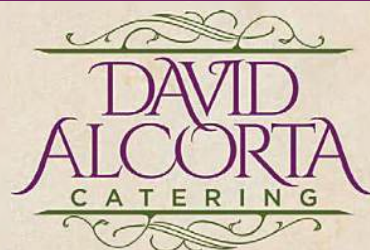
"We wouldn't trade the experience for anything," Michelle agreed wholeheartedly. "The rain brought out the best in everyone. When you have an outdoor event, the key is: be flexible."

"It rained so hard that our original location, Pfeiffer Beach, closed," adds Shannon. "We had no cell phone service in the mountains, so we just had to trust that our families would follow our instructions and meet us at our backup location in the redwoods."

With relief still in her voice, she adds, "Everyone made it on time, and the rain made the ceremony even more memorable and special for us."

"We even decided to wear bright pink trail-runner shoes because of the muddy conditions. They were conveniently hidden under our dresses," giggles Michelle.

continued on page 82



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WEDDING GUIDE

continued from page 80

Each raindrop and happy tear was captured by LGBT-friendly Viera Photographics, a firm that works all over California. "They were amazing," exclaims Shannon. "We felt like we were hanging out with friends, not strangers."

Shannon and Michelle briefly honeymooned at Ventana Resort and Spa in Big Sur, California, where they enjoyed the resort's chic outdoor vibe with five-star amenities.

"But our *real* honeymoon will happen this July, when we take a road trip around the USA with our dog, Iggy!" shares Michelle.

Henry V. Thiel is a principal with The Epicurean Publicist. He loves wedding cake.



A Little Rain Never Hurt Anyone

The weather didn't stop Caruso (l) and Hodgins from having the perfect wedding ceremony in the redwoods of Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park.

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We Are Orlando

At the big vigil at the Dr. Phillips Center in Orlando honoring the victims of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Florida on June 12, 2016.

Barbara Poma (Pulse owner)

(Billboard, 6/22/16, Tyler Gray)

On the public's response since the shooting:

I can't tell you how many stories I have read over this week that have told me that Pulse was the first gay bar they ever went to, how they were shaking in fear, how they weren't out to their families, and how Pulse welcomed them. People who aren't out, people who are exploring, people who are transitioning need a place to do this without judgment; they need acceptance. This is what Pulse was always about.



We Will Always Love You

Dolly Parton (seen here on CNN): when she has to pee, where is she gonna go?

▲ Dolly Parton

(CNN Money, 6/3/16)

On HB2, the bathroom law:

I think everybody should be treated with respect. I don't judge people. I try not to get too caught up in the controversy of things. I hope that everybody gets a chance to be who and what they are. I just know if I have to pee, I'm going to pee—I don't care where it's going to be.

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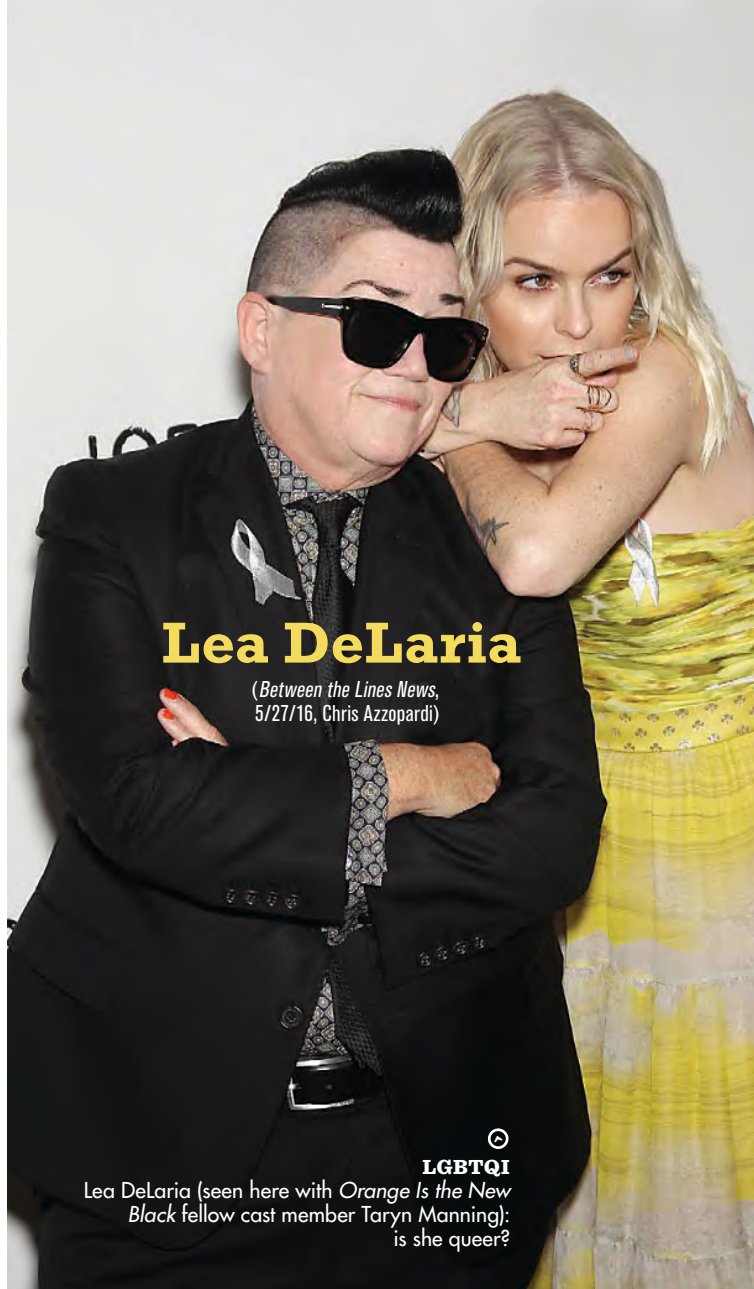
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Lea DeLaria

(Between the Lines News, 5/27/16, Chris Azzopardi)

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LGBTQI

Lea DeLaria (seen here with *Orange Is the New Black* fellow cast member Taryn Manning): is she queer?

DELARIA - MARION CURTIS/NETFLIX; TAMBOR - JASON MERRITT/GETTY IMAGES FOR TURNER; ORLANDO - VICTORIA KENNEDY/CNN; PARTON - SCREEN GRAB FROM CNN

Chris Azzopardi: You famously dropped out of Michigan Womyn's Music Festival in 2014 because of their womyn-born-womyn stipulation, which discourages transgender people from attending. And you've spoken many times on the topic of "infighting," saying once, "We queers need to find a way to stop this fighting and work together towards our common goal." In the years since canceling your Mich-Fest appearance, have you seen any noticeable change regarding the unification of the queer community?

Lea DeLaria: Absolutely not. I speak at universities now because apparently I'm a role model. [Laughs] It just makes me laugh. Like, honey, if I'm a role model, queers are in a lot of f--king trouble. I speak about it a lot, but when we come together and don't infight, we get a lot done. That's how we defeated DOMA, that's how we defeated Prop 8, that's why the SCOTUS decision happened.

But in the midst of all that, I still find myself constantly dealing with the more conservative queers and the more radical queers like myself, and as I said in the statement when I pulled out of MichFest: how f--ked up is it when I'm the voice of reason? ... When Lea DeLaria and Larry Kramer are the voices of reason, people are f--ked, 'cause we're the two biggest bitches on the planet! We're little brats. We scream and yell until people listen to us. That's who we are.

This is the biggest issue we have in the queer community to date, and it will continue to be the biggest issue until we learn to accept our differences, and that's the issue. And part of me believes that this inclusivity of calling us the LGBTQQTY-whatever-LMNOP tends to stress our differences. And that's why I refuse to do it. I say queer. Queer is everybody.

Jeffrey Tambor ▶

(The Hollywood Reporter, 6/10/16, Lacey Rose)

On his role as Maura Pfefferman in the Amazon series *Transparent*: I'm a cisgender male actor assaying this role, and so it's a great privilege and a huge responsibility that, even in the third season, just keeps tapping at me. It really weighs on me. And I do have a responsibility. I'm having these conversations in life, people coming up to me. I remember a gentleman on the plane, and he was all Zegna'd and cufflinked and coiffed, and he [wagged his finger at me], and I thought, "Here it comes." Then he put his hand in mine and said: "You. Thank you for introducing me to a subject I had no knowledge of." And I went, "Well, there's the revolution." I've had the other conversation, too, where I say, "You can't say that word, you can't talk like that."

©
Acting Responsibly

Jeffrey Tambor (seen here with the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Male in a Comedy Series for *Transparent* on January 30, 2016): is there a revolution?





'Margarita with a Straw'

A sensitive portrait of disability and the sexual awakening of a young bisexual woman.

Those People



On Manhattan's gilded Upper East Side, a young painter, Charlie (Jonathan Gordon), finds the man of his dreams in an older pianist from across the globe, Tim (Haaz Sleiman). If only Charlie weren't secretly in love with his own manipulative best friend, Sebastian (Jason Ralph), who is embroiled in a financial scandal. In the wake of Sebastian's notoriety, their tight-knit group of friends must confront the new realities of adulthood. Wolfe Video (wolfevideo.com). —**Suzie Lynde**

Fever



This psychological thriller follows the lives of two high-school students who impetuously kill a woman. After the murder, they return to school with their upper-class lives seemingly unperturbed by their violent act. The two have gotten away with the crime, until a neighbor makes a connection to them. But will she turn them in or exact justice in her own fashion? Artsploitation Films (artsploitationfilms.com). —**Troy Carrington**

Shonal Bose's 2014 drama *Margarita with a Straw* follows the story of Laila (Kalki Koechlin), a young, adventurous bisexual woman who is undeterred by cerebral palsy.

Laila is a student at India's Delhi University and an aspiring writer who writes lyrics and creates audio tracks for an indie band at school. As is natural for students at this age, Laila becomes curious about sex and begins experimenting by kissing her friend Dhruv (Hussain Dalal) in the campus library. From here, Laila embarks on a journey of self-discovery, independence, and sexual autonomy.

She starts falling for Nima (Tenzin Dalha), the lead singer of the college band, because she misreads Nima's love of her new lyrics and believes he is actually interested in her. Laila is heartbroken after Nima rejects her when he realizes she likes him. However, she quickly overcomes this heartbreak when she receives a letter in the mail telling her she has been awarded a scholarship to attend New York University for a semester. Laila's father (Kuljeet Singh) discourages this venture, but her mother (Revathy) is very supportive and decides to move with Laila to New York. Before they leave for America, there is a beautiful moment where her parents and her brother, Monu (Malhar Khushu), help Laila stand up for a dance.

Living in Manhattan, Laila meets a cute boy named Jared (William Moseley) in her creative-writing



Instant Connection

Laila (Kalki Koechlin, l) and Khanum (Sayani Gupta) form a budding friendship that quickly turns romantic in *Margarita with a Straw*.

class who is assigned to help her with typing. Shortly thereafter, Laila stumbles upon and joins in on her first protest where she meets a blind woman named Khanum (Sayani Gupta). Connecting almost instantly, Laila and Khanum begin seeing each other regularly as friends. However, the girls quickly develop feelings for one another, and they decide to become girlfriends. As she falls in love with Khanum while continuing to feel attracted to men like Jared, Laila is forced to reconcile her attraction to both men and women.

Her identity crisis is further complicated by the hospitalization of her mother and the problems that arise in her relationship with Khanum. Her sexual exploration causes a rift within herself and those she is closest to. Ultimately, it is in the strength of these bonds that she finds the courage to be her true self.

Margarita with a Straw has garnered praise and awards at many film festivals, including the Netpac Award for Best World or International Asian Film Premiere at the To-

ronto International Film Festival, as well as the Best Narrative Feature at the Tel Aviv International LGBT Film Festival. The film has received attention in India and throughout the world for its tender portrayal of taboo subjects rarely depicted on screen. Bose's script approaches the subject with the sensitivity and insight it deserves. Bose's direction and cinematography echoes this sensitivity with beautifully intimate and revealing shots of Laila with the other characters. Particularly impressive is Koechlin's performance in the film. Her delicate portrayal of Laila as a complicated and flawed character earned her the Jury Award for Best Actress at India's National Film Awards.

Margarita with a Straw is an intersectional coming-of-age story that reveals the complexities of learning to love one's self entirely.

Margarita with a Straw is now available on VOD and DVD through Wolfe Video (wolfevideo.com).

B. Root is a frequent contributor to *OutSMART* magazine.



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Summer 2016 Queer Playlist

Rufus Wainwright, Tegan and Sara, Margaret Cho, and more.

Ariana Grande *Dangerous Woman*



Ariana Grande's third full-length album had an innovative rollout that included one song per day being

revealed on Apple Music and an intimate performance at the Angel Orensanz Center in New York that debuted on VEVO. Her influence continues to grow in 2016, being prominently featured in *Billboard* magazine and named one of *Time* magazine's "Most Influential People." *Dangerous Woman* follows previous *Billboard* #1 albums *Yours Truly* and the platinum-selling and Grammy-nominated *My Everything*. Republic Records (republicrecords.com). —*Suzie Lynde*

St. Lucia *Matter*

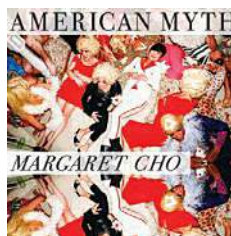
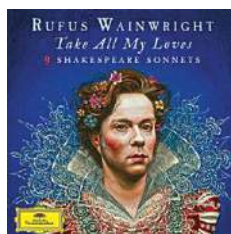


Emotional moments are Jean-Philip Grobler's specialty. Under the name St. Lucia, he crafts the kind of high-

energy, artful pop that tugs at the heartstrings as it pulls you onto the dance floor. *Matter*, his second full-length release, grapples with themes of getting older while battling insecurity and self-doubt. In addition to electric guitar and explosive percussion parts, nearly every track on the album contains horns and multi-part vocal arrangements whose sophistication reflects Grobler's lifetime of music study. Columbia Records (columbiarecords.com). —*Troy Carrington*

Those who count themselves as **Rufus Wainwright** fans know that we were going to lose him to opera sooner or later. All of the signs were there, beginning with the song "Damned Ladies" on his brilliant 1997 eponymous debut album. Wainwright often discussed his love—or rather, *obsession*—with opera, so none of this should come as a surprise. In 2015, a double-disc recording of Wainwright's 2009 opera *Prima Donna* was released, making it more or less official. Or did it? ***Take All My Loves: 9 Shakespeare Sonnets*** (Deutsche Grammophon), Wainwright's musical observance of the Bard's 400th anniversary year, does something remarkable. It seamlessly combines Wainwright's opera fixation with his pop passion, as he set selected sonnets to music. In addition to Wainwright himself, the album features a stellar array of guest vocalists, including opera diva Anna Prohaska, singing sister Martha Wainwright, Florence Welch (of Florence and the Machine), as well as spoken passages performed by Carrie Fisher, William Shatner, Helena Bonham Carter, Siân Phillips, and others. Perhaps most amazing is the song "Unperfect Actor (Sonnet 23)," in which Wainwright rocks harder on record than ever before.

Why be wrought when you can be overwrought? That's a question that **Michael Longoria** might have asked himself as he set out to record ***Broadway Brick by Brick*** (Broadway Records). Just when it seemed the cabaret community had turned a corner by expanding its palette to include interpretations of more daring modern material, along comes this affected and clichéd offering from "Jersey Boy" Longoria. Seemingly unaware that love is a four-letter word, not a four-syllable



word, Longoria—who, granted, has a pleasing voice—takes to the recording studio like it's the mat at a gymnastics event. Even more disappointing is the uninventive choice of material, as if there wasn't a decent song from a Broadway musical after *Sunset Boulevard* or *Mamma Mia!* from which to choose. Check again, mister! Longoria does deserve praise for singing some songs that were traditionally sung by women, including "Tell Me on a Sunday" (from *Song and Dance*), "As If We Never Said Goodbye" (from *Sunset Boulevard*), and "Music and the Mirror" (from *A Chorus Line*). Closing the disc with "Over the Rainbow" was a wise choice, as it gave Longoria the opportunity to clear out before someone dropped a house on him, too.

Fast Forward (E-A-R Music/Edel), queer singer/songwriter **Joe Jackson's** first album of original material in seven years, is his best and most consistent disc of the 21st century. Jackson, who along with Elvis Costello and Graham Parker, arrived among the first wave of punk/new-wave artists, was a synth-pop pioneer (remember "Steppin' Out"?), composed memorable movie scores (check out *Mike's Murder* and *Tucker*), and dabbled in jazz and symphonic music over the course of his lengthy career. Separated into four sections based on where the songs were recorded—New York, Amsterdam, Berlin, and New Orleans—the 16 selections are fine examples of Jackson's versatility. His covers of songs by Television ("See No Evil") and German cabaret composer Peter Kreuder ("Good Bye Johnny") co-exist comfortably alongside top-notch originals, including the title tune, "Ode to Joy," "Poor Thing," "If It Wasn't for You," "A Little Smile," "The Blue Time," and "Keep on Dreaming."

It's incredible and exciting to think this, but each new **Tegan and Sara**

album has become its own sort of event. Since the release of the queer-twin duo's major-label debut in 2000, their popularity has continued to mount as they evolve their definitive folk-pop style into the current electro-powered sound.

Love You to Death (Rhino/WB), propelled by the insanely irresistible first single "Boyfriend," spins around like '80s nostalgia filtered through the 20-teens. There's so much to love to death here, including the desirable "Stop Desire," the dramatic "White Knuckles," the dazzling piano and vocal break-up ballad "100X" and its flip-side "B/W/U," the retro strut of "U-Turn," and the swirly dream of "Hang On to the Night."

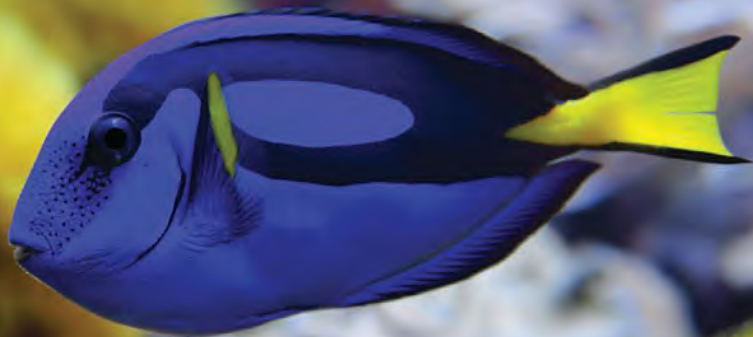
Is there anything **Margaret Cho** can't do? She's a comedian, a writer, an actress, a burlesque artist, an activist, and a fashionista. In 2010 she expanded her reach with her music album *Cho Dependent* and has just released its highly anticipated follow-up **American Myth** (margarecho.com). On the whole, the album, a collaboration with lesbian singer/songwriter Garrison Starr, feels like a more serious effort, beginning with the way that Cho has become a better singer. Opener "Come with Me," as well as "Moran & Miiri," "Anna Nicole," and "Daddy, I Miss You," also reflect a more fundamental change in her approach to making music. Don't misunderstand—Cho still knows how to make us laugh, as she does on "Ron's Got a DUI" (which also has a sober side to it), "Fat Pussy," and "We So Worry." Brava, diva!

Heather Mae is not the first queer woman of size to address issues of body image. Beth Ditto and Mary Lambert get some of the credit for paving the way. Nevertheless, Heather Mae's self-empowering five-song EP **I Am Enough** (heathermae.net) is also deserving of attention. To her credit, she's got talent to burn, both as a singer and a songwriter. "Broken" but with her "feet still on the ground," as she sings in "Hero," she vows to get crowned and be the hero in her own story. The brilliant title tune, with its "turn around" advice to detractors, as well as the anthemic "Stand Up," on which she's accompanied by a "bad-ass chorus," are also noteworthy. This is the kind of EP that will surely leave listeners longing for more from the singer.

Filmed in October 2015 at Como, Italy's Teatro Sociale, **Sinfonia Pop** (Eagle Vision), the live concert video by **Mika**, features a broad selection of songs from all four of the queer singer/songwriter's major-label recordings, including his latest, 2015's *No Place in Heaven*, as well as a couple of non-LP singles. If you've ever had the pleasure of attending a Mika concert, you know he's a first-rate showman. Even in such a sophisticated setting, backed up by a full orchestra, the buoyant energy of Mika's music comes through. DVD bonus features include interviews with Mika and conductor Simon Leclerc.

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

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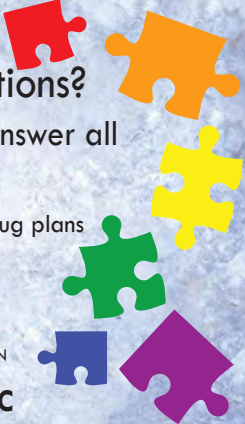
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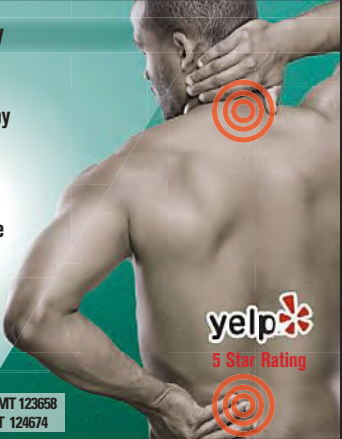
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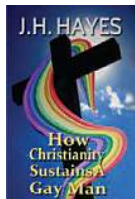
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'Fair Play'

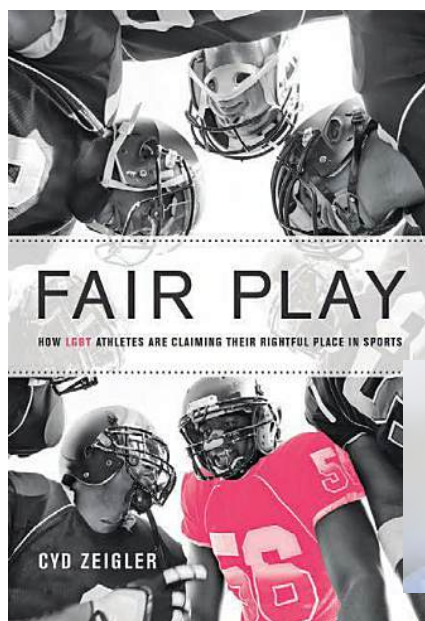
How LGBT athletes are claiming their rightful place in sports.

How Christianity Sustains a Gay Man J.H. Hayes

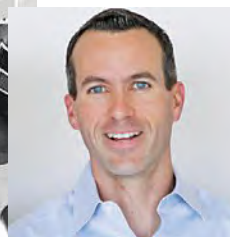


"I had a terrific childhood before sex came to complicate everything," writes author J.H. Hayes in a summary of his book. Raised in a Southern Baptist household near Houston, Hayes realized that he was gay

during middle and high school; struggling with religious guilt, he escaped through drugs. Hayes recounts the dizzying years of 1975-'82: an arrest, a trip to rehab, his meeting and marrying a woman he met there, his college affair with a married man, his coming out in 1980, and his subsequent divorce a year later. From there, he chronicles his work as an AIDS activist, his second marriage (to his husband), and his relationship with his mother, a devout Baptist who grew to accept her son. Hayes wrote the book in the hope that others will learn from his experiences—which, judging from his synopsis, are many and memorable. Club Lighthouse Publishing (clublighthousepublishing.com). More at jhayes.com. —Terrance Turner



Fair Play
by Cyd Zeigler
2016, Akashic Books
(akashicbooks.com)
207 pages • \$15.95



Cyd Zeigler

As long as your team wins—that's all that matters, isn't it? Just that they win? You don't care what they ate for breakfast. You don't give a rat what they weighed this morning. And, as in the new book *Fair Play* by Cyd Zeigler, you don't care who they sleep with.

Less than a generation ago, if a professional athlete came out publicly as gay, it was cause for controversy (at best) and harassment (at worst), from the stands and in the locker room. In today's arena, however, gay and lesbian athletes enjoy wider acceptance from fans and followers; sadly, the intolerance that formerly came from the bleachers can now just as easily come from behind the scenes.

It used to start early, and while there are still some problems with hazing in high school locker rooms, Zeigler indicates that many public schools are more accepting of gay athletes and staff than they've ever been. High schools are also less willing to put up with incidents of homophobia.

In college sports, though, something different emerges: teasing (which is mentally depleting, despite it being ostensibly meant for bonding), hazing (of which Zeigler demands an end), antigay rhetoric at religious institutions, and general torment are all practiced and are psychically hurtful to anyone, but particularly to gay athletes.

Conversely, lesbian and transgender athletes' experiences almost bookend those of gay men. On one hand, lesbian athletes receive unusually high fan-tolerance, which may be because higher numbers of lesbian athletes are matter-of-factly uncloseted; indeed, when a female athlete comes out as lesbian, it's rarely newsworthy anymore. On the far other hand, many transgender athletes still receive fierce backlash.

Yet, times are changing—albeit gradually. Teammates and staff who voice homophobia

might now receive punishment along with negative fan reaction. Mere humanity makes a difference, too. The biggest change, though, seems to come from fans, and from their quiet acknowledgement that a player's sexuality doesn't affect the enjoyment of the game itself.

With bullying being such a hot topic in schools and the media these days, it was only a matter of time (and it's about time) that someone tackled this subject in the context of the sporting world. Even so, I was rather disappointed to see that *Fair Play*, although its subtitle indicates that it's about LGBT athletes, is more about gay males in sports. I suppose one could argue that most professional sports are male-dominated, but Zeigler—though he admits what his focal point is—truly needed more about lesbian, bisexual, and transgender players.

Still, it's hard not to be fascinated with what's definitely *not* your usual game coverage. Zeigler is a nationally known sports writer, and this book is filled with insider peeks, big-name examples, astonishing incidents, and up-and-comer encouragement. Therefore, what's *in* this book ultimately overshadows what's *not*, and it becomes something that I think will be enlightening for fans both straight and gay. Despite the limited coverage that left me wanting, if you're an arm-chair cheerleader, then, *Fair Play* will really score.

Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was three years old, and she lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 11,000 books.

who live and work there.” Houston scored a 48 out of 100, in sharp contrast to the perfect scores of 100 for Dallas and Austin, a 99 for Fort Worth, and a 90 for San Antonio. This dismal grade—from the largest LGBT civil rights organization in the United States—cast a pall over Houston’s image as a diverse and accepting place.

Luckily, a project has emerged that presents a more positive view of the city. The Downtown District, formed to revitalize urban areas in Houston, has launched a colorful new street banner program. Titled “Figurative Poetics,” the project aims to achieve the vision of Downtown Management District director Bob Eury: “This beautification project speaks to Houston’s diversity and our progressive nature while giving everyone something to smile about.”

The project was developed by Houston-based design, art, and communications outlet Core Design Studio. They conceived the idea for 575 banners that combined poetry, quotations, and lyrics with images of life in downtown Houston. “We used a singular frame around one word to punctuate and create a more immediate secondary narrative describing the city,” Krathaus said. “Collectively, the text reveals Houstonians as humorous, with a hint of cynicism that’s punctuated by a positive outlook,” added Fiona McGettigan, Core co-founder.

The participants quoted include Beyoncé, Neil Armstrong, *Texas Monthly* executive editor Mimi Swartz, *Houston Chronicle* columnist Lisa Gray, and elementary-school students (courtesy of a partnership with community organization Writers in the Schools). The project also involved the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (HSPVA) and the Creative Writing Department at the University of Houston. The posters are displayed in sports venues (Minute Maid Park), government sites (City Hall), health hubs (St. Joseph Medical Center), the Theater District, and on Main Street.

“The series portrays the Bayou City as an energetic destination that values creativity, diversity, and individuality, offering commuters and passersby a patchwork of thought-provoking messages that encourages them to muse on what it means to be a Houstonian,” the press release said. Angie Bertinot, director of marketing and communications at the Downtown District, added that “the banner program is meant to enliven and beautify the streetscape. . . . The end result is not only colorful and vibrant, but meaningful! We think it very much supports the image and ‘brand’ of Houston.”

Best of all, Bertinot says that Houstonians have welcomed the new project: “We’ve had a great response by the public, including Mayor Turner, who told me he loved the new banners!”

Terrance Turner is an editorial intern for OUTSMART magazine



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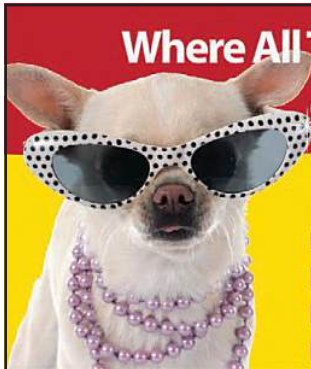
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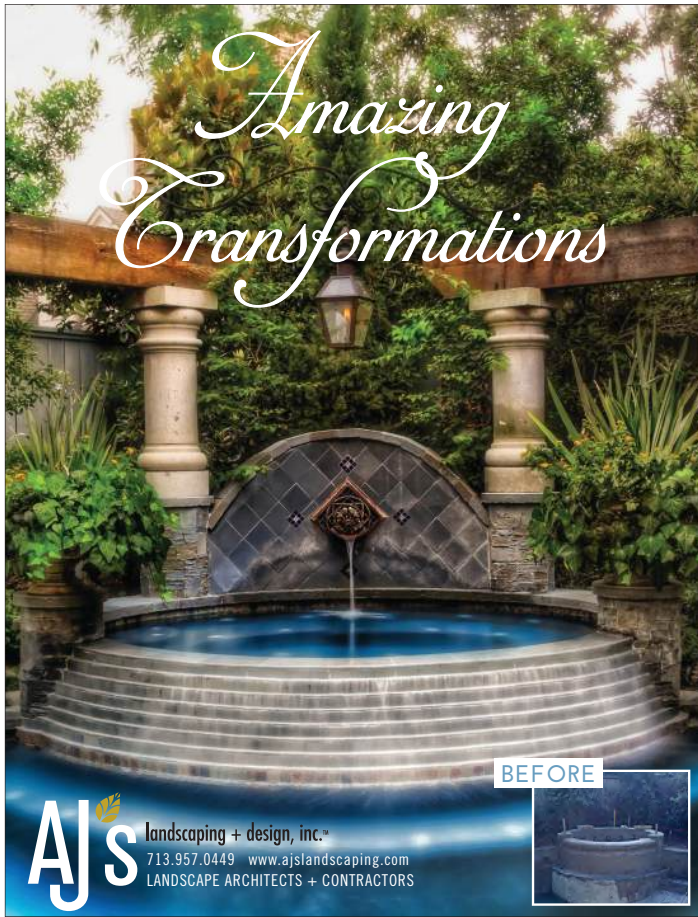


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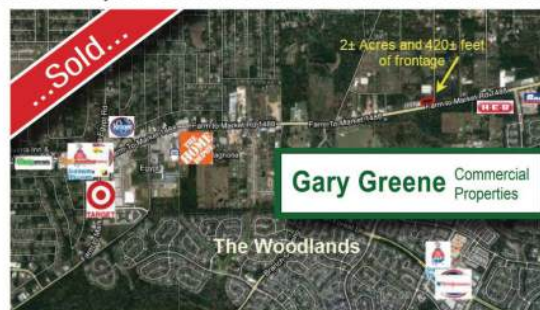
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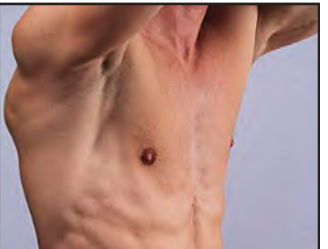
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Houston

13 ENTERTAINMENT

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BLUR

This multi-level dance club features a patio upstairs lounge and balconies that overlook Pacific St. Ladies enjoy Wet and Wild Wed., 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, 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 • club-2020houston.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.

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HOUSTON EAGLE

Part of the Eagle worldwide family, originating in 1970, this neighborhood watering spot is the place to cruise and dance. Featuring DJs on the weekends and the birthplace of the hit remix team Dirty Disco. Multiple patios and always a party. Featuring a 29-degree pour and 12 beers on tap. The inside leather shop is open the same hours as the bar. M-F 4pm-2am, Sat. & Sun. noon-2am. 611 Hyde Park Blvd. • houstoneagle.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 Athena on Friday and award-winning DJ Eddie E on Saturday. Open Thurs.-Sat. 2306 Genesee St. • meteorhouston.com • 713.521.0123.

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

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PEARL BAR

This LGBT-friendly lounge is open under "familiar" management in the Washington corridor. Daily highlights range from open mic night to steak night to appearances by DJ Kittie and DJ Ben Phoenix from KRBE. Drink specials and more. 4216 Washington • pearlhouston.com.

RICH'S HOUSTON

Houston's most iconic and largest LGBT dance club, with multiple levels featuring a video/show bar and a private VIP lounge. Originally built to be the Studio 54 of the South, Rich's boasts world-renowned DJs and entertainers. No cover before 10:30 p.m. 2401 San Jacinto • 281.846.6685 • richsnightclub.com.

THE RIPCORD

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.

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.

SOUTH BEACH

This mega-dance club is a frequent winner of OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest awards, with DJ Eddie E 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.SOBIE.

TC'S SHOWBAR

With the longest daily happy hours in Montrose (8am-10pm), it's no wonder this neighborhood watering hole is so popular. Owner Tim Pugh says TC's has built quite a reputation as the perfect spot to celebrate special occasions. Other big draws are the drag shows Wednesday-Sunday and karaoke Monday & Wednesday. 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.

VIVIANA'S

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Galveston

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ROBERT'S LAFITTE

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THIRD COAST DOWNTOWN BAR

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Goodbye to June

Hello to July.

Happy Independence Day! This should be a better month than June, especially in the first half of the month. Mars, planet of action and risk, is no longer retrograde, so we will no longer feel as though we are walking through a bowl of sticky oatmeal after July 5. The first half of the month is a better time for decision-making, but the entire month is an active period. • Good days to get out and have fun are the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 19th, 20th, and 27th—all positive days this month. Days to avoid the drama are the 7th, 11th, 16th, and 29th.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). Our homes and families are uppermost on the agenda this month. You may be having the Independence Day celebration at your house! You will want to make your nest a more comfortable place. This is also a good time to buy property or consider relocating. You will really need a break from your routines during the weekend of the 16th and 17th. You are more playful toward the end of the month, but keep on your health routine!

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). The cows and bulls are communicating more clearly during July, and adding more organization to their daily lives. You continue to be in a creative and playful time through the end of August. Relationships definitely need some attention this month. This can be a great time to get out and renew that commitment. Or if you are single, get out there and meet someone new. Home and family are more of a focus as we move toward the end of the month.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). Your sluggish journey and efforts get a break, and things seem to move a bit more easily this month. You may have wanted to take some action last month, but you may have seemed very stuck. Pay attention to your resources this month. You are evaluating your sense of self-worth. This is a good month to get your finances in order. Relationships take the spotlight at the end of the month, as they need some TLC.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). This is your yearly solar cycle or birthday period. You are ending the cycle from last year and bringing some situations to an end. As you establish new plans and goals for your own personal new year, you are



At the end of the month, we pay more attention to our money.

LEO (July 23–August 22). In the first half of the month, you are in a time of rest and retreat. Lots of your energy has been focused on your family and home over the last month. Even though your children bring you pleasure and pride, they are more problematic this month. You will need to re-establish your boundaries to give them a clear message. This may also be true with people who treat you like their own children. By the end of the month, you have more energy, focus, and direction as you come out of your retreat time. Continue to keep an eye on your spending.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). The Virgoans are a lot more social this month. This is a great time to involve yourself with a community or business organization. Your long-term plans include continuing to focus on doing more with your career and getting your home in shape. This is a good time to consider more education or an advanced degree. Family issues are calling you to take more of a leadership role. If you take the job, you only have to satisfy yourself and not them. Toward the end of the month, you are ready for some R&R!

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). Career and long-term security are on your menu this month. This is a good month to step up and take on a leadership role at your place of business. This could even be a time when you feel the need to start your own business. Friends can be especially helpful with any task you are undertaking this month. Joining a business organization is also a good way to promote yourself and your business. Keep your boundaries strong when you are around your family during the middle of the month.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). This month is much better for taking a laid-back approach to things. The beginning of the month can be a good time for some vacation. You are still working on a long-term plan to create some financial security. Funds may feel tight this month, but you are actually just more aware of what's going on. Group activity is very constructive, as long as you don't take on too

much. By midmonth, you are back to your natural "take charge" self. The end of the month is a good time to start a new project or make some investments.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). The archers have been in "analysis paralysis" for the last month, but now you are feeling some strong forward motion. This strong surge of self-confidence gets even stronger as we get to the end of the month. You are definitely in a time of long-term planning. You will begin to act on what you have been thinking about this month, and next month as well. Your partnerships will need some renewal of trust to reinforce that emotional connection. You are not as flexible as usual, and you have little time for people's B.S.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). Relationships are the center of attention for you this month. If you are in a relationship, you will want to spend more time with your partner. If you are single, you may feel a strong urge to get out there and meet someone new. Your work and career activity gets busier, especially toward the end of this month. It could be even busier in August. This could be a time when you are considering starting your own company. Don't overload your schedule this month—that would be very easy to do.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). You are in an organizing and cleaning mood for most of this month. You will want to get your home and workplace looking as neat as possible. You will also pay more attention to what you eat. You haven't had much enthusiasm or energy for work, but that should be coming back after July 5. You will feel more like starting those projects. This is also a good time to look for a new job, or to take on a stronger role at work. By the end of the month, relationships become the center of attention. This can be a good time to renew your commitment.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). After the tough month you went through in June, July should feel like a cakewalk. July is the month to give legs to all of the good ideas that were brewing in your head during June. You will be more confident at work, especially toward the end of the month. You are feeling more creative and just not experiencing the blocks you had felt previously. Partnerships could be working better, and they could be more helpful to you than usual. Toward the end of the month, you are in a good time to get into a better workout and diet regimen. You will find the clarity that you are looking for.

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Resurrection
Metropolitan Community Church
Sunday Worship 9 & 11 am • Nursery Available • Handicap Accessible
11 am • Spanish & Deaf Interpretation, Youth & Teen Program
2025 West 11th Street, Houston 77008 • 713-861-9149
www.ResurrectionMCC.org



OUT IN HOUSTON



Pride Houston held the season finale of Pride Superstar Season 10 on June 22 at Meteor Lounge. Pictured are Pride Superstar winner **Christina Wells** and Pride Houston CEO **Frankie Quijano**.



Omega House held its volunteer appreciation social on June 18. Pictured are **Deloris Scott, Denis Kelly, Sandy Stacy, Rodney Mills, and Marguerite Maddalino**.



The Timeless History Gala benefitting GCAM was held on June 4 at the Four Seasons hotel. Pictured are (front row) **Judy Reeves, Cristina Martinez, Karen Morry**, (back row) **Lloyd Powell, Rick Hurt, Robert Conn, and Jason Gallegos**.



On June 2, the Art for Hope fundraiser benefitting Bering Omega was held at Clé Houston. Pictured are **Paul Pettie, Patrice Williams, Adrian Perez, Ashlee Elmore, Kermit Eisenhut, Joe Fuentes, and Justin Garcia**.



On June 19, Tony's Corner Pocket held its "The Orlando Strip" fundraiser for the victims of the Pulse shooting. Pictured are **Tony Vaccaro, An'Marie Gill, and the dancers**.



On June 18, **Jovon Alfion B. "LuJack" Tyler** held his 40th birthday celebration at BradshawCarter. Pictured are **Kathy Hubbard, Peggy Smith, Marquitta Parker, Tyler, former mayor Annise Parker, and Daniela Parker**.



Escapist artist **Hugo Perez** held his opening reception on June 16 at John Ross Palmer Art. Pictured are **John Palmer, Juanita Mayora, Perez, Alma Rivas, and Ryan Lindsay**.



The ActOUT performance of *Born Yesterday* was held on June 16 at the Alley Theatre. Pictured are **Larry Haser, Deborah Oakley, Shelley Finley, Lauren Pelletier, and Robert McMillan**.



On June 18, the Montrose Center held its "Transgender in Texas: Managing the Harsh Rhetoric of Today & Tomorrow in an Era of Bathroom Politics" event. Pictured are **Kent Loftin, Dr. Glenda Russell, Brad Pritchett, Wendy Gwynn, Carlotta Maxwell, and Jake Maxwell**.



On June 11, the Montrose Center held its "Transgender Day of Resources & Healthy Living" event. Pictured are event organizer **Dee Dee Watters** and participants.



On June 4, the Lesbian Health Initiative held its 2016 Spring Health Fair at Houston Area Community Services. Pictured are **Todd Richard, Keri Sprung, Fran Watson, Dr. Stephanie Coulter, Kala Winkelman, Aurora Harris, Dr. MaryAlice Cowan, Cynthia Conner, Laurel Gravensen, and Aundrea Louis**.



An interfaith service for Orlando was held on June 13 at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church. Pictured are clergy and participants.

RICH'S RESURRECTION



SATURDAY
JULY 16TH

DJ MICHAEL TANK

10 PM-2 AM

RESIDENT DJs



DJ GERALDO



DJ UKEMI



DJ ATHENZ



DJ JOE ROSS

Wednesday Latin Night begins July 20th with DJ Geraldo
Thursday DJ Ukemi 10-2 | Friday DJ Atenz 10-2 | Saturday DJ Joe Ross 10-2



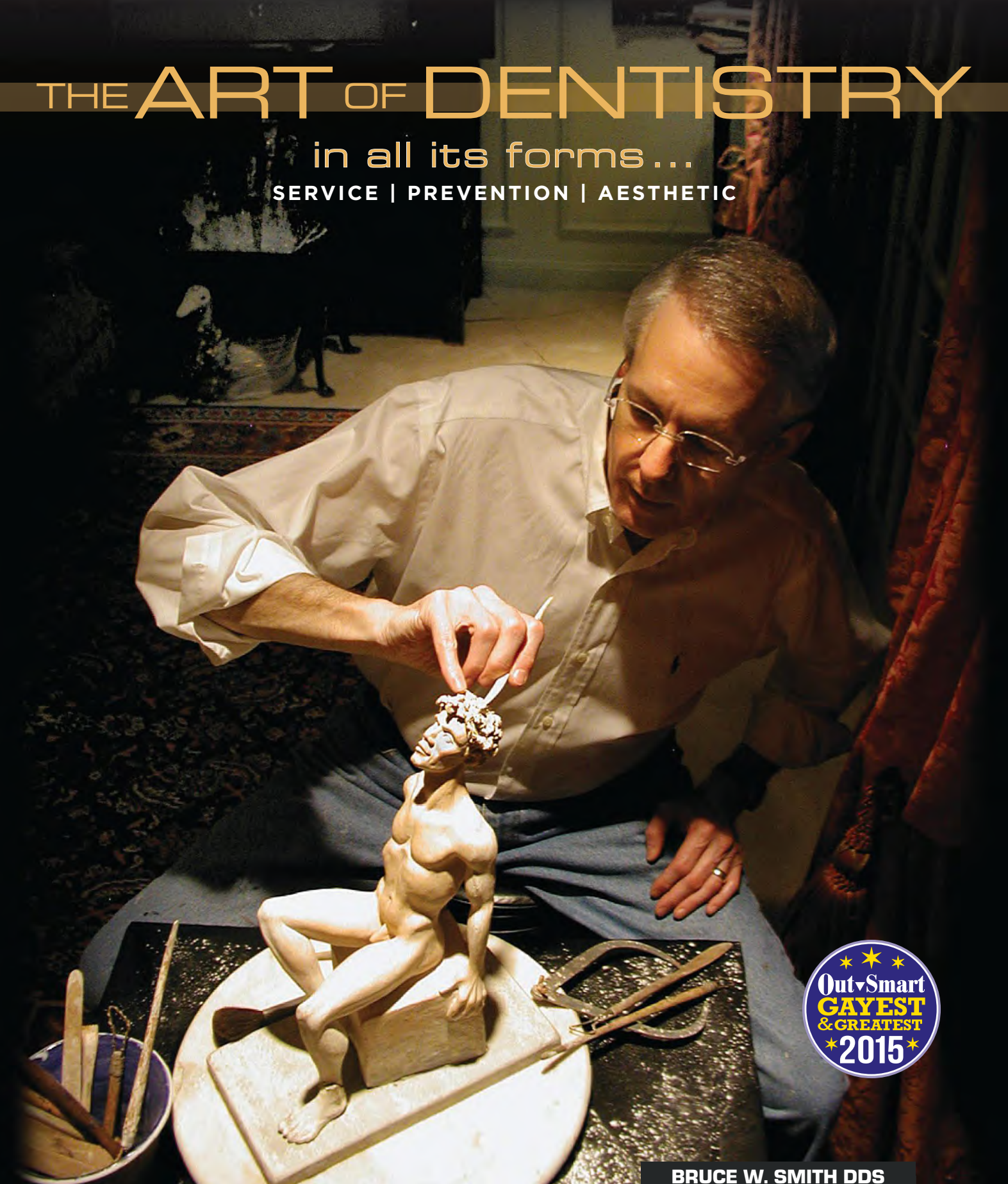
Thursday & Friday - DJ Johnny Vibe in The Video Lounge



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