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DEC. '22

HOUSTON'S LGBTQ MAGAZINE

2022 in REVIEW

Ryan Leach's
Winners & Losers

Pg.38

THE YEAR in PHOTOS

Dalton DeHart's
Highlights

Pg.49

EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW

JIM PARSONS

The former Houstonian
stars in the holiday
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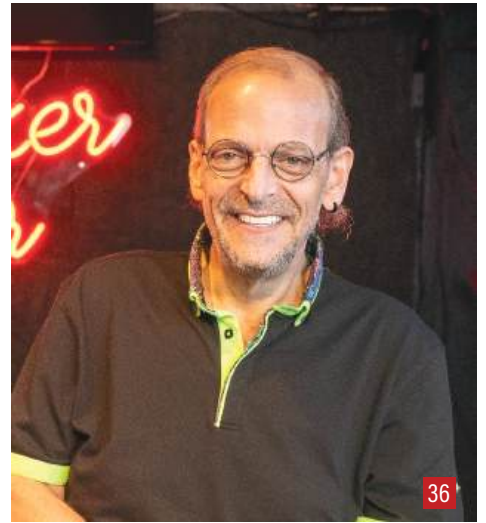
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JIM PARSONS

The former Houstonian stars in the holiday love story *Spoiler Alert* (Pg. 42)
Photography by Jesse Dittmar @jessedittmar

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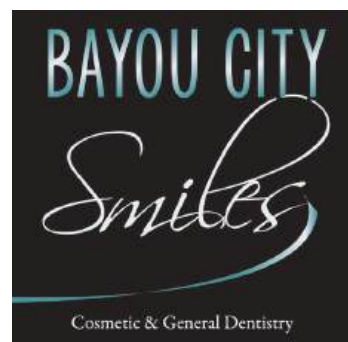
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Well, we made it. 2022 is almost a wrap—and what a year it's been! To say it's been a roller coaster ride is putting it mildly. Just this month, we've gone from the darkest low, with the horrific massacre at Club Q in Colorado Springs, to the remarkable political high of the US Senate passing the bipartisan Respect for Marriage Act. Nationally, the predicted "Red Wave" failed to materialize as Team Blue retained control of the Senate and lost the House by only the slimmest of margins. Closer to home, Texas remains in Republican control, and those legislators have been busy filing a flurry of

anti-LGBTQ bills for the upcoming 88th Legislative Session.

In our December cover story, writer Zach McKenzie brings us an exclusive interview with native Houstonian—and gay icon—Jim Parsons about his experience starring in the new feature film *Spoiler Alert*, which opens in theaters this month. The beloved actor emphasizes that this film is one of the most rewarding experiences he's ever had.

As is our holiday tradition, we also present community photographer Dalton DeHart's 2022 photo highlights showcasing the extraordinary diversity of our community. Heartfelt congratulations to Dalton for being honored by The Banner Project, the local

history exhibit that features our past and present LGBTQ heroes.

And don't miss Ryan Leach's annual list of things to keep in 2023 and things we hope to leave behind. What a list it is!

Finally, we mourn the loss of longtime activist and historian Arden Eversmeyer, who leaves behind a legacy of building vital community organizations and publishing inspiring biographies.

This year, perhaps more than ever, I want to personally thank our family of advertisers, without whose financial support none of OUTSMART's work would see the light of day. Many of our advertisers have been with us since our publication debuted in 1994. We encourage you to support these

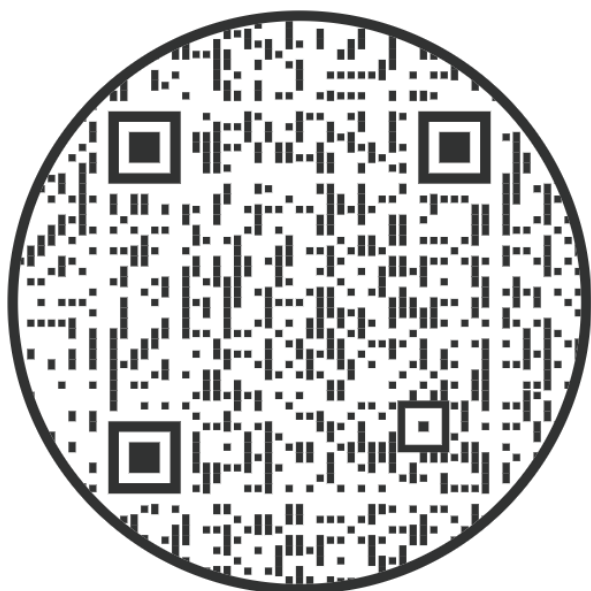
LGBTQ and ally businesses whenever you can.

Next year, OUTSMART begins its 30th year in publishing. Stay tuned for announcements on our upcoming anniversary events and features.

All of us on the OUTSMART team wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy holiday season, and a fruitful and prosperous 2023!



Greg Jeu
Publisher



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QUEER THINGS to DO

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STAGE

December 8

ActOUT AT WHAT-A-CHRISTMAS

Gender-fluid playwright Isaac Gómez (she/they/him) puts a Texas twist on *A Christmas Carol* in the new holiday play *What-a-Christmas* at the Alley Theatre. Margot (played by Briana J. Resa) is working the overnight shift at Whataburger on Christmas Eve. Margot's a bit of a Scrooge, so while she's busy flipping burgers and dealing with grouchy drive-thru customers, Jackee (Margot's best friend who happens to be dead) appears and warns her that ghosts are coming to show her the error

of her ways.

This is a slightly more grown-up version of the traditional *Christmas Carol* (which, of course, is playing on Alley's main stage), but there's still a happy ending.

December 8 is the Alley's ActOUT night for *What-a-Christmas* starting at 6 p.m. The free LGBTQ pre-show party gives ticket-holders a chance to enjoy cocktails, music, and complimentary appetizers while mingling with fellow theater lovers.

tinyurl.com/mwz6c26k



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COMMUNITY

December 2-4

DICKENS ON THE STRAND

Enjoy a weekend of Victorian fun on Galveston Island, with plenty of live entertainment, family programming, and special events for every taste and price range.

tinyurl.com/5cebbz38



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CITY LIGHTS IN DOWNTOWN HOUSTON

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NIGHTLIFE

December 10

NAUGHTY & NOT-SO-NICE ONESIE PARTY

Get an early start on the holidays with NYC DJ Shane Marcus at ReBar. Come in your onesie, pajamas, or lingerie and be ready to dance. Drink specials, bottle service, and VIP areas available. tinyurl.com/3k5dmmdf



STAGE

December 10

DON WE NOW!

Join Pride Chorus Houston for some rousing musical renditions of seasonal favorites. tinyurl.com/4wevch5t

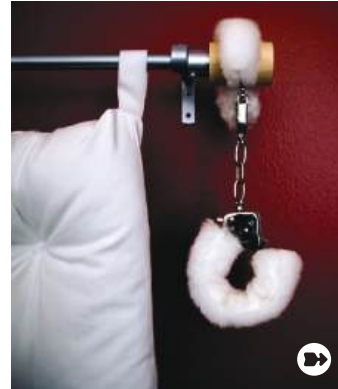


COMEDY

December 11

THE RIOT PRESENTS 'THE GAY AGENDA'

Houston's funniest LGBTQ comedians join forces for a show that hilariously chronicles our similarities and differences. Produced by Brian Gendron and Zach Lyons. tinyurl.com/4x9p8zjx



STAGE

December 11

KINKY CIRCUS - FREAKSHOW

Jesse Salazar and Lady Z's show is a mix of kink and classic circus performances by sexy fire-eaters, aerialists, contortionists, and others. tinyurl.com/3fa7ymcy

STAGE

December 15

OUT@TUTS - MARY POPPINS

Meet the cast and crew of *Mary Poppins* during the Out@TUTS after-show party featuring free bites, drink specials, and mingling with other LGBTQ theater-lovers. tinyurl.com/yt86j8x6



STAGE

December 16

OUT AT THE BALLET - THE NUTCRACKER

Just in time for the holidays, join the Houston Ballet and OUTSMART magazine for Out at the Ballet, a private reception for LGBTQ ballet fans attending Stanton Welch's *The Nutcracker*. tinyurl.com/27kd2rn9



STAGE

December 23

CIRQUE DREAMS HOLIDAZE

This family-friendly blend of Broadway and circus spectacle features aerialists, jugglers, acrobats, and more. tinyurl.com/yc6wtsvf

NIGHTLIFE

December 24

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS EVENT

Snuggle up with your favorite Santa daddies at BUDDY'S on Christmas Eve. Photo-ops with Santa, dancing, and drink specials will all be on tap. tinyurl.com/4seyrxru

NIGHTLIFE

December 31

SOBER EVE HTX

Start the New Year without a hangover at this Washington Avenue hotspot featuring mocktails, a coffee bar, a great DJ light show, and a confetti drop at midnight. tinyurl.com/bd2njyyb

More QUEER THINGS TO DO →

QUEER THINGS to DO

SAVE the DATES

STAGE

January 25-March 5

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL KOOZA

Cirque du Soleil's KOOZA combines acrobatic performance and the art of clowning to tell the story of The Innocent's journey, bringing him into contact with comic characters from an electrifying world full of surprises and thrills.

tinyurl.com/mryprhmm



STAGE

January 3-8

PRETTY WOMAN: THE MUSICAL

This Broadway version of the iconic '90s movie was created by Tony Award-winning director and choreographer Jerry Mitchell, with a score by Bryan Adams and Jim Vallance. Expect romance and lots of fun. tinyurl.com/2p9eyk49



STAGE

February 24-26

THE BEST OF BROADWAY WITH JEREMY JORDAN

The Houston Symphony teams up with Tony and Grammy nominee Jeremy Jordan, who will perform songs from his Broadway roles in *Newsies* and *Waitress*, plus classic selections from *West Side Story*, *Les Misérables*, and others.

tinyurl.com/2p9ftjv4



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SCENE OUT

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On October 22, 2022, Lina Hidalgo and Jane Fonda held a pre-election fundraising event. Pictured are **Lina Hidalgo, Jane Fonda, and Ben Montelbano.**



On October 29, 2022, Phyllis Frye held a Brazos Bookstore signing event for the newly published biography *Phyllis Frye and the Fight for Transgender Rights*. Pictured are **Jerry Simoneaux, Phyllis Frye, and Christopher Bown.**



The Montrose Softball Cub-ee's celebrated their success during a World Series party at BUDDY's on October 30, 2022. Pictured are team members.



On November 2, 2022, the Harris County Democratic Lawyers Association held its luncheon featuring Mustafa Tameez, at Cadillac Bar & Grill. Pictured are **Luis Adame, Emma Brockway, Mustafa Tameez, Michael Collins, Marilyn Burgess, and Steve Duble.**



The Out@TUTS after-party for *The Secret of My Success* was held in the Hobby Center's Diana Restaurant on November 3, 2022. Pictured are members of the cast and crew.



On November 4, 2022, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce held its First Friday Meet & Eat at Pho 518. Pictured are **Kristi Marchand, Latasha Kendrick-Palmer, and Rica Kendrick-Palmer.**



On November 6, 2022, the Diana Foundation hosted a drag charity show benefiting the Montrose Center's SPRY seniors program. Pictured are **Alexye'us Paris and Howard Huffstutler.**



Roger Woest presented his show to honor Ovation's owner Frank Tilton, for his support of local musicians and to celebrate his 91st birthday on Nov. 6, 2022. Pictured are **Jerry Atwood, Terry Jones, Laura Finger, Daniel Mata, Roger Woest, Deborah Boily, Patti Barnes, Frank Tilton, and Juan Trujillo.**



On November 8, 2022, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce hosted a Brewing Up Business event at Balani Custom Clothiers. Pictured are LGBT Chamber members with the Balani staff.



On November 10, 2022, Texas Pride Impact Funds hosted its five-year anniversary reception and check presentation at Harold's Restaurant. Pictured are **Lisa Madry, Bryan Hlavinka, Jordan Edwards, Joelle Espeut, Hector Ruiz, Robert Salcido Jr., and Petey Makopoulos-Sentfleber.**



Asians and Friends hosted their 30th-anniversary celebration at the Montrose Center on November 12, 2022. Pictured are **Tony Lee, David Tagg, Davis Gunter, Noel Boado, Dick Dicken, Vuthy Heng, Guoxiu Xie, Paul Kern, Christopher Woo, and Richard Hockert.**



On November 12, 2022, Resurrection MCC held a Drag Bingo evening. Pictured are Houston Show Choir members **Carmen Gettit, Van English, Jinga Snapp, Kedric Brown, Christy Irvin, and Ruth Ann Wathen.**



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The memorial to the five Colorado Springs LGBTQ and ally murder victims.



On Saturday night, November 19, I turned to my partner, Alec, and asked if he wanted to go out. There was going to be a big gay dance party at a club in

town. We don't go out a ton these days at our age, but every once in a while we like to see a drag show, or dance with some shirtless men, or just be around other queer people. It's good to charge your batteries by being among your own people, regardless of how old you are. Our community has a way of reinvigorating itself simply by being in close proximity to one another.

We didn't end up going out.

The next morning, we got the news about the attack on Club Q in Colorado Springs—the place where Daniel Davis Aston, Derrick Rump, Kelly Loving, Ashley Paugh, and Raymond Green Vance were murdered, and several others injured, by a man with an AR-15.

Immediately, I flashed back to a similar morning on June 12, 2016, when I learned about the Orlando mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub where 49 people were killed and

It Happened Again

The hate crimes will only solidify our determination to thrive.

By RYAN M. LEACH

Photo by PARKER SEIBOLD/THE GAZETTE VIA AP

many more injured by a man with an AR-15. Then my mind was flooded with memories of all of the violence and murder that has been committed against queer people.

The murders of 375 trans people worldwide in 2021—the deadliest year for the trans community since the previous year, when 350 trans people were murdered.

The brutal 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard—a watershed moment for me, a closeted gay teen, that caused me to stay in the closet longer than I otherwise would have.

The 2014 murders of Britney Cosby and Crystal Jackson in Port Bolivar, Texas. They were a Black, lesbian couple who were beaten

and shot by Cosby's father. I remembered there being several other instances of murder and violence against lesbians in Texas around that time. Most reporting on it erased the queer identities of the women. But I knew.

The deaths of a generation of queer men during the AIDS epidemic, when politicians boasted that AIDS was “killing the right people”—a thought shared by what felt like everyone else in the world.

All of these sad recollections came to me on that November Sunday morning, but I wasn't able to cry. I was numb. I turned to Alec and said, “It happened again.”

He said, “I know.” →

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Daniel Aston,
he/him



Kelly Loving,
she/her



Ashley Paugh,
she/her



Derrick Rump,
he/him



Raymond Green
Vance, he/him

We and all queer people everywhere understand the violence that we might encounter at any moment, around any corner. Whether we live our lives in spite of that or in fear of that, it traumatizes us all. This trauma manifests in many ways. Maybe we avoid holding hands in public. Maybe we deepen our voices. Maybe we try to present more “stealth.” Maybe we just say Fuck it, I am going to do whatever the fuck I want!

These are reactions to our collective queer trauma that our straight counterparts do not have to endure. It is part of our DNA as queer people to understand that violence is part of the package. Even if we grew up in the most affirming home in the most affirming neighborhood

in the most affirming state, we know. We know that the violence will find us, even if it is in the Sunday paper, in a story about something that happened 1,000 miles away.

It goes without saying that this is unacceptable. Everywhere should be safe for all of us, whether we are in Club Q or Pulse, or in our places of worship or at school or in our homes. And yet, these are the places where we typically encounter the worst violent acts.

The blame is appropriately placed on the world that allows these massacres to happen. This includes politicians like Lauren Boebert, a Colorado congresswoman who is one of the most vocal in telling her followers that queer people are to be feared. The blame also lies with

the media outlets that either erase us or mischaracterize us. Even the friendliest accounts of LGBTQ people manage to get it wrong most of the time.

There are many people and institutions to blame, but I know who the blame does not belong to: Us.

We have every right to live and love and be visible—whether we exist quietly or loudly. In rural towns or in urban cities. Whether we live in America, Iran, Russia, Canada, or the Galapagos Islands, we have a right to be there. We have a right to live. We have a right to be safe. Even if nobody else agrees with us. Living out and proud will always be our best weapon in this culture war—a war we did not start but are forced to fight and even die in.

We can't escape the trauma or the violence, but we do have each other. And that will get us through. It always has, and it will be what saves us in the end. It has to.

Ryan Leach is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine. Follow him on Medium at medium.com/@ryan_leach.

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Jean Arden Eversmeyer, 1931–2022

Houston's LGBTQ community loses a pioneering activist and historian.

By SAM BYRD

Photo by ALEX ROSA

Jean Arden Eversmeyer, known as Arden, left us on her final journey on November 14, 2022, in Houston, Texas.

Arden was the eldest daughter of the late Audrey Handeyside and Herbert Edwin Eversmeyer. She was born on April 4, 1931, in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. The family moved to Dallas in 1943. Arden was very close to her father, who passed away in 1954, leaving a large hole in her life. Over time, Arden and her mother became closer. Arden and her sister, Floi, cared for their mother until Audrey's death, at 95, in 2004. Floi passed away, at 73, in 2005.

Arden earned a B.S. degree in health and physical education from Texas State College for Women in 1951, and a master's degree in education from Sam Houston State University in 1964. She worked in Texas public schools for 30 years, teaching health, physical education, driver education, and serving as a secondary-school counselor. She initiated the driver-education program in the Plano public schools in the early 1950s. Arden spent most of her career in the Pasadena and Houston Independent School Districts. She retired in 1981.

In the early 1950s, Arden met her first partner, Tommie Russum, at a softball game in Houston. Arden relocated to Houston to be with Tommie, and they had been together for 33 years when Tommie died of cancer in 1985. In 1987, Arden met Charlotte Avery; they were married in 2008. Arden and Charlotte traveled, worked, and loved together until Charlotte's death on April 4, 2018—Arden's 87th birthday.

Throughout Arden's life, she was a community activist. After Tommie's death, she focused on lesbian rights by building community and developing resources for lesbians, particularly the elderly. She served for six years as a mayoral appointee to the Houston Agency on Aging. In 1987, she founded Lesbians Over Age Fifty (LOAF), a unique social and friendship organization that now has about 150 members.

Concerned that the life stories of lesbians, particularly those born in the early decades of the 20th century, were being lost as those women aged and passed away, Arden



founded the Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project (OLOHP) in an effort to document and honor those life stories. OLOHP celebrated its 24th anniversary in 2022, having interviewed over 800 women. Arden personally interviewed over 200 older lesbians and co-edited two anthologies, *A Gift of Age* (2009) and *Without Apology* (2012), which contain excerpts from the collected interviews. Arden often said, "You don't have to climb Mount Everest to be interesting. Everyone has an amazing story."

Arden served on the steering committee of the national organization Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC) for 14 years—including

7 years as a co-director promoting social justice and equality for elderly lesbians nationwide. Arden's efforts on behalf of older lesbians and the Houston LGBT community resulted in her being recognized locally as well as internationally. She has been featured multiple times in *OUTSMART* magazine as well as in *Texas Woman's Magazine* and US newspapers from Hawaii to New Jersey and Washington State to Florida.

Arden's honors and awards highlights include three proclamations from the City of Houston for community service through LOAF, OLOC, and the OLOHP; the Woman →

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Eversmeyer receiving a City of Houston proclamation from Houston Mayor Annise Parker.

Trailblazer Award from the United States Department of Energy; the Woman of Character, Courage and Commitment award from the National Women's History Project in Washington DC; and the Bold Woman Award presented at the BOLDfest Conference in Vancouver. She was named Honorary Grand Marshal for the Houston Pride parade in 2017. Arden has also been a featured speaker at a Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Pride Month celebration in Washington DC, and a room is named in her honor at Houston's Montrose Center.

Arden established the Arden Eversmeyer Endowed Scholarship in Multicultural Women's and Gender Studies at her alma mater, Texas Woman's University, providing scholarship funds for a master's or doctoral student in the school's Multicultural Women's & Gender Studies program. She donated her substantial library of lesbian books, music, videos, and memorabilia to the Texas A&M University library. She also donated significant LOAF archival records, as well as other activist materials, to the University of Houston. Arden's impact will be felt by generations to come.

Arden is survived by a niece and nephew, three grandnieces, one grandnephew, five great-grandnieces, and many, many dear friends around the world whose lives she touched.

Memorials may be made to The International Documentary Association—OUTWORDS; PFLAG Houston; OLOHP; LOAF; OLOC; National Women's History Project; the National Women's Music Festival (Women in the Arts, Inc.) or your favorite charity.

 A Celebration of Life gathering will be announced at a later date.

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APRETUDE is given every other month by a healthcare provider after initiation injections have been given 1 month apart for 2 consecutive months. Stay under a provider's care while receiving APRETUDE. You must receive it as scheduled. If you will miss a scheduled injection by more than 7 days, call your provider right away.

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT APRETUDE

This is only a brief summary of important information about APRETUDE and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your medicine.

AP-reh-tood

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT APRETUDE

Important information for people who receive APRETUDE to help reduce their risk of getting human immunodeficiency virus-1 (HIV-1) infection, also called pre-exposure prophylaxis or "PrEP":



Learn more at [APRETUDE.com](https://www.apretude.com)

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT APRETUDE (cont'd)

Before receiving APRETUDE to reduce your risk of getting HIV-1:

- You must be HIV-1 negative to start APRETUDE. You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1 infection.
- Do not receive APRETUDE for HIV-1 PrEP unless you are confirmed to be HIV-1 negative.
- Some HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected. If you have flu-like symptoms, you could have recently become infected with HIV-1. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting APRETUDE or at any time while receiving APRETUDE. Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include: tiredness; joint or muscle aches; sore throat; rash; enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin; fever; headache; vomiting or diarrhea; night sweats.

Please see additional Important Facts About APRETUDE at right.



Eligible patients may pay as little as a \$0 co-pay per injection on prescribed APRETUDE.

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT APRETUDE (cont'd)

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT APRETUDE (cont'd)

While you are receiving APRETUDE for HIV-1 PrEP:

- **APRETUDE does not prevent other sexually transmitted infections. Practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom to reduce the risk of getting sexually transmitted infections.**
- **You must stay HIV-1 negative to keep receiving APRETUDE for HIV-1 PrEP.**
 - Know your HIV-1 status and the HIV-1 status of your partners.
 - Ask your partners with HIV-1 if they are taking anti-HIV-1 medicines and have an undetectable viral load. An undetectable viral load is when the amount of virus in the blood is too low to be measured in a lab test. To maintain an undetectable viral load, your partners must keep taking HIV-1 medicine as prescribed. Your risk of getting HIV-1 is lower if your partners with HIV-1 are taking effective treatment.
 - Get tested for HIV-1 with each APRETUDE injection or when your healthcare provider tells you. You should not miss any HIV-1 tests. If you become HIV-1 infected and continue receiving APRETUDE because you do not know you are HIV-1 infected, the HIV-1 infection may become harder to treat.
 - Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections such as syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea. These infections make it easier for HIV-1 to infect you.
 - If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away. They may want to do more tests to be sure you are still HIV-1 negative.
 - Get information and support to help reduce sexual risk behaviors.
 - Do not miss any injections of APRETUDE. Missing injections increases your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
 - If you do become HIV-1 positive, you will need to take other medicines to treat HIV-1. APRETUDE is not approved for treatment of HIV-1.

If you have HIV-1 and receive only APRETUDE, over time your HIV-1 may become harder to treat.

ABOUT APRETUDE

APRETUDE is a prescription medicine used for HIV-1 PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection in adults and adolescents who weigh at least 77 pounds (at least 35 kg). HIV-1 is the virus that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

It is not known if APRETUDE is safe and effective in children younger than 12 years of age or weighing less than 77 pounds (less than 35 kg).

DO NOT RECEIVE APRETUDE IF YOU:

- **already have HIV-1 infection.** If you are HIV-1 positive, you will need to take other medicines to treat HIV-1. APRETUDE is not approved for treatment of HIV-1.
- **do not know your HIV-1 infection status.** You may already be HIV-1 positive. You need to take other medicines to treat HIV-1. APRETUDE can only help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection **before** you are infected.
- are allergic to cabotegravir.
- are taking any of the following medicines: carbamazepine; oxcarbazepine; phenobarbital; phenytoin; rifampin; rifapentine.

BEFORE RECEIVING APRETUDE

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

- have ever had a skin rash or an allergic reaction to medicines that contain cabotegravir.
- have or have had liver problems.
- have ever had mental health problems.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if APRETUDE will harm your unborn baby. APRETUDE can remain in your body for up to 12 months or longer after the last injection. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while receiving APRETUDE.

BEFORE RECEIVING APRETUDE (cont'd)

- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if APRETUDE can pass to your baby in your breast milk. Talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby while receiving APRETUDE.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Some medicines may interact with APRETUDE. Keep a list of your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine. You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for a list of medicines that interact with APRETUDE.

Do not start a new medicine without telling your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider can tell you if it is safe to receive APRETUDE with other medicines.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF APRETUDE

APRETUDE may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Allergic reactions.** Call your healthcare provider right away if you develop a rash with APRETUDE. **Stop receiving APRETUDE and get medical help right away if you develop a rash with any of the following signs or symptoms:** fever; generally ill feeling; tiredness; muscle or joint aches; trouble breathing; blisters or sores in mouth; blisters; redness or swelling of the eyes; swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue.
- **Liver problems.** Liver problems have happened in people with or without a history of liver problems or other risk factors. Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your liver function. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you develop any of the following signs or symptoms of liver problems:** your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark or "tea-colored" urine; light-colored stools (bowel movements); nausea or vomiting; loss of appetite; pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area; itching.
- **Depression or mood changes.** Call your healthcare provider or get medical help right away if you have any of the following symptoms: feeling sad or hopeless; feeling anxious or restless; have thoughts of hurting yourself (suicide) or have tried to hurt yourself.

The most common side effects of APRETUDE include: pain, tenderness, hardened mass or lump, swelling, bruising, redness, itching, warmth, loss of sensation at the injection site, abscess, and discoloration; diarrhea; headache; fever; tiredness; sleep problems; nausea; dizziness; passing gas; stomach pain; vomiting; muscle pain; rash; loss of appetite; drowsiness; back pain; upper respiratory infection. These are not all the possible side effects of APRETUDE.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist.
- Go to APRETUDE.com or call 1-877-844-8872 where you can also get FDA-approved labeling.

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By SUSAN BANKSTON



Back to the Future

Republicans are pining for Russia and Ronald Reagan.



I love elections like our midterm showdowns last month. The predicted Red Wave turned out to be Pepto Bismol pink—kinda like if you accidentally washed your Klan robe and your MAGA hat together in hot water, and now you're all set for the High Noon in Pinkerville Ball. Yeehaw!

I dunno about you, but this election once again reminded me why I do not trust polls. At all. Hell, to be honest, I am even highly suspicious of telephone and power poles. (Yes, I know you spell them differently, but that's just to throw us off track.)

Look, I do not blame people like me who lie to pollsters. If some guy calls me in the middle of the damn day and wants to talk about who I am going to vote for, I always answer, "Whoever Trump tells me to vote for." Don't laugh—it's worked so far! How do I know the caller is not sitting out in front of my house with his hunting rifle ready for some target practice on my front porch? I'm kinda leaning toward the theory that Republicans do "polls" to scare off people who ain't carbon copies of my friend Dewayne over at the bowling alley.

Meanwhile, *Newsweek* magazine broke the news that the Russian parliament will consider requests from any US state wishing to secede

from the Union and join Russia. Come to find out, Russian parliament deputy Alexander Tolmachev was responding to an online poll that showed many Americans want their states to break free from the rest of the nation.

"If Americans vote to secede and express a desire to join Russia, Moscow will consider it," Tolmachev intoned.

I don't think Comrade Tolmachev understands that whole Dixieland-yearning-to-secede crap. However, I would be delighted to take him up on his offer. But which state should go first?

I know there are those who think we should volunteer Texas, but we're harder to move. A whole lot of floatation devices would be needed. And since we can't even build a fence on the border, what makes us think we could dig a trench? You'd have to get Louisiana to scooch over and make room to pull Texas out of the mud. And then Oklahoma would have to quit sucking, and New Mexico would have to find another state to keep their tourist economy going.

Nah, it's gotta be... *Florida*.



And lastly, most of you are familiar with Houston-area Republican Congressvarmint Dan Crenshaw. Back in October, Crenshaw spent \$2,442 of his cam-

paign funds to rent a 1980s DeLorean Time Machine sports car (of *Back to the Future* fame) for his "Crenshaw Youth Summit" rally in downtown Houston. He told the kids gathered there that the Republican Party needs a time machine to take them back to Ronald Reagan's golden era of 1980s small government and big tax cuts.

The problem is, today's Republicans want to hop in that DeLorean and crank the dial back a lot farther than the 1980s. How about the sublime days of Herbert Hoover? You know, before women had a say-so and LGBTQIA+ hadn't been invented yet.

I think our best hope is that Dan will calculate his trip back in time with all the efficiency of a Trump vaccination rollout. A slight miscalculation could land him back in Pompeii on Volcano Day, or on the *Titanic* for its festive maiden voyage. I'm personally hoping he'll end up fighting Grant at the Battle of Shiloh—now *that* would be a *Back to the Future* sequel I would pay good money for.

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

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By GRACE YUNG, CFP

Time for a Getaway?

How to plan an affordable vacation with your significant other.



As we emerge from the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, there seems to be a new travel trend. We used to take our vacations during the summer, but we now see

people traveling more during the off-peak seasons. This is because most people now have flexibility in their schedules, thanks in large part to the pandemic trend of working remotely.

If you and your significant other are planning a romantic getaway before or after your holiday family time, here are some things to consider.

Find the Best Travel Times

Seasonal deals after Labor Day and before Christmas have been increasing. This is because October is typically cooler and fewer people tend to travel then, so prices tend to be lower. Additionally, there are fewer crowds and shorter lines—which translates into more time to experience the things you want to do. Saving time is part of saving money, and getting more time to spend with your mate is priceless.

Many couples want to go to Europe for a romantic getaway, whether it be Paris, Venice, or some other romantic European destination. Thanksgiving week is a good time for these types of trips because overseas countries don't celebrate Thanksgiving and most attractions are open. Plus, things are slower here at home as work becomes less hectic around the holidays.

For a domestic getaway, January and February can be great times to visit warm southern locales to avoid the winter chill. Or you could visit the ski slopes early in the new year when crowds tend to be smaller. Tourist attractions in these areas may not be as busy, allowing you to enjoy seeing more of the sights.

With so many people working remotely now, it can also be easier to take time off for a “working vacation” by bringing your laptop with you to knock out a few work projects while taking in scenic views.



Plan Your Trip Ahead of Time

Although many people use travel to relax and recharge, vacations can be costly when you factor in transportation, lodging, and meals. So how can you swing the cost of a four- or even five-figure trip? Here are the key planning strategies you should consider:

Determine Your Budget

Your travel budget will depend largely on where you go and what you plan to do. For instance, going to an international destination will likely cost more than heading to a US beach or campground. Likewise, lodging in larger cities tends to be higher-priced than in rural areas. And of course, traveling at off-peak times could land you discounts on lodging and attractions.

Start Saving Now

After you have an approximate dollar amount in mind for the cost of your trip, you can break that down and set aside money each month until you reach your goal. You could also beef up your travel account if you receive a bonus at work and/or an income-tax refund. And cutting unnecessary expenses such as subscriptions and restaurants can also help accelerate your savings.

Check Your Credit Card Perks

You may be able to pay for parts of your trip

without using cash or credit if you have a credit card that offers airline miles or hotel points. Put these toward your expenses in order to reduce your out-of-pocket costs.

Don't Overdo It

It is easy to overspend when you are having fun on vacation. So track your spending as a way to avoid a trip that costs you more than you anticipated.

Are you financially prepared to see the world? Working with a financial-planning professional can be extremely beneficial when it comes to planning a travel budget. No one wants to scrimp, struggle, or be saddled with significant credit-card balances after returning home from a vacation. A professional planner can not only help you plan for your future travels, but also your long-term financial success.

Grace S. Yung, CFP®, is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER practitioner with experience in helping LGBTQ individuals, domestic partners, and families plan and manage their finances since 1994. She is the managing director at Midtown Financial Group, LLC, in Houston. Yung can be reached at grace.yung@lpl.com. Visit letsmakeaplan.org or midtownfg.com/lgbtqplus.10.htm.

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By DARYL SHORTER MD



Suicide Prevention

Some warning signs and strategies for getting help.



Each December, messages about the increased risk for suicide during the holidays begin circulating. While many people may experience loneliness and isolation around this time of year, it is a myth that the holiday season is associated with increased rates of suicide.

Interestingly, the National Center for Health Statistics reports that suicide rates are lowest in December. Studies suggest that suicide rates peak in the spring and the fall. But while people are not necessarily at an elevated risk for suicide in the month of December, this holiday season is still a good time for us to have discussions about suicide prevention.

Suicide is one of the most well-researched aspects of mental health. This is because understanding the risk factors of suicide can directly save lives. Much of the work around suicide prevention is intended to help individuals, families, and communities identify and reduce the risk factors of suicide.

The Statistics

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the US. In 2020, there were roughly 46,000 deaths by suicide—roughly one death every 11 minutes. Among persons age 10 to 64, suicide was the ninth leading cause of death, and among young people age 10 to 14 and 25 to 34, suicide was the second leading cause of death.

Rates of suicide are actually highest among persons age 85 or older, highlighting the vulnerability of our elderly relatives and neighbors. This is likely because older folks tend to experience higher rates of chronic illness and shrinking social networks.

The number of people who simply have thoughts about suicide (also known as suicidal ideation) is even higher. It is estimated that 12.2 million adults have thought seriously about suicide, 3.2 million adults have made plans to attempt suicide, and 1.2 million adults have attempted suicide. It is impossible to

measure exact numbers because some people may die by suicide and it goes unrecognized. For example, people who die from an “accidental” overdose may have had some intent to die that was not known to others. This means that the number of suicides may be even higher than estimates suggest.

Tragically, studies show that more than 1 in 3 people who make a non-fatal suicide attempt do not subsequently receive mental-health treatment. Better suicide awareness allows us to improve our conversations about suicide. Having suicidal ideation is not something to be ashamed of, and it doesn’t mean that one is weak. It is a legitimate reason to seek out mental-health evaluation and support.

Risk Factors for Suicide

While there is no single cause of suicide, numerous factors have been identified. Previous suicidal behaviors (such as someone telling friends that they “just want to die”) appear to have the strongest link to a person’s future risk for suicide.

Psychiatric illness, and particularly depression, is one of the most potent risk factors for suicide. However, it is important to note that not everyone with depression will go on to think about or attempt suicide. Sleep problems, substance-use disorders, physical illness, and impairment caused by mental-health conditions also represent a risk for suicide.

The good news is that these conditions are amenable to treatment, so seeking out appropriate care is an important step in preventing suicide.

Suicide at the Margins

Certain racial and ethnic groups possess a higher risk for thinking about or attempting suicide. According to the most recent Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports, non-Hispanic Native Americans and Alaska natives (as well as white residents of Alaska) are particularly vulnerable. People experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage are also at increased risk

for suicide.

LGBTQ people are thought to have an increased suicide risk because of their relative lack of familial and societal acceptance combined with homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination. LGBTQ youth are particularly at risk, being four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. In fact, The Trevor Project estimates that more than 1.8 million LGBTQ youth ages 13 to 24 seriously consider suicide each year.

Why might suicide rates be higher among vulnerable and marginalized communities? One psychological model, the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, may offer some insight. The interpersonal theory asserts that the simultaneous presence of “thwarted belongingness” and “perceived burdensomeness” produces the desire for suicide. Thwarted belongingness refers to the feeling or sense that one is not accepted by or connected to others. Perceived burdensomeness is the belief that one is a burden to others or to society. Adjacent to this belief is the idea that one’s death would actually be a relief for others.

Importantly, simply having the *desire* for suicide is not in and of itself sufficient. There must also be *acquired capability*, or the ability to overcome one’s natural instincts and fear of death. That natural fear can be weakened by factors such as trauma, chronic pain, or compulsive engagement in self-harm behaviors.

Using the interpersonal theory of suicide to prevent needless death is still an active area of research, and is only one of many theories. Its relevance among LGBTQ people is particularly important, however, given the homophobia and transphobia that can negatively impact one’s sense of belonging. Being told that there is no place for you because of your gender identity can disrupt any sense of safety and connection.

It is important to remember that LGBTQ people specialize in the creation of

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chosen families to compensate for the lack of acceptance within their families of origin. Developing a sense of belonging with other LGBTQ community members is one of the most powerful ways to find connection and understanding. Coming out, being invited in, and finding support can directly combat the sense of “thwarted belongingness” that may lead to suicide.

What If I’m Having Suicidal Thoughts?

First, it’s important to know that immediate help is available. You can always reach out to the national Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by texting or calling 988. It’s OK to speak with someone about suicidal thoughts. You can also go to the nearest urgent-care clinic or emergency room if you would rather speak with someone in person.

In addition to seeking help, remember that depression and hopelessness can cloud your ability to see things clearly. Suicidal thoughts and feelings are often caused by problems that have a solution—perhaps even an easy solution that just hasn’t been found yet. This is why seeking help is so critical in the moment. Talking with someone can often lessen the intensity of harmful emotions.

It is also important to remove weapons, medications, and sharp objects from your surroundings if you are in a period of intense depression, or if suicidal thoughts are present. If guns cannot be removed, locking them up is important. If you have access to harmful medications, ask a friend or family member to safely store and dispense them for you.

Seek out ongoing mental-health support and treatment. Speak with a counselor, therapist, primary-care physician, or psychiatrist who can identify potential underlying causes for your suicidal thinking. Professional therapy can provide an opportunity to work on coping strategies and deal with your thoughts of suicide or despair.

A Year-Round Strategy

Let’s not simply focus on suicide prevention during this holiday season. Engaging in wellness techniques, connecting with others, and being supportive of friends and family in distress should be our year-round mental-health strategy.

Daryl Shorter, MD, is board-certified in both general and addiction psychiatry. His clinical practice focuses on the treatment of mental-health and substance-use disorders. He is also the psychiatrist of record at the Montrose Center.



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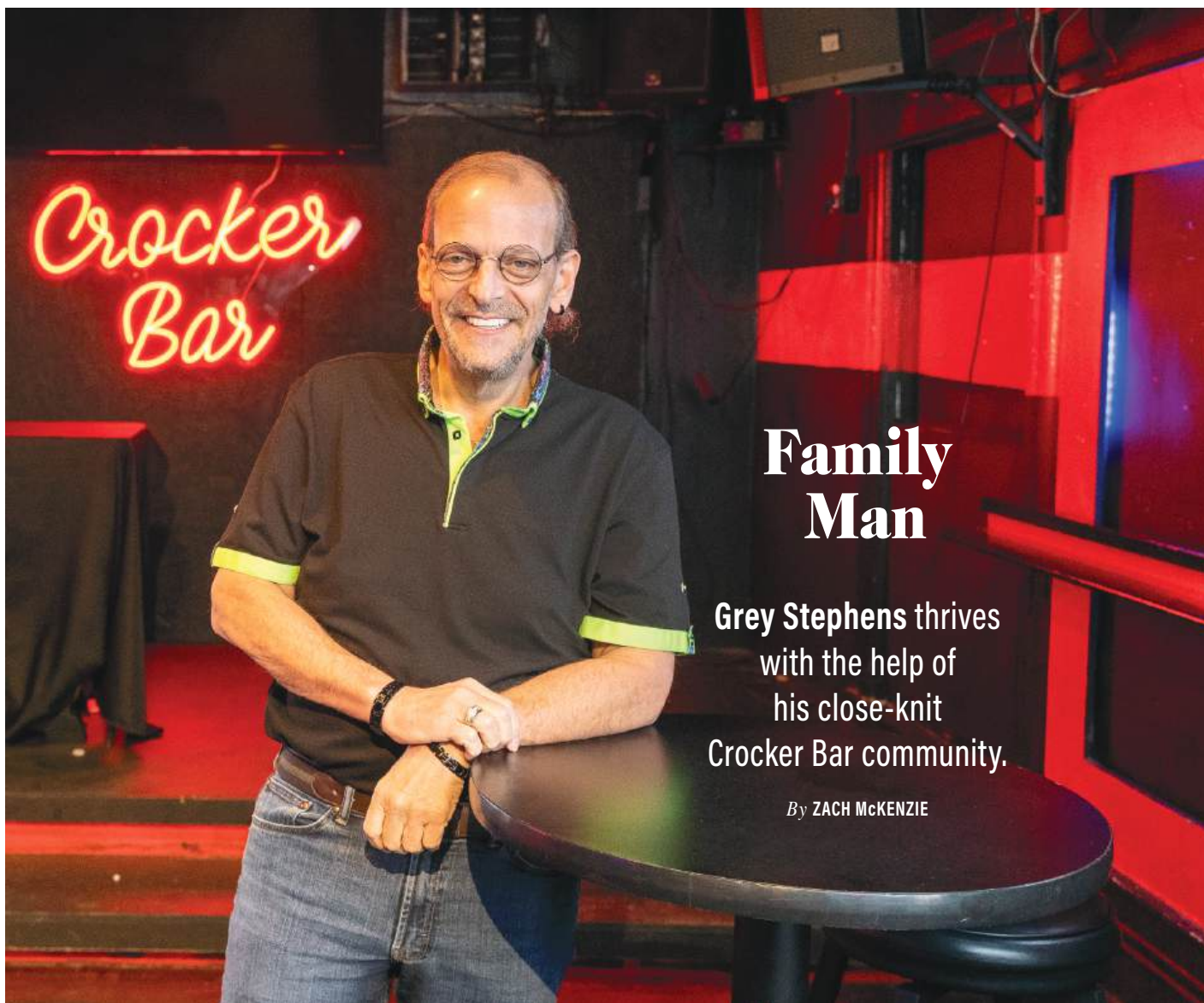
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Family Man

Grey Stephens thrives with the help of his close-knit Crocker Bar community.

By ZACH MCKENZIE

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEX ROSA FOR OUTSMART



When Grey Stephens opened up Crocker Bar in Montrose, he was looking to diversify his income by re-entering the bar scene. While the extra dough in his bank

account was nice, it was the community that formed at his neighborhood bar that was the real prize. That same community would rally alongside Stephens after he was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) 11 years ago. While the disease altered the way he navigates through life, he still has his razor-sharp wit and a passion for maintaining a fun, safe gathering space for the LGBTQ community.

Stephens, who has called Houston home for nearly 20 years, figured his experience as a bartender would easily translate into bar ownership. While the savvy entrepreneur has seen great success, he admits it wasn't always easy. "It was a lot more work than I ever

thought it would be."

On June 1, 2008, Crocker opened its doors to the community. "Crocker is a neighborhood bar with a bit of a dance vibe to it. Nothing too fancy," Stephens explains. "Everybody's welcome, and my customers have always had our back. They have always done what they can to help the community, the bar, the employees. It's been a cool ride, and we are coming up on 15 years."

Stephens credits his friends and loved ones with functioning as an unofficial board of directors for his business ventures. "This community has provided for me. I have had some of the best people in the world work with me over the last 15 years, and they've helped build the business," he says. "I have trouble matching two white socks, so I've had friends, family, employees, and everybody else offer their input—what the place should look like, what the music should be, changes and repairs—stuff like

that." His sense of humor shines as he explains, "I'm really good at listening to people. I hear them all. Doesn't mean I follow all of their recommendations, but I hear them all."

After getting Crocker Bar up and running, Stephens would go on to open Club 2.0, providing even more dance vibes in Montrose. But then, as bar-goers were enjoying the fruits of Stephens' labor, he began his silent battle with MS. "I started noticing I had a problem in November, 11 years ago," he recalls. "They diagnosed me with six or seven other things. They've tested me for everything for years—CAT scans, spinal taps, bloodwork, EMGs. I've had so many MRIs that my insurance card glows in the dark."

Multiple Sclerosis affects the central nervous system, so Stephens has seen major changes in his day-to-day life. "It takes me 20 minutes to put my shoes on, and an hour to get dressed in the morning," he admits.

"I spend 80 percent of my time in a wheelchair. I can't go to the grocery store without an assistant. I have to do drive-bys before events to make sure the places are accessible. I have to pay attention to where I go and what I plan on doing before I get there."

Despite the hand life has dealt him, Stephens maintains a "glass half full" perspective. "I make a decent enough living where I can afford to get help where I need it. A lot of people don't have that fortunate situation. I'm not depressed about it, but I'm definitely not happy about it. I do my thing, I move forward. Sometimes my friends get mad at me when I do things myself. If I've got to change a lightbulb, I'll pull up the ladder and do it myself, which is not the brightest idea."

**"MY CUSTOMERS
HAVE ALWAYS
DONE WHAT THEY
CAN TO HELP THE
COMMUNITY AND
THE BAR."**

—Grey Stephens

Despite the odds, Stephens rallies each and every day to defy the limitations that MS tries to impose on him. "I take things one step at a time. My goal—no matter what, no matter how good or bad I feel—is to get up, get showered, get dressed, and get out of the house every day," he says. "I have to admit, I was just looking for an income when I opened the bars. I had no idea how much they would help the community with charity events and donations and everything else. It was a side benefit to owning a business that I never expected. I'm really proud that the bar can help the community and they can help the bar, all at the same time."

Reflecting on the past 15 years, Stephens is humbled by the support he's received from the community. The glowing neon sign at Crocker that reads "We are family" is indicative of who Stephens credits for keeping him in the game despite his diagnosis. "These bars have been a success because of all the current and past staff, employees, and customers," he says assuredly. "There's not any one thing that I did."

 December 3 is International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

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Things to Leave in 2022

and Keep for 2023

By RYAN M. LEACH



I once thought that by the time we got to 2023 we would have flying cars and people living on Mars. Instead, we have billionaires taking day trips into space and monkeypox. It's not the future most sci-fi movies predicted, but at least Houston has Beyoncé, our own "Alien Superstar." And although progress may not be progressing at the pace some of us might prefer, there are still some bright spots that we should hang on to for 2023 as we leave the not-so-bright spots behind in 2022.

So let's get started on my eighth annual Year in Review!

Things to Keep for 2023

1. Beyoncé's Renaissance

OUTSMART cannot be a queer Houston-centric magazine and not mention Queen Bey's seventh studio album *Renaissance*—a tribute to Blackness, to queerness, and to pop/disco/ballroom culture. Will this finally be the year that she wins the elusive Album of the Year Grammy? If "the queens in the front and the doms in the back" have any say in the matter, then yes. Bey's latest album was also a tribute to her Uncle Jonny, who introduced her to the world of house music and who died from AIDS complications when she was 17. Familiar club beats can be felt throughout the album, as well as contributions from Black queer artists TS Madison, Honey Dijon, Grace Jones, and Big Freedia, to name a few. The album, an "Act One" of a yet-to-be-completed trilogy, also came at a time when people needed to dance and sing her anthem lyr-



ics for the ages: "You won't break my soul, I'm tellin' everybody."

2. Breaking Ceilings

In May, Karine Jean-Pierre became the first Black and openly LGBTQ-identifying person to serve as the White House press secretary—one of the Biden administration's most prominent positions. Jean-Pierre, the daughter of Haitian parents, moved from France to New York City when she was 5. She completed her Master of Public Affairs degree at Columbia University in 2003 before joining the Obama administration. In her 2019 memoir *Moving Forward: A Story of Hope, Hard Work and the Promise of America*, Jean-Pierre recalls how her life changed in 1992 when she saw Texas Congresswoman Barbara Jordan speak at the Democratic National Convention. "She was the first Black woman in politics I had ever witnessed. In a world of pretty, pearl-wearing charmers, Jordan was substantive and authentic." It is now Jean-Pierre who will provide that



Karine Jean-Pierre

representation and inspiration for others as the face and voice of the nation's top office.

Also of special note, newly appointed Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, although not LGBTQ-identifying, became the first Black woman on the High Court. Brown Jackson has already proven to be an active and insightful participant in the Court's deliberations.

3. Queer Candidates (in particular, Lesbians)



Jolanda Jones

Queer political power continued to grow in Texas and throughout the country. Jolanda Jones will be the first out Black lesbian in the Texas House of Representatives. She will join the ever-expanding House LGBTQ Caucus founded by Erin Zwiener, who also returns to the House. Queer Black excellence will also have a voice in representatives-elect Venton Jones and Christian Manuel-Hayes. Representatives Ann Johnson, Julie Johnson, Jessica Gonzalez, and Mary Gonzalez were also returned to Austin to represent their constituents. And several Houston LGBTQ judges won their bids, including Shannon Baldwin, Porscha Brown, Jim Kovach, Beau Miller, Tonya Parker, and Jerry Simoneaux.

Lesbians also made history in getting elected to the top offices in other states. Governors-elect Maura Healey of Massachusetts and Tina Kotek of Oregon will join Colorado Governor Jared Polis to form the LGBTQ Governor's Caucus. Win or lose, LGBTQ candidates show the world that representation matters. And that visibility may eventually pave the way for an openly LGBTQ president. Paging Pete Buttigieg?

4. Dusty Baker



Dusty Baker

The Astros were finally vindicated when they won their second World Series, 4-2 against the Philadelphia Phillies. Although the Astros had regular success since their first win in 2017, their record was severely marred when they were accused of cheating. That scandal created a space for manager Dusty Baker, one of the few Black managers in baseball. Baker finally made it across the finish line following a long career leading teams, including the Astros, to the World Series. As fans cheered on the Astros during their winning Game 6, the crowd was peppered with signs saying "Do it for Dusty!" And lucky for us, the Astros did just that by giving us a second championship. When asked what he would do now that he had finally reached his elusive goal, Baker told reporters, "I'm going to win another one." We will hold you to it in 2023, Dusty!

5. Getting Vaccinated

The summer of 2022 was supposed to be the best ever since COVID shut the world down in 2020 and 2021. But just when we thought it was safe to get back into the dating pool, monkeypox swung into our lives. As the extremely painful cousin of smallpox left many with horrific blisters in some very delicate spots, vaccines were slow to roll out and the LGBTQ community had to organize itself to prevent an even



larger outbreak. Although not terribly deadly, monkeypox made many gay men think twice about their post-

COVID trysts. But effective community outreach and organizing helped get enough people vaccinated to slow the virus down. The lessons we learned from the early days of AIDS are now part of our communal DNA, for better or worse. Of course, very few hetero onlookers actually noticed our victory, but what else is new?

Things to Leave in 2022

1. The Supreme Court



Ugh, what a bust the High Court has turned out to be. It seems absurd to think that as recently as 2020, the justices had maintained some semblance of balance when they (barely) upheld the right of LGBTQ people to maintain Title IX protections in the workplace. Even though Trump appointees Gorsuch and Kavanaugh were already present, it seemed like Chief Justice John Roberts might hold up the ideological center that had been abandoned when Anthony Kennedy retired. (Kennedy was, of course, the deciding vote on two landmark cases that ushered in marriage equality.) When Amy Coney Barrett replaced Ruth Bader Ginsberg, folks knew it was only a matter of time before the wheels would come off. Not that Barrett alone had much influence, but the numbers to reverse landmark rulings were now there, and in a 6-3 ruling the Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and threw out fifty years of legal precedent upholding reproductive rights. Clarence Thomas also signaled his intent to follow through on ending the rights to contraception, marriage equality, →

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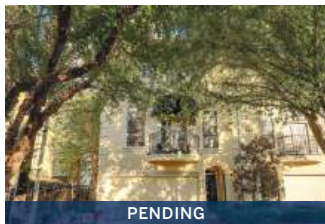
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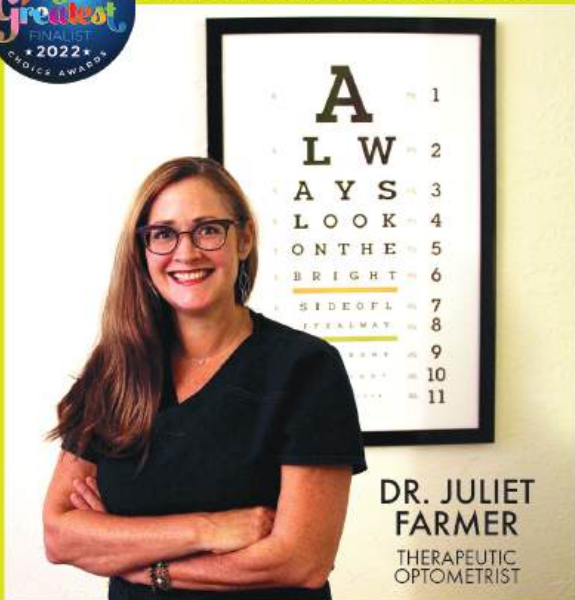
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and even queer people's right to have sex. So now we wait, and enjoy it while we can. Let's hope that the lame-duck Democratic Congress can actually pass legislative protections for both same-sex and interracial marriages.

2 The Outrage

Outrage was all the rage in 2022. Was it the war in Ukraine, or the overturning of *Roe v Wade*, or the stash of Top Secret documents stored at Trump's golf club that got people red-faced? No, the source of the *real* outrage was the Little Mermaid, and Lizzo playing the flute in a museum.



The Little Mermaid with Halle Bailey

All hell broke loose when Disney unveiled the first glimpses of their live-action remake of *The Little Mermaid* with Black actress Halle Bailey playing the titular fictional character—the key word here being *fictional*. But, like Santa Claus and Jesus, racism dictates that Ariel, a singing half-woman/half-fish, must be white. It's almost too stupid to think about. Wait until they hear that Snow White will be played by Latinx actor Rachel Zegler.

Weeks later, Lizzo, who is currently enjoying another hit album (*Special*), a slew of Grammy nominations, and a gigantic stadium tour, was the target of white outrage when she played James Madison's crystal flute at the Library of



Lizzo

Congress. Apparently, crystal flutes owned by dead presidents should not be played by living musicians who also happen to be Black, according to the internet trolls.

3 Anti-LGBTQ Violence



AP PHOTO/GENEVEA HEFFERNAN

Mourners lay flowers near Club Q in Colorado Springs.

2022 saw the queer community again under attack, both in the streets and in state capitols nationwide. The mass shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs in late November left five people dead and many others injured when a man with heavy artillery entered the LGBTQ space on a packed Saturday night. Thanks to two patrons who bravely fought back and subdued the murderer, the death toll was not as horrific as the 2016 Pulse Nightclub massacre. There's no doubt why these events keep happening: our country's failure to do anything about assault weapons, and the constant stream of online hate being spewed at queer communities, create an environment that breeds hate and violence. And just days before this atrocity, 17 anti-LGBTQ Republican bills were filed in anticipation of the 2023 Texas Legislative Session in Austin. Tragedy after tragedy, and still nothing is done. Even when violence is committed against small children, nothing is done. America is many things, and unfortunately, *violent* is near the top of the list.

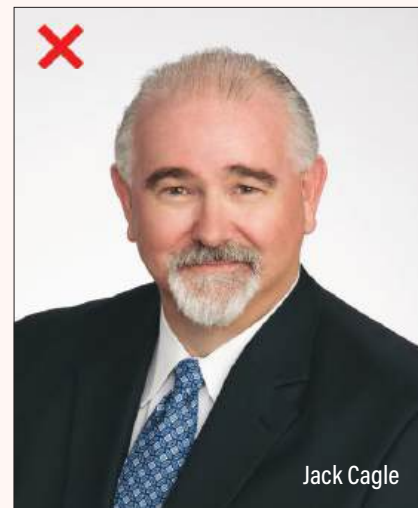
4 The War on Texas Kids

Texas is developing a bad reputation for being a dangerous place to be a kid. The state's Republican leadership (which was re-elected by large margins) is doing absolutely nothing about it, and in the case of trans-identifying youth, they are making access to gender-affirming care illegal while they investigate the parents of these young people. Many families with trans kids have opted to flee the state to avoid being torn apart by a governor who refuses to accept these children for who they are.

Furthermore, gun violence took the lives of 21 at Robb Elementary School when a gunman slaughtered students and teachers in a class-

room while police waited in the hallways. (This isn't the first mass school shooting under the watch of Governor Greg Abbott—the massacre in Santa Fe also resulted in several students being killed.) And according to Texas Republicans, the answer to all of this gun violence is more guns. Considering that Texas gun laws are now almost non-existent, the “more guns” solution has not yielded more lives being saved.

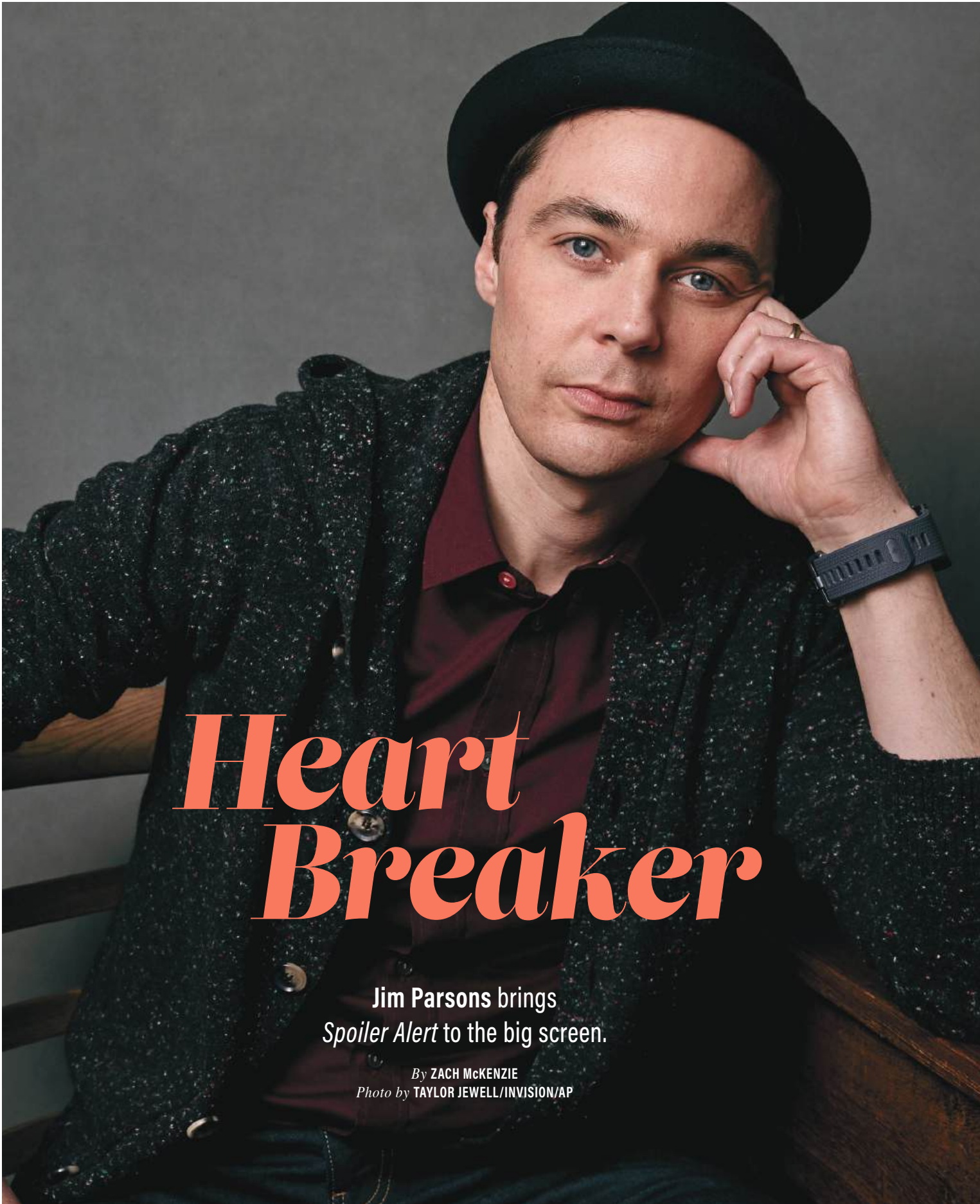
5 Do-Nothing Politicians



Jack Cagle

Democrat Lina Hidalgo won a tight re-election to serve as Harris County Judge. Hidalgo's first term was a success in the eyes of voters who approved of her handling of large issues like the pandemic—much to the chagrin of many Texas Republicans. In an effort to make Hidalgo look bad in the weeks leading up to the November election, the two lone Republican County commissioners decided to skip work for several weeks, thus preventing the passage of a budget and jeopardizing essential County services for the upcoming fiscal year. The stunt backfired when voters sent Commissioner Jack Cagle packing and elected Democrat Leslie Briones. Hidalgo now has a Democratic supermajority going into her second term. So if Tom Ramsey, the remaining Republican commissioner, wants to act the fool, he needs only to look at what happened to his buddy Jack. To quote Britney Spears, “You better work, bitch!”

Ryan Leach is a frequent contributor to OutSmart magazine. Follow him on Medium at medium.com/@ryan_leach.



Heart Breaker

Jim Parsons brings
Spoiler Alert to the big screen.

By ZACH MCKENZIE
Photo by TAYLOR JEWELL/INVISION/AP



For book lovers, the mere mention of a production company bringing a beloved story from the printed page to the big screen triggers a sense of apprehension.

Reviews are often mixed, wrought with impassioned opinions and criticisms.

In some instances, however, undeniable magic happens during these big-screen adaptations—as is the case with director Michael Showalter’s *Spoiler Alert*, a new film starring Houston native and University of Houston alum Jim Parsons.

Bringing a fictional story to life is one thing. Bringing a true story about real people to life is an entirely different ballgame, and a gamble that Parsons and the cast (including Academy Award-winning actress Sally Field) were willing to make. The movie is based on the memoir *Spoiler Alert: The Hero Dies* by journalist Michael Ausiello, a heart-wrenching, side-splitting autobiographical book that recaps the love life between Ausiello and his husband, Kit Cowan, who would ultimately succumb to a years-long battle with an incredibly rare form of cancer.

“When I first read the book, I was reading it strictly to be able to intelligently host a Q&A with the author at a Barnes & Noble,” Parsons, who portrays Ausiello in the film, explains. “I connected with it very emotionally and deeply, in part because it mirrored many things about my own relationship timeline. I [eventually realized that] this amazing and heartbreaking journey that he went on with this other human being was the kind of tumultuous, incredible journey that leads to being able to see life in a clearer way. [Ausiello’s journey teaches us that] heartbreak is, in some ways, the only way to open yourself up to loving more sincerely and less defensively. My husband is the one who suggested that we should make this into a film. I can’t claim to be smart enough to put two and two together.”

Ausiello had actually interviewed Parsons during his time on the hit sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*. Their connection was undeniable, but

Ausiello’s memoir is what ultimately guided Parsons’ portrayal of the real-life television journalist and author. “I don’t know that I’ve ever had one piece of material like that. I read it repeatedly. I can’t count the times I went through that book,” he explains. “There is such a power to the story. It’s vicious, evocative, and it would evoke in me this reality of what he was going through and the horror, mystery, and fantastical journey that he was on. It was very helpful for me to keep going back to that as we were making this film and reminding myself of the kind of breathtaking, awestruck feeling he must have been feeling as he described living through this roller coaster.”

Parsons, who proudly identifies as gay, understands that his portrayal in this film is a form of representation for the community. But this story, in Parsons’s opinion, is larger than a simple “LGBTQ” genre label implies. “What became clear with this project, in particular, was that from an LGBTQ+ point of view, it is a very typical love story that we’ve seen for our entire lives through movies. And in a beautiful way, they just happen to be two men going through it,” the actor explains. “In some ways, its first classification [should be] ‘love story,’ and *then* you could pick and choose [other themes], and ‘gay’ would certainly be in there. I was getting to bring what I know about being a gay person in the world [as I] participated in a type of movie that I’ve admired and wanted to be a part of [my whole life]. That was what was really magical about this.” →

Houstonian Jim Parsons at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival promoting his leading role in *A Kid Like Jake*.



Parsons (l) and Ben Aldridge in a scene from director Michael Showalter's *Spoiler Alert*, opening in theaters nationwide this month.

PHOTO BY GIOVANNI RUFINO © 2022 FOCUS FEATURES LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

In December 2021, Ausiello shared a photo of himself on Instagram in a full embrace with Parsons and Ben Aldridge, who portrays Kit Cowan. Parsons explains that the photo captures a bond between friends who were wrapping production on this intensely unique project. "I remember pretty distinctly feeling stunned and not quite prepared to end it," he admits. "It's one of the more rewarding experiences I feel I've had as an actor. There was no day that wasn't intense. That's not to say that everything we were doing was laced with sadness or tragedy, but there was a passionate commitment on everyone's part to tell this [story] as best we could. We were telling an extremely personal and intimate story, and that really affected the way that Ben, Showalter, and myself approached our day-to-day on that set. It was very muscular, hands-on, and passionate." The Houston-born actor, who lists The

"HEARTBREAK IS, IN SOME WAYS, THE ONLY WAY TO OPEN YOURSELF UP TO LOVING MORE SINCERELY AND LESS DEFENSIVELY."

—Jim Parsons

Original Ninfa's, the Menil Collection, Rothko Chapel, and the Cy Twombly Gallery among his hometown favorites, discovered that Ausiello's story about love and loss opened up a new perspective on life for him. He hopes the movie will do the same for its audiences.

"One of the big takeaways for me is the lesson that only by risking heartbreak can you live a full life. Only by risking heartbreak do you have a chance of giving, receiving, and

experiencing an immense amount of love. The more we went through it, the more the lesson became that to live a full life means having your heart broken."

Parsons pauses before summing up the priceless lesson of *Spoiler Alert*. Reflecting on the theme of the inevitability of heartbreak and the willingness of humans to participate in endeavors that inspire that type of loss, Parsons says, "I think it's some sort of profound truth that once a heart is broken it creates more space, and through that heartbreak, you are able to see the world in a way that you wouldn't have been able to without that heartbreak."

 *Spoiler Alert* opens nationwide on December 2. For information, visit focusfeatures.com/spoiler-alert.

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- **Resistant HBV.** Your healthcare provider will test you for HBV infection before you start treatment with DOVATO. If you have HIV-1 and hepatitis B, the HBV can change (mutate) during your treatment with DOVATO and become harder to treat (resistant). It is not known if DOVATO is safe and effective in people who have HIV-1 and HBV infection.
- **Worsening of HBV infection.** If you have HBV infection and take DOVATO, your HBV may get worse (flare-up) if you stop taking DOVATO. A "flare-up" is when your HBV infection suddenly returns in a worse way than before.
 - Do not run out of DOVATO. Refill your prescription or talk to your healthcare provider before your DOVATO is all gone.

- **Do not stop DOVATO without first talking to your healthcare provider.**

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For more information about side effects, see "What are possible side effects of DOVATO?"

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Important Facts About DOVATO (cont'd)

Who should not take DOVATO?

Do not take DOVATO if you:

- have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine that contains dolutegravir or lamivudine.
- take dofetilide. Taking DOVATO and dofetilide can cause side effects that may be serious or life-threatening.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before using DOVATO?

Tell your healthcare provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have or have had liver problems, including hepatitis B or C infection.
- have kidney problems.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. One of the medicines in DOVATO (dolutegravir) may harm your unborn baby.
 - Your healthcare provider may prescribe a different medicine than DOVATO if you are planning to become pregnant or if pregnancy is confirmed during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.
 - If you can become pregnant, your healthcare provider may perform a pregnancy test before you start treatment with DOVATO.
 - If you can become pregnant, you and your healthcare provider should talk about the use of effective birth control (contraception) during treatment with DOVATO.
 - Tell your healthcare provider right away if you are planning to become pregnant, you become pregnant, or think you may be pregnant during treatment with DOVATO.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. **Do not breastfeed if you take DOVATO.**
 - You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.
 - DOVATO passes to your baby in your breast milk.
 - Talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

Some medicines interact with DOVATO. Keep a list of your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

- You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for a list of medicines that interact with DOVATO.
- **Do not start taking a new medicine without telling your healthcare provider.** Your healthcare provider can tell you if it is safe to take DOVATO with other medicines.

What are possible side effects of DOVATO?

DOVATO can cause serious side effects, including:

- See “What is the most important information I should know about DOVATO?”

What are possible side effects of DOVATO? (cont'd)

- **Allergic reactions. Call your healthcare provider right away if you develop a rash with DOVATO. Stop taking DOVATO and get medical help right away if you develop a rash with any of the following signs or symptoms:** fever; generally ill feeling; tiredness; muscle or joint aches; blisters or sores in mouth; blisters or peeling of the skin; redness or swelling of the eyes; swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue; problems breathing.
- **Liver problems. People with a history of hepatitis B or C virus may have an increased risk of developing new or worsening changes in certain liver tests during treatment with DOVATO. Liver problems, including liver failure, have also happened in people without a history of liver disease or other risk factors. Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your liver. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following signs or symptoms of liver problems:** your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark or “tea-colored” urine; light-colored stools (bowel movements); nausea or vomiting; loss of appetite; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis). Too much lactic acid is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms that could be signs of lactic acidosis:** feel very weak or tired; unusual (not normal) muscle pain; trouble breathing; stomach pain with nausea and vomiting; feel cold, especially in your arms and legs; feel dizzy or lightheaded; and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Lactic acidosis can also lead to severe liver problems, which can lead to death. Your liver may become large (hepatomegaly) and you may develop fat in your liver (steatosis). Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the signs or symptoms of liver problems which are listed above under “Liver problems.”**
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female or very overweight (obese).**
- **Changes in your immune system (Immune Reconstitution Syndrome)** can happen when you start taking HIV-1 medicines. Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections that have been hidden in your body for a long time. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you start having new symptoms after you start taking DOVATO.
- **The most common side effects of DOVATO include:** headache; nausea; diarrhea; trouble sleeping; tiredness; and anxiety.

These are not all the possible side effects of DOVATO. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

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

Where can I find more information?

- Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist.
- Go to DOVATO.com or call 1-877-844-8872, where you can also get FDA-approved labeling.

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2022 YEAR in REVIEW



2022 came roaring back from our two-year pandemic lull, with approximately 450 events filling my LGBTQ social calendar.

In January, ERSICSS held its

Coronation 37-Enchantment Under the Sea, and Pride Sports Houston began the year with a dodgeball match. February saw ActOUT at the Alley Theatre return, and AIDS Foundation Houston hosted a reception to announce that Gilead Sciences had donated \$500,000 to support AFH services. In March, Out@TUTS began its year at the Hobby Center, Resurrection MCC celebrated its 50th anniversary, and the Walk to End HIV was held. April was a busy month with events like The Diana Foundation's annual awards show and the Human Rights Campaign's "There's No Stopping Us Now" dinner gala. Highlights for May included OUT for Education's scholarship awards event and the Victory Fund's champagne brunch. June Pride Month



was very busy, with OUT Professionals launching a Houston chapter with its OutPro Lounge event, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce celebrating Pride Night at a Houston Dash game, and of course the annual Pride festival and parade. July saw the re-opening of South Beach dance club, and the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance (NAGAAA) World Series was held in August with a large Houston contingent participating. September highlights included the annual Harris County Democratic Party Johnson Rayburn Richards Dinner, and the Montrose Center held its annual OUT for Good fundraising gala in October. The fall lineup also included EPAH's "One Home Many Hearts" fundraiser for Omega House, a tribute to Ovations owner Frank Tilton for his support of new musical talent in the community, a Thanksgiving luncheon served to over 300 clients at the Thomas Street Health Center, and a Reunion Project event for long-term HIV survivors at St. John's Church in downtown Houston.

DECEMBER 2021



December 15, 2021
OutSmart's 2021
Holiday Party



December 1, 2021
AIDS Foundation Houston presented
its Behind-the-Scenes reception



December 3, 2021
The Montrose Center's annual Out for Good gala



December 11, 2021
Pride Chorus Houston's Holiday Traditions concert



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JANUARY



January 26, 2022
The Montrose Center's screening of *Dear Fredy*



January 30, 2022
The Music Box Theatre cast and band



January 16, 2022
Snowbunnies at ReBar Houston



January 22, 2022
Pride Sports Houston - Dodgeball Opening Day



February 7, 2022
AIDS Foundation Houston reception



February 11, 2022
The Mardi Gras Krewe of Apollo Ball



February 19, 2022
The Space City Rugby's Underwear Auction

FEBRUARY



February 15, 2022
Human Rights Campaign's Gala Kickoff at PNC soccer stadium

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MARCH



March 3, 2022
The OLTT Justice for Paloma vigil at Houston City Hall



March 3, 2022
The Lazarus House brunch before the 2022 Walk to End HIV



March 18, 2022
The Montrose Center's Bringin' in the Green event



March 26, 2022
Resurrection MCC's Fifty-Fest event celebrating the church's 50th anniversary



APRIL
April 9, 2022
Space City Rugby and Crescent City Rougaroux teams



April 1, 2022
Transgender Day of Visibility Rally at the Montrose Center



April 17, 2022
Bunnies on the Bayou 43



April 7, 2022
The Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce, Grubhub, and the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce announced their grant recipients



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MAY



May 11, 2022
Out for Education scholarship awards event at Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Houston



May 10, 2022
Judge Kathleen Stone's portrait was hung in the Harris County Probate Court 1



May 15, 2022
Victory Fund Houston hosted its 2022 Champagne Brunch



May 19, 2022
Avenue 360 Health and Wellness opens its new Midtown facility

JUNE



June 9, 2022
OUT Professionals launched its OutPro Lounge Houston



June 12, 2022
The Greater Houston LGBT Chamber and the Houston Dash celebrated Pride Night



June 4, 2022
ROADwomen celebrated its 25th anniversary



June 16, 2022
The Pride Houston 365 grand marshals reception at Avant Garden.



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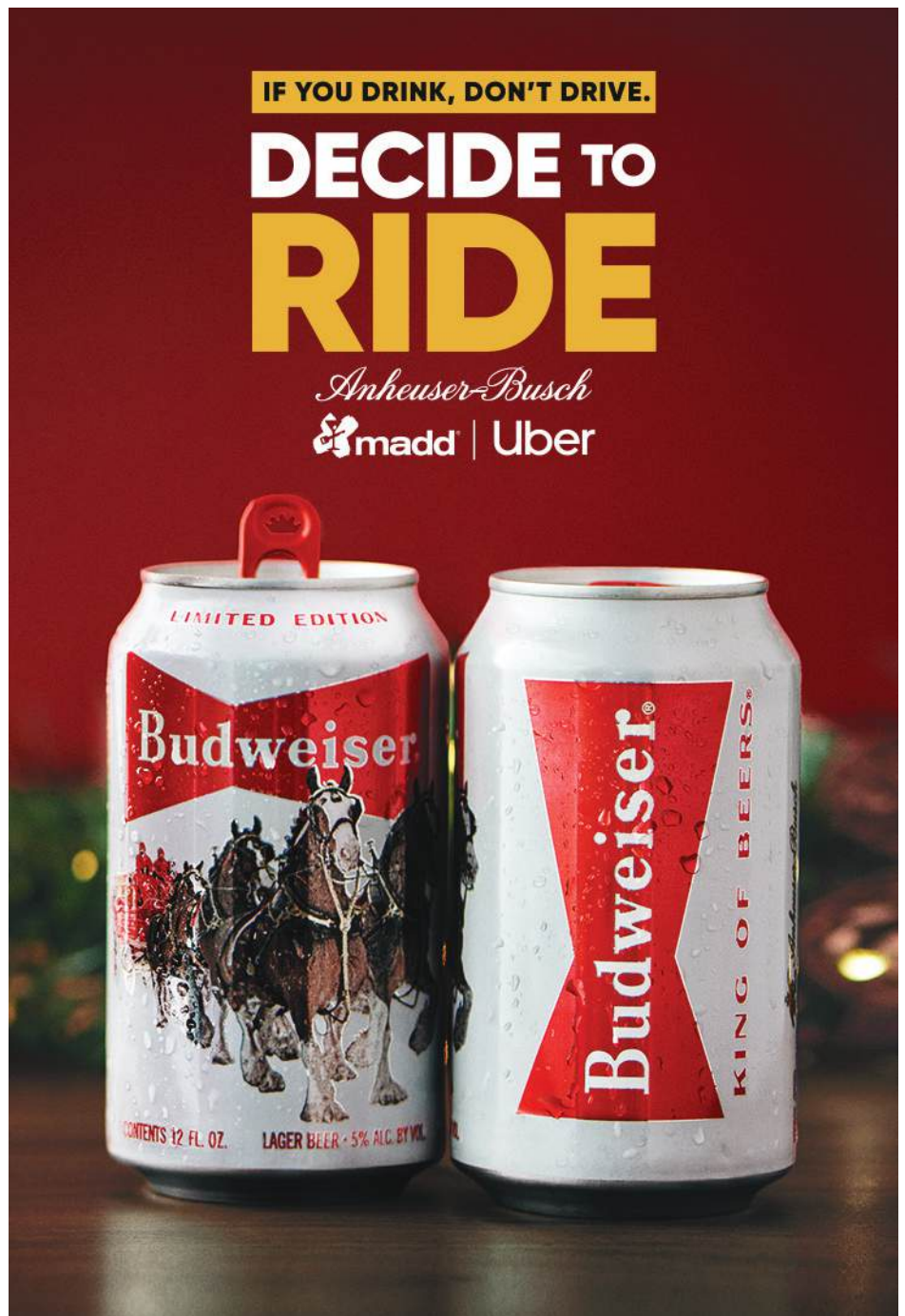
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SEPTEMBER



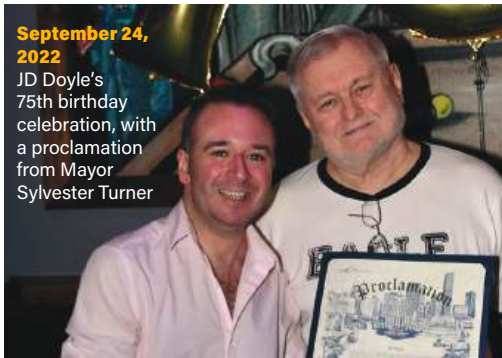
September 18, 2022

The Diana Foundation hosted a benefit for Pet Patrol and Friends for Life



September 18, 2022

Puppy of Montrose 2022



September 24, 2022

JD Doyle's 75th birthday celebration, with a proclamation from Mayor Sylvester Turner



September 25, 2022

The Queer Kouture Fashion Show kickoff party



October 27, 2022

The Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce presented its LGBT History Month Celebration, in collaboration with The Banner Project honorees Larry Bagneris and Dalton DeHart



October 22, 2022

John Palmer Art honored the 2022 Escapist Artists Sola Cardoso and Ruby Fear



October 15, 2022

The Montrose Center held its Out for Good gala honoring Linda Morales at The Ballroom at Bayou Place



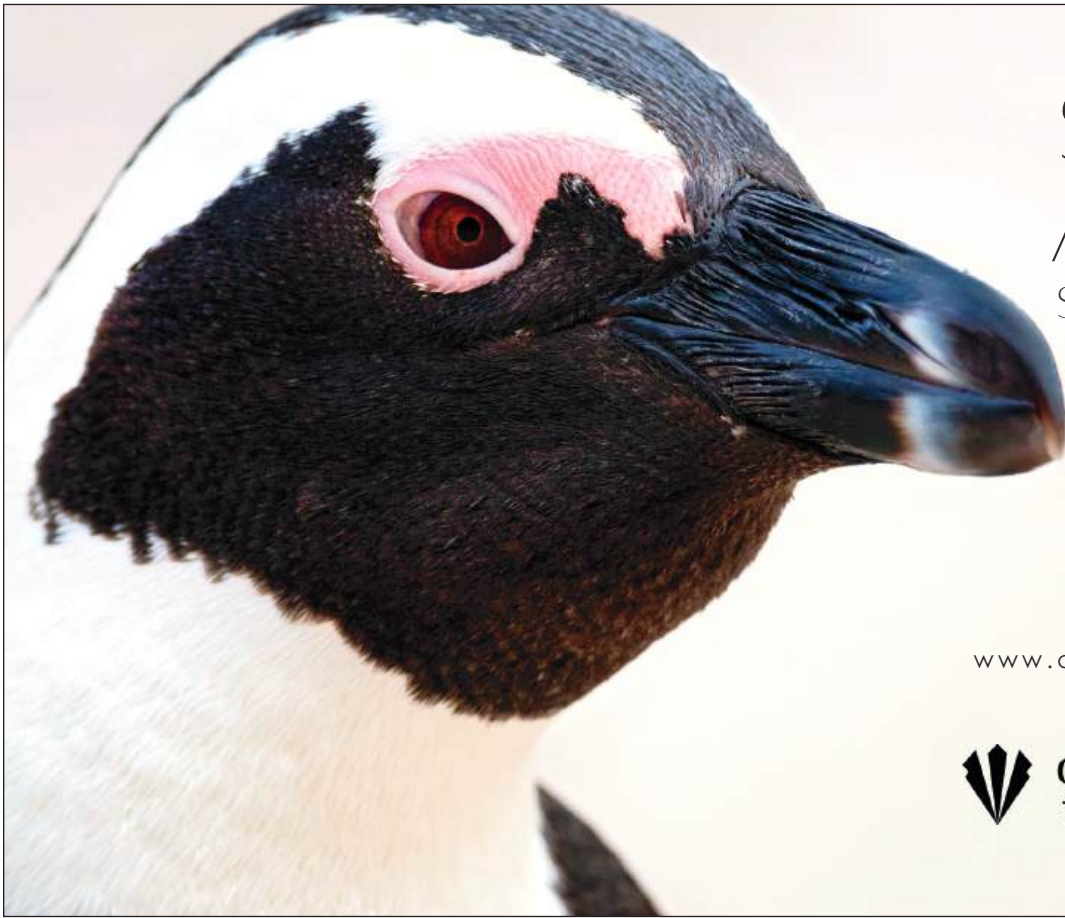
October 21, 2022

Crom Rehabilitation held a fundraiser benefiting OUT for Education



October 4, 2022

The City of Houston issued a proclamation for World Mental Health Day to C. Patrick McIlvain



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NOVEMBER



November 2, 2022
Out@TUTS for The Secret of My Success at the Hobby Center



November 5, 2022
OutReach United held a Casino Night at the Montrose Center



November 6, 2022
The Diana Foundation's Drag Charity Show benefiting the Montrose Center



November 12, 2022
Resurrection MCC hosts a Drag Bingo event



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Art from the Borderland

The Troy Montes Michie: Rock of Eye exhibit at CAMH explores an amalgamation of cultures.

By KIM HOGSTROM

Texas artist Troy Montes Michie was born in El Paso, which left a deep impression on this queer 37-year-old man. Those formative years resonate in nearly every aspect of his reflective creations, some of which are now on display at the Contemporary Art Museum Houston (CAMH) through January 29, 2023.

Visitors can expect to be enveloped in items of clothing, collages, drawings, sewing patterns, and sculptures—many portraying the contours of the masculine body. Both visually stunning and socially disquieting, anyone who enjoys the epiphanies contemporary art can offer will want to see this exhibit.

Using an array of media, Montes Michie meshes Black consciousness and Latinx heritage with a queer artist's candor. Through his use of textiles—including military camouflage material—the artist explores the ways in which the bodies of marginalized people can be erased, fetishized, and even criminalized.

"I think [my point of view] came from an interest in the amalgamation of cultures in my childhood," Montes Michie reflects.

"A huge part of my work includes camouflage; I grew up seeing camouflage my whole life. When I first left El Paso, I didn't realize how different my upbringing was in this highly militarized zone with the presence of Fort Bliss, the border, and border patrol. When I was in Connecticut, I was shocked at how quickly you could get to other states. I was like, 'Where's the checkpoint where they ask us if we're Americans?'" he recalls.

Another recurring theme in Montes Michie's work is the all-American zoot suit. This pre-World War II icon of men's clothing is a natural choice for inclusion, as it, too, is an amalgam of 1930s urban cultures. Style-conscious ethnic youth of that era began wearing loose-fitting suits that drew attention to their dance moves while allowing for physical expression. The pants were baggy and the jackets extremely long, with heavily padded shoulders and wide lapels. Accessories usually included draped watch chains and hats ranging from porkpie hats to sombreros.

The suit soon became a symbol of mar-



Artist Troy Montes Michie

ginalized Americans. In June 1943, what is now called the Zoot Suit Riots took place in Los Angeles. A violent clash erupted as US military men, police officers, and regular citizens brawled with Mexican American, Black American, and Filipino American youth. Many of the riot's victims wore zoot suits, but news accounts reveal that the conflict was motivated by racial tensions rather than fashion.

"I think the first time I encountered the zoot suit was in El Paso. It was prominent with lowrider culture. Certain friends and family members that would go to quinceañeras would be wearing a zoot suit. Today, it's a suit made for a special occasion," Montes Michie explained with a smile.

CAMH visitors will see the iconic suit appear in several forms. A collage may include a sample of zoot suit cloth, a drawing of the suit's drape against the body, and an erotic pose illus-

trating its appeal to the youth who wore it.

Much of Montes Michie's expressions are confrontational—old juxtaposed with new, soft with hard, pleasant with disturbing. Utilizing published materials ranging from ordinary newspapers to pornography, Montes Michie subverts comfortable narratives by placing them in conflict.

The exhibit's title, *Rock of Eye* (or *Rock of the Eye*) is an expression used by tailors as far back as the 1800s. It means "to be guided by the eye" (rather than by precise measurements) and creating clothing using intuition, observation, and experience. In this case, Montes Michie stitches stories together for the viewer through his "rock of the eye."

"When I was young, I was interested in erotic men's magazines from the '70s and '80s [that featured] predominantly white men. Then I discovered other magazines that featured men of color, [but they were] very stereotypical. I wanted to do something where it was a gesture to break their static placement throughout history," Montes Michie explains.

This artist from a dusty corner of West Texas has garnered much attention in the art world. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Texas at El Paso and a master's degree from the Yale School of Art in Connecticut. His works have been included in exhibitions in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, to name only a few. He is currently a lecturer on the visual arts at Princeton University.

CAMH, located in Houston's Museum District on the south end of Montrose Blvd., has a mission to present extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences. Admission to the museum is always free.

What: *Rock of Eye: The Vision of Troy Montes Michie* art exhibit

When: Through January 29, 2023

Where: Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Info: 713-284-8250 or camh.org

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Tragedy and Triumph

The films that changed our attitudes and response to the fight against AIDS.

By A.L. GARCIA CARRERA



As we celebrate the resilience of our community and remember those we've lost on World AIDS Day, we want to look back at a few notable movies and shows that have changed our attitudes and response to the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Holding the Man (2015)



This intimate, true depiction of Australian couple Timothy Conigrave and John Caleo's 15-year relationship first appeared as Timothy's 1995 memoir of the same name. Twenty years later, the movie adaptation received international acclaim for its unflinching look at the unfolding AIDS crisis and its effect on countless gay couples. There is romance, heartbreak, friendship, and humor in this couple's uniquely human story.

How to Survive a Plague (2012)

Considered to be one of the most poignant documentaries on AIDS activism, *How to Survive a Plague* reveals the unrelent-



ing determination of the ACT UP and TAG members who stood up to the pharmaceutical industry and government officials. Many of the breakthroughs in lifesaving HIV treatments is a direct result of the organizing and protesting that these incredible groups did throughout the 1980s and '90s. Directed by one of the first journalists who covered the epidemic, this inspirational documentary is a must-watch for anyone who needs to be reminded of the queer community's power and resilience.

Howard (2018)



The Walt Disney Company was actually in dire straits during the 1980s, before a little film called *The Little Mermaid* transformed Disney into a media powerhouse. *Little Mermaid* lyricist Howard Ashman, who was largely responsible for the film's success, was a genius whose life was cut short by AIDS complications. This documentary offers an intimate depiction of his life's work and the colleagues whose own lives and careers Ashman made possible. With a star-studded cast and a beautiful soundtrack by longtime collaborator Alan Menken, this film is sure to tug at your heartstrings and fill you with nostalgia for all things Disney.

Our Sons (1991)

Starring the iconic Julie Andrews and the dashing Hugh Grant, this made-for-TV movie is a hidden gem. As the title implies, the film focuses on the mothers of two men whose loving relationship ends in tragedy as one of them lands in the hospital with AIDS complications.



The complicated relationships between parents and their children are depicted with empathy, even when homophobia enters the picture. There is nuance to the characters within a story that is all too familiar to many people—especially the mothers whose gay sons were taken from them too soon.

Jeffrey (1995)

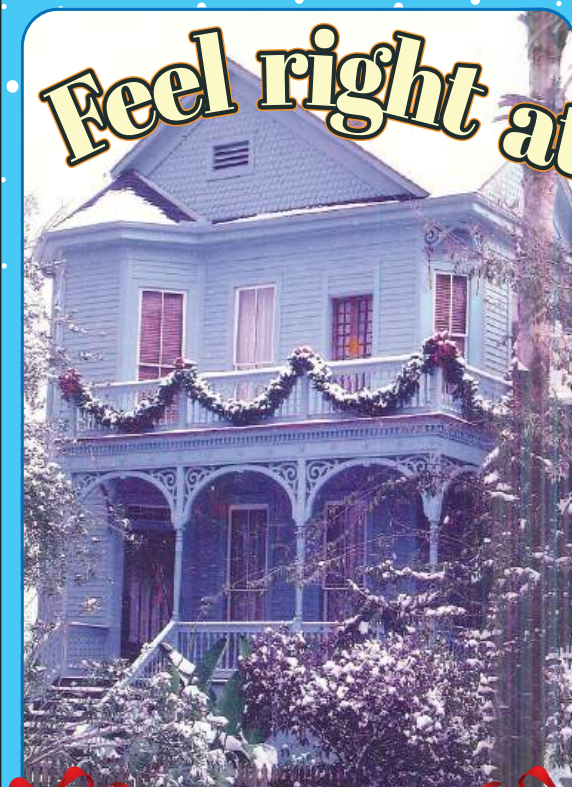


This rom-com milestone tackled the complicated topic of dating in the age of AIDS—and did so with a charmingly comedic script. Set in New York City, the film follows Jeffrey as he struggles with his fear of contracting HIV whenever love comes knocking at his door. Featuring the likes of Sir Patrick Stuart and gay icon Nathan Lane in supporting roles, *Jeffrey* signaled a cultural shift in attitudes about HIV-positive characters. This funny and romantic film offers audiences the valuable lesson that being gay and HIV-positive no longer equates with heartbreak and grief.

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Queer as Folk (2000 and 2022)

This British hit series has been adapted twice for American audiences, and each adaptation has boasted a diverse cast of characters whose lives capture the queer experience of its generation. Both the 2000 and 2022 *Queer as Folk* remakes feature HIV-positive main characters and over-arching storylines that include marriage, adoption, being out at school and work, and the ever-present celebration of queer sex in the face of AIDS. Whether you wish to revisit the Y2K era through Ben and Hunter's stories, or peek into the vibrant lives of young Gen Z characters with Mingus' story, there's something for everyone here.

Pose (2018)



This iconic and groundbreaking show, which puts trans actors of color at the forefront, also features some of the best depictions of life with HIV in the 1980s and '90s. Set in New York City's underground ballroom scene, Blanca's story begins with her HIV diagnosis. But instead of hurling her into a self-destructive spiral, the news inspires her to live each day as if it's her last, and create a meaningful legacy that impacts more lives than she ever expected. If you haven't watched this show yet, you'll want to find out why everyone has fallen in love with Blanca's story—and why it's so important to keep empowering intersectional queer voices.

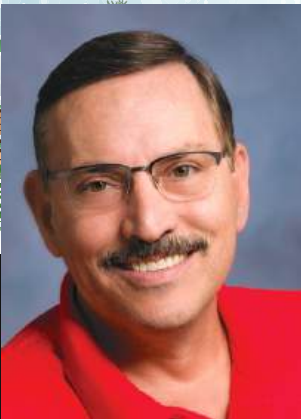


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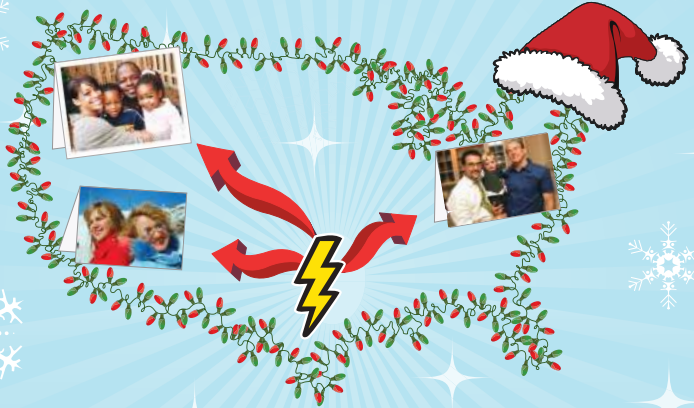
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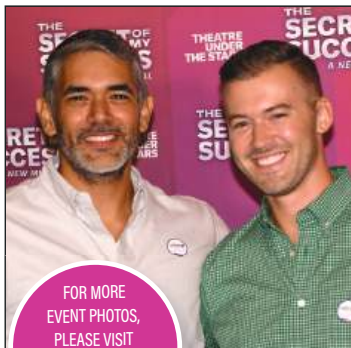
OUT THERE

Photos by DALTON DEHART & CREW



Out@TUTS: "THE SECRET OF MY SUCCESS" November 3, 2022

Actor T. J. Newton and other cast and crew mingled with audience members at the Out@TUTS party after the November 3 performance of *The Secret of My Success*. Held in the Hobby Center's Diana American Grill and co-hosted by OutSmart magazine, Out@TUTS was emceed by Carmina Vavra. Guests mixed and mingled while enjoying complimentary light bites and a cash bar, and a few lucky guests won tickets for the next TUTS production. The next Out@TUTS event is for *Mary Poppins* on December 15. We'll see you there!



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OUT THERE

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CASINO NIGHT AT THE MONTROSE CENTER

November 5, 2022

OutReach United held its Casino Night fundraising event benefiting the Montrose Center last month. Sponsored by Tito's Handmade Vodka and Ole Smokey Whiskey, the evening featured Las Vegas-style casino tables and valuable prize giveaways to cap off the gaming action.



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TEXAS PRIDE IMPACT FUNDS RECEPTION AT HAROLD'S RESTAURANT November 10, 2022

Texas Pride Impact Funds celebrated its fifth anniversary with a reception at Harold's Restaurant, Bar & Rooftop Terrace. The grant-making organization supports under-resourced LGBTQ communities across Texas, and reception attendees heard grant recipients from small towns and large cities throughout the state tell their stories.

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WEDDING GUIDE



Gabriel Rodrigo Fries (l) and Andrew Patrick Fields

Love at First Swipe

Gabriel Rodrigo Fries and Andrew Patrick Fields felt a strong connection after meeting on Tinder.

By **JENNY BLOCK** | Photos by **EL OJO PHOTOGRAPHY**



Like many couples, Gabriel Rodrigo Fries and Andrew Patrick Fields met via a dating app. It was Tinder, to be exact, and it was April of 2015.

But unlike many couples who meet online, the two became good friends and started sharing their lives from the very first day. “I remember wanting to see him and be with him every second of the day from that very first encounter on,” Gabriel says.

Andrew knew Gabriel was the man he wanted to marry when Gabriel took him to Brazil for Christmas to meet his family for the first time. Andrew, who does not speak Portuguese, says, “No matter the language barrier, they opened their arms and showed me so much love.”

The two are grateful to have found each other. “Andrew is not only a very sweet and

loving person (not to mention handsome), but he also has an amazing singing voice and is an amazing baker,” Gabriel notes. “I really hit the jackpot.”

The feelings are clearly mutual. “Gabriel is so smart and handsome, and I love the fact he can speak four different languages,” Andrew adds. “He is the guy who’s going to grab my hand and say ‘Let’s go see the world together.’ I am the happiest man alive when I am next to him.”

Gabriel, 35, was born in Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, and is a graduate of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. He’s now an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

Andrew, 32, is from Deer Park, Texas. A University of Houston Downtown graduate, he’s an accounting manager for a communica-

tions and structured cabling company.

Although they were sure of their future as a married couple, the two put off moving forward with a ceremony until Gabriel’s friends and family could come to the United States for the wedding.

Instead, they did everything but get married. They bought a house and moved in together. “All that was left was officially tying the knot,” Gabriel says. “In a way, our lives didn’t drastically change after the wedding because we had already been living as a married couple for a long time.”

But on a trip to Puerto Rico in December 2021, Gabriel finally proposed to Andrew. “It wasn’t something I planned, exactly, but I had been wanting to do it for a very long time and just realized the time was right as we were both having a great time there,” he recalls.



The two were wed on August 13, 2022, at Houston Municipal Courthouse, some seven years after they met. Unfortunately, getting travel visas for Gabriel's family proved to be impossible, and Andrew was hesitant about having their wedding without both families present.

Gabriel admits he was a bit anxious about getting married in the courthouse. "I wasn't sure how people around us would react to seeing two men marrying each other," he says.

But both Gabriel and Andrew agree that their courthouse wedding was far sweeter and more personal than they could have imagined. It was far from a "sign and go" affair, Gabriel adds. "Judge Robert Rosenberg made it very personal, respectful, and it was an actual sweet memory for us."

It ended up being one of the couple's greatest days ever, and Andrew's family was able to join them, as were friends of the couple, to celebrate their marriage at Brasa's Steakhouse after the courthouse ceremony. "I felt that having the reception at a Brazilian steakhouse showed [how much we] wanted a

part of Brazil and Gabriel's family to be there," Andrew says.

One of the couple's best friends, Raquel Hernandez, owner of El Ojo Photography, photographed the celebration.

The pair is planning a more meaningful wedding ceremony when Gabriel's family can travel here from Brazil. "I'm sure we will look for vendors that clearly and openly claim to be LGBTQ or LGBTQ-friendly," Gabriel says. "I think that's a requirement for us to feel comfortable."

"We couldn't *not* be married anymore, so we decided to marry now. We still want to have something small but symbolic that resembles more of a wedding, and maybe repeat our wedding vows. I need to convince Andrew. We already have two close friends who agreed to officiate."

So this happy couple looks forward to the day when the Fries and the Fields can all celebrate together under one roof, knowing that their extended families just got a lot bigger.

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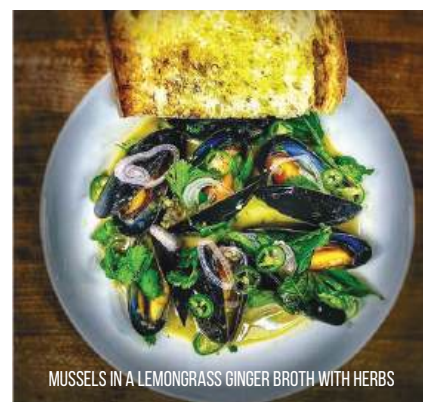
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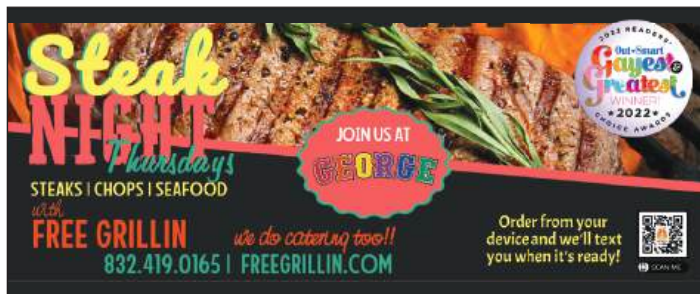
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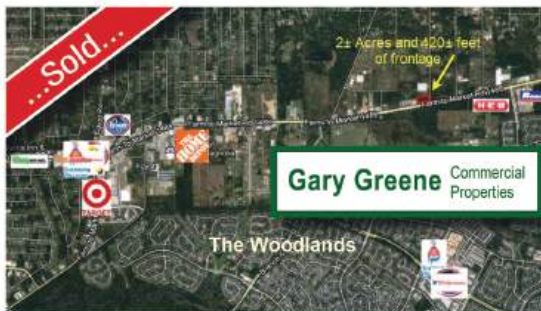
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A Sluggish December

Our energies improve after mid-February.



We end the year with Mercury going retrograde in Capricorn. We'll be feeling the retrograde's effect by the 24th, and that will take us into the New Year when Mercury

is direct by January 27. This holiday season will spark the desire to revive cherished old traditions. Plan your holiday season in advance, and be prepared to adapt to changing plans.

The sun enters Capricorn on the Winter Solstice (December 21), Mercury enters Capricorn on the 6th, while Venus enters Capricorn on the 9th. Mars, our initiator and protector, remains retrograde until mid-February, creating supply-chain and delivery problems. Jupiter, our planet of growth, re-enters Aries on the 20th. Saturn remains in Aquarius, Uranus in Taurus, Neptune in Pisces, and Pluto in Capricorn. Things will seem sluggish around the New Year, but our energies improve after mid-February.

ARIES (Mar. 21–Apr. 19)

You are excited about the upcoming holidays, and it's a very good time to get your message across. With your ruler, Mars, retrograde, you are looking back instead of forward as you continue to confront past issues. By midmonth, you are beginning to focus on new goals and future directions. Jupiter, planet of growth and optimism, re-enters your sign, which should open up new career and relationship opportunities through the spring. Don't be surprised by your lack of action early in 2023—the best time to act on those new opportunities is after mid-February.

TAURUS (Apr. 20–May 20)

You are improving the quality and intimacy of your partnerships, perhaps by sharing hidden aspects of yourself. Your career drive remains strong as you work on a plan to improve your circumstances, perhaps by starting a business, retiring, or going back to school and starting over! Toward the end of the month you are in more of a holiday mood, so that's a better time to connect with friends and family. You are communicating more directly with others, and letting your real feelings show. You'll be reassessing things in late December, which prepares you for some shifts in career and relationships in 2023.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21)

Mars (planet of action, lack of patience, and self-orientation) continues her long visit in your sign. Mars entered Gemini in August and remains here until the end of March 2023. This will keep you re-examining both previous decisions and upcoming choices that may have a strong impact on your career. You want to do something that is internally satisfying, and you're in no mood to compromise. This is the time for research and planning rather than acting on new plans. Relationships are still very important, and you may be making plans to create a more solid foundation. Toward the end of the month, you'll be wanting more intimacy and fewer secrets in all of your partnerships.

CANCER (June 22–July 22)

December is about getting your health, exercise, and work routines organized and back in place. This is an excellent time to monitor your food intake, in spite of the holidays. Difficulties in working with co-workers could make you short-tempered, so being more flexible and not rushing can really help during this period. Relationships take on more importance in late December, when Mercury will be retrograde. If you are in a positive partnership, this is a good time to renew those bonds.

For difficult relationships, this is the time to face the issues. If you are single, this is a good time to connect with people from your past. February will be the time to move forward.

LEO (July 23–Aug. 22)

Relationships are now very active for you until May of 2023. This is your time to set new goals for business or personal partnerships. In difficult relationships, it may be time to move apart. You may want to just have some fun and not take life too seriously. You need to focus on yourself, although your children may also demand more attention. This is a very good time for hobbies and things that give you pleasure. Late December takes on a more serious tone, and you may feel the need to control things. Career energies still need updating and improving. You will feel more confident after mid-February.

VIRGO (Aug. 23–Sept. 22)

This is the time of year when family is active in your life, whether or not they are with you. This can make the holidays feel more demanding, and you may need some options before you agree to participate. Career continues to be busy, with people from your past still

contacting you. You are busy improving both your health regimen and your partnerships. By the end of the month, having more fun, enjoying hobbies, and connecting with your children is all on the agenda. Your patience will be limited through the end of March. As your ruler, Mercury, goes retrograde this month, you'll be feeling more nostalgic!

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)

You are speaking your mind this month. You are usually more diplomatic, but your patience with people is limited. Don't try to do all of the holiday planning or you'll be overwhelmed when the fun times arrive. Over the last several years, major changes in your family have made you confront past issues and then move on. This is the time to start your own traditions rather than clinging to old ones. Your work routines are still in flux as you look at new options. Hold off on those work decisions until February.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)

This year has seen you change your views about relationships and search for more options. This cycle continues through next year. During December, you are more in touch with the flow and making practical decisions, even if they are demanding. It's a good time for writing, organizing, and prepping for the holidays. You keep your boundaries clear with your family in spite of the shift that has occurred. In late December you will be in a more creative and playful mood, which could mean turning fun hobbies into something more lucrative. Your relationships need

to reflect your current views, which can be difficult when maintaining traditional roles is expected. Personal choice is a must!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

You are looking at relationships, patience, and the need to be real this month. This long-term trend continues through March 2023. If you are in a positive relationship, this is a great time for bonding and recommitment. In difficult relationships, old issues come to the surface to be dealt with. If you are single, you are weighing the pros and cons of relationships. You are also paying more attention to your health and well-being. Later in the month you are reconsidering finances and making efficient use of your time. The holidays may be very nostalgic for you. Your family has changed over the last few years and you are just beginning to establish new traditions. This is your personal yearly cycle when the sun returns to the sky you were born under—a time of endings and new beginnings!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

You are looking at different options to maximize holiday fun and minimize work. Problems that you usually ignore are bothering you, so you may need a break from routines. You feel more in control later in December. Mercury, our planet of routines and schedules, will be retrograde in Capricorn from midmonth until late January. This will be a time of gaining perspective as past issues become clear. It's not unusual to hear from people in your past during a Mercury retrograde. This could make you more nostalgic for the holidays. Put your New

Year's resolutions on hold until mid-February, when you can put them into play.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

This has been the year for setting boundaries. You've let go of responsibilities and limited your commitment to activities that you've enjoyed being involved in. This has had an impact on both your career and your partnerships. You are more conscious of your tribe as the month begins. You are very aware of the nation's divisions and can't understand the motives of others. Career activity continues to be active as you look for something that really ignites your passion. You may need an "exit strategy" during the holidays since you are feeling reclusive in late December. You are looking at ways to create a more stable resource base in 2023.

PISCES (Feb. 19-Mar. 20)

There is a real mix of energies this month. Although you are more sensitive to avoiding negative people, you are also very active with your community and family. You may be more impatient with problems at work that you would normally ignore. Communications may seem blocked or confused. The holidays may seem even more demanding this year, so make sure you have plenty of options! You are ready to be more socially active in late December, when boundaries are going to be more important. Old friends may reach out during the holidays and through the end of January!



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Leading with Love

Angela Mercy is Houston's queen who reigns with kindness.

By SAM BYRD



Angela Mercy may be a mild-mannered accountant by day, but at night this money-minded mama is focused on dollars for a different reason. She has built her entire career around raising charitable funds to support nonprofits throughout the community. Kindness is free, and she distributes it *gratis* both near and far. Read on to find out more about this big-hearted beauty.

Pronouns?

In drag: She/Her. Out of drag: He/Him.

Inner Avatar?

Oprah—inquisitive, compassionate, and powerful.

Home town?

Crosby, Texas.

Drag birthday?

Valentine's Day 2012

What got you interested in drag?

I would watch the charity drag shows back at Brazos River Bottom and wanted to get more involved in fundraising.

Describe your drag persona.

Kind, caring, happy, and energetic.

How did you choose your stage name?

I wanted a name that was a pun, but also reflected my intentions to do charity work. So I ended up with "Angel of Mercy."

Any pageant titles under your belt?

I'm very proud that all of my titles have charity fundraising at their core. I have been Empress 31 of Houston with the Empire of the Royal Sovereign Imperial Court of the Single Star, Inc. (ERSICSS), Girl of Montrose 2016 for PWA Holiday Charities, a 2016 Miss Mint Julep honoree for Legacy Community Health, and most recently, Miss Tony's Corner Pocket 2019–20.

Since this time of year is the season of giving, tell us about your interest in philanthropy.

From a very young age, I knew I was destined to serve and care for others. I'm grateful that



I found an amazing avenue to accomplish fundraising while also having fun.

Do you have a few favorite charities that you support?

There are so many incredible charities in Houston, and I am fortunate enough to sit on the board of directors for two of them: PWA Holiday Charities, which helps those affected by HIV/AIDS during the holidays, and ERSICSS, which runs a scholarship fund, an emergency fund, and supports other local charities.

#TeamPopSong or #TeamBallad?

I personally perform for #teampopsong because I prefer upbeat numbers, but I produced a show this year called Battle of the Ballads, and it was *incredible*! The entire show was ballads, and we raised thousands of dollars for the Believe In A Dream Scholarship Fund. So there is no denying the power of #teamballad.

Have you ever had a defining moment in your life?

My most pivotal defining moment happened on March 9, 2020. That was the day I decided to give up alcohol. I've been sober for nearly three years, and it has changed my life for the better in every aspect. You can still enjoy the nightlife and support your local bars and bar staff if you are sober. There are more and more drinks these days without alcohol that you can enjoy while you're out and about.

How would you describe Houston's drag scene to a visitor?

The drag scene here is so incredibly diverse. You can find a show that fits exactly what you are looking for.

Where do you perform?

People can find me most often at Tony's Corner Pocket or Barcode, but I perform at bars all across the city for charity events. I am at one, two, or sometimes three or more events each week. I always post on social media where I'll be, so follow me and come support a show!



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