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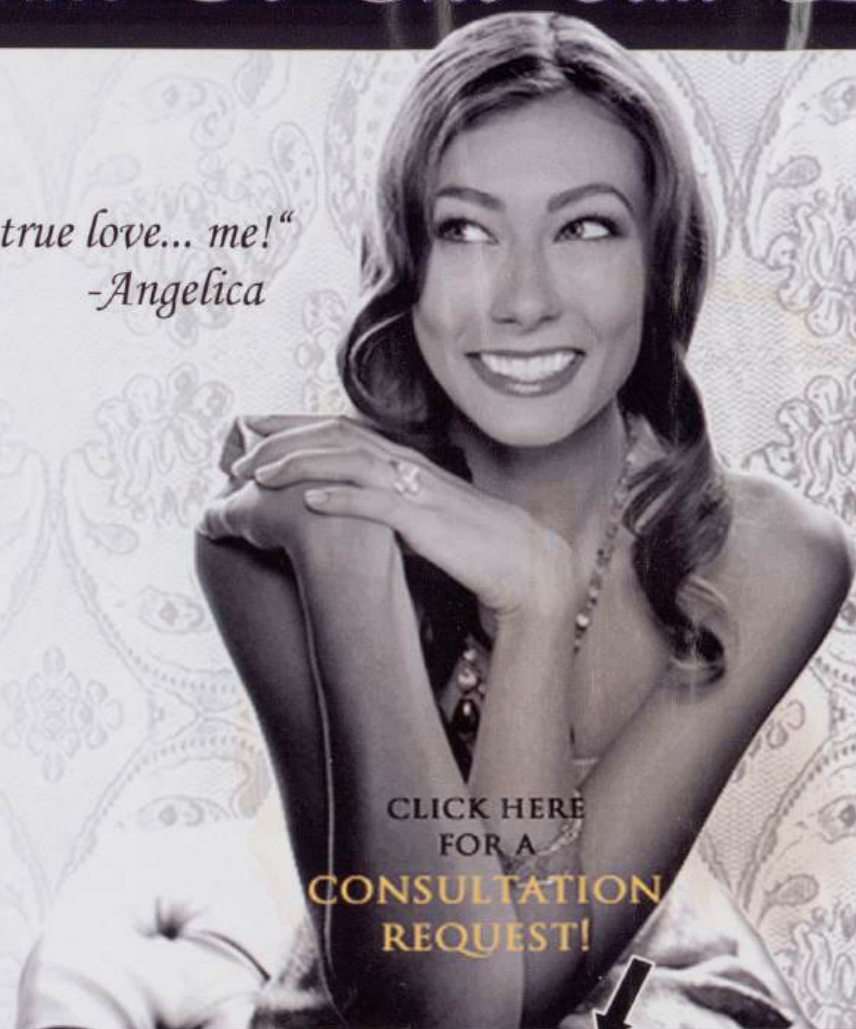
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CONTENTS

Vol. 16 • No. 2 • March 2009

News & Comment

- 11 Letters**
- 14 News Briefs**
- 18 What a World** Ted Haggard's new life.
- 20 LeftOut** The audacity of inclusion.
- 21 OutRight** California in the rearview mirror.
- 24 InsideOut** More audacity.
- 26 AIDS Watch** Tips to honor the fallen.

Features

- 28 COVER STORY The Scales of Equality** Houston's gay and lesbian judges.
- 35 Now More than Ever** AIDS Walk Houston turns 20.
- 40 Sundance Scene** Jim Carrey and others get gay at the famed festival.
- 46 Looking Good** OutSmart's spring fashion roundup.
- 48 Getting There** Wheels make the woman—and man.
- 61 Smooch and Tell** *Stop Kiss* plays at Rice University.
- 65 Beyond the Obvious** Choreographer Joe Goode puts more gay in ballet.

Arts & Entertainment

- 68 Queer Quotes** Wanda Sykes, Kanye West, Toni Collette, and more.
- 70 DVDs** Rev up the player for *Rent*, *Choke*, *Otto*, and more.
- 72 Movies** The other *Trinidad*.
- 74 GrooveOut** Ann Hampton Callaway comes out, plus new releases from India.Arie, Nat King Cole, Willie Nelson, Daniel Lenz, and others.
- 80 ReadOut** New Orleanians tell their tales, plus a Harvey Milk album, new gay fiction, and more.

Out & About

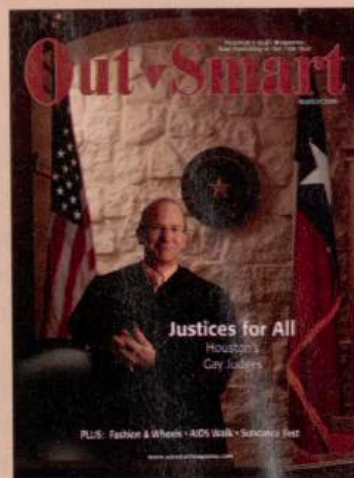
- 84 Calendar**
- 86 LookOut**
- 92 Out There**
- 94 TimeOut**
- 102 Bar/Club Guide**
- 104 SignOut**
- 106 SceneOut**

Advertisers Index

- 96 Business News**
- 98 Classified**
- 100 OutSmart Advertisers**

On the Web

Visit www.OutSmartMagazine.com for an extended interview with Ann Hampton Callaway.



About the cover:
 Houston judge Steven Kirkland (see page 28).

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Blase DiStefano
Senior Editor Nancy Ford
Graphic Artist Teresa Anderson, Caleb Smith

Contributing Writers Sheri Taylor Bockelman,
Dale Carpenter, Troy Carrington, Angel Curtis,
Lawrence Ferber, Steven Foster, Marene Gustin,
Suzie Lynde, Donalevan Maines, Kelly A. McCann,
Neil Ellis Orts, Annise D. Parker, Lilly Roddy, Terri
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Photographers/Illustrators
John Conroy, Dalton DeHart, Pam Francis, Mark
Hiebert, David Eduardo Flores Perez

Sales Manager Nikki Araguz
Account Executives
Jack Berger, Thomas Chelena, Michael Hatcher,
Joanna Jackson, Greg Jeu

Web Editor Ann Walton Sieber

Special Projects Manager Tom Fricke

National Advertising Representative
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Letters

RENDER UNTO CAESAR

Dale Carpenter misses the mark re: Rick Warren's association with Obama by focusing on ideology [OutRight, "The Purpose-Driven Choice," February]. The main connection between Warren and Democrats and Republicans alike is financial, according to "Religion-Based Tax Breaks: Housing to Paychecks to Books," from a four-part series by Diana B. Henriques published October 11, 2006, in the *New York Times*. Both houses of Congress overwhelmingly passed into law, thanks to Rick Warren's efforts, a new law that clergy members of all faiths could deduct [from their taxes] the amount used to provide a home, however much that might be. Nice perk for clergy, right?

Furthermore, we could solve all of our financial problems in this country if we simply began taxing the land that churches own, which we all know is tax-exempt, and remove sales tax exemption status from churches. What a wonderful gesture that would be in Jesus' name!

Buzz Bellmont
Houston, Texas

MORE FACTS

I congratulate James Fedowsky [for his] letter, "Don't Let the Facts Get in the Way" [Letters, January, re: Mark Timmers, "Houston's Animal Cop"].

OutSmart has never been unbiased in support of its advertisers. It is noteworthy that Ms. [Phyllis] Frye's ad ran opposite [OutSmart's editor's note, which defended] her client [Timmers]. And your support of Ms. [Karen] Derr's candidacy is based in part on her being one of your earliest clients.

Robert J. Wilson
Houston, Texas

HE LIKED BUSH

How predictable that the comments in *OutSmart* regarding Obama's inauguration were unanimously enthusiastic, and how discouraging that the breathless tone resembled teenagers with a crush more than serious adults ["Why We Love This Man" by Steven Foster, February].

Surely somewhere in this community of ours there exist people who noticed that we haven't been attacked since 9/11; that Iraq just held fair, free, and peaceful elections . . . ; that al-Qaeda, which had made Iraq its central battleground, was unable to disrupt a single polling place; that Libya has given up its weapons of mass destruction program; that Syria is out of Lebanon. . . . [Or] that Obama gave himself a long time to close Gitmo. . . . [Or] that it wasn't Bush, the Republicans, or any conservative that caused oil to spike at \$140 a barrel . . . [or pushed] the idea of giving mortgages to people who can't afford them. . . . [Or] that under the Bush tax cuts, which "favored the rich," tax revenues to the government actually went up. . . . [Or] that the dreaded Patriot Act, which we all like to believe is stomping on our Constitutional rights . . . was passed by Congress, →

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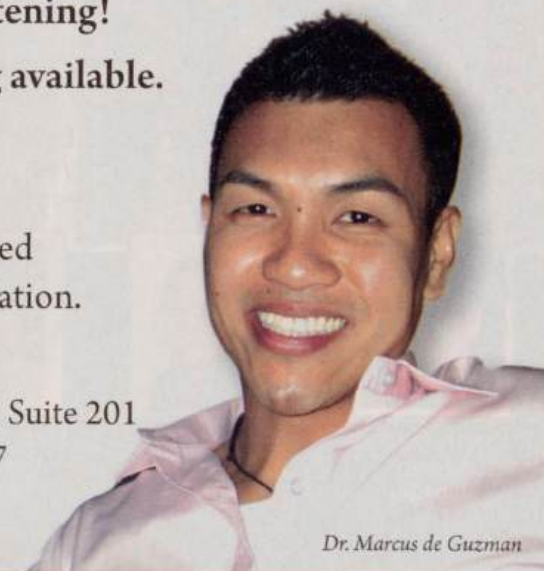
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Letters continued from previous page

just as the Constitution designed it. . . .

I noticed all these things, and actually liked President Bush. I would never write breathless prose about how he changed the world or fought for my rights. I just don't have those feelings of helplessness or victimhood or whatever it is that makes gay people act so childish about Obama. I guess that means I hate myself.

Dirk Marshall
Houston, Texas

A MATTER OF DISCIPLINE

The office of the presidency is not charged with raising, feeding, or disciplining Americans. Its first order of responsibility, constitutionally, is national security and the protection of our borders. The institution of the family is charged with the duties of raising children, yet Mr. Wolf so willingly yields them to Obama's White House [LeftOut, "Spare the Rod, Spoil the World" by Brandon Wolf, February]. I sometimes wonder if there are any responsibilities left to the individual.

Mr. Wolf seems to suggest that our source of success and happiness exists in Washington. Government is not and never has been the source of American greatness. Freedom is that source. Our government is authorized by its citizenry to "promote the general welfare," not to provide it! Helping people who cannot help themselves is one thing, but Americans who demand womb-to-tomb assistance are simply lazy and fail to recognize their individual self-worth. We do not answer to a central government. Government answers to us.

Under Bush, the economy was stable for six of his eight years. Unemployment was, on average, lower than any previous decade since the 1960s. Due to his tax-cutting efforts, tax revenues to the federal government have never been higher, a paradoxical truth that liberals do not understand. We have not been attacked again since 9/11, although there have been some attempts. Perhaps Mr. Wolf desires Obama to dismiss terrorist desires even though the 9/11 Commission Report said specifically, "They have been at war with us while we have not been at war with them." This is a profound statement, given that it references decades of Muslim terror plots against U.S. interests, going back to 1979 when Iranians took 52 Americans hostage—until Reagan was sworn in. Yes, even with understanding Democrats in the White House, radicals had America in its cross-hairs.

If Mr. Wolf really thinks Obama is going to "lead us into a new world of discussion, understanding and negotiation" with psycho-leaders in the Middle East and elsewhere, you're living on the planet Romulac. Obama will finally be held accountable for his talk and his decisions. He cannot vote "present" and his rhetoric of two years of campaigning is documented. And so are the declared desires of terrorists speckled across the globe. He better be ready to spank evil. And the terrorists need to know that.

Michael Crowe
Houston, Texas ■



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by Nancy Ford

GLBT CAUCUS PAC ENDORSES ANNISE PARKER FOR HOUSTON'S MAYOR

HOUSTON CITY CONTROLLER ANNISE PARKER earned an early endorsement in the November 2009 race for city mayor from the Houston Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Political Caucus.

"Annise Parker is the most qualified candidate to lead Houston as our nation struggles through a severe economic crisis," said Kris Banks, caucus president. "Like the rest of our city, the Houston GLBT community is bracing for tough times in the coming months and years. We need a steady, experienced hand to guide us."

Parker's proven leadership and record of fiscal responsibility—along with her sound economic policy ensuring that Houston can continue to fund important priorities like public safety, stronger neighborhoods, infrastructure, and quality city services—were cited in the endorsement process.

"With this endorsement, our members send a strong message: qualifications matter now, more than ever," Banks said. "And no one is more qualified than Annise Parker to lead our city through tough economic times."

VOTING CONTINUES FOR PRIDE PARADE GRAND MARSHALS

NOMINEES FOR GRAND MARSHALS WHO will lead Houston's 2009 GLBT Pride Parade are currently being voted upon by the local GLBT community.

Female grand marshal nominees are Fiona Dawson, Cristina Martinez, Julia Oliver, and Carol Wyatt. Nominees for male grand marshal are Kris Banks, James Knapp, Keith Nappier, John Nechman, Mark Nichols, Mark Timmers, and Jeff Wallace. Nominees for honorary grand marshal are Linda and Mike Bratsen, Ann Robison, and Sandy Stacy. The Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce, Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender History, and Houston Area Bears are organizations also competing for the grand marshal honor.

In-person voting takes place March 1 at 2 p.m. at St. Paul's United Methodist Church; March 4 at 7 p.m. at Meteor; March 7 at 10 a.m. at AssistHers' Softball Tournament; March 11 at 10 p.m. at Guava Lamp; and online. The winners' announcement event takes place March 27.



History on the 'net: organizers of a new community digital history project have already unearthed artifacts, including the *Montrose Voice* reporting the election of pro-gay Mayor Kathy Whitmire and a photo of an early activists' meeting.

NEW GROUP PLANS TO PRESERVE HISTORY WITH DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Twenty-five community members gathered downtown at the Houston Public Library on January 28 to discuss ways to bring historical pieces of Houston's GLBTQ community together and to make them more accessible. During that conversation, a new community-based initiative was proposed: to preserve, collect, and promote wider awareness of Houston's rich GLBTQ history through an Internet-based archive.

"What would you do to protect your valuable papers and photos from a natural disaster—put them where floodwater cannot get to them? Scan them so they might not be lost in a fire?" Brian Riedel, one of the project's collaborators, posited. "But what would you do if those photos and papers were not just yours, but represented the history of a whole community? And what about the stories of our community that have not yet been recorded? What happens to those stories when the ones who know them pass on?"

The group hosts an open community meeting on Wednesday, March 25, 6:30 p.m., in the Montrose Counseling Center's first floor meeting space, 401 Branard St. Details: 713/348-2162.

Houston's 2009 GLBT Pride Parade, presented by Pride Houston, is scheduled June 27, 8:45 p.m., in Montrose. Details: pridehouston.org.

THREE OPENLY GAY MEN RUNNING FOR HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL

A RECORD NUMBER OF OPENLY GAY MEN have declared their candidacy for seats on Houston's City Council.

Jeff Downing, a local attorney, also announced his candidacy for Houston City Council District A, the seat currently occupied by Councilwoman Toni Lawrence, whose term also expires this cycle. After beginning his law career in the Harris County District Attorney's Office, Downing opened his own general practice firm, the Downing Law Firm.

City of Houston Public Works employee and small business owner, Noel Freeman, is running for Houston City Council at Large, Position 4. An Air Force veteran who has also worked in the office of U.S. Congressman John Culberson (R-Tx.), the National Archives, and the National Security Agency, Freeman seeks to fill the council seat currently held by term-limited Ronald C. Green.

A former teacher, Maverick Welsh has announced his candidacy for Houston City Council District H, formerly held by now-Harris County Sheriff, Adrian Garcia. Welsh also served as campaign manager and chief-of-staff for current Houston City Council member and candidate for Houston mayor, Peter Brown.

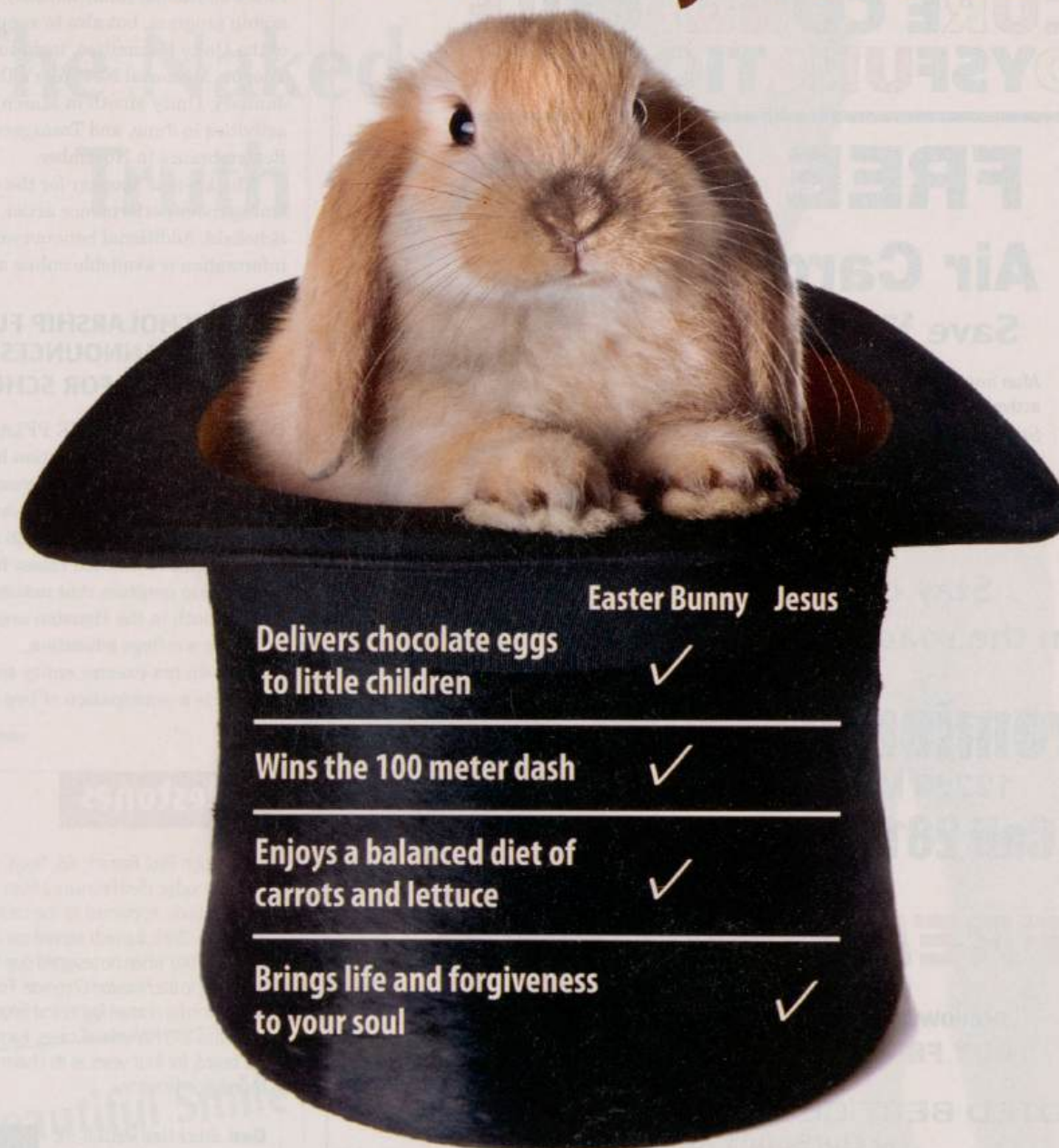
UNITY COMMITTEE TO AWARD TWO SCHOLARSHIPS AT ANNUAL BANQUET

THE HOUSTON TRANSGENDER UNITY Committee has announced March 16 as the postmark deadline for applications for the trans-positive group's annual scholarships. Representatives of the nonprofit organization say they will award two Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarships for \$1,000 each to transgender students who are attending or will attend accredited institutions of higher learning once again at the annual Houston Transgender Unity Banquet.

Returning to Sheraton Brookhollow Hotel on May 2, the banquet is one of the premiere single-night transgender events in the nation, organizers say.

continued on page 16

The Easter Bunny vs. Jesus



	Easter Bunny	Jesus
Delivers chocolate eggs to little children	✓	
Wins the 100 meter dash	✓	
Enjoys a balanced diet of carrots and lettuce	✓	
Brings life and forgiveness to your soul		✓

In conclusion we have found that although both the Easter Bunny and Jesus get a lot of attention this time of year, they really have very little in common. When it comes to tasty chocolate, raw speed and eating vegetables... the Bunny wins hands down. If however, you're looking for your soul to be refreshed and for some eternal forgiveness... Jesus has much more to offer. But hey! There's really no rule that says we can't have both!

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News Briefs continued from page 14

The semi-formal event's silent auction raises additional funds not only for the scholarship program, but also to support programs of the Unity Committee, including the Brenda Thomas Memorial New Year's Day Social in January, Unity Month in March, Pride month activities in June, and Transgender Day of Remembrance in November.

The keynote speaker for the event is transgender performance artist, Scott Turner Schofield. Additional banquet and scholarship information is available online at htuc.org.

SCHOLARSHIP FUND ANNOUNCES 'DOLLARS FOR SCHOLARS'

ORGANIZERS FOR THE PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation have announced the date for the group's annual Spring Fling-Dollars for Scholars dinner. The event, scheduled March 26 at InterContinental Hotel, raises funds for a scholarship program that assists worthy GLBT youth in the Houston area who are pursuing a college education.

Its own tax-exempt entity since 1998, PHYSF is a combination of two scholarship

continued on page 93

Milestones

DIED. John Paul Barnich, 63, Texas' first openly gay city court judge, died February 2 from diabetes-related complications. Appointed to the court by Mayor Lee Brown in 1999, Barnich served on the bench until October 2007 when he resigned due to failing health, according to the *Houston Chronicle*. Founder of the Bar Association for Human Rights and frequent defender of gay rights and HIV-related cases, Barnich was also on the board, for four years as its chairman, of the AIDS Foundation Houston.

DIED. Bruce Neal Metskar, 51, died on January 15. A longtime member of the Montrose Softball League, Metskar also served on the board of that sports organization. Originally from Indiana, Metskar is survived by his partner, Ruben Diaz; two sisters; one brother; and many friends.



DIED. Eleanor Tinsley, 82, an eight-term veteran of Houston's City Council who was one of the first women elected to citywide office, died February 10. A fierce advocate of city beautification, Tinsley was also a solid champion of issues supporting Houston's gay community. Tinsley's husband, James, preceded her in death. Funeral services were held February 14 at South Main Baptist Church.

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SO GAY

The sad—more or less—return of Ted Haggard

To say that these are strange days we are living in is a vast understatement. Huge, molten objects are falling from the sky in Austin. Batwoman is a lesbian. And no sooner do I express my desire that *Desperate Housewives* represent with some woman/woman lovin', ABC suits announce that Teri Hatcher is about to get beso'd by Swoosie Kurtz.

Strange days, indeed. But perhaps the strangest occurrence of all: Ted Haggard is back. And I feel sorry for him.

Sort of.

You remember that grinning, former leader of the 30,000-member evangelical movement who boyishly zipped through the hallowed hallways of his mega church on a shiny silver motor scooter.

That's so gay.

Reverend Ted enjoyed not only worldly riches but also unfettered access to the Bush 2 White House, making no bones (sorry) about the influence he exerted over matters not only of church but also state. He took glee in revealing: "The president said, 'Ted Haggard, you need to come to the Crawford ranch and I'll show you what a ride is like.'"

That's so gay.

There were many more hints about Haggard that had for years set off the gaydar of those of us blessed with that extraordinary gift. There was his warm, full body embrace of young man after young man who flocked to his church in Colorado Springs with glazy-eyed adoration.

That's so gay.

And in an address to a stadium reserved exclusively for men—presumably Promise Keepers—Haggard enthusiastically once noted: "There's loads of testosterone in the room and everyone seems to love it."

So gay.

Named one of the 20 most influential evangelicals in the United States by *Time* magazine in 2005, Haggard fell and fell hard in 2006 when he admitted to snorting meth and cavorting with massage therapist/hookerman, Mike Jones.

"I broke the rules. I shouldn't have done that," Haggard now says in a new documentary, explaining his propensity for sexual hypocrisy like he was caught on a technicality.

Dancing around vocabulary. That's so gay.

Alexandra Pelosi's *The Trials of Ted Haggard* reveals a much different Haggard today than the confident religious leader we met in her *Friends of God* three years ago. When not unemployed, Haggard now skips from menial job to even more menial job, like distributing advertising flyers or selling life insurance door-to-door. Every few months he moves himself, his

Haggard agrees when his counselor calls him "a heterosexual with complications."

family, and their dwindling possessions from loaned homes to bleak apartments to cheap hotels.

Ted is now a haggard Haggard, if you will.

In Pelosi's new film we learn that, after The Fall, Haggard agreed to counseling called "spiritual restoration" in exchange for a year's severance pay; he was also unceremoniously banished from New Life church and Colorado state by church leaders. Eighteen months later, those same church leaders declared Ted "100 percent heterosexual," a concept in itself which is so gay.

But Haggard denies ever having said that, himself. Rather, he agrees when his counselor calls him "a heterosexual with complications."

After his sordid story broke, Haggard said in a letter read to his heartbroken congregation that part of his life was "so repulsive and so dark"—a condition he later blamed on the long-term effect of "same-sex sex play" as a teen.

And then a priest molested him and then he became an alcoholic and then he began practicing his wide stance in the Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport.

Just kidding about that last paragraph. That would be too gay.

In reality, he told CNN interviewer Larry King, "I have some thoughts in my life and some processes in my life that just don't fit neatly into the boxes, which I think is true for a lot of people."

Yes, Ted, that is true for a lot of people. We call those people gay people.

Trials closes with news that a second man, Grant Haas, has recently publicly accused Haggard of "inappropriate action"—more proof that when you scratch a closeted homo, you usually find more than just one massage therapist under the surface.

Haggard brushed off this latest revelation, telling King that church leaders knew about his encounter with Haas two years ago, because—get this—he was "already out."

Gay.

Haggard further told King that he didn't choose his sexuality, but admitted that denying it and trying to smother it only made it worse.

Gay.

And finally, though he also told King he is "100 percent satisfied" with his relationship with his wife, Gayle, Haggard also admitted, "I have thoughts from time to time, but not compelling thoughts."

That's not gay. That's just sad.

Former GLAAD chief, Joan Garry, blogged last month about Haggard's return to the public eye with a more skeptical eye: "Please remember: he abused his power in the evangelical church and was dismissed. Sounds about right to me. Please remember: when he sympathetically talks about selling life insurance now, remember he should feel lucky he has a job. And please remember: his antigay rhetoric has been fanning the flames of prejudice and discrimination against gay and lesbian people for years. His sermons give permission—for name-calling and gay jokes at the water cooler. Then it ramps up. Employment discrimination, violence. But it all starts with the words of people in positions of power, often those with pulpits."

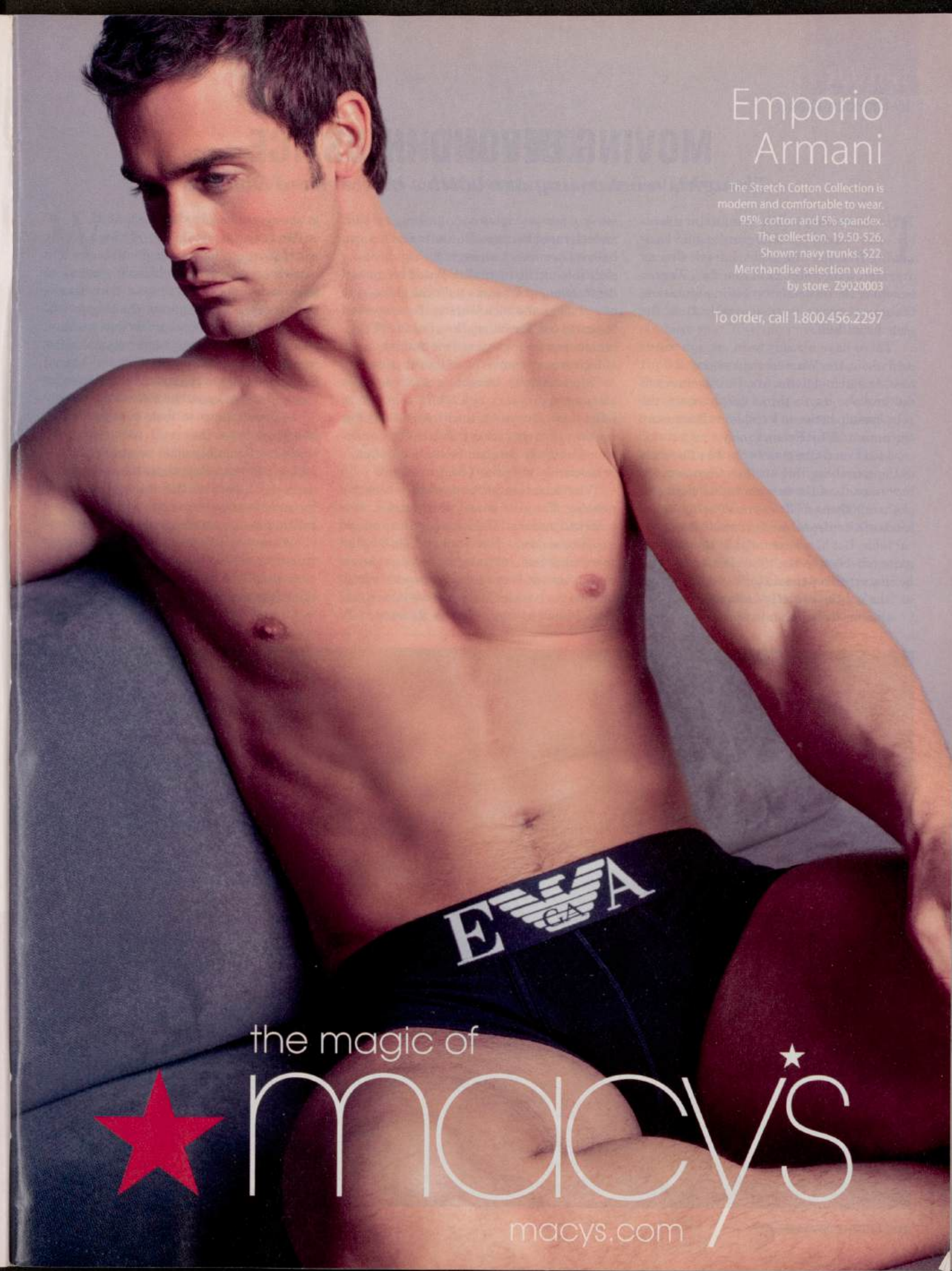
Okay. I'm back, and appropriately outraged and disgusted.

Strange days, indeed. ■

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MOVING BEYOND INJUSTICE

Thoughts on choosing our battles in the era of Obama

It's not an easy task to trump a president-elect during pre-inaugural media feeding frenzies. But when Barack Obama announced the selection of Rev. Rick Warren to deliver the invocation at his inauguration, the gay community temporarily stole the global spotlight.

There have already been enough words said about the Warren controversy; I don't need to add fuel to the fire. But the incident did provoke me to think deeply about the relationship between President Obama and the nation's GLBT community.

I first read Obama's book, *The Audacity of Hope*, in the spring of 2008. Obama noted how important the human rights struggles of the 1960s and '70s were in bringing all kinds of disenfranchised groups to the political table. But he also noted that Ronald Reagan probably won the 1980 election because he characterized the rhetoric of these groups as "the politics of victimization."

Obama feels he understands the whole

issue of human rights well, growing up with an interracial heritage. He had to find his own balance between a struggle for rights and a slide into victim mentality. Based on my understanding of Obama's political philosophy of inclusion, the Rick Warren choice seemed logical to me. The outcry from the GLBT community, however, convinced me that this sense of logic wasn't shared by many other gays.

Since Barack Obama is our leader for the next four years, the GLBT community must learn how to work with him. So I offer my own thoughts for others to reflect on, as we collectively determine our community's relationship with the 44th president.

Victimization is, in essence, obsessive grieving. The grief is real. It is justified. It is a normal, natural, and necessary response to injustice and loss. Historically, the GLBT community has been treated with disdain, violence, and alienation. We've been the target of moralists and gay bashers. We've had our basic rights denied and our very existence threatened. To

grieve over such hurts is to be human.

However, as with all grief, there is only one true resolution: to accept our losses and to move on. Accepting our losses doesn't mean that we condone the actions that caused them, nor do we exonerate the people who caused them. It simply means that we have, as all 12-step recovery programs emphasize, "the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference."

We don't have to look beyond today's headlines to see that resolving grief means that past injustices must be put to rest. Israel and Palestine continue their seemingly perpetual bloodbath that destroys countless innocent lives because neither side can resist seeking atonement for past atrocities.

What I'm suggesting is not a simple "turn the other cheek" attitude. There are very practical reasons to transcend past injustices and join in an effort to find com-

continued on page 22

KNOW ON 8

A post-mortem on what went wrong in California

With a switch of just two percent of the votes, the leaders of the "No on 8" campaign would today be heroes. We'd be lauding their powerful advertising campaign. We'd be celebrating their coalition building. We'd wonder at their unprecedented fundraising prowess. And we'd still have gay marriage in California.

But life is a vale of tears, so the conventional wisdom is that the leaders of No on 8 are clueless cowards who squandered a large lead in a blue state in a bright blue year.

Never mind that they were trying to overcome deeply embedded views about something Americans think is the foundation of responsible family life.

Never mind that winning on Prop 8 would have been a first for gay marriage at the polls anywhere in America (except for a brief win in Arizona in 2006, reversed in 2008), including in blue states like Oregon and Wisconsin.

Never mind that the early public polls suggesting a big defeat for Prop 8 were never

reliable, and were criticized as such at the time. There was no lead to be squandered.

Everybody now seems to know what went wrong on Prop 8. But the truth is, nobody really knows how that extra two percent might have been persuaded to vote "no."

The main "problem" identified by many critics is that the campaign left gay people invisible. Anti-Prop 8 literature made no mention of gays, instead complaining that it was "unfair" and "wrong" to discriminate against an unnamed group of people. The television ads didn't portray gay families.

This deliberate omission deeply offends a lot of people. The gay-rights command of the past 40 years has been to come out. The logic was recently summed up by veteran lesbian activist Robin Tyler at a post-Prop 8 "Equality Summit" in Los Angeles. "When you get to know us," she said, "you don't want to discriminate against us." No on 8 was a "know-nothing" campaign.

Campaign leaders have defended the

know-nothing approach as the only way to win. Political consultants, whom we're told know better about such things than ordinary mortals, advised them that frank images of homosexuals would turn off persuadable voters. An "openly gay" campaign would not have won. It would have lost by an even larger margin, they claim.

The political professionals may be right. The error of the know-nothing critique is that it treats a strategy for winning the culture war (come out) as a tactic for winning a ballot battle. Coming out is an interpersonal act that works because the person already knows and likes you. It's not something you tell 40 million strangers expecting their immediate understanding and support. Contrary to Tyler's admonition, can you really "know us" via 30-second ads aired over a period of a few months?

But there are a couple of potential problems with the adult, responsible, realistic, political-consultant perspective. First, to

continued on page 23

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LeftOut continued from page 20

monalities with our detractors, instead of emphasizing our differences.

Real change doesn't occur overnight. It's incremental. In the mid 1990s while I was an employee at Chase Bank, I joined actively in support of the newly established diversity effort that the bank had initiated, and helped found the firm's Pride Team. One of the initial realities we had to accept was this: people can be forced to change their behavior, but not their attitudes. For example, I knew that some people would continue to make Brandon-bashing comments, but now they would have to be very careful just how publicly they made those comments. If homophobic comments were reported to the management, these people would be punished because of the new corporate diversity policies. Their attitudes remained the same, but their windows of opportunity had become much smaller and would continue to shrink, as more and more people came to believe in the value of respecting diversity.

After the Warren controversy broke, the pastor called lesbian rock singer Melissa Etheridge and told her he was a fan. He accepted an invitation to meet her partner and her children. Etheridge said she felt genuinely moved by their meeting. Many critics were quick to label her as "naïve."

Perhaps it is her critics who may be naïve. Change can happen, but it has to be accepted at a pace that is realistic. Progress for our community has come at a pace of "two steps forward, one step back." Let's try to focus more on that incremental one step forward.

Our community has goals that are noble, and it has complaints that are legitimate. But if we don't choose our battles wisely, we will waste political capital, and we may come to be viewed by some as whiners. If we "cry wolf" too often, the day may come when no one listens.

President Obama is determined to lessen the polarization in America. Inviting a man of faith who is not a member of his political base helped to do just that at the inauguration. And as fate would have it, Warren delivered a totally unmemorable invocation. When Aretha Franklin appeared with that über-fabulous big-bow hat, Warren quickly became forgotten history.

We can't expect the president to ignore those people who share views different from his own—or from ours. What we can do is to support his efforts to bring people in this country face to face, with a new willingness to walk in each other's shoes. And when we do, we all begin to discover that no matter what shoes we wear, we all walk on the same common ground.

Brandon Wolf founded the online group, Houston Activist Network (Han-Net), which is now LoneStarActivists.

OutRight continued from page 21

know whether it's right we'd need to see the actual data—the polling, the focus-group analysis—that underlie this judgment. My untutored sense is that focus groups and polls are often applied too statically and mechanically to real-life politics, which are dynamic and contextualized. Focus groups might have loved New Coke, but the public didn't.

Second, there's a paradox here. Almost everyone agrees that victory in the gay-marriage struggle ultimately requires the deep cultural shift brought on by coming out, by acquainting Americans with the real problems faced by real gay families, and by showing them how gay people are no threat to their own churches, families, and values.

We aren't going to fool people into supporting gay marriage. We can't just coldly claim legal rights. We may persuade gay activists that it's "wrong" and "unfair" to eliminate rights created five minutes ago by four judges. But most people don't believe there's a right to something that's not right. And they need to know a lot more about gay families over a long period to reach the conclusion that gay marriage is right.

How can that be done without talking about actual gay people? And when will it be done on a large scale except when we have the resources and energy to do it, as we do in a ballot fight? Winning in the end may depend on losing a few preliminary rounds in a way that progressively erodes the opposition. Instead, in every single ballot fight in 30 states, we have squandered the opportunity to educate voters for the future. Losing smartly now means winning later; losing ignorantly just means endless losing.

None of this is to say that the know-nothing choice made by No on 8 leaders was wrong in its context. My sense is that leaders of No on 8 reasonably thought they were within striking distance of winning and let their analysis overcome their instincts. They placed the safest bet available and narrowly lost.

Some people would say on principle that we should always reject "closet" tactics, regardless of the political consequences. That's too hard and pure for my taste. If we could have secured marriage in California in 2008 by parading Dykes on Bikes before the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, I would have done that. If we could have won by replaying Pat Robertson's meteorological ruminations, I would have done that, too.

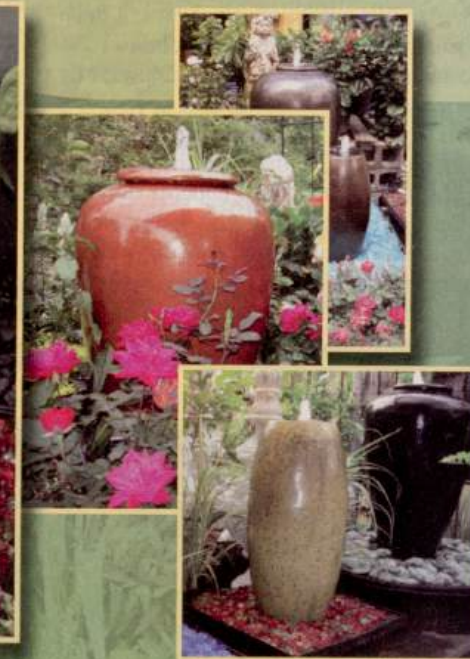
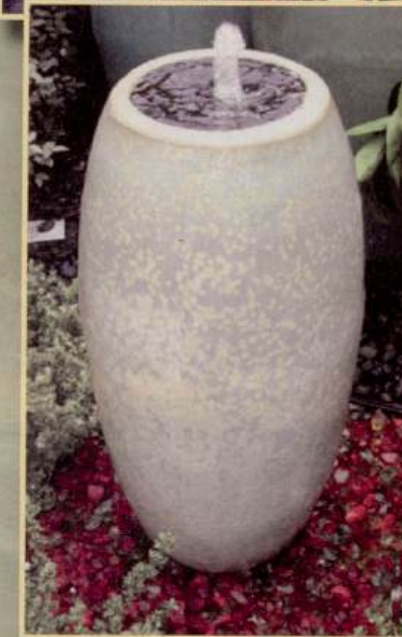
But the hard truth is that in the long run, and in other places, we'll need less "No" and more "Know."

Writing from the conservative side, Dale Carpenter began his column for OutSmart in 1994, when he lived in Houston. Now residing in Minneapolis, Carpenter is a University of Minnesota Law School professor.

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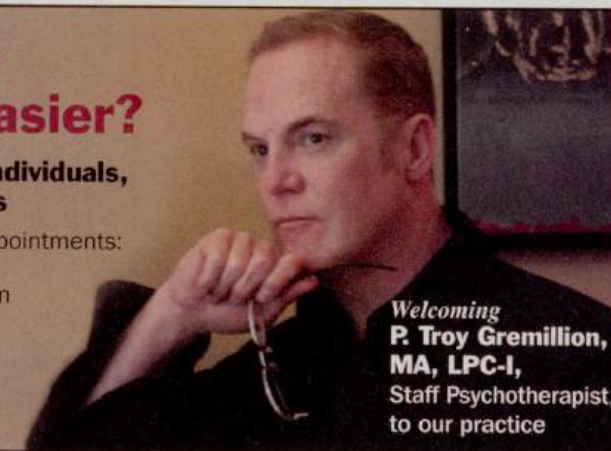
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CLEAN SLATE

Our new president ushers in an era of hope, optimism, and diversity

The historic election of the country's first African-American president may be the most important election of the 21st century, signifying a new hope in America and throughout the world.

Not since the 1932 election of Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Depression have so many Americans yearned for a fresh start. The problems facing President Obama stagger the imagination: two wars, a deep recession, rising unemployment, home foreclosures, and an overall fear among many Americans.

Fortunately, imagination and new energy appear to be abundant in Washington. Many Americans are hopeful that the Obama administration will work across party lines to stabilize our economy and return America to its place as a beacon of hope. The American Dream has never looked more like a rainbow as this symbol of American diversity ushers in a new era.

President Obama set this new tone in an inspiring but sobering inaugural address that reached across the United States and the world. He spoke candidly: "We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus and nonbelievers. . . . To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect." We surely needed to hear those words of wisdom these past eight years.

His earlier speech at the Lincoln Memorial described a nation of "every race and region and station" and his "belief that if we could just recognize ourselves in one another and bring everyone together—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents; Latino, Asian, and Native American; black and white, gay and straight, disabled. . . ."

The world watched the new president view the inaugural parade amid a reviewing stand that was about one-third people of color. The parade itself showed off an

even broader American rainbow, from traditionally costumed Native Americans to the Lesbian & Gay Band Association. This president clearly wants to represent all Americans and has already proven wise enough to tap diverse talent to help run his administration.

As many civil rights leaders—and even economists—have noted, America's diversity signifies strength, not weakness. "For we know that our patchwork heritage is strength, not a weakness," President Obama said, ". . . and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass. . . ."

Gather a dozen diverse Americans in a room to discuss controversial issues and you'll get a dozen different perspectives. We all see the world from a slightly different angle. The good news is that our president

seems ready to lead a complex, diverse America as it regains its footing in the world.

With his economic transition team already hard at work for weeks, President Obama rose early his first full day. What does he do? He calls four Mideast leaders to take that first step toward permanent peace in the world's No. 1 hotspot, the epicenter of Western-Muslim conflict. If the president can leverage some of his world popularity to help forge a real peace between Israel and the Arab world, we will have won a critical battle in the War on Terror. And we will have done so peacefully. As the president said, ". . . as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; . . . America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace." But it will take all of us to turn his message about the Audacity of Hope into a national dream.

I am optimistic, indeed hopeful, that we can move closer to that dream as a unified country and more peaceful world family. And isn't it great to have children in the White House again?

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



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FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF ADVOCACY

What you can do to honor two heroes' legacy

Judge John Paul Barnich died of diabetes-related causes on February 2, 2009, at the age of 63. With his death, Houston lost a good friend and a dedicated public servant.

Barnich was instrumental in the creation of the High School for Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, and he was the first openly gay man to serve as a city court judge. In addition, he made a lasting impact on HIV/AIDS services in our community.

For starters, Barnich became a board member at AIDS Foundation Houston in 1984 in the early days of the organization's existence. Later, as chairman of the board, Barnich further helped to shape AFH and created some of the services it continues to provide today. However, Barnich's impact extended well beyond one AIDS service organization.

Barnich was a true activist, passionate about his cause and willing to employ

humorous, creative, poignant, and even outrageous tactics to convey his message. Once in the early days of the HIV epidemic, Barnich dressed as Death to address city council members about the needs of our citizens who were living with AIDS! Barnich was a role model for other activists, and he will be greatly missed.

We lost another advocate and budding crusader in late December 2008 when Glenn (due to confidentiality issues, I have omitted his last name) passed away of AIDS-related pneumonia. Glenn, a former civil engineer, had recently devoted himself full time to volunteer service within the HIV community.

Glenn spent many hours per week volunteering at Center for AIDS, and he was slated to serve on the Ryan White Planning Council in 2009. In addition, Glenn was working tirelessly with Ruben Rosas (another local advocate) to investigate and pursue prosecution of God Bless Charities, the bogus non-

profit organization that collects donations on Houston streets. We will miss Glenn and his commitment and enthusiasm.

The recent deaths of John Paul Barnich and Glenn got me thinking about HIV/AIDS advocacy in our community: What is being done to nurture and prepare the next generation of AIDS activists in Houston?

There is a leadership training program for HIV-positive individuals administered by the Ryan White Planning Council and facilitated by the Center for AIDS called Project L.E.A.P. (Learning, Empowerment, Advocacy, Participation). This comprehensive, 17-week program informs participants about the needs of Houston's HIV community and services available for persons living with HIV, as well as funding issues, community planning processes, and governmental policy.

Through this program, 35 persons per year gain the knowledge and skills needed

to shape HIV services and influence the allocations process in the Greater Houston area. Project L.E.A.P. ensures that those living with HIV have a significant voice in determining the future of AIDS care and funding.

HIV-infected persons interested in Project L.E.A.P. should contact the Center for AIDS at 713/527-8219, or they may apply online by going to centerforaids.org/leapapp.pdf.

Since only a few people per year are admitted to Project L.E.A.P., what can the rest of us do to have an impact on HIV/AIDS in our community? The good news is that there are numerous ways one can serve as an HIV advocate. There are many local AIDS service organizations that need volunteers to help with administrative tasks, client service delivery, or special events. Investigate the volunteer opportunities offered and see which ones fit with your personality, interests, and schedule. Then make a phone call and offer the gift of your time. It will be invaluable.

People may also serve as HIV advocates by getting educated and simply speaking up about this disease. Inform those in your life—family, friends, colleagues, neighbors—about the ways in which HIV is transmitted, how it can be prevented, the numbers of people infected in our community, the plight of those living with the disease, and the need for tolerance and an end to stigma.

Be visible and vocal in your support of those living with HIV and those working to fight the disease. Attend rallies and events, write your elected officials, and participate in the planning process.

And of course, you can impact HIV care and services in our community by donating to a community-based organization. We have dozens of them in Harris County that provide HIV-related services. You can specify the particular program or service you wish to support with your donation or you can allow the provider to use the funds in the way that would most assist the organization.

One very easy way you can become an HIV advocate is by participating in the 20th AIDS Walk Houston. Go to AIDSWalkHouston.org and register as an individual, join an existing team, or create your own team. Then raise money and walk the Walk on Sunday, March 15. By doing so, you will be making a public statement about your support of those living with HIV and your concern about this important health issue facing our community.

Kelly A. McCann is the chief executive officer of AIDS Foundation Houston. To learn more about HIV, AIDS Walk Houston, or volunteer opportunities, contact AFH at 713/623-6796 or AIDSHelp.org.

Houston's Ryan White Planning Council invites you to attend a meeting of the AFFECTED COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

The Affected Community Committee meets at different locations each month so that consumers can sit in on a meeting, ask questions and have a voice in allocating approximately \$24 million dollars for HIV/AIDS services in the Greater Houston area.

Please call for the location of meetings on the following dates:

January – No meeting

February 18, 2009

March 18, 2009

April 15, 2009

May 20, 2009

June 17, 2009

July 15, 2009

August 19, 2009

September 16, 2009

October 14, 2009

November 18, 2009

December – No meeting

You are also welcome to attend Council and other committee meetings, receive a monthly meeting packet and calendar of events, and apply for membership.

The calendar of all Council and Committee meetings and a wealth of other information is available on our website: www.rwpc.org. Check the calendar regularly for topics of specific interest to you.

We hope to see you soon!

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The Verdict Is Favorable

Steven Kirkland is Harris County's first and only out-and-proud elected jurist

by Brandon Wolf • Photo by Pam Francis

Lawyers find answers for clients, judges find answers for society," says newly elected Judge Steven Kirkland. A ballot victory last November has now put Kirkland in a position to find those answers for society. He also holds the distinction of being the *first and only* out-and-proud elected jurist in Harris County.

"I want to be a judge because I've always believed in justice," Kirkland told *OutSmart* in a recent interview. "All my life I've stood up for what is right. I've told people what is wrong, and I've tried to change it."

The 48-year-old Kirkland is a man of transparency who talks with equal ease about his male partner of 22 years, his recovery from alcoholism, and his passion for the judicial process. He comfortably blends a wry sense of humor with a deep understanding of law.

The son of a truck driver, Kirkland was born and reared in Abilene, Texas. "I got out as fast as I could," he remembers. "I came to Houston and enrolled at Rice University. I picked a major, completed my coursework, and graduated with a bachelor of arts degree. I was quite involved in politics at Rice, but I was also an active alcoholic. I didn't have a grip on my sexuality or my addiction."

Participation in a twelve-step recovery program helped Kirkland get control of his alcoholism. "I have a genetic predisposition to addiction," he says. "There is lots of it on both sides of the family. All of my brothers are addicts of some sort and are at various points of recovery."

"I had to get my triggers under control," he reflects. "Being gay was a trigger for the disease. I had to get a grip on my sexuality before I could get a grip on my alcoholism. At age 23 I came out to my aunt and then to my parents. It was one of those late-night sobbing things at the kitchen table."

Kirkland sobered up, started law school, and went to work as a paralegal for the now-defunct Texaco Corporation. He attended night school at the University of Houston's Law Center and graduated with cum laude honors. Following graduation, Texaco promoted him to environmental litigator. He held that position for eight years, until a merger made his position redundant.

For the next few years, he worked as a plaintiff's attorney for Harris County residents filing air pollution lawsuits. "This is not a good jurisdiction for plaintiffs," he notes. "We weren't able to be as successful as citizens needed us to be. But we got what we got at the time."

Kirkland actively entered local politics when his friend, Annise Parker, asked him to manage her city council campaigns in 1991 and 1995. "Neither campaign was successful," he states, "but we laid the groundwork for her 1997 victory." Parker has since served three terms as a Houston City Council member and three terms as City Controller. She is currently a candidate in the Houston mayoral contest.

Kirkland's path to the judiciary was paved in 2001, when his name was submitted to Mayor Lee Brown for consideration as a municipal judge. He was appointed to a part-time position, and later appointed as a full-time judge, then re-appointed by Mayor Bill White.

Campaigning for Elected Office

In late 2007, Kirkland announced his candidacy for the 215th District Civil Court. He won the Democratic primary against opponent Fred Cook in the spring of 2008. He then faced the challenge of running against 10-year incumbent Levi Benton, an African-American Republican.

No one ever asked about his sexual orientation during candidate forums, Kirkland says, "but there was probably a whisper campaign. I heard one report that

cent of the vote. As an openly gay candidate for judge, Kirkland also made history for the Houston GLBT community that night.

On January 1, 2009, Kirkland took the oath of office with his fellow judges-elect during a brief, quiet ceremony at the South Texas College of Law. On January 15, 2009, his investiture ceremony, the judicial equivalent of an inauguration, was held in the ceremonial courtroom of the Civil Courthouse.

Addressing those who gathered to celebrate, Kirkland declared, "We don't make these journeys alone, and I would like to acknowledge a number of folks who have helped and supported me along the way. First is my life-partner, Mark. Mark is both my anchor and barometer, lifting me up and keeping me humble at the same time. He's put up with many strange side trips in our journey together and many impositions, including attending and participating in this event on this, our 22nd anniversary."

Houston's Openly Gay Civil Court Judge

As a Texas District Civil Court Judge, Kirkland works with property-damage issues, personal-injury claims, breach-of-

I don't judge people;
I judge their actions and behavior.

a comment was made at a local meeting of the Greater Houston Pachyderm Club about 'a guy who is running for office who's never been married.'"

Kirkland neither shied away from nor made a point of his sexual orientation during the campaign. "When I walk into a gay fundraiser and kiss men hello, I don't really have to talk about it," he says. "However I did mention being gay when I was emphasizing the diversity of the Democratic ticket."

Besides his personal qualifications for the job, Kirkland points out other factors that helped elect him last November. "George Bush's unpopularity and Barack Obama's popularity were important," he says. "The Republican brand was tarnished both nationally and locally. And many voters detected a sense of entitlement on the part of some local Republican judges."

On the evening of November 4, 2008, Kirkland led his opponent with 51.3 per-

cent of the vote. He also presides over environmental litigation and suits between corporations. Kirkland feels that a judge needs to listen, to have a breadth of knowledge of the law, to be decisive, to be compassionate, and to be humble. For young people interested in a judicial career, he advises that they go to school, study hard, be connected, learn how to relate to people, exhibit interest in the judiciary, and work internships.

Asked how he likes being a judge, Kirkland responds, "It's fun! I get to hear lots of stories and see the world through the different perspectives of many others."

"It's a great intellectual challenge. That challenge is very stimulating, and when I meet it, it's very rewarding."

The Importance of Law

"The justice system serves public safety," Kirkland says. "Our society has a place

continued from page 32

Out on the Bench

Municipal Judge Barbara Hartle
is the only out lesbian member of the Texas judiciary

by Brandon Wolf
Photo by Brandon Wolf

I'm still overwhelmed when I first enter a courtroom, and everyone rises," says Houston Municipal Court Judge Barbara Hartle. The only out lesbian member of the Texas judiciary, 50-year-old Hartle has been sitting on the bench since her appointment in 2006. She moved to Houston in 2002 from Austin.

At the time of her appointment, she says, no one in the GLBT community knew of her presence in Houston. She had been busy with a new job and settling in. "I didn't have time to get involved with the GLBT community here like I had in Austin." When Presiding Judge Berta Mejia introduced Hartle at her swearing-in ceremony, Mejia acknowledged Hartle's partner, Vallarie Fisher. "No one in that audience was more surprised than fellow judge Steve Kirkland," she says. "So were City Controller Annise Parker and City Council member Sue Lovell. Annise and her partner, Kathy Hubbard, quickly organized a welcoming party at their home, so that I could meet local GLBT leaders."

From Military Brat to Attorney

"I was born on the grounds of the Annapolis Naval Base," Hartle says. "I was one of six children." She graduated from high school in Ohio and then moved to Austin to attend the University of Texas.

"I earned a degree in social work, but Ronald Reagan had recently been elected, and there were no longer jobs in social work," she recalls. "So I went to work as a corrections officer, and my first captain was Margo Fraiser, who went on to become the sheriff of Travis County. The majority of female corrections officers were lesbian, so I never felt closeted."

After being promoted to sergeant, Hartle decided to earn a peace officer certification. She worked at the city jail in Austin, where she was responsible for transporting prisoners to and from the jail. "I was a uniformed deputy sheriff. I handled the paperwork required and worked with people posting bond. Those were interesting times, but I tired of shift work—the 11-to-7 shift was particularly hard—so I became



Judging Barbara. Honesty, fairness, and integrity are the standards Municipal Judge Barbara Hartle requires not only of herself, but also the attorneys in her courtroom.

an adult probation officer."

In 1996, in her mid 30s, Hartle made the decision to move to San Antonio and attend law school. "My parents had a home there and I lived with them. I finished law school and found a job as a prosecutor for the Austin Municipal Court."

Austin was close enough that she could keep watch over her elderly parents. But after her mother's death, her father re-married. "I no longer had a reason to stay in Austin," she says. "My partner's daughter, who lived in Houston, now had two children. We wanted to watch them grow up, so we sold our home, packed the car, and moved here along with my partner's father. We sort of looked like the Beverly Hillbillies," she says, laughing at the memory.

Municipal Court Appointment

"I first found a job in Huntsville, but after five months of commuting, I knew that wasn't going to work," Hartle says. She

then took a position with the State of Texas working in elder law. "I work with the elder population and their specific legal needs. This has become a very popular field because of all the aging Baby Boomers."

When Mayor Bill White was looking for part-time municipal judges in 2006, he sent letters to members of the Association of Women Attorneys in this area.

"I was a member of that group," Hartle says, "so I applied and was selected for a part-time appointment." She was first appointed in March 2006, and then re-appointed in December 2008.

Municipal judges sit for misdemeanor cases, situations where citizens are fined but are not sentenced to jail—traffic violations, public intoxication, dog barking. There are currently about 22 full-time and 40 part-time municipal judges who report to Presiding Judge Berta Mejia. "I work two nights a week, from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.," Hartle explains. "I sometimes take cases in the courtroom at the jail, but usually I

am in the downtown location. I have a very active walk-in court, mostly for people who have missed their court dates and are the subjects of outstanding warrants. . . . Most people will deal with a municipal court because of traffic cases," she notes.

How can citizens stay out of traffic court? Hartle smiles and advises, "Slow down. Most traffic violations are for speeding. Usually drivers deny it and most often say they were just going with the flow of the traffic. But we are all human, and sooner or later we all get popped. I was once ticketed for speeding, as I was coming down a hill," she chuckles. "I denied it, but the officer wouldn't listen!"

She stresses the importance of keeping auto insurance current. "The State of Texas imposes a large surcharge if you let it lapse," she warns.

The Integrity of the Legal System

Hartle says that a good judge must have knowledge of the law and be able to show fairness to both sides in a case. "And they must have integrity," she adds.

"There are so many bad jokes about lawyers," she says wistfully. "Some lawyers don't tell the truth, and they can taint the whole field. But most people who represent clients in municipal court care about their clients. They aren't making big bucks. They do what they do to help people who don't have much money and could lose their driver's licenses."

Hartle says that she sometimes catches attorneys making dishonest statements. "I get angry with them. I let them know that they are bringing down the whole field. It's like 10 steps backwards, and the rest of us have to show that this is not representative of the whole legal system. But lack of integrity isn't widespread. If it was, the system would already have stopped working."

For people who feel cynicism about the judicial process, Hartle says the remedy is the same as that for GLBTs who aren't respected. "You should get to know people in the legal field and see that they are genuine, honest, and hardworking people."

Hartle likes being a judge because she likes working with people, she says. "It's the interaction. I learn from other people every day. And at the end of the evening, people often thank me for ensuring that they get their share of justice."

Grandchildren Ride in Pride Parade

Hartle and partner Vallarie Fisher met at church in Austin in 1993, and they have

been in a relationship for 14 years. Hartle has no children, but 68-year-old Fisher has two. Though Fisher's daughter, Tara, is also a lesbian, it was not something Fisher knew or even guessed, until Tara chose to come out. Sadly, Fisher's other child, a son, has turned his back on both his sister and his mother.

Tara and her partner, Kim, have a son and a daughter, Dylan and Kyra, both from artificial insemination, using the same anonymous sperm donor. Hartle says that the children are popular and active.

The law as it is written does not say 'except gay and lesbian people.' We all have the right to pursue happiness, but that doesn't seem to be happening for us in this country.

"We go to a lot of athletic games and other activities to watch them participate. They are comfortable at school; several other children also have same-sex parents."

"The children know that they have two mommies and three grandmas," says Hartle. "I'm Grandma Barb—GB for short." Although Hartle grew up Catholic, her Houston family attends Unity Church. "It's warm, accepting, and positive," she says. "When children are surrounded by lots of love in the home, the gender of the people giving it isn't important."

Local gay attorney John Nechman is pleased with the addition of Hartle to the municipal court bench. "The appointment of Judge Barbara Hartle to Houston's Municipal Court is another wonderful step in the increasing diversity of Houston's judiciary. As plaintiffs, defendants, practitioners, and citizens, we need to know that our judges reflect and come from our diverse community. We have faith that judges like Judge Hartle will rule according to the law and not their personal beliefs, but we also are inspired to know that more and more judicial benches in Houston are occupied by immensely qualified people who have lived through GLBT/HIV-related discrimination. Now the once seemingly impregnable 'pink ceiling' every day becomes more a cruel memory than ever."

...

Longtime GLBT activist and attorney Phyllis Randolph Frye adds, "It is another step forward to have Barbara Hartle on the COH Municipal Bench. She and others before her—John Paul Barnich and Steven Kirkland—are role models for being open and out, for being both competent and proud. Knowing that we have such GLBT folks serving openly as municipal judges demonstrate to both GLBT and non-GLBT supporters that we are deserving of future appointments and other elective offices."

Hartle's and Fisher's grandchildren enjoy coming to her courtroom and watching her preside as judge, she says. "They also love to ride in a convertible in the annual Houston Pride Parade. In 2006, 2007, and 2008, I've marched with fellow out-and-proud judges Steve Kirkland and the late John Paul Barnich. . . . I'm blessed that my family—brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces—are all very accepting," says Hartle. "Even my father, who at first struggled, is now accepting."

Hartle feels that it is important for gays to be out, to be true to themselves and not to hide. "Being gay has no impact on my being wise and fair on the bench," she says. "And like many attorneys, if

I am filling out a form and it isn't comprehensive, I add in an extra line and make it so—under marital status, I usually add the classification 'partnered.'"

How the Judicial System Impacts GLBTs

The Supreme Court's 6-3 decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*, the famous Houston sodomy case in 2003, surprised her, Hartle says. "But it was about time. How much more would it have taken?"

Reflecting on California's Proposition 8, she says, "The law as it is written does not say 'except gay and lesbian people.' We all have the right to pursue happiness, but that doesn't seem to be happening for us in this country. More and more, brave gay and lesbian people will challenge this in the nation's courtrooms, and landmark cases will change people's attitudes. I am especially interested in Melissa Etheridge's challenge that she will not pay state taxes in California because she cannot fully partake of the state's privileges."

About the United States Supreme Court, Hartle says, "It's not very representative. Let's hope certain members decide to retire." Asked if there are viable gay jurists who would make good nominees, she pauses for a few moments and then says brightly, "Steve Kirkland! Let's call Barack."

As for herself, Hartle says, "The Supreme Court jurists are really a bit distant—they work mostly with the lawyers, not the people being represented. I prefer to work with people." But would she accept the call if nominated? "Oh, sure," she says. Then a big smile crosses her face as she adds, "I've never hired a nanny, and I've always paid all my taxes, too!" ■

Brandon Wolf is a frequent contributor to OutSmart magazine. Wolf also profiled Judge Steven Kirkland for this issue.



Phyllis Randolph Frye:
Transgender and Intersex Legal Issues

Patricia Cantú:
Family Law, Divorce Issues, Criminal Defense

Salvador J. Benavidez:
Estate Planning, Wills, Trusts, Immigration Issues, Landlord/Tenant

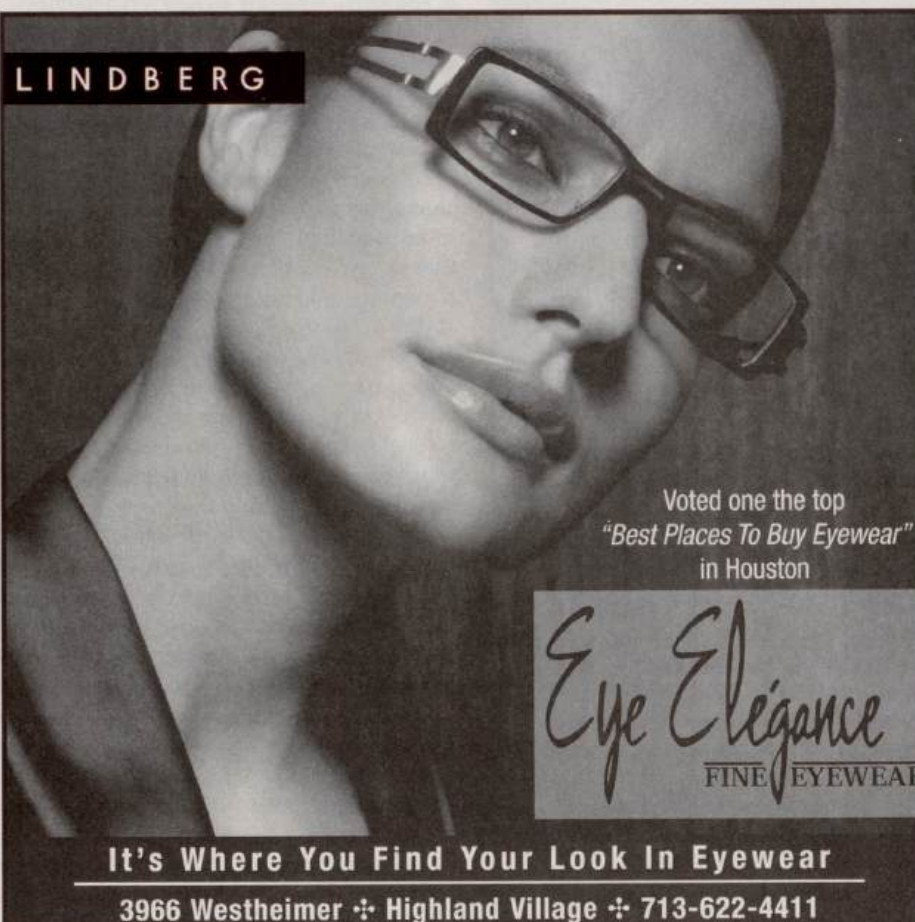
Robert P. "Rob" Scamardo:
Civil Litigation, Civil Rights, Non-Profit Advising, Mediation

Tracie Jackson:
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Jeffrey Forbes:
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The Verdict Is Favorable

continued from page 29

and a process to work out disputes, rather than fighting in the streets. I don't judge people; I judge their actions and behavior. In my drinking days I violated the law and I was punished. We all make mistakes, but we can be bigger than our mistakes and get beyond them."

Kirkland says that there is good reason to respect the judicial system. "One must understand that justice is a process. A lot of people are involved that bring the whole process together. It can take several years of work for some decisions. Even if one can't appreciate a particular decision, they can appreciate the process."

"Broad-stroke criticisms usually don't take into account the context of a decision," Kirkland warns. "Don't listen to Rush Limbaugh—or to a liberal equivalent. Evaluate what is really happening. Don't just have a knee-jerk reaction."

Kirkland dismisses the characterization of "activist judges" as partisan criticism. "A judge is only an activist if the ox being gored is one's own," he says dryly.

Longtime Houston activist Ray Hill feels a great sense of pride in Kirkland's win. "When I began organizing for GLBT equality in 1966, the issue was one of criminal law because we could be sent to prison. Forty-three years later in 2003, that law was declared void when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Texas 21.06 sodomy statute. The election of Steve Kirkland to a district court in Harris County is just one indication of how far we have come in less than a generation."

...

Local gay attorney Mitchell Katine reflects on his own years of practicing civil law. "As an attorney who has practiced in the Harris County Civil District Courts for over 20 years, it is exciting that the citizens of Harris County have finally been able to focus on the merits and abilities of a judicial candidate, such as Judge Steven Kirkland, instead of who the candidate loves or wants to share his or her life with. Judge Kirkland will be an excellent example of a fine judge who also happens to be gay. Judge Kirkland has broken the GLBT barrier in Harris County's civil judiciary. He is the first of many GLBT judges who will follow in his footsteps for many years to come. GLBT issues rarely come up in the courtroom, but with more and more GLBT individuals coming out, it is more likely that the sexual identity of the parties will play a role in some litigation, and Judge Kirkland will be very equipped to handle them with understanding, sensitivity, and good judgment."

To Kill a Mockingbird is the only courtroom movie that Kirkland has ever seen. "The dramatics in courtroom movies are only for entertainment—a real courtroom is not that exciting," he says. "Then again, sometimes it's more exciting!"

Kirkland is not a fan of TV court coverage. "Television in a courtroom is a bad idea," he says. "It affects how people behave. It impacts justice."

He is a fan of the jury system and has great faith in it. "There may be people on juries who don't listen to what the judge tells them to do," he says, "but there is always someone on a jury who does, and they police the process."

Supreme Court Justices Frankfurter, Cardozo, and Marshall are three famous jurists he admires. "I also admire the men who decided the *Brown v. Board of Education* suit," he adds. "There are many great people who have been a part of judicial history."

Gay Rights and the Law

"Gays need to be in every walk of life," Kirkland asserts. "It's important to be who we are wherever we are, then other people can learn to relate to us. Some people connect with me because I'm gay, others connect with me because I'm a recovered alcoholic. Or perhaps it's just that I'm a Democrat. I put it all out there for people to decide."

"Being gay doesn't have to hold a person back," Kirkland says, "but it used to hold people back." He remembers two distinct incidents from his campaign. "One young lawyer told me he wanted to run for a judgeship someday but was concerned because he was gay. Another man asked to be removed from my petition for candidacy when he found out I was gay. In both cases, people took the gay issue and limited lives. Until we get lots of gay people who are out in the open, this will continue."

Kirkland looks at the United States Supreme Court and doesn't see diversity. "We will change it," he says with optimism, "but not overnight." Will a future Supreme Court nominee be gay? Kirkland says there are good gay candidates that might be considered. "I know of a federal judge in Florida and a Supreme Court judge in Oregon," he notes.

Would he answer a call to serve on the Court, if President Obama phoned and asked? "I'm available!" he says with a broad smile. ■

Brandon Wolf is a frequent contributor to OutSmart magazine. Wolf also profiled Judge Barbara Hartle for this issue.



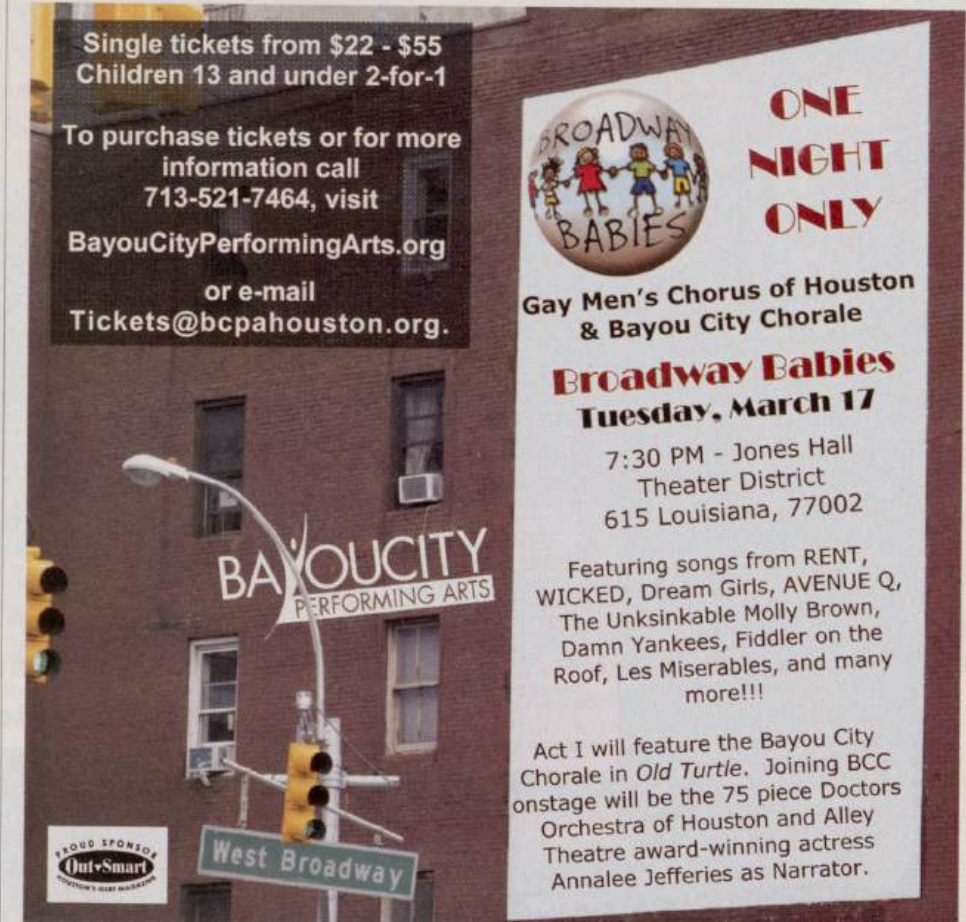
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In the Beginning

Judge John Paul Barnich

September 25, 1945–February 2, 2009

Someone had to be first. In the case of openly gay judges in Houston, the first was John Paul Barnich.

Barnich was initially appointed to the Municipal Judge's bench in 1999 by Mayor Lee Brown, and, thanks to continual re-appointments by Mayor Bill White, served 10 subsequent years as such.

He began his professional career as a schoolteacher for the Houston Independent School District. However, he wanted to do more. Earning his law degree from South Texas College of Law in 1980, Barnich began his private attorney's practice in 1981.

As his practice grew, so did his résumé. A lecturer for Thurgood Marshall School of Law, Texas Southern University, Texas Human Rights Foundation Legal Seminars, and the Houston Bar Association, Barnich was a founding member of the Bar Association for Human Rights and a volunteer lawyer with the Houston Volunteer Lawyers. One of his cases was joined by the U.S. Justice Department, and led to the inclusion of AIDS under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

But Barnich is perhaps best remembered as a pioneer in Houston's GLBT community, originally inspired by a sign he saw on the wall at Mother Theresa's clinic in Calcutta that read, "God is Love in Action."

The affable Barnich also lived by the sentiment of another sign: the one on his office door read, "Be Nice or Leave."

Barnich's countless volunteer hours on behalf of the GLBT and HIV/AIDS community would entail handling untold numbers of pro bono cases. Additionally, he helped form AIDS Foundation Houston, serving on its board for several terms. The Greater Houston HIV Alliance, AIDS Equity League, Houston GLBT Political Caucus, the Harris County Democrats, Texas Human Rights Foundation, and the Annual Conference on AIDS in America also benefited and recognized his leadership and humanity.

One of his proudest legal moments came when, as lead council, he won the case in a suit against a well-known dental franchise for refusing to treat PWAs, forcing changes in the way dentists treated the HIV/AIDS population.

In 1999, he made it look easy as he took the bench beside other minorities of African-American, Hispanic, and Vietnamese judges, saying he felt included in a bigger sense of history, looking toward a future in which a gay man, such as himself, would not be considered a minority but simply as part of the bigger picture of what he called "this great city of Houston."

John Paul Barnich, 63, died last month at Methodist Hospital of complications due to diabetes. Because he walked in them, Houston's judicial halls have been forever changed for the better.

—Nancy Ford

(Jennifer Rantz contributed to this story.)

WALK ON 20 Years Later

Now more than ever, AIDS Walk Houston is vital to area charities

by Nancy Ford • Photos by Dalton DeHart



Walk VIPs: Houston Mayor Bill White (l-r), Miss Texas USA Crystle Stewart (who went on to win the title of Miss USA 2008), and AIDS Foundation Houston chief executive officer, Kelly McCann, at the 2008 AIDS Walk Houston. A record number of participants (r) helped elevate the annual walk's proceeds to more than \$1 million.

In 1990, Texas Ranger Nolan Ryan logged his 300th major league baseball win. Now-Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee was beginning her first term on Houston's city council. And nearly 8,000 cases of HIV, primarily infecting gay men, had been diagnosed in Texas.

Funds to support those ailing Texans were scarce. Texas state senator Carl Parker, a democrat from Port Arthur, had recently denounced state funding for AIDS programs, calling it "pouring money down a rat hole."

By necessity, Houstonians were taking more personal responsibility in fighting the spreading, deadly disease that had insidiously introduced itself to the gay community a mere nine years earlier.

"The very first year, 1990, when our AIDS walk was called 'From All Walks of Life,' there were probably →

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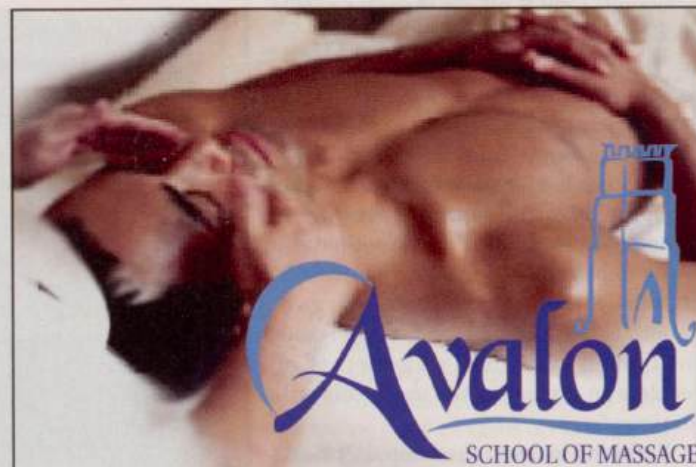
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Working, Walking Together

AIDS Walk Houston 2009, this year presented by Chevron, is a community-wide event that attracts thousands of Houstonians each year. Though the walk is produced each year by AIDS Foundation Houston, funds raised benefit local AIDS service organizations.

"This is one of the things I love most about our partnerships with partner agencies," McCann says. "The partner agencies raise money for their own organizations, using AIDS Walk as their vehicle."

Each of the partner agencies keep 75 percent of what they raise, with 25 percent going to AFH to cover administrative cost.

"We don't require that our partner agencies be solely AIDS service organizations, but they must have programs that serve those living with the disease, or they have some sort of prevention program," McCann continues. "SNAP, for example, has a wonderful AIDS program. They provide either free or reduced cost vaccinations, neutering, and other pet care to the animal companions of people who are living with HIV and AIDS."

2009 Partner Agencies

- Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative 832/822-1038 • bayloraids.org
- Bering Omega Community Services 713/529-6071 • beringomega.org
- Bread of Life, Inc. 713/650-0595 • breadoflifeinc.org
- Brentwood Community Foundation 713/852-1451 • brentwoodfoundation.org
- The Center for AIDS Information and Advocacy 713/527-8219 • centerforaids.org
- Family Fight Against HIV/AIDS, Inc. ffahivandaids.com
- Houston Buyers Club 713/520-5288 • houstonbuyersclub.com
- Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program, Inc. 713/228-0735 • ehvlp.org
- The Lazarus House 713/526-5071 • thelazarushouse.org
- Legacy Community Health Services 713/830-3000 • legacycommunityhealth.org
- Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas, Inc. 713/522-6363 • pphouston.org
- Resurrection MCC 713/861-9149 • resurrectionmcc.org
- Spay-Neuter Assistance Program, Inc. (SNAP) 713/862-3863 • snapus.org
- Texas Children's Hospital - Department of Allergy & Immunology 832/824-1319 • bcm.edu/pediatrics

Walk On continued from previous page

200 people—if that—who showed up downtown to raise awareness and funds for HIV," Kelly McCann recalls.

It is impossible for McCann, chief executive officer of AIDS Foundation Houston, which produces AIDS Walk Houston, not

to be a bit reflective considering how far the walk has come since its inception.

"It's such an amazing thing to think that most of those few 200 people who showed up were people living with HIV who were still healthy enough to walk."

Though HIV and AIDS had been a reality in Houston since the early 1980s, it remained a stigmatizing illness a decade

later, even to the extent that close friends and supporters were sometimes hesitant to be spotted at an event as visible as a public walk.

"We made virtually no money," McCann says. "Of course, we've been very proud to be able to grow the event and grow the impact."

"And we are still so honored to be doing this work, 20 walks later," she continues. "But we certainly realize and are humbled by the fact that we don't do it alone. This is

a true grass-roots, community-wide effort, and we are deeply indebted to the people of Houston."

McCann hopes for a warm, sunny day for those 15,000-or-so Houstonians who now converge annually on downtown's Sam Houston Park the morning of the walk, adding that only the most extreme weather emergency would prevent the walk from occurring.

"One year, Mexico was burning the sugar cane fields and all that smoke drifted up to Houston," she recalls. "The air quality was so poor it was unhealthy, and we had to move the walk indoors."

Thousands of people just walked around and around inside the George R. Brown!

"But, you see again, neither rain nor sleet nor smog nor dark of night will keep people from coming out, and that is a great thing for us and for the HIV community," McCann reasons. "It shows that, yes, people still care about this issue, they still support people living with HIV, and they know that it's still a serious health crisis in our community."

McCann estimates as much as \$6 million has been raised over the years by AIDS Walk Houston, distributed to AFH and partner agencies to help fund a diverse array of programming; for the first time since its inception, last year's walk →

A Fitting Tribute to Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee



COURTESY BIRELLA JACKSON LEE

A long-time supporter and advocate for AFH and HIV/AIDS issues, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee is being honored with the title of grand marshal of the 20th Annual AIDS Walk Houston. Through legislation, Congresswoman Jackson Lee has helped bring \$48 billion to three million people, many of whom are fighting HIV and AIDS in the Bayou City.

"AIDS Foundation Houston has been a major champion of fighting the devastation of HIV/AIDS, not only in the Houston community but worldwide," says Congresswoman Jackson Lee, who represents Texas' 18th congressional district in the United

States House of Representatives. "I am proud to serve as grand marshal for an organization that uses its resources to pointedly help individuals who are dealing with HIV/AIDS as well as to encourage and create programs to educate and to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. AIDS Walk Houston, being one of the largest walks in the country, has proven the durability of the foundation to never give up on the war against HIV/AIDS. Together with AIDS Foundation Houston's leadership, we will achieve victory in saving the many lives impacted by this disease."

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Hot Coffee, Grande Hearts

Before losing his battle with AIDS in 2004, Patrick Chees was a regular at the Montrose-based Starbucks coffee shop. District manager Angela Lara and staff missed Chees' smile and ability to enhance people's lives—so much that, in 2005, they began hosting an annual silent auction in his honor, donating all proceeds to AIDS Foundation Houston.



"As Patrick grew weaker near the end of his short but wonderfully full life, his trips to Starbucks were less frequent," Chees' family shares. "He would be pleased that he is still remembered by the crew and customers of this store."

In addition to various pieces of art which is available for viewing and bidding on throughout the day of the auction, other donated items include memberships to local museums and theaters, certificates to restaurants and businesses, basketballs autographed by Magic Johnson and members of the Houston Rockets, skydiving adventures, jewelry, purses, pottery, photography—treasures Chees would have loved. March 6, 5–9 p.m. Starbucks, 3407 Montrose Blvd. Details: 713/521-7278.

Walk On

continued from page 36

broke the \$1 million mark. She attributed last year's increase not only to the hard work of AFH's staff, but also to the walk's partner agencies. "Those partnerships plus greater and greater numbers of people joining up, becoming team members and raising funds lends itself to—no pun intended—the viral sort of expansion of AIDS Walk that I hope we'll see continue."

But that was 2008. This year's final tally from 2009 may yield a bleaker result.

"Because of the economic problems, all areas may suffer; all sorts of AIDS service organizations are going to be in a whole world of hurt, potentially," McCann says. "There is an increasing need, especially when there is an economic downturn, for the types of services that AIDS Foundation Houston provides—basic needs like food and housing, and certainly greater access to medical care, and greater needs in prevention and awareness."

Despite readily available information regarding knowledge of how the AIDS virus is spread, and valiant attempts by local and national organizations to stem that rising tide, HIV/AIDS infection rates have reached alarming numbers. In 1990, the World Health Organization estimated that 8 to 10

million people were living with HIV worldwide. It is now estimated that 25,000 individuals are HIV-positive in Houston alone, with three more citizens becoming infected every day. Further, new estimates from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that as many as 55,000 new infections occur in the United States each year.

Compounding those startling statistics, AFH is seeing smaller-than-normal gifts per person, McCann says. The good news is, more teams and individuals had registered for the walk so far this year than in past years.

"We're up nine percent on teams. So we are hoping that everything will kind of come out in the wash, and that we'll have more people giving fewer dollars for the same outcome."

"Even though it would be great if it happened, we don't expect to hit the million-dollar mark again this year," McCann concludes realistically. "But nothing would make me happier than to be proven wrong."

The 20th annual AIDS Walk Houston, a non-competitive 5k pledge walk, is set for Sunday, March 15, at Sam Houston Park, Bagby at Lamar in downtown Houston. On-site registration begins at 8 a.m., with opening ceremonies at 9 a.m., and the walk stepping off at 10 a.m. To register or donate, call 713/403-WALK (9255) or visit AIDSWalkHouston.org.

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Sundance 2009

Heights
despite
lows

by Lawrence Ferber

He loves to get to the bottom of a character: in the based-in-fact *I Love You Phillip Morris*, Steve Russell (Jim Carrey, r) shares his drink with a poolside guest played by Rodrigo Santoro.

PARK CITY, UTAH: Quieter, sunnier, warmer, less crowded and circus-like than usual, this year's Sundance Film Festival, which ran from January 15-25, was also characterized by a plethora of high-quality films. Celebrating its 25th anniversary, the festival was frequently overshadowed by real-world events—Obama's inauguration, news of further economic woe/layoffs (by Warner Bros. and Microsoft)—yet every day saw premieres of excellent, thought-provoking, audacious works.

For example? In *I Love You Phillip Morris*, we watched a sweaty, thrusting Jim Carrey eagerly fulfill a man's request to do what used to be illegal between two men in Texas.

Possibly Sundance's most anticipated queer-interest title, the based-on-a-true-story comedy stars Carrey as gay con man Steven Jay Russell, whose romance with another prisoner (played by Ewan McGregor) and non-stop swindles and prison breaks lead to plenty of laughs and heart-break. The day following its premiere, the filmmakers—including writer/director team Glenn Ficarra & John Requa (*Bad Santa*), executive producer Luc Besson,

Carrey, McGregor, and co-star Rodrigo Santoro (who plays one of Carrey's previous lovers)—held a press conference at Main Street's Queer Lounge. Carrey admitted the raucous "ass" scene was a reason he did the movie, and that despite his criminal streak, Russell (who's currently in prison) is a good guy at heart.

"We're all good guys—your worst enemy is a good guy!" he shared. "I love to get to the bottom of a character. What lies they believe about themselves. He felt like he needed acceptance. Beware the unloved—they go to extremes to find significance."

The film, still seeking a distributor at fest's close, utilized

actual prisoners as extras. "They were life prisoners, so they had a calm to them," McGregor recalled during the second screening's Q&A. One convict took McGregor aside to make a creative suggestion. "He said, 'I think there should be a scene where I fight Jim for you.'" The real Morris makes a cameo, playing a lawyer, during a final courtroom scene. →

Three-way: Rooney Mara (c) is caught in the middle between Emmy Rossum (r) and Ashley Springer in *Dare*, a short film from David Brind.



PHILLIP MORRIS - GLENN WATSON; MAD CHANCE PRODS./EUROPA CORP.; DARE - GIGANTIC PICTURES

One tough mother: the hysterical Mo'Nique abandons her funny side in director Lee Daniels' (inset) award-winning *Push*: Based on the Novel by Sapphire. A taut drama with a lesbian hero, this *Push* bears little resemblance to the season's other *Push*, which stars Dakota Fanning.



director Frank Feldman won Spirit of Slamdance honors for his short, *Vapid Lovelies*.

Peter Bratt's *La Mission* received a standing ovation at its premiere. Set in San Francisco's Mission district, it stars Benjamin Bratt as Che, a good-hearted yet violently homophobic Latin father whose teenage son (Jeremy Ray Valdez) comes out. At a post-screening Q&A, the Bratts explained how the character of Che represents our culture, one of using brute force and violence to achieve goals, as well as spark conversations within communities of color. Meanwhile, out writer-director Tina Mabry's accomplished Slamdance feature, *Mississippi Damned*, addressed homophobia and generational clash within a poverty-ridden African-American family.

A surefire conversation-stirrer, Julian Breece's stunning short film, *The Young and Evil*, saw a black teen "bug chaser" attempt to get infected by an HIV-positive AIDS-prevention activist. Equally disturbing, but in a non-real-world way, was Paul Solet's comedy-horror film *Grace*, in which a lesbian midwife helped her bisexual ex birth a ghoulish, blood-drinking infant. Also darkly humorous, Nancy Kissam's

Drool updated *Bound* with its tale of a repressed housewife who kills her husband and runs off with her sassy black neighbor, moody daughter, and budding gay adolescent son.

In the desert-dry French absurdist comedy, *Louise-Michel*, an incompetent FTM transsexual hit man is enlisted to kill a corporate boss. A gay man cruising the beach finds an unexpected connection with a woman in Italy's *One Day in a Life*. Spun from Philadelphia writer David Brind's 2005 short of the same name, *Dare* chronicles a love triangle between a gay teen, his female best friend, and the bisexual bad boy they both crush on.

As for lame ducks? Ensemble drama *The Informers*, based on Brett Easton Ellis' novel, was pointless and vapid, while despite its talented leading ladies—including Rachel Dratch, Amy Poehler, Parker Posey, and Jane Lynch—out director Ryan Shiraki's *Spring Breakdown* was →



Sundance 2009 continued from previous page

Speaking of juries, one of the festival's biggest winners was out director Lee Daniels' U.S. Dramatic Competition title, *Push*: Based on the Novel by Sapphire. Newcomer Gabourey Sidibe (who was reportedly discovered on a street corner) stars as Precious Jones, a Harlem high schooler whose life represents a virtual onion of adversity: illiterate and obese, she endures nonstop abuse from her monstrous, unloving mother (Mo'Nique), was raped by her father, and bore two children as a result—one, with Down Syndrome, is named Mongol (short for Mongoloid). She only finds comfort from a nurturing lesbian teacher, and escape in fantastical blackouts.

The film is powerful as much as entertaining, heart-wrenching as much as hopeful, tragically funny as much as terrifying, and boasts typecast-busting performances from Mo'Nique—who, during the festival, admitted she had been molested by a family member and infused her character with that evil—Mariah Carey (dressed down as a social worker), and Lenny Kravitz (as a male nurse). Since acquired by Lionsgate, *Push* snagged Grand Jury, Audience, and Special Jury Prize for Acting (for Mo'Nique) awards.

Another winner of both distribution deal (with Magnolia) and Sundance prize (for Spirit of Independence) was writer/director Lynn Shelton's comedic *Humpday*, in which two straight men challenge themselves to have sex on camera for a Seattle amateur porn contest. And local



Strange bedfellows: Ben (Mark Duplass, l) and Andrew (Joshua Leonard) go gay for play in director Lynn Shelton's *Humpday*, something of a treatment of *Zack and Miri Make a Porno*. The comedy took Sundance's 2009 Independent Spirit Award.



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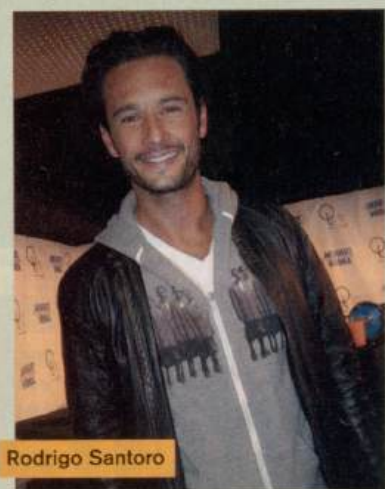
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You Can't Stop the Swag

There were fewer lounges, lodges, and big brands, but VIPs (and their friends) could still load up with suitcases of swag. In fact, much of it was extremely useful—brands and chains like Nivea (at House of Hype), St. Ives, Sephora, AMC Theaters, and Conair gifted VIPs with moisturizers, hair-care products, body treatments (Elijah Wood received a St. Ives facial), AMC tickets, Divine fair-trade chocolates, Givenchy Phenomenon mascara, and other useful items. "It's like you went to a free Target," observed



Rodrigo Santoro

one of my condo mates. The Hollywood Life House upped the cool factor with hip Onitsuka Tiger sneakers, T-shirts, and adorable Tokidoki dolls; Whiting and Davis metal mesh bags; and tasteful White House Black Market clothing/accessories. L-R-G Gifting Villa's Radius Earphones and Creative Recreation sneakers were fab giveaways. And Village at the Yard, where I ran into Chris Meloni, proved a favorite spot, thanks to its T-Mobile Diner comfort foods (like "Touchscreen Turkey Pot Roast" and "Google Maps Mac & Cheese"), Fred Segal Fun mini-outlet (which featured the Black Boy Collection's way-cool T-shirts and sweater depicting gay poet/icon Langston Hughes as a child), and Nickelodeon's insanely fun Spongebob Squarepants lounge. Visitors included Jane Lynch, *Phillip Morris'* Ewan McGregor and Rodrigo Santoro, Richie Rich, Michael Cera, and Susan Sarandon, whom inquired, "Why is it a sponge?" —L.F.



Sundance 2009

continued from page 42

barely more pleasant than a case of spring break-contracted herpes.

Film proved secondary on inauguration day, as many festgoers viewed the televised proceedings at Sundance/Slamdance venues/events in their condos, or in Washington, D.C. itself (like *Dare's* Alan Cumming). A few films played up political and global issues, such as *The End of the Line*, which addressed the dangers of overfishing (someone wearing a plump, red fish costume skied the slopes to promote it). Conversely, California's Proposition 8 was barely addressed, barring a Queer Lounge panel, pro-gay-marriage pins, a few posters in storefronts, and a lone demonstrator dancing on Main Street (and handing out CD-ROM copies of his screenplays while at it).

"Surprisingly, and unfortunately, I didn't see anything about Prop 8," shares



Dramatically disturbing: Julian Breece directs Vaughn Lowery (inset) as Karel Andrews in *The Young and the Evil*, a short about barebacking.

out publicist John Murphy, who represented director Cary Joji Fukunaga's Sundance Directing and Cinematography prizewinner, *Sin Nombre*. "I expected

to see more. I felt there really wasn't any rebuttal for [films screened at] Cinemark theaters, which I was surprised by."

As usual, LGBTs crowded the 13th Annual

OUTFEST Queer Brunch—I spotted Guinevere Turner, Rose Troche, and Tracy Chapman at one table—and three-level GLAAD/Absolut-sponsored Queer Lounge, which hosted numerous panels, schmoozing, parties (best of the lot was Regent's "Sundance" shindig, complete with open bar and locally enlisted go-go boys), and, of course, gossip. I learned that Glenn Gaylord will direct Ariztical's upcoming *Eating Out 3*, and Lesli Klainberg (*Fabulous! The Story of Queer Cinema*) is working with Dan Bucatinsky (*All Over the Guy*) on a pilot entitled *My Family*, geared to kids of gay parents.

Less may not be more, but, as Sundance 2009 proved, it was certainly satisfying.

Lawrence Ferber, the New York-based entertainment journalist, reports each year from the Sundance Film Festival for OutSmart magazine.



Goodfellas: powerhouse lesbian filmmakers Rose Troche (l) and Guinevere Turner (c) chat and chew with musician Tracy Chapman at the OUTFEST Queer Brunch. Turner, now released from her recurring role as Gabby Deveau in Showtime's *The L Word*, is in post-production with the film *Feed*, a new drama.

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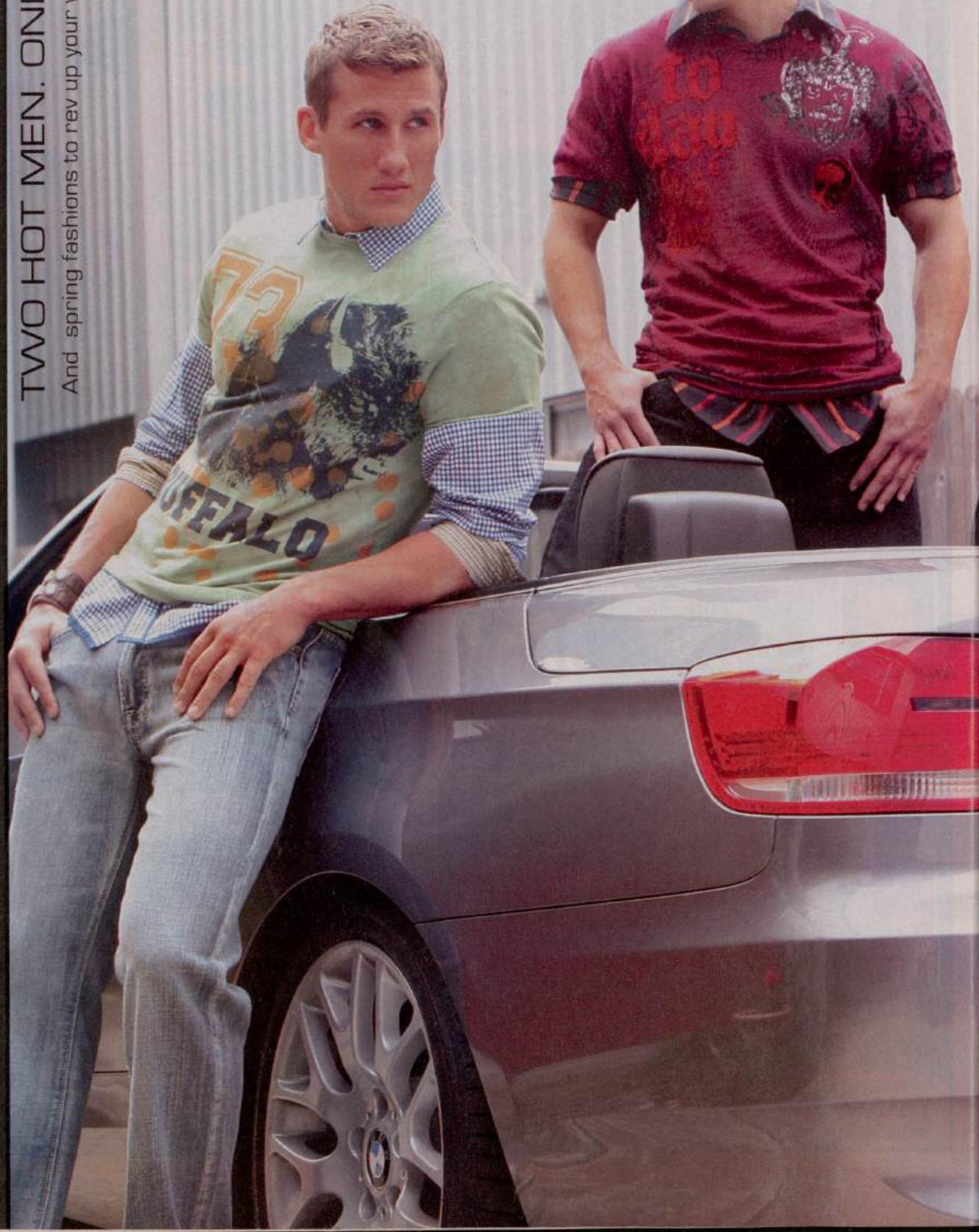
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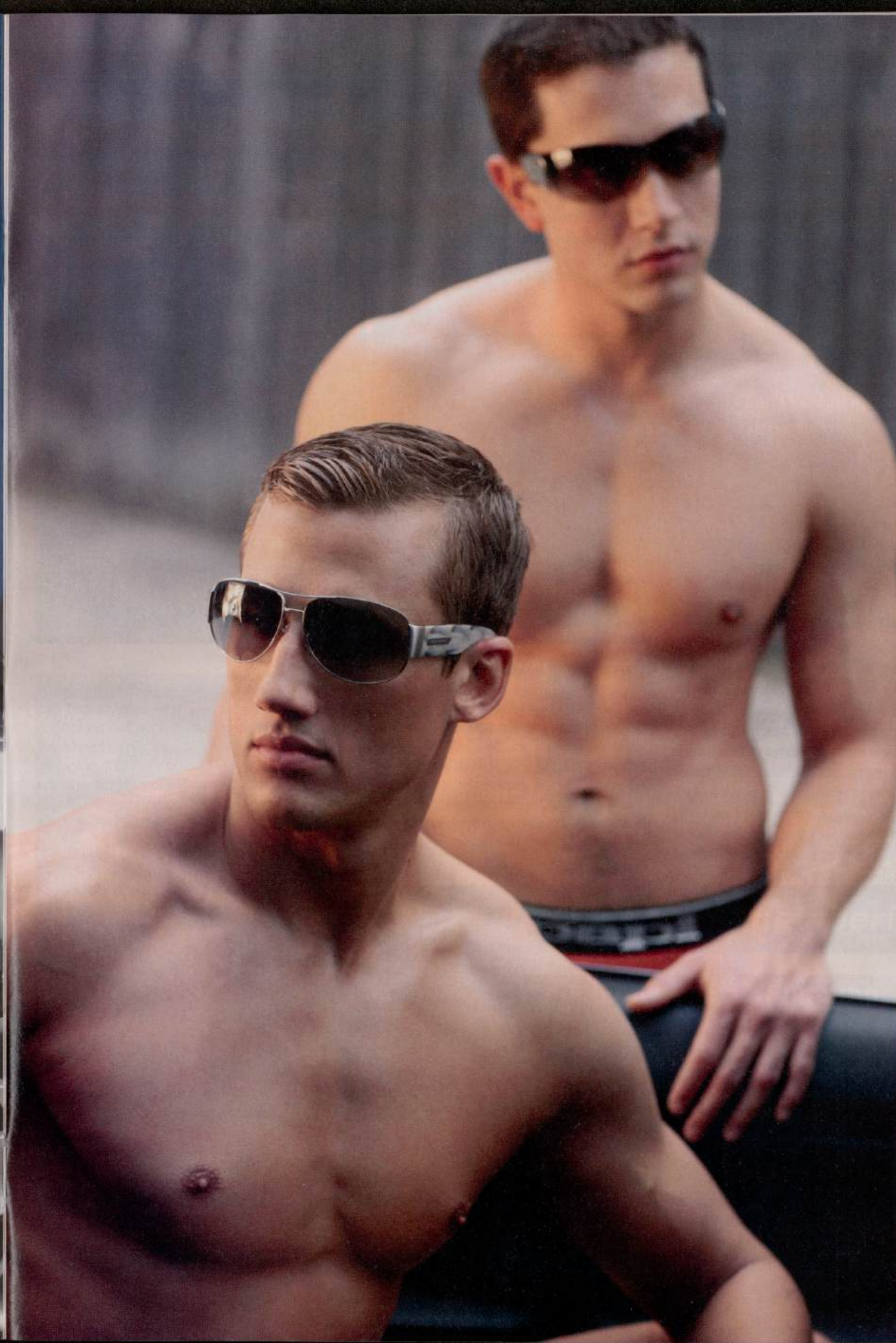
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This Page: Black Artful Dodger Masked Brawl Blazer (\$168), Kenneth Cole Black Slacks (\$58) from Macy's, 2009 BMW 328 CiC, courtesy of Advantage BMW. Opposite: Print sea-green T (\$35), blue-checkered button-down shirt (\$79) and blue jeans (\$89), all by Buffalo-David Bitton, available at Macy's. Brown leather and silver wrist cuff by Brave Belworks (\$62), available at Envy Me. Calvin Klein mensai red T (\$39), INC firewood longleeve shirt (\$59) and XRAY black corduroy pants (\$88), also available at Macy's.

Left: Polo Club Room shorts (\$89) and white Polo Club Room shirt (\$49), available at Macy's. Shoes models own.
Right: Ralph Lauren Polo Club shirt (\$125) with white Polo Club Room shorts (\$89), also available at Macy's.



Left: Burberry shades (\$210) with Papi "Fish" briefs in blue (\$20). Right: Prada shades (\$330) and Papi "Stud" red briefs (\$24). Glasses from The Sunglass Hut in Macy's. Underwear also available at Macy's. Kiss My Face Cranberry Orange lip balm (\$3). Nature's Sources Kolorex Honey Skin Care (\$8) available at The Houston Buyer's Club.

Wheel Love 2009

If you are considering buying a car, there are some great models in '09

by James Hurst

Even before Wall Street began its meltdown and the credit crunch came to our doorsteps, analysts were predicting auto sales this year of a little more than 12 million vehicles. That is the lowest level of auto sales since the 1980s. According to *Business Week*, through August of 2008, auto sales were off more than 11 percent from 2007 levels. They have not recovered in any way and, in fact, continue to spiral downward each month. There are a number of factors which are converging as automakers try to decide how to pitch the newest wares, and we, the consumers, must decide whether to jump into the game or stay home and ponder our future. Because of the bad news and obvious reluctance to spend our hard-earned money, consumers are scared. Gas prices look good today hovering around \$1.90, but are likely to climb back above \$4 a gallon next summer.

Choosing the best new cars for 2009 isn't easy in today's market. Automakers have been forced to improve their designs, build better quality, monitor their costs, and begin to face that hybrid technology is a must. Hope you enjoy the list, and the next time you have to buy a car, consider the design, innovation, practicality, and how well it drives before you buy!



2009 BMW Z4 Roadster

A new expression of fun has come to us in the form of the redesigned BMW Z4 Roadster. Enhancing the spaciousness and better all-around visibility, this roadster offers a new, retractable hardtop that raises and lowers in just 20 seconds. The new Z4 package comes with a choice of two potent-yet-efficient engines. In the Z4 sDrive35i, the roadster moves you with 300 twin-turbocharged horses and 300 lb./ft. of torque, or you can opt for the 255-hp Z4 sDrive 30i with a strong 220 lb./ft. of torque. A 6-speed manual transmission is standard or opt for the 7-speed Sport with automatic transmission and double clutch. This car delivers BMW's guarantee of precise handling, quality materials, sporty looks, and just plain fun to drive. Prices and mileage are to be determined, so check back in the spring with BMW for more information.



2009 Toyota Venza

Designed by the its engineers as 70-percent car and 30-percent crossover, the Venza represents a new direction for Toyota. Outside, the Venza's radical styling breaks loose from Toyota's traditional conservative mold, creating a vehicle with innovative features and unusual design cues. Prices range from \$26,695-\$38,805. EPA fuel economy estimates: 18-21 mpg city, 25-29 mpg highway. Toyota plans to offer the Venza in a single model—no LE, XLE, SR5, or limited trim levels as per standard Toyota practice. There will be eight option packages and four stand-alone options, and power comes in either a four-cylinder front-wheel-drive model or an all-wheel-drive V6 with all the trimmings.

continued on page 52

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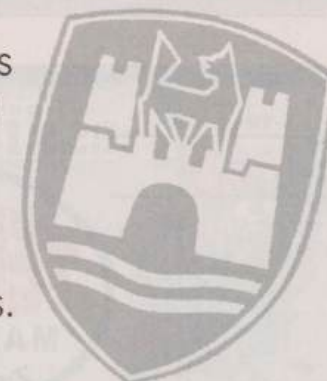
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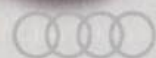
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Wheel Love

continued from page 50



2009 Cadillac CTS-V

The CTS-V is the high-performance and all-new version of Cadillac's CTS sedan. Last year's CTS packed a big 400-hp V8 and a manual transmission, but the new CTS-V is amazingly over the top—a bigger supercharged V8 that pours out a whopping 556 hp, plus it's available with an automatic transmission. Prices range from \$60,355–\$98,995. EPA fuel economy approximately 13 mpg city and 19 mpg highway. The CTS-V supercharged engine is closely related to the 638-hp LS9 engine in the Corvette ZR1. Its output of 556 hp and 551 lb./ft. of torque lays waste to German rivals. Caddy claims 0–60 in a blistering 3.9 seconds!



2009 Audi TT

Audi brings us a new high-performance version called the TTS in both coupe and convertible form. The TTS features a special high-performance version of the turbocharged 2.0T engine, with output raised to 265 hp and 258 lb./ft. of torque. Audi's S-Tronic transmission and Quattro all-wheel drive are standard. Other TTs will get additional standard equipment and revised options, and 2.0T models can now be purchased with Quattro all-wheel drive. TT roadsters now come with a manually operated convertible top.



2009 Glass Roof Ford Mustang

In 2009, coinciding with the 45th anniversary of the Mustang's debut, Ford will offer a glass-roof Mustang, in addition to the existing coupe and convertible versions. This option will be offered on all premium model 4.0L V6 and 4.6L GT Mustang coupes at a cost of \$1,995, which is less than the cost of upgrading from a coupe to a convertible. The Mustang's glass roof will feature tinted privacy glass designed to keep the inside of the car cooler and to reduce infrared rays. It is designed to prevent interior fading and discoloration of the car's fabric as well as feature a manual roller blind, allowing passengers to control the amount of exposure the roof offers.

continued on page 56

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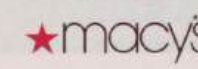


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Wheel Love

continued from page 52



2009 Volkswagen CC

The CC is what Volkswagen calls a four-door coupe, or a German luxury car without the German luxury price tag. The CC engine options are a 200-hp 2.0L engine as standard and 280-hp 3.6L narrow-angle V6 optional. Volkswagen sells the CC in four models: Sport, Luxury, VR6 Sport, and VR6 Motion. All get heated power-adjustable front seats, alloy wheels, electronic stability control, and six-disc CD changer, and all but the Sport get a huge full-width sunroof, dual-zone climate control, rain sensing wipers, auto-dimming rearview mirror, and leather seats. The car will slot in above the top-of-the-line Passat 3.6L, with prices starting at \$27,480 for the CC Sport with a manual transmission and topping out at \$43,255 for a loaded CC VR6 4Motion.



2009 Chevrolet Corvette ZR1

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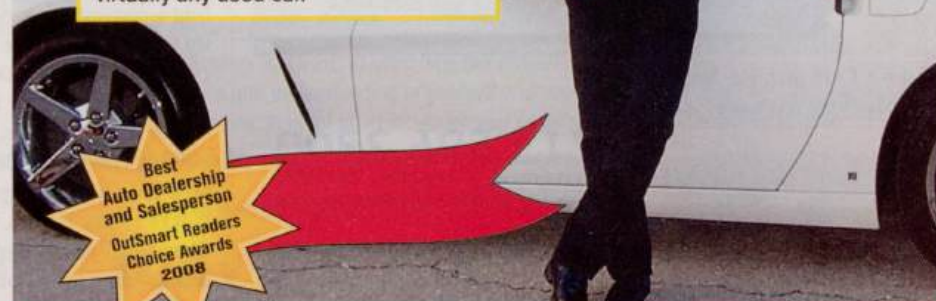
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Driving Green

Save money, save the planet
 by Marene Gustin

If visions of Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn gaily dashing about Rome on a Vespa aren't enough to make you consider a scooter, think about this: two-wheeling will save you money, and it just may help save the planet.

For attorney Dan Lundeen, zipping around town on his scooter just makes sense. "It just seems silly to drive a big car a couple of blocks," he says. "With a good tailwind I can go 35 mph and I don't worry about parking spaces." Plus, he only spends about \$5 every two weeks to fill up his tank.

Matthew Creede, owner of Apollo Scooters, started his store more than seven years ago, at a time when Houstonians were all about the big pickups and SUVs. It's taken awhile, but he's seen sales rise for his scooters, cycles, and Segways. Business was so good after last year's four-dollar gas prices that he now has three locations. Creede says that even using a scooter for half of your driving can save as much as \$100 a week on gas and insurance, plus scooter owners find it saves them time. "Getting around in traffic, not having to hunt for a parking space," he says.

And if that isn't cheap enough for you, how about an all-electric scooter?

Velotek Corporation is a privately held Houston-based company with a Shanghai manufacturing plant that produces electric scooters. They began selling the scooters in British Columbia, and last spring Gulf Coast Velotek, a distributor, opened a showroom here in Houston.

"A 750-watt motor takes one kilowatt of energy," Jock Drummond, GCV president, says.

"You plug it in, and it costs about 15 cents to charge. It will run for about 35 to 40 miles off that charge." Velotek scooters range in price from \$1,500 to \$2,000 and come with such features as cruise control and antitheft devices. And they come with detachable pedals, just in case.

Classified as low-speed electric bicycles by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, these scooters are street legal, require no registration or motorcycle license and get up to about 20 mph on the road.

But it isn't just the two-wheelers that are available. Houston Electric Cars sells Zenn cars, Skys, and Benjys, which are cute-as-a-bug e-convertibles. Some are basically golf carts on 'roids, others seat up to 11. These little beauties run \$8,000 to \$21,000, can net you tax credits, and cost less than two cents per mile to operate.

"Plus insurance is cheaper and they're easier to finance," says owner Rick Ehrlich, who started the dealership last summer. The neighborhood vehicles will hit 35 mph and can go about 35 to 40 miles on a four-hour charge. Just plug it into a home outlet overnight and you're ready to roll. Ehrlich says he has no problem dashing about downtown in his peppy e-car. And, besides being practically free to drive—no gas, no oil, no transmission to break down—these little babies just may save the planet.

"An SUV puts out enough carbon gas to fill Reliant Stadium every month," says Ehrlich. "Electric cars make no pollution, and I really think the salvation of the human race depends on solar panels and electric cars." ■

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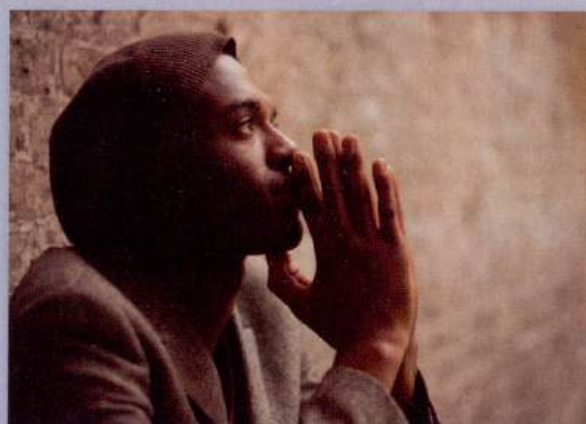
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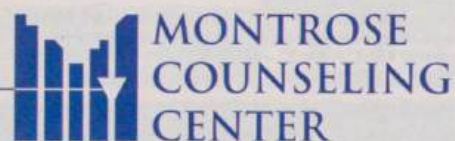


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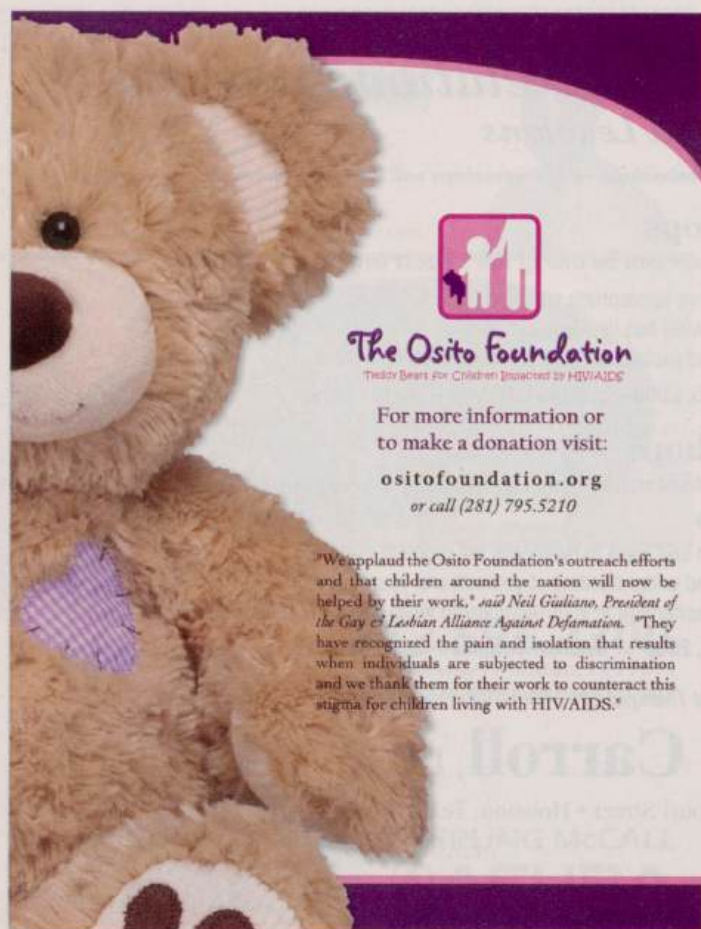


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A Kiss Is Not Just a Kiss

Rice's newest
play explores the
consequence of
a kiss

by Marene Gustin

Photo by Mark Hiebert



Pucker up: Sigrid Owen (l) and Carolyn Tanner play gay (or do they?) this month in Rice University's Theatre Department's production of Diane Son's *Stop Kiss*, which Matt Huff (r) directs.

A kiss is just a kiss," sang Dooley Wilson in *Casablanca*, but in reality, isn't it more? That's the premise of award-winning playwright Diane Son's *Stop Kiss*, the off-Broadway play from 1999 that won both an Obie and a Media Award from GLAAD. This month Rice University's Theatre Department presents the play of violent gay bashing and humorous blossoming love. →

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A Kiss Is Not Just a Kiss

continued from previous page

"This is a play I've wanted to work on," admits director Matt Huff, guest artistic director at Rice for the spring semester. "It's not just a gay play. The characters don't really identify with gays. On a simple level it's a love story. Yes, there is violence and gay bashing, but it's also a romantic comedy."

Stop Kiss is the story of disorganized New York City traffic reporter Callie and her growing friendship with Midwest transplant Sara, who comes to the big city to teach in the Bronx. Though vastly different characters, the two form a bond that develops into a friendship and much more, ending in a street kiss that sparks violence by an antigay onlooker.

Huff is gay, but the two leads at Rice are not.

"I've never done a girl kiss on stage," says Rice junior Caroline Turner, "but I think it will be pretty cool." Turner is cast as Sara, a role originated by Sandra Oh off-Broadway. "I think there's a bunch of me in Sara. She comes from a conservative family like I do, but she's also feisty and curious, and that's what I want to make real."

"The way the couple falls in love is just like any couple," explains Sigrid Owen who plays Callie in *Stop Kiss*. "Straight, gay, or bisexual, it's all the same."

Both young women admit that the scenario probably wouldn't happen today in New York, but Owen points to the recent defeat of California's Proposition 8 as how relevant the message still is today.

"We fall in love with people," she says. "Not races, genders, or backgrounds. That's what the play is all about. It's encouraging people to ask themselves, 'What do I want?' And I'm trying to ask myself what I want. Being in the play is really helping me grow."

"I grew up in Dallas," Turner says. "And I think this could still happen there today. So it's really an important play for the community, and I'm excited to be in it."

The play moves back and forth through time, showing the beginning of the women's friendship, and the aftermath of the

"We fall in love with people. Not races, genders, or backgrounds. That's what the play is all about."

kiss, as Sara lies comatose in a hospital, and their two heterosexual lovers arrive.

"Structurally it's intense," says director Huff, "as it moves back and forth. And the casting of the two women is central to the success of the play. Finding the right dynamics is crucial." But he thinks he's found just that with Turner and Owen.

"Caroline is really open to the kiss, and I'm really open to the character," Owen says. "I want to make her and the relationship seem real."

"Their tentative first kiss leads not only to shocking violence," says Rice's theater department director Christina Keefe, "but also to a moving transformation. Making choices and commitments is a scary business as *Stop Kiss* suggests. But what's the alternative?"

Stop Kiss

Diane Son's award-winning play runs at Rice University's Visual and Dramatic Arts Theatre Hamman Hall, March 20-28. Tickets for opening night are \$5; \$10 thereafter (seniors \$8, students \$5). Call 713/348-PLAY (7529) for ticket reservations.

Marene Gustin wrote about Houston Ballet's *Marie by Stanton Welch* for the February issue of OutSmart magazine.

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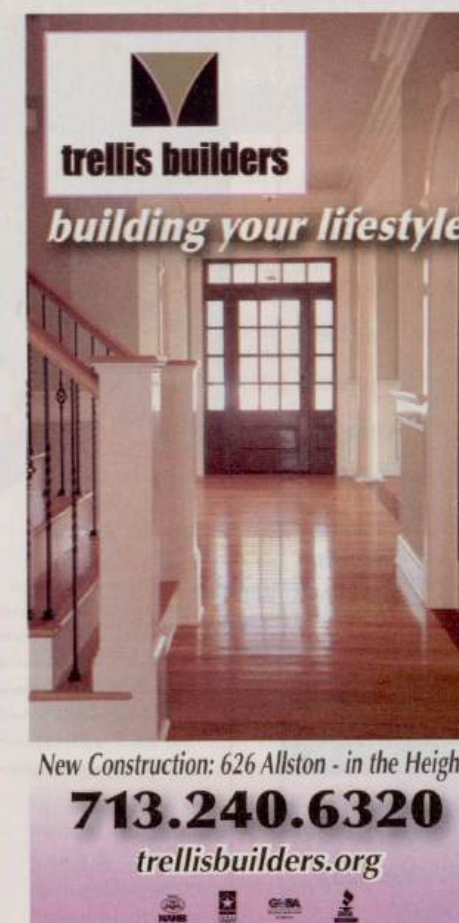
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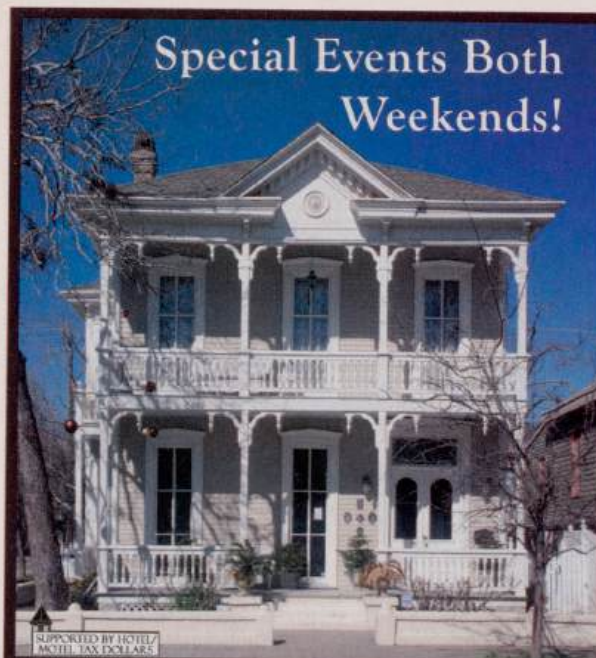


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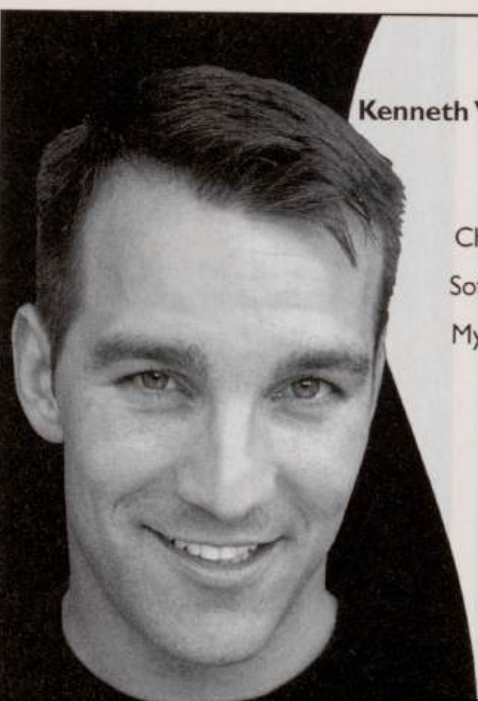
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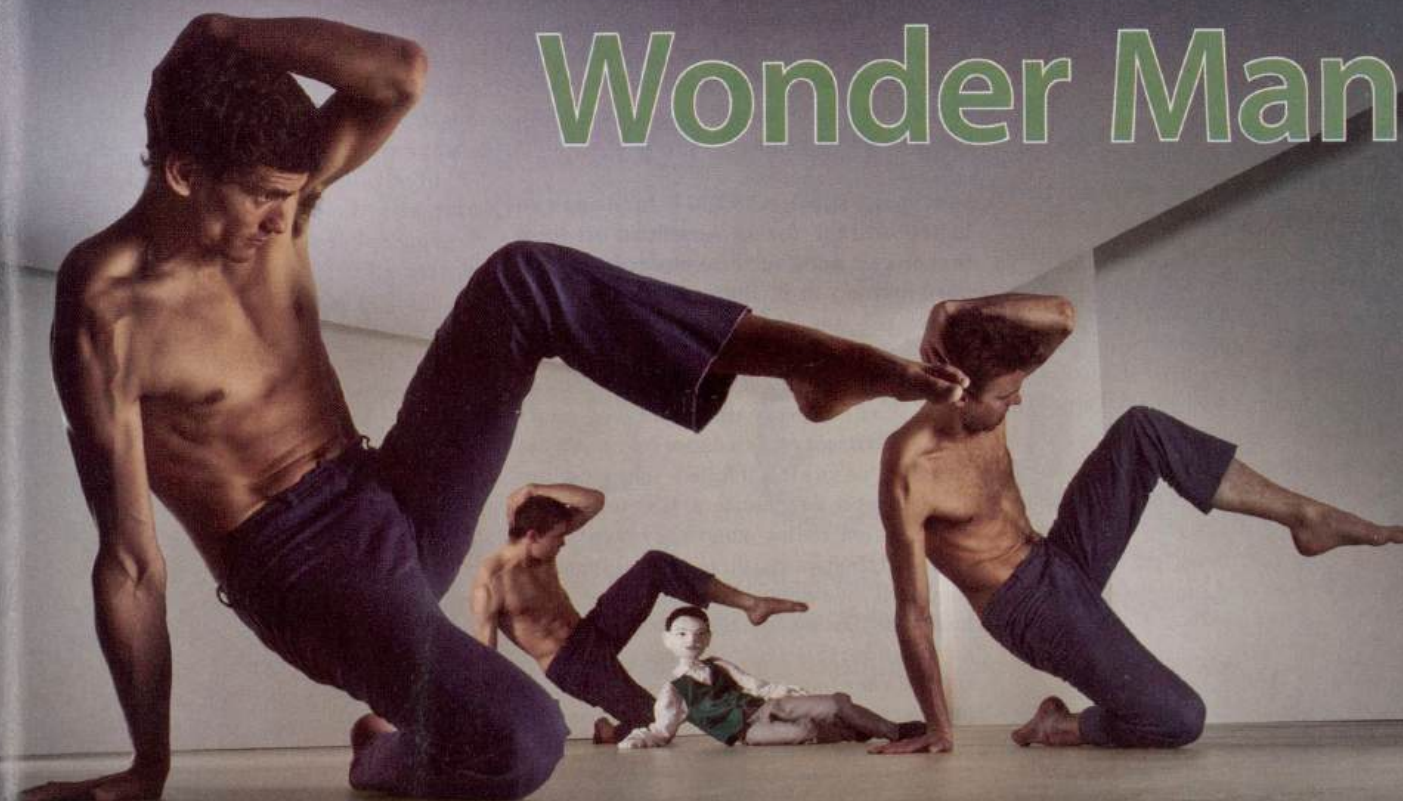
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Wonder Man



Joe Goode allows dancers to portray gay men in his choreography. In fact, he insists

by Neil Ellis Orts • Photos by RJ Muna

The Joe Goode Performance Group has been making innovative dance for over 20 years. Goode was at the forefront of choreographers who used text with their movement to create interdisciplinary narratives and has been awarded with many honors, among them a Guggenheim Fellowship, and, most recently, the United States Artists Glover Fellowship. The Society for the Performing Arts is bringing the JGPG to the Wortham Center's Cullen Theater on March 6, when Houstonians can see Goode's most recent work, *Wonderboy*, and a revival of an older piece, *Maverick Strain*.

Neil Ellis Orts: What is it about these two pieces that goes together?

Joe Goode: *Wonderboy* is the story of the queer boy who discovers himself as an artist, discovers a way to use his sensitivity and his aesthetic feelings, and goes from feeling oppressed to feeling empowered: "I actually can do something a lot of people can't do." Obviously, a very personal story for me.

I collaborated with a puppeteer, Basil Twist, and it's very much his story, too. So that moment when we discovered at puberty, or somewhere around there, that we had this power of making beautiful things and offering insights about the world through these beautiful things that we made, it was a kind of a redemption for both of us. We discovered that we were going to be okay.

With *Maverick Strain*, it's very different. *Maverick Strain* is about Americans believing our rugged individual spirit kind of dominates all, that in the end, we're going to walk off into the sunset with our mangy dog, victorious. I think that mythology is something that a lot of us live, against our better judgment. I wanted to point a finger at that, which is, in a way, kind of the opposite issue of the overly sensitive flower [in *Wonderboy*].

Do you have any thoughts on why dance in particular seems to attract gay men?

I have a piece called *29 Effeminate Gestures*, which is about effeminacy. It's about a lavishness of expression, a desire to make one's gestures baroque or larger than life or dramatic, to expand feeling in a big way. I basically feel like gay men—many of us, not all of us—have that desire to express things deeply, to express things artistically even in gesture, even in the way we walk, in the way we wear our clothes. And dancing is kind of a natural extension of that. Absolutely.

I think the more interesting question is why—in the dance world that is populated by gay men—are there so few out gay choreographers? It is kind of shocking to me, even in this day and age that people still try to make this neutral, neutered kind of dance. I still feel like, in the →



Goode enough. Awarded a prestigious John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 2007 for exceptional creative ability in the arts, like *Wonderboy* (pictured above), Joe Goode is also one of only 10 U.S. choreographers to receive the National Dance Residency Program grant (in 1955), a \$100,000 award for artistic development.

Wonder Man

continued from previous page

residencies and the workshops that we do in the middle of the country, it's this education process. People have never seen a woman lift a man or two men dance really tenderly and erotically together. And it's like—why? What country are we living in?

I hope we're coming into an era when that becomes less and less.

It's funny, you know, because we went through this era, and I was very much a part of this era—the era of AIDS and dances about AIDS—and suddenly being gay or having two men and one of them dying became a real kind of topical possibility in dance. And everyone had an AIDS piece. I had 20 of them, but everybody had at least one. And I think there was some progress made there, but really, beyond the issue of death and dying, it's really very hard to make a gay dance that people can look at and respond to, because they don't have the eyes for it.

I'm in my mid-40s and I look at twenty-somethings who've grown up post-*Ellen* and post-*Will & Grace* and there is a whole different sensibility to them.

There is, and I hate to be the one to say the glass is half empty, but I do feel at the same time, to Letterman and Leno and all those popular culture people, gay is still a big joke. "That's so gay" or "You must be a little light in the loafers." The standard hasn't changed that much. I'm still kind of shocked that the mainstream culture still has a long way to go.

Last year, I spoke with Bill T. Jones and he lamented that, for an American art form that has an enormous number of gay men participating in it, there are some cities where the gay community is completely oblivious to dance.

Most cities, yes, I totally agree with him. What you find mostly, unfortunately—and I think this is where, as a dance community in America, we've kind of failed—is your dance audience is mostly dancers. It's mostly girls who studied ballet when they were little girls and then moved on to other things, but they still love dance and they bring their husbands. But you're right, the gay men are not going out to see contemporary dance. I've worked very hard to cultivate them here in my hometown and I think I've succeeded, but outside of that it's really tough. I think some of them are going to the opera and the ballet because it is a kind of validation: "I'm

an elegant person, so I'm going to the opera and the ballet." But the pieces they could be seeing that really are dealing with some issues that are familiar to them, and frankly dealing in a vernacular in movement and language that is more contemporary with their lives, they're not necessarily getting out to see that stuff. And it's just an education process.

I really feel like you can go into the theater with the expectation that something is going to happen to you...personally. That something is going to become dislodged or rearranged or some slight new perspective or something emotionally is going to open up or be revisited, something you kind of locked away. And that that experience can be a really powerful experience. Go with an appetite for that experience. I'm pretty sure, particularly with this piece of work, [OutSmart readers] get it.

Joe Goode Performance Group

The 75-minute program is presented at Wortham Center, 500 Texas, on March 6 at 8 p.m. Tickets (\$20-\$45) are available at spahouston.org, at 713/227-4SPA, or at Jones Hall (615 Louisiana).

Neil Ellis Orts is a regular contributor to OutSmart magazine.

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Chuck Lorre

(producer, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Two and a Half Men*)
(*The Big Bang Theory* vanity card, 2/9/09)

One of Chuck Lorre's "vanity cards," a series of changing, witty messages that flash at the end of his television shows:

"A wise man once told me that we are all God in drag. I like that. Sometimes when I'm in a public place or sitting at a stoplight, I'll watch people walking by and I'll silently say to myself, 'He's God. She's God. He's God. She's God.' Before long I always find myself feeling a warm sense of affinity for these strangers. The experience is even more powerful when I do this while observing a person who is clearly suffering. On occasion I'll test my little spiritual practice by turning on Fox News. Within minutes I become an atheist."

Jason Segel & Paul Rudd

(*Entertainment Weekly*, 2/13/09)

Re: Jason Segel and Paul Rudd in the new comedy *I Love You, Man* (March 20).

Jason Segel: This is our third movie together. There's definitely a bromance that's been growing. And you know what they say about the third date....

Gavin Castleton

(2/09, Peter Galvin)

Peter Galvin: ... I know some gay guys who really think you're hot. It's not just about the looks—it's the emotional sensitivity that they find attractive. Have you built up any kind of gay fan base over the years?

Gavin Castleton: This question makes me very sad. Being objectified undermines the ... 15 years I've dedicated to making thoughtful music. Any attention given to me as a person, especially something so irrelevant as my appearance, is shifting the focus from my work, which can impact people deeper and longer than any physical attribute. In regards to building a gay fan base, I find that people respond positively to honesty and introspection, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Sen. Chris Buttars

(Utah state senator)

This past January, Senator Chris Buttars was interviewed by Reed Cowan for his documentary *8: The Mormon Proposition*. In the documentary, Buttars says, "Homosexuality will always be a sexual perversion. And you say that around here now, and everybody goes nuts. But I don't care."

He also states, "What is the morals of a gay person? You can't answer that, because anything goes. They wanna talk about being nice—they're the meanest buggers I've ever seen."

And, saving the best for last: "They're probably the greatest threat to America going down I know of."



Mel 'n' Mike White, in matching outfits.

Mel White & Mike White

(*Entertainment Weekly*, 2/13/09, Jessica Shaw)

Just when you think the race around the world can't throw you a curve, [*The Amazing Race 14*] cast vegan screenwriter Mike White (*School of Rock*) and his gay rights activist dad, Mel. "I had some trepidations," says Mike about doing season 14. "Nothing makes me regress faster than being embarrassed by my dad on television." Mel, however, embraced team spirit. "[Mel] came over like, 'We have to get matching outfits!' I said, 'I'm not going to be Liza Minnelli to your Judy Garland.'" [At press time, the Whites were still in the race.]

Kanye West

(*Details*, 3/09, Ivan Solotaroff)

"Take the word gay—like, in hip-hop, that's a negative thing, right? But in the past two, three years, all the gay people I've encountered have been, like, really, really, extremely dope. Y'know, I haven't, like, gone to a gay bar, nor do I ever plan to. But where I would talk to a gay person—the conversation would be mostly around, like, art or design—it'd be really dope. From a design standpoint, kids'll say, 'Dude, those pants are gay.' But if it's, like, good, good, good fashion-level, design-level stuff, where it's on a higher level than the average commercial design stuff, it's, like, gay people that do that. I think that should be said as a compliment. Like, 'Dude, that's so good it's almost... gay.'"

Wanda Sykes

(*The Advocate*, 3/09, Ari Karpel)

Just before moving to New York [in 1992], Sykes married record producer David Hall. "I actually made the choice to be straight as a kid," she says. "Early on I knew [being gay] wasn't gonna fly. No way. And from the teachers and the church and all, it was, *This is wrong! What's wrong with me?* And you pray and ask God to take it away, and you bury it and bury it, and you shut that part of yourself off. Then you try to live the life that you're supposed to live." ...

[Sykes was in Las Vegas when post-Proposition 8 rallies were planned across the country. At the one in Vegas, one of the event's organizers mentioned that there was a rumor that she was in the crowd. She went onstage and spoke.] She ended the impromptu presentation with a statement of pride: "I'm proud to be a woman, I'm proud to be a black woman, and I'm proud to be gay. Let's go get our damn equal rights."

By the time she'd returned to her hotel room, news that Sykes had come out of the closet was on the CNN crawl. "I was like, *Damn, whatever happened to 'What happens in Vegas...?'*"

Wanda Sykes (seen here on *The Tonight Show*): is she proud to be gay? INSET: On *The New Adventures of Old Christine*, Barb (Sykes) and Christine (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) were smiling before they were told, that because they're married, they broke a family values clause and could lose the gym they own. FYI: they gave up their gym rather than support discrimination of gays.

Cherry Jones

(*TV Guide*, 2/09, William Keck)

William Keck: You've been in a relationship with actress Sarah Paulson (*Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip* and ABC's upcoming *Cupid*) for the past five years. How did you feel about California's Prop. 8 overturning gay marriage?

Cherry Jones: I hope it will be repealed because I don't think the majority should be allowed to take away the rights of the minority. I originally wanted the movement to be about civil unions, because to me, "marriage" is more of a religious bond and civil union is about the state. But I now appreciate that they went for broke, and I do believe that in another four or five years the majority of those who voted for Prop. 8 will be ashamed of themselves.

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blase DiStefano



Toni Collette (seen here in 2004's *Connie and Carla*): did she like hanging out with drag queens?

(*The Advocate*, 3/09, Brandon Voss)

Toni Collette: [W]hen we were shooting *Connie and Carla*, we went to a local bar where they did drag shows. Hanging out with the drag queens on set was my favorite part of working on that movie. They have an innate acerbic wit and sense of irony that doesn't exist elsewhere. Being from Australia, which is a very dry place, I met my match with those guy-gals.

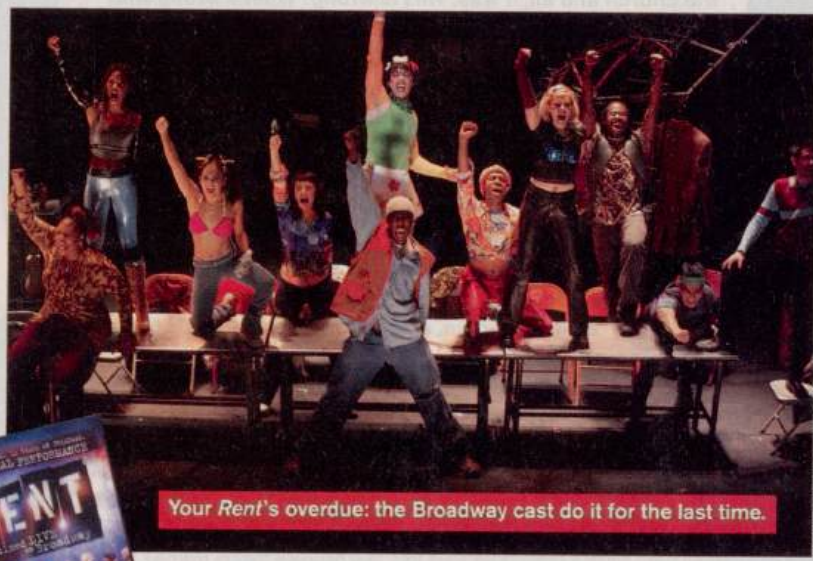
Brandon Voss: What advice would you give a drag queen who wanted to impersonate you?

Oh, God, I probably wouldn't give any. I'd just sit back and laugh my head off.

LOW RENT

The musical may be popular, but it's no Puccini

Rent, the Broadway phenomenon and winner of four Tony awards as well as a Pulitzer, began its National Theater Tour last month after 12 years playing to SRO audiences in New York. In expectation of the enormous marketing opportunities presented by the *Rent* tour, Sony Pictures managed to film the very last Broadway performance of the original run. Now you can not only see *Rent* over and over again, but you can watch a charming special feature wherein several thousand die-hard *Rent* fans vie for seats in the first two rows in a special *Rent* version of The Amazing Lottery. *Rent*, Sony would have us believe, is the sort of theater (and Blu-ray digital experience) that comes along once in a generation. "*Rent* can change your life," the myriad bonus features (some of which are only



Your *Rent*'s overdue: the Broadway cast do it for the last time.

available on Sony Blu-ray) veritably shout from the back cover. But as I remarked to a friend pressing me to join him on a "life-changing" spiritual retreat, I like my life just fine the way it is, thank you.

Whether you elect to buy this product, simply rent it, or eschew it entirely will almost certainly be determined by which of the following descriptions comes closest to sounding like you. One, *Rent* was a life-changing experience validating

your decision to indulge your youthful fantasies well past the point your friends and family called seamly.

Two, you were once pleasantly entertained by the energy and earnestness of the *Rent* experience, but you didn't then and don't now see yourself as a Bohemian.

Three, you haven't a clue what any of this is about. If you're in this third category (or either of the first two really), do yourself an enormous

favor and find the 1988 film version of the classic Puccini opera upon which *Rent* is based. It's called *La Boheme*, and it stars Mirella Freni and Luciano Pavarotti. Seeing, and especially hearing, that particular version of *La Boheme*/*Rent* might be the sort of life-changing experience any of us would embrace.

John W. Stiles (johnwstiles.com) is a regular contributor to OutSmart magazine.

DVD/VHS Shorts Previews by Nancy Ford

Noah's Ark: Jumping the Broom

Fans of the popular Logo series flocked in record numbers to this big-screen treatment of the wedding-day saga of four gay African-American friends. The double disc DVD includes soundtrack, out-takes, and "making of" bonus features. Nominated for two NAACP Image Awards. Directed by Patrick-Ian Polk (*Punks*). Paramount Home Entertainment (logoonline.com).

Choke

What could be funnier than Sam Rockwell (*Frost/Nixon*) starring as a colonial theme park employee as he struggles with sexual addiction? Angelica Huston costars; bonus features include a gag reel. (Ha—get it?) Winner of the Special Jury Prize at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. Directed by Clark Gregg. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment (foxhome.com).

Laughing Matter...Next Gen

Young gay and lesbian comedians strut their punch lines and share private moments in director Andrea Meyerson's latest tribute to queer stand-up. Features Edison Apple, Gloria Bigelow, Ryan Hill, Daniel Leary, Bridget McManus, and Amy Bee. March 17. Ariztical Entertainment (ariztical.com).

Out at the Wedding

What's harder: telling your conservative Southern family you're gay, or telling them you're straight but engaged to a Jewish African American? Veteran of many a John Waters film, Mink Stole is a featured player in this romantic romp directed by Lee Friedlander (*Exes and Ohs*). Winner of the Audience Award for Best Feature Film at the 2007 Newfest New York LGBT Film Festival. Paramount Home Entertainment (logoonline.com).

Otto; or, Up with Dead People

Gay zombies in Berlin—what's not to love? Expect this freak fest from avant director Bruce LaBruce (*Skin Flick*, *Super 8 1/2*) to achieve cult film status. Katharina Klewinghaus and newcomer Jey Crisfar star in this 2008 Best Picture winner of Milan's International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. Strand Releasing Home Entertainment (strandreleasing.com).

Ready? OK!

Michael Emerson (*Lost*) co-stars in this poignant comedy focusing on a single mom's hope that her young son soon drops his cheerleader's pom-poms to take his place on the wrestling squad. A favorite of audiences at Seattle, San Diego, New York City, and North Carolina gay film festivals. Directed by James Vasquez (*29th and Gay*). March 24. Wolfe Video (wolfevideo.com). ■

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Movies

by Steven Foster

TUMBLEWEEDS AND TRANSSEXUALS

A fascinating new documentary focuses on the tiny town of Trinidad, Colorado, population 9,000—and sex change capitol of the world

When most people think of Colorado, laid-back Boulder, snowy Aspen, and cosmopolitan Denver are the go-to's. But when thousands of others ponder the Centennial State, the little town of Trinidad comes to mind—and its reputation as the "sex change capitol of the world."

To find out how this tiny outpost of barely 9,000 people became the mecca for sexual reassignment surgery, don't miss the remarkable new documentary by noted Austin filmmakers PJ Raval and Jay Hodges. *Trinidad* explores the recent past and ponderous future of the town whose inhabitants are (literally) in transition.

The film follows the fascinating, sometimes frustrating journey of three transsexuals in various stages of the transgender process; Dr. Marci Bowers, Sabrina Marcus, and Dr. Laura Ellis.

It all started in 1969, when kindly old Dr. Stanley Biber performed the first "sex change" operation in Trinidad. (Culture geeks are probably aware of Biber's name from an infamous *South Park* episode, if not the hundreds of media articles on the good doctor.) When Biber began his practice, the slice-and-dice procedure of removing a penis and transforming it into a vagina was a fledgling, workmanlike procedure at best. But Biber revolutionized the process, advancing genital reassignment surgery into something of a medical miracle and surgical game changer. Frustrated by the less-than-artistic aesthetic, Biber created genitalia that resembled the actual genitals and, what's more, they worked remarkably like the real thing. His pioneering efforts drew pre-op transsexuals and those with gender dysphoria from all over the world, and by the time of his retirement, Biber had performed almost 6,000 GRSs.

When Biber did retire, Dr. Marci Bowers left a lucrative practice as an OB/GYN in Seattle to inherit Biber's mantle. But Bowers had one important difference: she'd been there on the other side, whereas the man's man Biber had not. So Bowers gave a certain spiritual resonance to the procedure, and, believe it or not, most residents of Colorado didn't bat a prejudicial eye. The other two Bowers subjects don't find Trinidad as open-armed.

Naturally, *Trinidad* does reveal the small-town folks you'd expect. There are the toothless good old boys in gimme caps who "just don't get it" and the stalwart

church-goer who's scripturally opposed to the whole transgender debate. But *Trinidad* is also filled with dress-shop dowdies who only want to help the new girls in town look better, farmers who realize that without the surgeries there would be no hospital for anybody, and

children of men-who've-become-women who stand by their parent while debating whether to call Dad "Mom." And these transsexuals aren't above the occasional catty *Real Housewives of Trinidad* behavior either. And those with weak stomachs should be prepared, the doc doesn't spare any *Nip/Tuck*-like details. From almost shocking, decades-old surgical sketches to vivid, headspinning footage of the procedure, the documentary pulls no punches.

Gripping, enlightening, and frequently deeply moving, *Trinidad* is that rare documentary that educates while it entertains.

Plan ahead: PJ Raval and Jay Hodges' *Trinidad* screens April 4, 7 p.m., at Rice Cinema. Details: ricecinema.rice.edu.

Steven Foster is a regular contributor to OutSmart magazine.

From almost shocking, decades-old surgical sketches to vivid, headspinning footage of the procedure, the documentary pulls no punches.

Fanny Ardant Ania Bukstein Michal Shtamler

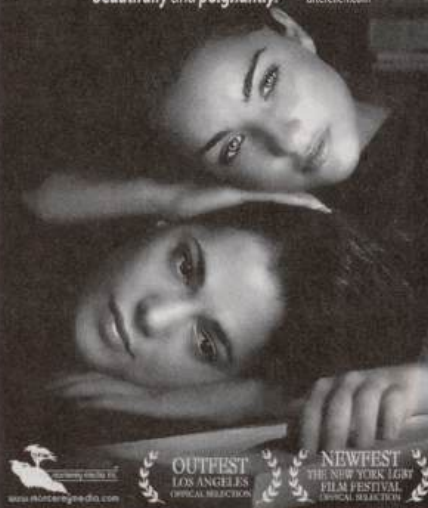
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HOME 'AT LAST'

An interview with the newly out Ann Hampton Callaway

On *At Last* (Telarc), Callaway just may get her wish "to help the world fall in love." Fueled by "the power of music," the "eclectic and very personal" selection of material on the album includes a reading of "Over the Rainbow" that reveals new tints in the oft-performed standard. There's an interesting Joni Mitchell connection to be found on the disc as well. Callaway covers "Comes Love," which Mitchell recorded on her *Both Sides Now* disc, and follows it with a genuinely original reading of Mitchell's "Carey." She also does a heartbreaking rendition of the Stevie Nicks/Fleetwood Mac gem "Landslide," and both Callaway originals "Save a Place for Me" and "Finding Beauty" fit perfectly with the other material. The album is especially significant in that its release is timed with Callaway's willingness to speak openly about being a member of the GLBT community. We spoke, fittingly enough, shortly before Valentine's Day.

Gregg Shapiro: I'm one of those people who devours liner notes...

Ann Hampton Callaway: Oh, you're a rarity. There are few of you left.



Ann Hampton Callaway

I know! And I love what you wrote in the CD booklet about how "good songs remind us that there is more to life than headlines." Was that one of the motivators in collecting these songs for this disc?

I think it's a way of me articulating the backdrop of the power of the adventure of love within a time that contains so much uncertainty. I think the importance of finding connection becomes even more urgent when you feel so uncertain about the world you're living in and what's going to happen the next moment. And having someone to share that adventure with becomes a heightened yearning and experience when you have this sense of impermanence inside your consciousness.

When we look at our lives, we're so information-obsessed. . . . There's so much data coming at us at all times, I think that the importance of songs now becomes even greater because we've become so in our heads that we . . . forget what it's like to disappear into a gorgeous world, which music seems to be able to create better than almost anything I know. Especially during the last eight years of a truly mind-boggling time, and the whole heightened political season of "who's going to be my next leader" and "what kind of country am I living in," I think I have been particularly anxious about things.

So having found a partner and being able to celebrate finding this partner through my music has been a joyous occasion. I want to spread the joy and I want to kindle that →

GrooveOut Shorts

Gregory Douglass
Battler



Inspiration for this Logo Click List favorite's seventh album came from HBO's *Six Feet Under*, lending it a palpable quirkiness and introspection. The powerful "Cathedral" and the darkly carnival-like "Day of the Battler" deserve a listen. March 3. Emote Records (gregorydouglass.com). —Review: Nancy Ford

Gene Dante
The Romantic Lead



Ziggy Stardust finds new life in this alt rock, sans visible glitter. Steady beats prevail, though lyrics like "My d--k is a song, not super long, but it pounds like a hammer," are not for the faint of musical heart. Omninox Entertainment (genedante.com). —Review: N.F.

Knox Bronson
The Seasons



The four tracks of this CD individually pay homage to summer (specifically, of '68), followed by fall, winter, and spring—presumably of the year of your choice—in this electro-tonal "symphony for the new century." Vivaldi, he's not. Tangerine Sky Interactive (theseasonscd.com). —Review: N.F.

Nat King Cole
Re: Generations



The King's songs live on in 21st-century technology via these immaculately produced re-do's featuring contemporary artists like Nas ("The Game of Love") and Will.i.am and daughter Natalie ("Straighten Up and Fly Right"). Capitol/EMI (emicap.com). —Review: N.F.

Various Artists

Forbidden Broadway Goes to Rehab



Writer/director Gerard Alessandrini has masterfully parodied top Broadway tunes in no less than 10 volumes now, with slaphappy take-offs on *Gypsy*, *Young Frankenstein*, and *Xanadu* rising to the top on this one. DRG Records (drgrecords.com). —Preview: N.F.

India.Arie

Testimony: Volume 2, Love & Politics



The soulful siren follows up her first *Testimony* volume, which concentrated on love and relationships, with this more serious step-up. Her "Chocolate High," the first breakout single, is joyously appropriate to begin the age of Obama. Universal Republic (india.arie.com). —Preview: N.F. →

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P.S. in the Heights

GrooveOut continued from page 74

hope in people—the beauty of music and what it can do, whether you're single or with someone or entertaining the thought of being with someone. . . .

Did the events of the 2008 election, including the passage of Prop. 8 in California, have any impact on your coming out, as it did with Wanda Sykes?

Yes! I was thinking about that today. You're the first person I'm talking to about this openly. I've always been a combination of a magnanimous personality—I love people, I love my audiences, I'm so interested in the world. But I'm also a very private person. I've been partnered with people who have been very private, so it's been an interesting climate throughout my life of those two different emotions and energies going on.

But I think the urgency of needing to elect a leader that was going to bring about the kind of change that was desperately needed—I started to get so much more outward with my friends and my community. For instance, being on Facebook and writing so openly about feelings. Trying to really connect with many people about these ideas and get more energy of a bigger and more powerful “us,” I think has been a part [of it]. I think turning 50 last May [2008] was another eye-opening, sobering [laughs]. . . .

Okay, here I am being an advocate of people being their true selves and fulfilling their greatest potential, and I'm always trying to nurture that in other people, and I looked philosophically at my own life and I realized that for me to own up to that wish for myself I had to be willing to step forward into the light and speak more candidly about my life and what I've learned. Politically, I'm a very political person. Being raised by a journalist [John Callaway], he fostered the idea of always seeing both sides of the picture. I'm a very passionate person and I do feel that, in our lifetime, that it's essential for us to fight for human rights.

There was a great, great victory to have Barack Obama elected as our president. But it was a huge disappointment to have Prop. 8. So I do feel that it's time for me to do my part. That's one of the reasons I'm stepping out.

I'm glad that you mentioned your father, because the coming-out process can be difficult at any age—did you get unconditional love and support from your family? I have it now. Because I'm not a black-and-white story—I've been very attracted to men. I've had a lot of relationships with men and I'm still attracted to men. But I don't fall in love with men. So because my parents →

GrooveOut Shorts continued from page 74

Kylie Minogue

Boombox: The Remix Album 2000–2008



Chemical Brothers, Fischerspoorn, and other top pop producers took turns churning out tunes for this collection of hits from the international dance icon. Oddly, the 2007 Greg Kurstin mix of her mega hit, “Can't Get You Out of My Head,” is only available via iTunes. Astralwerks Records (emi.com). —Review: N.F.

Willie Nelson
Naked Willy



Here, the enduring Red-Headed Stranger delivers tunes recorded between 1966 and 1970, this time with the major orchestration stripped away to reveal the uncomplicated, straight-ahead basic Willie. Purist heaven, for those who prefer their steak without the sauce. RCA/Legacy (legacyrecordings.com). —Review: N.F.

Rihanna

Good Girl Gone Bad: The Remixes



The self-explanatory title says it. Top dance producer/DJs like Tony Moran, Seamus Haji, and others redo the lovely Rihanna's scorching 2007 LP that brought us the multiple-Grammy'd hit, “Umbrella,” and more. Def Jam (rihannanow.com). —Preview: N.F.

Various Artists

Rodgers & Hammerstein's Allegro



Collectors will appreciate this 1947 piece by musical theater's most venerated legends. Considered one of Broadway's first “experimental” shows, it gets a second chance with a newly recorded reproduction featuring heavy-hitters Liz Callaway, Nathan Gunn, Audra McDonald, and others. Sony Masterworks (sonymasterworks.com). —Preview: N.F.

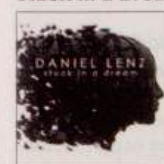
Gavin Castleton
Home



This eclectic composer deals with severe heartbreak with this 14-song narrative that begins with falling blissfully in love and ends with zombies. Rhythmically imbalanced and disturbing, yet oddly irresistible, especially “The Human Torch.” Five One Records (gavincastleton.com). —Review: N.F.

Daniel Lenz

Stuck in a Dream



Hard-driving electronica mixes with a taste of rock ‘n’ roll and hip-hop to make for a heady blend on Lenz's first solo album that smacks (no pun intended) a bit of Prodigy. “Push the Tempo” is especially anarchic. March 5. Psykoked Music (daniellenz.com). —Review: N.F. ■

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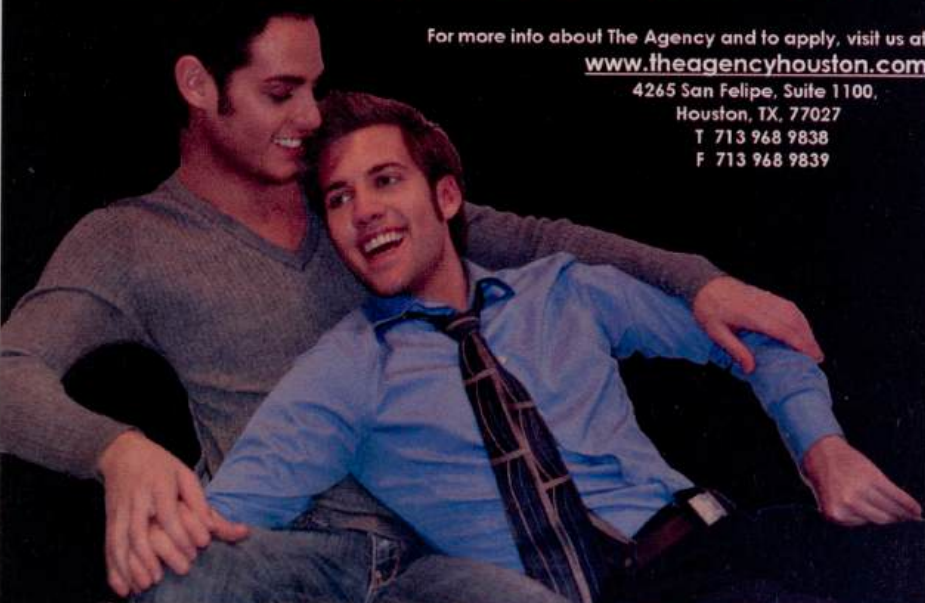
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GrooveOut continued from page 76

understood that about me, I think they always entertained the thought that maybe the right man would come along. Eventually, I think they realized [laughs] that their daughter was who their daughter was. I'm very grateful that whatever difficulties they had with it, they got through it all. I have an extremely supportive and loving family. I've been out to my friends and so many of my professional cohorts for years. . . .

Harvey Fierstein has been a great mentor and a part of my life. [Sir] Ian McKellan took me aside at a BBC interview years ago in London and told me how profound his coming out was to his creative life. And that haunted me for years. I remember afterward taking a long walk by the Thames and thinking about how much I yearned for that complete freedom to be who I am. I was with a partner at the time who was forbidding me from coming out. That put a big restraint on my own instincts and I kept with that lifestyle for a while because of her. I am now looking forward to seeing Ian McKellan's words come to life as I break out of whatever threads of webbing that I have hidden behind.

How much did the inclusion of "Over the Rainbow," the unofficial gay national anthem, have to do with this disc being released at the time of your coming out? I think it's a subliminal message for me. I didn't consciously think, "I want a gay anthem on my CD," but in hindsight it's perfectly poetic that it turns out to be that I needed to sing this song. I felt such a reluctance to sing a song that had been so identified with Judy Garland. Being friends with Liza Minnelli, I've always tip-toed around that song. But when I finally dared to sing it on the centennial of Harold Arlen, I felt so much emotion.

And seeing Judy Garland, as a young girl, my first movie musical, I was completely mesmerized by her performance of that song. . . . I feel that that song, almost more than anything else that I sing, expresses a life of deep yearning for a place that is a safe place to be myself. . . .

You've mentioned your partner Kari a number of times and the album is dedicated to her. How long have you and Kari been together?

We're going to celebrate our two-year anniversary in a few days.

For the complete interview with Callaway, go to www.outsmartmagazine.com.

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

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STORM STORIES

In 'Nine Lives,' author Dan Baum reveals the survivalist spirit of New Orleans residents

It happens every time: you're busy, in a hurry, and somebody starts blah-blah-blahing, making a long story longer. You wonder if he'll ever get to the point. Maybe you even say that: get to the point.

Everyone has a story.

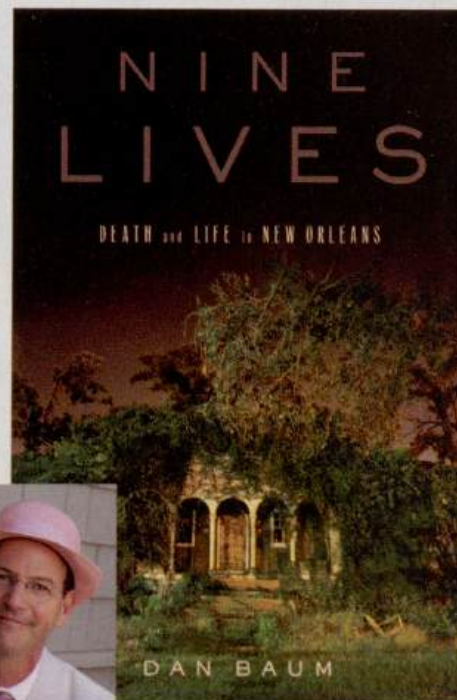
In the new book, *Nine Lives: Death and Life in New Orleans* by Dan Baum (Spiegel & Grau), you'll read about nine people from the Crescent City: stories, bracketed by storms.

In 1965, Ronald Lewis found something more powerful than Mama: Hurricane Betsy. Betsy went through the Lower Ninth Ward like a hot spoon through a snow-cone. Still, the neighborhood couldn't be kept down by a storm, could it?

All his life, Anthony Wells heard about New Orleans, but it seemed that life took him everywhere but there. He was in Vietnam, Los Angeles, and later, he was bused to Tennessee.

John Guidos hid his secret from everyone, because he knew what they'd say: women's clothes are for women. But inside his mind, John was a woman, believing he was alone in his feelings. By the time John became JoAnn, he knew otherwise.

For her first years of marriage, Joyce Montana slept restlessly before Mardi Gras. Tootie, her husband, was an Indian, meaning he would likely come home bloodied. But



Author Dan Baum

Tootie knew there was another way to fight: with splendor.

Billy Grace's father wasn't Uptown, so it was a surprise when Billy was enfolded into Society. Still, Billy wondered if he'd ever be fully accepted.

All Tim Bruneau dreamed of was being a cop. But it took an accident—and a storm—to show Tim what life was like for the people he arrested.

When gynecologist Frank Minyard wanted to help his city, he ran for office of

coroner. His new job meant he would be in charge of New Orleans' dead, no matter how they expired.

Jazz jangled Wilbert Rawlins Jr.'s bones, right alongside responsibility. Wilbert was passing that legacy to his band kids. He was the only family some of them had, and no storm would keep him from that.

All Belinda Carr ever wanted was to leave New Orleans because she came up hard. When she married Wilbert Rawlins Jr., she hoped life would be different. It took a storm to see the preciousness of what she had.

Can I say now that I loved this book?

Nine Lives reads like a novel: it sucks you in with the first page, moving you along with short-short chapters, swaddling you in little dramas, making you gasp every now and then.

But it's not a novel. It's all true.

I loved how author Dan Baum unfolds each of his subjects' stories, telling most of them at a just-right pace, allowing one of them to blurt his own tale. I loved the brutal honesty between the pages, I loved the uniquely "New Orleans" feel I got when I was reading. I just plain loved this book.

When you're ready for a good set of stories, don't miss this one. *Nine Lives* is a book you should make a point to get.

Terri Schlichenmeyer works with over 250 newspapers and magazines around North America and is the treasurer for her local PFLAG organization. She lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 11,000 books.

ReadOut Shorts

Milk: A Pictorial History of Harvey Milk
Foreword by Armistead Maupin
Newmarket Press (newmarketpress.com)

This new book celebrates Harvey Milk's life and legacy in archival photos (120 in all), many rarely seen before, and in the words of those who knew him best. Extracted from interviews conducted by screenwriter Dustin Lance Black while researching his screenplay for the film *Milk*, this unique volume includes an introduction by Black, a foreword by Armistead Maupin, and a special section on the making of the movie. —Preview: Troy Carrington

Pink!
Lynne Rickards
Illustrations by Margaret Chamberlain
Chicken House (scholastic.com)

Patrick the Penguin wakes up and discovers he has turned pink. Feeling that neither boys nor penguins can be pink, Patrick runs away to Africa to be with the flamingos. Realizing that he is safer and happier at home, he returns to a warm welcome by all. Beautifully illustrated, this is a new classic in children's "be who you are" stories. Ages 4-8. —Review: Angel Curtis

Mucho Mojo and Savage Season
Joe R. Lansdale
Vintage Books (randomhouse.com)

Hap is a good ole East Texas boy. Leonard is an African-American drag queen. Lansdale turns this unlikely pairing into one of the best mystery series around. Great storytelling and hilarious situations make Hap and Leonard a perpetual favorite of mystery readers. For those of you who came to this series late, the first two books in this series have finally been reissued. For those who →



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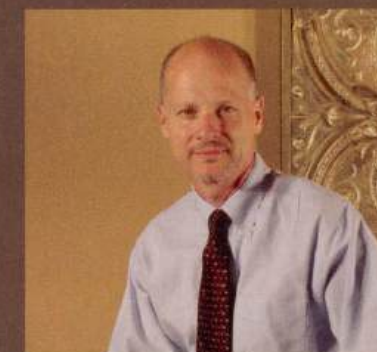
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ReadOut Shorts

continued from page 80

don't know this series, lucky you: you can start at the beginning. Kudos to Vintage Books for reissuing these classics. —Review: A.C.

Attack of the Theater People

Marc Acito

Broadway Books (broadwaybooks.com)

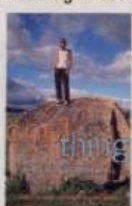


The Houston connection in this zany, quip-filled romp set in New York City in 1986 is a transplanted “Gaysian” named Hung Manh who dresses in a copy of the outfit Marlo Thomas wore in the opening credits of her TV series, *That Girl* ('65-'71). Laced with references to beloved Broadway musicals, this is “that” kind of book. —Review: Donalevan Maines

Cool Thing: The Best New Gay Fiction from Young American Writers

Blair Mastbaum, Will Fabro, Editors

Running Press (runningpress.com)



The 18 stories in this anthology are meant to give us a glimpse into the lives of 20-something gay men. Decades after so much gay fiction ended in despair and suicide, this collection depicts young gay life to be all about drugs, sex workers, and other delusions. This is progress? The writing isn't bad, exactly, but much of it smacks of trying too hard to be edgy and ends up merely sensational. —Review: Neil Ellis Orts

Men to Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity

Gary Cross

Columbia University Press (http://cup.columbia.edu)



A Penn State professor asks “Where have all the men gone?” in this look at the rise of “basement boys,” who’ve shunned marriage, work, and family to move back in with their parents. Interesting that as a child, the author’s single mom was a bohemian painter of abstracts. “We had two fellow art teachers over for holiday dinners,” he writes. “They were the Two Kens to us kids, though later I learned they were gay partners.” —Review: D.M.

The Decade of Blind Dates

Richard Alter

iUniverse, Inc. (iuniverse.com)



“Hope springs eternal” for lovelorn Peter Bauman, 45, a New England painter who admits he’s “no prime rib on the gay meat rack.” His plunge into personal ads, hoping that each rendezvous will yield the perfect partner, gives readers who have the patience for this sort of thing the opportunity to prove another adage, that “misery loves company.” —Review: D.M. ■

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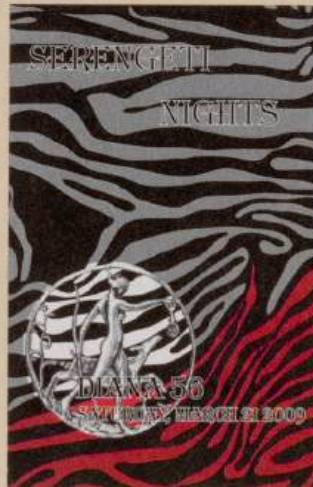
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Calendar of Events

Compiled by Sheri Taylor Bockelman

'Serengeti Nights' at the Houston Zoo



Zebras and wildebeests and gazelles—oh my! members of the Diana Foundation join the more than 4,500 non-human residents of the Houston Zoo (r) for their 56th annual awards celebration.



The Diana Foundation, Houston's oldest gay social organization, presents its 56th annual Diana Awards on Saturday night, March 21, from 7 to 11 p.m.

The black-tie evening, entitled "Serengeti Nights," takes place on the grounds of the Houston Zoo. Activities include a silent auction, a social hour, mingling with zoo animals, dinner, the awards presentation, a sea lion show, and dancing under the stars. During the awards presentation, the foundation unveils its new Diana statuette.

Tickets for this event are \$150 each and may be reserved by calling 713/639-2000. The charity beneficiaries of the evening are the Pet Patrol and Bering Omega Community Services. —Brandon Wolf

MARCH

PERFORMING ARTS

The 10th Muse: Opera for the Equinox is a fusion of opera, poetry, and contemporary dance. Presented by Divergence Vocal Theater in celebration of the spring equinox. March 20–22 at Barnevelter Movement/Arts Complex, 2201 Preston St. Tickets (\$20–\$40): divergencevocaltheater.org.

Amadeus. Antonio Salieri maintains his societal stature in 18th-century Vienna through double-talk and whispering campaigns. When Wolfgang "Amadeus" Mozart appears, Salieri mounts a battle against God to ensure his defeat. Through Mar. 7 at The Country Playhouse, 12802 Queensbury Lane. Tickets (\$20): 713/467-4497 or countryplayhouse.org.

Grandpa Hasn't Moved in Days. The Fertle family and all of Dumpster are drawn together by Ned's funeral, but the occasion proves to be anything but solemn. \$22. Through May 9. Radio Music Theatre, 2623 Colquitt. Info: 713/522-7722 or radiomusictheatre.com.

INFO NEEDED FOR YOUR EVENT LISTING:

a few lines of info about your event; date/time; cost; location/address; organization name; and two phone numbers—one for OutSmart to reach you for questions and one for OutSmart readers to get more info on your event. E-MAIL INFO TO: calendar@outsmartmagazine.com. MAIL INFO TO: OutSmart Magazine, 3406 Audubon Place, Houston, TX 77006. FAX INFO TO: 713/522-3275.

NO LISTINGS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE DEADLINE DATE—5 P.M., MONDAY, MARCH 9.

How to Absorb the Colorama Format from Jennifer Wood, artistic director and founder of Suchu Dance, features a cast of 10 performers in the round in a literal sense. March 5–14 at the Barnevelter Movement/Arts Complex, 2201 Preston St. Tickets (\$14–\$18): suchudance.org or 713/529-1819.

Houston Symphony's second annual classical music festival, *The Bach vs. Vivaldi Experience*, offers classical music programming from Johann Sebastian Bach and Antonio Vivaldi. Mar. 27 & 28 at Houston Baptist University's Joella and Stewart Morris Cultural Arts Center, 7502 Fondren. Tickets: \$12–\$35. Info: houston-symphony.org or 713/224-7575.

Les Misérables, presented by TUTS. Award-winning 19th-century France musical of a convict trying to start over, the relentless inspector who won't let him, and a single mother forced into prostitution to provide for her daughter. \$32–\$80. Mar. 24–Apr. 5. Hobby Center for Performing Arts, 800 Bagby. Info: www.tuts.com or 713/558-8887.

The Man Who Came to Dinner. An eccentric, boisterous celebrity monopolizes the Stanley family when an untimely accident causes him to take up residence in their living room. Through Mar. 22. Hubbard Stage, The Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. Info: alleytheatre.org or 713/220-5700.

Marie is a world premiere by Stanton Welch presented by Houston Ballet. Fascinating tale of Marie Antoinette, as the spirited child bride to King Louis XVI until she died by guillotine in the French Revolution. Tickets start at \$28. Through Mar. 8. Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Avenue at Smith St. Info: houstonballet.org or 713/227-2787.

Nursery School Musical. Second City meets *South Park* in this musical satire on kids, their parents, and the first day of school. NOT for children. Through Mar. 21 at Theater LaB, 1706 Alamo. Tickets (\$25): theaterlabhouston.com or 713/868-7516.

The Orphans is a poignant and humorous look at two eccentric

and extremely wealthy sisters who have not left their hotel room in 25 years. \$13–\$15. Through Mar. 14. Theatre Southwest, 8944-A Clarkcrest. Info: theatresouthwest.org or 713/661-9505.

The Pie Dialogues. Dawn and Sean survive as parents and individuals, bonded by daughter, Pie, who journeys from toddlerhood to womanhood. \$20–\$36. Through Mar. 22. Main Street Theater-Rice Village, 2540 Times Blvd. Info: mainstreettheater.com or 713/524-6706.

PERFORMING ARTS

For Young People

The Reluctant Dragon. A boy tries to save a lonely, harmless dragon from fearful simple-minded villagers who hired a fierce knight to slay him. \$12 Adult, \$10 Child/Senior. Mar. 21–Apr. 4. Main Street Theater-Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose Blvd. Info: www.mainstreettheater.com or 713/524-6706.

Unchain My Heart is the story of Kian Long, the slave and lifelong companion of Jane Long, one of the first white women to settle in Texas. \$8. Mar. 7 at 2 pm at Express Children's Theatre, 446 Northwest Mall. Info: 713/682-5044 or express-theatre.com.

RADIO

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

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

Reach Out in the Darkness. Houston's only transgender radio host and her partner present selected music from the '60s, played like it was in the '60s, exclusively from vinyl

pressings. Every Wednesday morning, 3–6 am, KPFT Pacifica radio (90.1 FM).

ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

The Art of Charity: The Creative Genius of Arthur Szyk. Gregg Philipson, Austin resident and a collector of political cartoons from the World War II era, discusses the significance of Szyk's work. Szyk, a Polish political cartoonist and propagandist, portrayed the Jewish people not as victims but as strong, patriotic, and heroic. Reception Mar. 5 at 6 pm (Philipson speaks 7–8 pm). Holocaust Museum's Morgan Family Center, 5401 Caroline. Admission is free. A *One-Man Army: The Art of Arthur Szyk* on view through July 26. Info: 713/942-8000 or hnh.org.

The Birth of Christianity: A Jewish Story explores the relationship between these two religions. \$12.50–\$18. Through Apr. 12. The Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Dr. Info: hmns.org or 713/639-4629.

Creating Space City USA. See the evolution of NASA, from the construction of the Johnson Space Center in 1962, and the city of Houston's role in the space program. Free. Through Apr. 26. The Heritage Society Museum, 1100 Bagby, Sam Houston Park. Info: heritagesociety.org or 713/655-1912.

Electric Mud explores visual art that blurs the boundaries between clay, traditionally used for its functionality, and paint, conventionally used for aesthetics. Through Mar. 29 at Blaffer Gallery (Fine Arts Bldg. on U of H's central campus, entrance 16 off Cullen Blvd.). Info: 713/743-9530 or blaffergallery.org.

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

Honey Harrison—Elusive. The local artist has a series of digital images manipulated on the computer or on the drawing board with ink, acrylic paint, or colored pencil. Mar. 6–31 (opening reception 6–9 pm, Mar. 6) at Canal Street Gallery, 2219 Canal Street. Info: canalstreetgallery.com or 713/223-2219.

Hot Glass and Environments. *Hot Glass, Cool Collections* offers a glimpse inside 12 of Houston's best private glass collections. Large Gallery. *Environments = Form + Space* features imaginative installations by three glass artists who present new and expansive ways to define the discipline of glass. Small Gallery. Through Mar. 15. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, 4848 Main St. Info: craft-houston.org.

Inspiration in Education highlights artists from Texas' top ceramic departments, which includes 19 artists from 20 educational institutions. Mar. 7–29 at 18 Hands Gallery, 249B W. 19th. Opening reception: Mar. 7, 6–9 pm. Info: 18handsgallery.com or 713/869-3099.

Pioneers of Contemporary Glass is 300 pieces of exemplary glass works. Mar. 7–July 26. Caroline Weiss Law and Audrey Jones Beck buildings of the Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. Info: mfah.org or 713/639-7300, Spanish: 713/639-7379.

The Puppet Show. marionette art. A variety of media that explores the imagery of puppets. Through Apr. 12. Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose Blvd. Info: camh.org or 713/284-8250.

Repository. Following surgery for cervical cancer, photographer Sarah Sudhoff began investigating the effects of the illness, resulting in a series of photos and videos that presents an account of the artist and her illness. Mar. 6–Apr. 17. Main Gallery, Art League Houston, 1953 Montrose. Opening reception Mar. 6, 6–8 pm (artist talk at 6:15). Info: artleaguehouston.org or info@artleaguehouston.org.

The Rites of Spring. Miguel Correll's ceramics celebrate spring's joy; Lois Morton creates mixed-media collages with natural motifs. Jonatan Lopez's metal sculptures reflect love in nature's realm. The Green House Gallery promotes eco-friendly themes and using recyclables in artwork. Through Mar. 31. The Green House Gallery, 716 W. Alabama. Info: greenhouseartgallery.com or 713/535-6462.

Yigal Ozeri. The Israeli native presents large and moderately scaled, hyper-realistic portraits. The striking images of young women are often first mistaken for photography. Through Mar. 28 at Wade Wilson Art, 4411 Montrose Blvd., ste. 200. More info: wadewilsonart.com or 713/521-2977.

DAILY

Daily (Mon.–Fri.)

HIV Testing. HCHD Thomas Street Clinic is offering HIV testing free to the public, 9 am–1 pm. There is no need to establish eligibility ("gold-card"), no donation will be asked of the person seeking testing, and the test is free. Thomas Street Clinic, 2015 Thomas, 713/873-4157 or 713/873-4026.

Daily (Sun.–Fri.)

HIV Testing. Legacy Community Health Services offers free

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LookOut

by Nancy Ford

DRIVE, HE SAID. The enthusiasts of the Classic Chassis Car Club of Houston are celebrating 20 years of events at members' homes, dining excursions, and cruises through Houston and surrounding areas. The group meets the first Wednesday of each month—this month, **March 4**—at 7 p.m. at Hollywood Vietnamese & Chinese Café, 2409 Montrose Blvd. Details: cccc-houston.org.

MORE THAN 15 MINUTES. Vaughan Christopher Gallery hosts *Midnight in the Garden of Warhol and Haring*, featuring works by Keith Haring and a series of 10 hand-colored flowers by Andy Warhol. Opening night cocktail reception is **March 5**, 6–8 p.m.; the exhibition runs through mid-April. 1217 S. Shepherd Dr. Details: vaughanchristopher.com • 713/533-0816.



The cast of *Five Flights*

BIRDS AND MORE. Unhinged Productions presents Adam Bock's *Five Flights*, which focuses on an inherited aviary and the issues of religious conviction, fear of commitment, and the way Russian ballet resembles a hockey game. Roy Hamlin directs. **March 6–28**, 8 p.m. Freneticore, 5102 Navigation Blvd. Tickets: \$10–\$20. Details: 281/781-7035 • u-p.org.

CHARITY BALL. The women of AssistHers host the group's 4th annual softball tournament, to which spectators are urged to bring whatever makes them comfortable for a full day of fun in the park (except glass). An awards ceremony follows the final championship game. **March 7**, with no "rain out" date. Memorial Park, fields 4 and 5. Details: assisthers.org.

BEYOND MUSICAL BORDERS. The Houston Pride Band presents its winter concert, *The Best of All Possible Worlds*, featuring Russian royal music, Australian folk songs, selections from the Middle East and Brazil, and a special performance from Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*. Come for the music, stay for the silent auction. **March 7**, 7 p.m. Resurrection MCC, 2025 W. 11th St. Benefits Lesbian Health Initiative-Houston and AIDS Foundation Houston. Tickets: \$10. Details: houstonprideband.org.

HAPPY WORLD WIDE WOMEN'S DAY. Dancepatheatre presents *Caution: Women at Work* at its International Women's Day Soiree, featuring a wine reception, dinner, and silent auction. The performance segment includes guest poet/spoken-word artist Donna Garrett accompanied by dancers Lindsey McGill and Catalina Molinari performing the choreography of Sara Draper. **March 8**, 7:30 p.m. Barnevelder Movement/Arts Complex, 2201 Preston. Tickets: \$45. Details: 713/522-6000 • dancepath.com.

READ ON. Local out playwright Eric James is the initial featured author in a series of readings presented by Wordsmyth Theatre. James' *Stop, Traveler* examines what happens when a gay man returns to his estranged family in the Midwest after a 10-year absence. The series continues the second Monday of April and May with two more authors. **March 9**, 7 p.m. Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Parkway. Details: stagestheatre.com.

20 YEARS OF GREEN. Montrose Counseling Center's annual fundraiser celebrating all things Irish, *Bringing in The Green*, turns 20 this year. "The event is a favorite of MCC's supporters, a long-held tradition in Houston's GLBT communities, and one of our most successful fundraisers," organizers say. John Danielson, the event's underwriter, hosts the party at his home. **March 13**. Tickets: \$50. Details/RSVP: 713/529-0037 • montrosecounselingcenter.org.

MUSE MUSIC. Filmmaker Dee Mosbacher's *Radical Harmonies* tells the story of the women's music movement through word and—guess what?—song, featuring trailblazers from Ronnie Gilbert to Ani DiFranco. **March 22**, 10:45 a.m. The Women's Group, First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin. Details: 713/529-8571 • HoustonWomensGroup.com/.

DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY (OF SORTS). The Montrose Softball league kicks off its 30th anniversary **March 22**, 8 a.m., at Slo Pitch City, 1826 Gault Rd. Opening ceremonies start at noon. Next month, league players present Pranksters and Pumps, a charitable drag show and

party benefiting AIDS Foundation Houston's Camp Hope, Bering Omega Community Services, and Legacy Community Health Services, on **April 4**, 7 p.m., at Rich's. Details: montrosesoftballleague.com.

SWEET DANCE AT JONES HALL. Choreographer Alvin Ailey has come a long way since his birth in Rogers, Texas, in 1931. As part of a 50-city global tour, his renowned dance company again proves its beauty, power, passion, and artistry with *Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at 50—A Golden Anniversary Celebration*. Includes Hope Boykin's "Go in Grace," a collaboration with the female cappella musical group Sweet Honey In The Rock. Presented by Society for the Performing Arts. **March 27–28**, 8 p.m., with a **March 29** matinee at 2 p.m. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St. Tickets: \$20–\$60. Details: spahouston.org • 713/632-8113.

THREE'S A CHARM. The Imperial Court of Houston presents the Mr., Miss, and Ms. Montrose Pageant, with categories for 1) men presenting as men, 2) men presenting as women, and 3) women presenting as women. **March 28**, 8 p.m., at E/J's, 2517 Ralph St. Details: spacecityempire.org.

HEADS UP! The Kindred Spirits 2009 Charity Golf Tournament & Dinner does not permanently replace the group's traditional spring celebration, organizers promise: the 2009 reunion dance is scheduled for August, with date and location to be announced. Meanwhile, the golf tournament, with its accompanying barbecue awards dinner and silent auction, benefits AssistHers, Bering Support Network, Houston Buyers Club, and Lesbian Health Initiative. **April 25**, 1:30 p.m., at Bear Creek Masters Golf Course, 16001 Clay Road. Details: kindredspirithouston.org. ■



Alvin Ailey Dance Company

confidential rapid HIV testing using the OraQuick-Advance collection method with results available within 20 minutes at the following community-based locations. • **MONDAYS:** All Star News and Video Emporium, 3415 Katy Frwy & Studewood, 4–8pm; GEORGE SPORTS BAR, 617 Fairview, 6–10pm. • **TUESDAYS:** 611 HYDE PARK PUB, 611 Hyde Park, 4–8pm; MIDTOWN SPA, 3100 Fannin, 4–8pm. • **WEDNESDAYS:** Club Houston, 2205 Fannin, 8pm–12am; E/J's, 2517 Ralph, 10pm–1am. • **FRIDAYS:** MIDTOWN SPA, 3100 Fannin, 5–9pm; E/J's, 2517 Ralph, Fri. 10pm–1am. • A complete listing of locations is also available by calling 713/830-3070. Free confidential syphilis testing is also offered. HIV & syphilis testing is offered at the main clinic located at 215 Westheimer, Mon.–Thurs. 11am–7pm and Fri. 11am–5pm.

Daily (Sun.–Fri.)

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

Weekly (Mondays)

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

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

Weekly (Tuesdays)

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

Weekly (Thursdays)

Depression & Bipolar Support Group. Don't let depression or bipolar disorder dig its claws into what little hope you've managed to hide from the shadows. Bering Support Network can help. You can benefit from the experience of others. GLBT friendly. Free. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold, Room 232, 7:15–8:30 pm. Info: 713/526-1018.

Weekly (Sun., Wed., Sat.)

Love and Rackets. Tennis players and enthusiasts of all levels are invited to join the Houston Tennis Club at Memorial Park tennis center. Sundays 9 am–noon, Wednesdays 7:30–9 pm, and offers clinics every Saturday 9–10:30 am. There are also social activities throughout the year. Annual membership \$30, court fees \$3 per session. More info: houstontennisclub.org.

Biweekly (2nd & 4th Wed.)

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

Biweekly (2nd & 4th Fri.)

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

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

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

Monthly (2nd Tues.)

Free Legal Consultations for Anyone with HIV/AIDS. AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc. (AFH, www.aidsfho.org) and Katine & Nechman L.L.P. have partnered to provide 30 minutes of free legal consultation on any legal issue to anyone with HIV. If any action is recommended, an attorney will take steps when applicable or make referrals to appropriate legal aid offices. Consultations are held at the offices of Katine & Nechman, located at 1111 North Loop West, Suite 180. To schedule an appointment, clients should call the law office at 713/808-1000 or use the contact box on the firm's website (which has more info on the consultations): lawkn.com.

Monthly (1st Fri.)

TG Social. The Friday Night Transgender Social is a special, once-a-month event hosted by the TG Center for the Houston-area

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Art in the Park

Spring is in the air, and so is a whiff of oil paint. More than 300 local and international artists representing 19 different media formats are converging once again for the Bayou City Art Festival Memorial Park.

The weekend-long outdoor festival showcases clay, drawing/pastel, fiber/textiles, furniture, glass, leather, metal, mixed media, painting, photography, print-making, sculpture, watercolor, wood creations—and jewelry.

One of the festival's featured artists, Diane Marshall, is a jewelry maker who creates her art with stamped text, found objects, and antique photos with attention to conservation. In fact, her entire booth is recycled. "I'm migratory, and have a portable workbench that I travel with," Marshall, an out lesbian, says. "I follow the sun and good weather."



Diane Marshall and her recycled art.

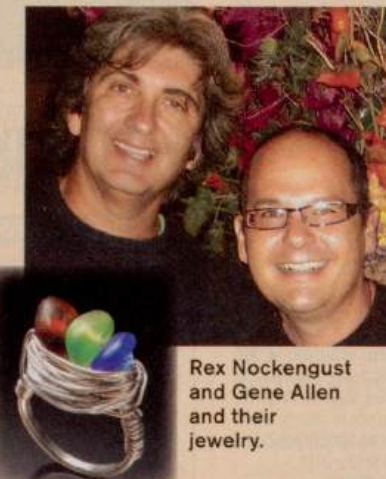
Gene Allen and Rex Nockengust, a couple for almost 19 years, are also jewelry makers. Actors and singers who traveled the U.S. and the world with the *Golden Musicals of Broadway*, the San

Diego-based couple brings their eclectic "Beach Glass Bingo" to this year's BCAF.

The Art Colony Association

produces the Bayou City Art Festival Memorial Park and its autumn counterpart, the Bayou City Art Festival Downtown, raising more than \$2.5 million in its 38 years for local nonprofit organizations. Tickets: \$10; children 12 and under admitted free. March 27-29, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. in Memorial Park.

Details: bayoucityartfestival.com • 713/521-0133. —Nancy Ford



Rex Nockengust and Gene Allen and their jewelry.

transgender community, supporters, family members, friends, community providers, and significant others. Each themed social consists of a dinner, movie, games, and/or presentation. 7-10 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. \$5. More info: 713/520-8586 or www.transhouston.com.

Monthly (2nd Sat.)

Second Saturdays at Winter St. Studios. It's open-door policy at Winter St. Studios every second Saturday of the month. This is a great way to meet and hang with the varied artists working in many different media and styles in their studios. Participating artists have a large red dot on or near the door of their studio. All are welcome between 1 and 6 pm. Winter St. Studios, 2101 Winter St. More info: 713/862-0082 or winterstreetstudios.net.

Monthly (4th Sat.)

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

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

March 3 (Tues.)

Iraq and Beyond: The Real Story. Journalist Dahr Jamail discusses all aspects of the war and its human rights implications. Free. Seating limited; first-come, first-serve. 7 pm. Rothko Chapel, 1409 Sul Ross. Info: rothkochapel.org or 713/524-9839.

March 4 (Wed.)

Da Camera's A Little Day Music. University of Houston's Moores School Jazz Orchestra performs. Free. Noon. Grand Foyer, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. Info: dacamera.com or 713/524-5050.

March 5, 12, 19, 25, Apr. 2 (Thurs.)

Lenten Recital Series. The St. Paul's Chamber Music Society's

annual series presents Madrigal Singers of the Houston High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (HSPVA) Mar. 5, U of H Moores School Concert Women's Chorus Mar. 12, pianist Robert Brownlee Mar. 19, pianist Giovanni Antipolo Mar. 25, harpist Betsy Brownlee Apr. 2, all at 12:15 pm in the St. Paul's United Methodist Church sanctuary, 5501 Main St. Info: stpaulshouston.org.

March 6 (Fri.)

Joe Goode's Wonderboy, a riveting collaboration with puppeteer extraordinaire Basil Twist. Also: *Maverick Strain*, which parodies Arthur Miller's *The Misfits*. 8 pm. Cullen Theatre, Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave. Info: spahouston.org or 713/227-45PA. (See interview with Goode on page 65.)

March 6, 13, 20, 27, & 28 (Fri. & Sat.)

ComedySportz's first annual ComedySportz March Madness improv comedy tournament. The tournament divides the ComedySportz ensemble into eight teams that compete in a two-week elimination competition. Begins Friday the 6th, and runs every Friday in March with the final match on Sat., Mar. 28. Kickoff is 8 pm at the ComedySportz Arena, 901 Town & Country Blvd. \$16. Info/reservations: 713/868-1444.

March 7 (Sat.)

Casseroles and Cocktails. Aurora House Party is rockin' to the 1950s! Memory-jogging media clips, period cocktails and hors-d'oeuvres, and a hula-hoop performance in a ranch-style home. \$50-\$60. 7-10 pm. Info: aurorapictureshow.org or 713/868-2101.

March 7 & April 4 (Sat.)

Texas Renaissance Wedding Tours. View five wedding venues and receive info about three wedding packages. Commitment ceremonies are offered. 9:45 am at the Texas Renaissance Festival main office, 21778 FM 1774 Plantersville, TX. To reserve a spot for the tour or for more info: 1-800-458-3435, weddings@texrenfest.com, or texrenfest.com. Tours also held Saturdays on May 2, June 6, July 11, Aug. 1, Sept. 12, and Oct. 3.

March 9 (Mon.)

Richard Price, bestselling author of *Lush Life*, is guest speak-

er at the Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series. 7:30 pm at the Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. More: inprintheatre.org.

March 10 (Tues.)

Wrestling with the Angels: Assisting People through Times of Spiritual Struggle is the topic of the second John E. Fellers Symposium presented by the Institute for Spirituality and Health. Noon-3 pm in Fondren Hall of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St. \$25 fee includes lunch. To register: Events section of ish-tmc.org or call 713/797-0600.

March 12 (Thurs.)

An Evening with Author Stephanie Elizondo Griest, who reads from her latest novel, *Mexican Enough*, which chronicles her journey from the narco-infested border town of Nuevo Laredo to the highlands of Chiapas. Among many other activities, she investigates the murder of a prominent gay activist. 7 pm. Central Library, 500 McKinney. Free. Details: houstonlibrary.org or 832-393-1313.

March 12-14 (Thurs.-Sat.)

Young Texas Artists Music Competition's 25th anniversary begins with preliminary rounds, free to the public. Thurs.-Sat. afternoon. Entergy Finalists Concert & Awards program, \$22. Sat., Mar. 14, 7:30 pm. Crichton Theatre, 234 N. Main Street, Conroe. Info: crichtontheatre.org or 936-441-SHOW (7469).

March 14 (Sat.)

Ars Lyrica's A Musical Pleasure Garden. With songs and sonatas of Handel, Arne, William Shield, and their contemporaries, the afternoon showcases the best of early music by Houston's premiere early music ensemble. Led by out artistic director Matthew Dirst, the Ars Lyrica musicians are joined by singers from U of H's Moores School of Music, Museum of Fine Arts' Bayou Bend. 4 pm. Details/tickets (\$10): arslyricahouston.org or 713/622-7443.

Red Hot! celebrates the closing weekend of the exhibition, *Hot Glass, Cool Collections*. Glass demos, hot 'n' spicy entertainment, a mojito bar, bites by Ruggles Green, "soular" grooves by DJ Sun, more. 8-11 pm at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, 4848 Main. \$40 by Mar. 11; \$50 afterward and at door. Details/reservations: craft-houston.org or 713/529-4848 x201.

March 14-22 (Sat.-Sun.)

Houston Arboretum's Spring Native Plant Sale features hard-to-find native plants, including grasses, vines, trees, and shrubs. 9 am-4 pm daily. Houston Arboretum, 4501 Woodway. Members Only Sale: March 14, 9 am-noon (sale opens to public at noon). More info: 713/681-8433 or houstonarboretum.org.

March 15 (Sun.)

20th Annual AIDS Walk. This fun, non-competitive 5k pledge walk is open to the public. No registration fee is charged, and incentive prizes are available for \$125, \$250, \$500, and \$1,000 fundraising levels. Corporate, community, social, and school walk team participation is encouraged. Register online at AIDSWalkHouston.org or by calling 713/403-WALK (9255).

Video Salon: Purple Hearts—Back from Iraq. Documentary photographer Nina Berman shows a short video of her acclaimed, poignant images of wounded U.S. soldiers. 1 pm. Free. Aurora Video Library, 1524 Sul Ross. Info: aurorapictureshow.org or 713/868-2101.

March 17 (Tues.)

Todd Haynes and Richard Linklater. SXSW (South by

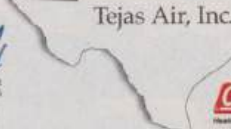
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Southwest) hosts a rare discussion between the two artists as they discuss their influences, inspirations, innate sensitivity to actors, and working methods, both within and outside the system. 1-2 pm at the South by Southwest (SXSW) Film Conference & Festival (Mar. 13-21), Austin, Texas. Info: sxsw.com/film.

March 20 (Fri.)

Katy Perry. The "I Kissed a Girl" and "Ur So Gay" girl stops in Houston during her world tour. \$18-\$20. 8 pm at House of Blues, 1204 Caroline. Tickets/info: hob.com or 888/402-583.

The Power of Baroque. An evening of music exploring the similarities and differences between Baroque and contemporary music along with discussion on the topic. Harpsichordist Matthew Dirst, out associate professor of music at U of H and artistic director of Ars Lyrica Houston, and mezzo soprano Sonja Bruzauskas engage the instrument and the audience. 7 pm. Rothko Chapel, 1409 Sul Ross. Info: 713/524-9839 or rothkochapel.org.

Baroque Meditation. Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri* leads off an intimate evening of German vocal works featuring Canadian singing group Les Voix Baroques. \$20-\$47. Pre-concert lecture, 7:15 pm; concert, 8 pm. Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave. Info: mercurybaroque.org or 832/251-0706.

March 21 (Sat.)

Jazz trumpeter Roy Hargrove, joined by an acoustic quintet, performs selections from his newest CD *Earfood*. \$30-\$50. 8 pm. Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. Info: dacamera.com or 713/524-5050.

March 22 (Sun.)

28th Annual Houston Humane Society K-9 Fun Run & Walk. All four-legged family members and their two-legged human companions can sign up for a 1-mile competitive run, 1-mile non-competitive jog, or a 1-mile non-competitive walk. Registration is \$20 before Mar. 13, \$25 after, and \$30 race-day. \$5 for additional humans. Sam Houston Park, 100 Bagby. Noon, check-in at 10 am, activities end at 4 pm. Info: houstonhumane.org, funrun@houstonhumane.org, or 713/433-6421, ext. 311.

March 23 (Mon.)

Barbara Best, the Texas executive director of the Children's Defense Fund, speaks about the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to the Monday Night Circle of the United Methodist Women at 6:30 pm at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St. Info: stpaulshouston.org.

The Question of Providence. How Christians should understand God's involvement in the events of our lives and of our world is addressed at the Craven-Wilson Lecture by Dr. Charles M. Wood. 7 pm in the Sanctuary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St. Info: stpaulshouston.org.

March 24 (Tues.)

Texas Children's Cancer Center hosts its fifth annual "An Evening with Texas Legends," honoring Apollo astronauts Capt. Alan L. Bean, Capt. Gene Cernan, Capt. James A. Lovell Jr., and Col. Buzz Aldrin. The evening celebrates The Apollo Program and the 40th anniversary of man's landing on the moon. The Hilton Americas Hotel, 1600 Lamar. Tickets (\$300): Jayne Dumolt at 832/824-6818 or texaschildrens.org/texaslegend.

March 25 (Wed.)

Children and Self-Control. St. Paul's School is providing a parent education workshop with Dr. Myron Friedman, director of psychological services at Edu-Clinic, Inc., who offers techniques that foster a child's ability to gain self-control. Free. 9:45-11:15 am. To RSVP for the workshop and childcare during the workshop: 713/528-5779 or spschool@stpaulshouston.org.

March 26 (Thurs.)

UP@TUTS & OUT@TUTS: Les Misérables. One of the world's best-loved musicals, following the life of French fugitive Jean Valjean, his foster daughter Cosette, and his relentless pursuer Javert. *OutSmart* magazine invites you to mingle in a cabaret-style atmosphere immediately after performance. Complimentary appetizers and happy-hour drink specials. Meet cast members and enjoy music by a TUTS pianist. Artista Restaurant, street level. Free admission with show tickets, start at \$32. 8 pm. Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 800 Bagby St. Info: tutstuts.com or 713/558-TUTS (8887).

Attorney Debra Hunt, from the law firm Moore & Hunt, discusses legal matters pertaining to gay and lesbian couples including living wills, directive of physician, and power of attorney. 7 pm at Houston Public Library, Fourth Floor Program Place, 500 McKinney, 832/393-1313. More info on the guest speaker: mooreandhunt.com.

March 27 (Fri.)

DiverseWorks' Fire Sale! While the smoke clears from a spectacular 25th-anniversary season, the Rice Hotel will be transformed into an inferno of festivities celebrating DiverseWorks. Cocktails and silent auction, 7:30 pm; dinner buffet, 8:30 pm; silent auction closes, 9:45 pm; final mark-downs, 10-11 pm; blazin' beats 10 pm-midnight. Sponsor tables start at \$2500. Invited after 10 pm: artists and DiverseWorks members, \$50/person; tickets available Mar. 12. The Rice Crystal Ballroom, 909 Texas

Ave. Info: diverseworks.org or 713/335-3445.

Rigoberta Menchú, Nobel Peace Laureate from Guatemala, speaks at 6 pm in collaboration with the U of H chapter of PeaceJam Foundation. Then the international observance of Music for Peace is the occasion for an 8 pm concert with pianist Sarah Cahill, who has commissioned a group of composers to write new works on the theme of peace. Rothko Chapel, 1409 Sul Ross. Info: 713/524-9839 or rothkochapel.org.

March 27-29 (Fri.-Sun.)

Bayou City Art Festival Memorial Park bursts into spring with more than 300 visual and performing artists from around the corner and around the world. Food, festivities, artists, fun for everyone. \$10 (children under 12 admitted free.) 10 am-6 pm. Info: bayoucityartfestival.com or 713/521-0133.

March 28 (Sat.)

Systems of Sustainability: Art, Innovation, Action (S.O.S.). Art and academia commingle to address global awareness. Lectures, art exhibits, interactive displays, more. Aurora Picture Show invites you to view videos from Good Magazine, 2 pm. Symposium (all day) \$35; UH students free w/ID. Wortham Theatre at U of H's Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts. Info: mitchellcenterforarts.org or 713/743-5749.

March 30 (Mon.)

The Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge, sings at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, as part of a three-state, six-concert tour of the U.S. 7 pm in St. Paul's Sanctuary, 5501 Main Street. Tickets (\$20/adult, \$10/student): 713/528-5776. Info: stpaulshouston.org

PLANNING AHEAD

APRIL

April 1 (Wed.)

The New Songs Project. Da Camera's A Little Day Music free lunchtime concert series: Rice University and U of H students compose and perform music to poems written by Grady Middle School students. Noon. Grand Foyer, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. Info: dacamera.com or 713/524-5050.

April 3 (Fri.)

Cuban-American drummer Dafnis Prieto, presented by Da Camera of Houston. \$30-\$50. 8 pm. Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas Ave. Info: dacamera.com or 713/524-5050.

April 3-5 (Fri.-Sun.)

The Houston Heights Association's Historic Houston Heights Spring Home & Garden Tour has as its theme, "Soaring to New Heights," which emphasizes the way the neighborhood continues to invite growth while maintaining tradition. The annual Candlelight Dinner & Auction (individual tickets are \$100) kicks off the festivities from 8-11 pm, Fri., at Winter Street Studios, 2101 Winter St. The dinner follows a private tour of the homes. The weekend tour: Sat. and Sun., noon-6 pm. Shuttle rides available. Beginning Mar. 7, tour tickets are \$17, available at houstonheights.org and selected retailers. Day-of-tour tickets are \$20. Tickets include all homes and bus shuttles. Tickets for individual homes are \$5. More info: houstonheights.org; 713/861-4002, ext. 3; or springtour@houstonheights.org.

April 4 & 5 (Sat. & Sun.)

William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. This modern version, geared for teenagers, has the usual characters, hilarity, and chaos. \$15 adult, \$10 child/senior. Sat. 8 pm; Sun. 3 pm. Main Street Theater-Rice Village, 2540 Times Blvd. Info: mainstreettheater.com or 713/524-6706.

April 5 (Sun.)

Ari Hest celebrates the March 10 release of his new studio CD *Twelve Mondays*, which features re-worked versions of 12 fan-selected songs, culled from his recently completed, unprecedented "52" project, during which he wrote, recorded, produced, and released one new song per week, for 52 weeks in a row! 6 pm at McGonigal's Mucky Duck, 2425 Norfolk, mcgonigals.com, 713/528-5999. \$15. More info: arihest.com.

April 9 (Thurs.)

The Ten Tenors' Houston stop is part of its Nostalgia tour featuring a program of classical tenor repertoire, Neapolitan ballads, and rock classics. Presented by Society for the Performing Arts (SPA) at 8 pm in Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. Tickets (\$20-\$65): spahouston.org, 713-227-4SPA, or at the courtyard level ticket office at Jones Hall.

April 9-11 (Thurs.-Sat.)

Dance Salad Festival is three days of a mixture of outstanding international dancers, who represent some of the best ballet and contemporary dance companies in the world from England, France, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Belgium and China. Many of these groups have never or seldom been to the U.S. before and are only coming to Houston to perform at the festival, no other city in the U.S. 7:30 pm at Cullen Theater, Wortham Center. Tickets (\$17-\$47)/details: dancesalad.org. ■

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Photos by Dalton DeHart

Annie Parker for Mayor Fundraiser with Congressman Barney Frank on Feb. 17.



Equality Texas' Merry Merry Martini Mixer on Feb. 5.



AIDS Foundation Houston's Mukuru Art 4 Life on Jan. 24.



The Krewe of Olympus Ball XXXIX on Feb. 7.



Same-Sex Wedding Celebration at MCCR & City Hall Demonstration on Feb. 14.



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News Briefs

continued from page 16

programs previously offered by community organizations, PFLAG-Houston and the HATCH youth group. The fund has granted more than 176 scholarships valued at nearly \$1 million since the two groups merged.

The deadline for students to apply for PHYSF scholarships is April 30. Details: physf.org • 713/416-8470.

ACCOMPLICE IN BROUSSARD MURDER RETURNS TO PRISON

PAUL CHANCE DILLON, ONE OF 10 MEN accused in the stabbing death of 27-year-old gay Houston banker Paul Broussard in 1991, has returned to prison following a parole violation. The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles determined on January 16 that he violated the conditions of his release from prison when he removed his ankle bracelet, fleeing from his mother's Spring home in early December. This recent flight attempt marked the second time Dillon had removed his monitoring device to escape supervision, officials told *The Spring Observer*.

Dillon was originally charged with two counts of attempted murder; his incarceration will be complete on November 19, 2011.

HOUSTON STONEWALL YOUNG DEMOCRATS RECEIVES STATE CAUCUS AWARD

THE HOUSTON STONEWALL YOUNG Democrats group received the Chapter Achievement Award from the Texas Stonewall Democratic Caucus for 2008 at TSDC's first biennial convention held March 1 in Austin.

"HSYD is the only active LGBTQI Young Democrats organization in Texas and it has demonstrated true leadership by mobilizing young people to get involved in voter registration and get-out-the-vote activities in the 2008 presidential election, and helping turn Harris County 'blue' in the process," said Daniel Graney, TSDC president. "TSDC is proud to honor the young activists of HSYD and to hold them up as a role model for other Democrats, both young and old, in Texas."

HOLLYFIELD FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2009 GRANT CYCLE

THE HOLLYFIELD FOUNDATION HAS announced that it is currently accepting grant proposals from GLBT and HIV/AIDS organizations, with all requests for funding due April 30.

Applications for grants are available via the foundation's website at hollyfield.org. ■

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Pageant guru J.J. Smith enjoys an OUTSMART moment with Miss U.S.A. 2008, Crystle Stewart, who is also Miss Texas U.S.A.

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FOR YOUR CALENDAR



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

March 14: 6th Annual Oodles of Noodles. All-You-Can-Eat Pasta Dinner & Silent Auction. Proceeds benefit Bering Support Network. INFO: 713/526-1017 ext. 206

March 15: The 20th Annual AIDS Walk Houston, benefitting AIDS Foundation Houston and 14 outstanding AIDS organizations. INFO: AIDSWalkHouston.org

March 17: Houston Pride Band presents the **Best of All Possible Worlds** concert featuring Bernstein's *Candide*. INFO: HoustonPrideBand.org

SAVE THE DATE

April 2: Les Miserables Out@TUTS Night INFO: TUTS.com

April 11: Jungle 17 Dance INFO: JungleHouston.org

April 12: Bunnies on the Bayou. INFO: BunniesontheBayou.org

April 26: Un Soiree Pelouse-Moulin Rouge. INFO: unsoiree.com

April 30: Rent Out@TUTS Night INFO: TUTS.com

May 2 & 3: Galveston Historic Foundation Historic Home Tour, benefitting the foundation. INFO: GalvestonHistory.org

May 16: HRC Houston Gala INFO: HRCHouston.org



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Business News

by Nancy Ford

Friendlier Skies. Ft. Worth-based American Airlines has named Betty Young to the position of director of diverse segment marketing. Young is tasked with focusing on enhancing services, support, and outreach to GLBT, African-American, Hispanic, and women customers, as well as other diverse populations. A 19-year American Airlines veteran, Young served the past five years as co-manager of American Airlines Rainbow TeAam, which is recognized as the first GLBT national marketing group at a Fortune 100 company.

Contemporary Director. Representatives for the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston have announced its selection of Bill Arning as its next director. Currently curator at the MIT List Visual Arts Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Arning assumes the directorship on April 6. Details: camh.org.

Hidden Treasure. Customers can bring their furniture dimensions and designs to Barrio Antiquo for an immediate quote. Now celebrating six years of providing iron wall pieces, pottery, and wrought-iron furnishings to their clients, Barrio Antiquo is located at 725 Yale St.

Traveling Musician. San Francisco Opera general director David Gockley has announced the appointment of Houston Grand Opera's music director,

Patrick Summers, as principal guest conductor for the 2009-12 seasons. Summers is slated to lead at least one production at San Francisco Opera per season, advising as a key member of the artistic team while remaining HGO's music director at least through 2014. Details: hgo.org.

More Reason to Smile. Randy Mitchmore, DDS, has completed requirements for the title of master from the Academy of General Dentistry. Additionally, "The Boomerang Effect," Dr. Mitchmore's article chronicling the positive impact of the Give Back a Smile program, was published in the Winter 2009 issue of the *Journal of the Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry*. Details: 713/5922-9300.

Combined Passion. Rebecca Perez of Keller Williams Realty and Rob Griffith of Nautilus Real Estate have combined their love of real estate and passion for homes to form Trellis Builders. Perez and Griffith's new business specializes in new construction and custom renovations, with their first two homes scheduled to be finished late spring 2009. Details: 713/240-6320 • trellisbuilders.org.

Sweet Ride. Houston-based limousine company, Ron's American Limousines, is celebrating its 20th year in business by changing its name to American Corporate Transportation. G&H Transportation

Services, owned by Mitch Guidry and Wes Hart, acquired the assets of Ron's American Limousines from founder Ron Delaney in 2006. Guidry says the company remains committed to Houston's GLBT community charities by supporting local charities via donations and services back to the community. Details: 713/266-6677.

D.C. Hire. The Washington, D.C., lobbying firm of Johnson, Madigan, Peck, Boland & Stewart has tapped John Michael Gonzalez to join its team of senior level strategists. Highly regarded for his political acumen, House leadership ties and financial services expertise, Gonzalez most recently worked on congressional affairs for the Obama transition after serving as an aide to former Texas governor Ann Richards and former U.S. representative Chris Bell (D-TX), and chief of staff for Congresswoman Melissa Bean (D-IL).

Trans Docs. Phyllis Frye, the "grandmother of the national transgender legal and political movement," reports that proceedings from the 1992 through 1996 International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy are now available online. The no-cost documents contain information about the early pioneers, shapers of policy, and how the grassroots movement began. Details: liberatinglaw.com. ■

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Octavio Barrios, MD
106 Westheimer, Ste. A.....713/942-7546

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BAR & CLUB GUIDE

Houston

LA ACADEMIA

Hot salsa and Latin flavor rule at this dance bar on the southwest side of Houston. Weekends often offer high-production drag shows, drink specials. 5829 S. Gessner • 713/334-5422 • www.myspace.com/laacademiabar

ANITA'S BAR & GRILLE

The "soon-to-be-famous" Anita-Rita dominates the bar menu at this trendy Montrose spot which is also a full-service restaurant specializing in American casual cuisine. Open Thursday through Sunday, and 'til 6 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. 713/522-2867 • www.anitasbarandgrille.com

BARTINI

This club near the Westheimer curve now features a second ladies' nights, Passionate Sundays on the second and fourth Sunday, in addition to the Exquisite Wednesdays ladies' night. 1318 Westheimer • 713/526-2271

BELLA AIDA GARDENS

Lady Barbara and MC Zip (of Bartini fame) host True Unity parties in this southwest Houston club every Saturday night for "everyone in the community," the women say. "We welcome lesbians, gays, transgenders, and bisexuals of all ethnic backgrounds." 9371 Richmond • 832/230-3739

BLUR

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

BOCADOS

Each Wednesday, women pack this Mexican restaurant for dancing and socializing preceded by open mic sessions on last Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m. Sunday brunch starts at 11 a.m. and lasts 'til 3 p.m. 1312 W. Alabama • 713/523-5230

BRAZOS RIVER BOTTOM

The BRB, Houston's leading gay country-western bar, is located in Midtown, just outside Montrose. Expect to see some fast and fancy two-stepping. Southern Country dance club offers lessons on Thurs. night. 2400 Brazos • 713/528-9192

CHANCES/THE NEW BARN/G-SPOT

Houston lesbians and those who love them enjoy three separate clubs under one roof, satisfying their C&W, urban dance, and live chick-music needs. Expanded and renovated bars include multiple video screens, banquet seating, and more. 1100 Westheimer • 713/523-7217 • www.chancesbar.com

CLUB 2020

Located downtown near the Toyota Center, this urban club features Clubbers Friday with male and female dancers. Its 6,400 square feet also offers theater-sized viewing screens and VIP rooms. 2020 Leeland • 713/227-9667 • www.club2020houston.com

CLUB ADAM AND EDEN

Serving the collective party needs of the Clear Lake area's gay men and lesbians, the adjacent clubs are open seven days a week, offering a large video lounge, a martini bar, pool tables, a private VIP area, and a 1,200 sq. foot dance floor. 522 W. Nasa Parkway. Details: 281/557-0434 • www.clubadam.com

CLUB CRYSTAL

If you miss the now-closed Inergy, you'll find many of its former staff, management, and décor at this two-room Latin/hip-hop club. Sunday evening drag shows rule the roost. 6680 Southwest Freeway, next to Colorado. www.crystalclub.com • 713-278-2582

CROCKER

New ownership has taken over this durable Montrose nightspot that boasts "the longest happy hour in Montrose." Miss Jenny hosts Wii tournaments, with gay boxing on Wed. and gay bowling on Sun. 2312 Crocker • 713/529-3355

COUSINS

Drag fans frequent this club in the heart of Montrose for its campy shows Thurs.-Sun. 817 Fairview • 713/528-9204

DECADES

This casual neighborhood bar attracts a devoted crowd of regulars. It hosts a Monday pool tournament and Wednesday dart tournament and offers free pool on Sundays. 1205 Richmond • 713/521-2224

EJ'S

Located on the western front of Montrose, EJ's retains the charm of a colorful, local hangout. Frequent shows, including community benefits, pack the stage. The upstairs martini bar offers a quiet retreat. 2517 Ralph • 713/527-9071 • www.ejsbar.com

GEORGE

Regulars rule at this comfortable neighborhood sports bar, just like most other neighborhood sports bars in town. But George's occasional benefit drag show makes it a wonderful, campy alternative. Sports Saturdays start at 3 p.m. with dart and pool tournaments; Steak Night is Sun., 3-7 p.m. 617 Fairview • 713/528-8102

BEHIND THE BAR



WHO: Blake Hoopingartner (l) and Marissa Chapman

WHERE: Club Adam and Club Eden, 522 W. Nasa Parkway in Clear Lake. 281/557-0434 • clubadam.net

WHAT'S UP: I-45 South now two clubs in one, with more than 10,000 square feet of space, a stainless steel dance floor, and VIP Lounge perfect for birthday parties.

GUAVA LAMP

The club left Shepherd Plaza and reopened with a larger space near Allen Parkway. Guava Lamp presents karaoke nights on Sun. and Wed. and offers a free happy hour buffet on Fri. 570 Waugh • 713/524-3359

IN-N-OUT

Heights residents appreciate this nearby alternative to Montrose haunts with state-of-the-art large digital displays, Internet jukebox, comfy seating, and daily drink specials. 1537 N. Shepherd Dr. • 713/589-9780

JR'S BAR & GRILL

With house emcee Kofi, OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest reigning drag champion, this Montrose standard offers shows Sun.-Wed., as well as pool tables, go-go boys, and karaoke. 808 Pacific St. • 713/521-2519

MARY'S, NATURALLY

The oldest gay club in Houston, this is a legendary nightspot, though not as notorious as in days past. Mary's hosts many community fundraisers, including the Imperial Court of Houston's Jukebox Wednesdays event. 1022 Westheimer • 713/527-9669

METEOR

Check out the classy baby-grand piano at this posh but comfy lounge on the downtown edge of Montrose. The spacious double-room bar offers multiple giant plasma video screens; the updated patio accommodates smokers in style. 2306 Geneesee • 713/521-0123 • www.meteorlounge.com

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

This comfortable neighborhood club doubles as a piano bar with a regular roster of evening pianists including Wayne Gray and Roger Woest. 1419 Richmond Ave. • 713/520-8446

MONTROSE MINING COMPANY

Study male dancers bump and grind every night at this leather/denim spot. The two-tier back patio bar provides a perch for viewing the Pacific Street scenery. 805 Pacific • 713/529-7488

RAINBOW ROOM

Every Thursday, Heather Moon hosts karaoke at this north Houston club. DJ Kenny supplies music on Fri. and Sat. 527 Barren Springs • 281/872-0215 • www.therainbowroombar.com

RIPCORD

Named best place to show off your leather in the Gayest & Greatest poll. The Black Hawk Leather shop is located inside the club. Another big draw is the Houston Big Men's Club's bi-weekly hamburger BBQ fundraiser. 715 Fairview • 713/521-2792 • www.theripcord.com

THE 611

This neighborhood club is a popular spot with pool sharks. On Fri. and Sat., the 611 dishes up buffet dinners. Features include a garden-style patio. 611 Hyde Park • 713/526-7070

SOUTH BEACH

This expensive, ultra-chic dance club is a frequent winner of OutSmart's Gayest & Greatest awards, with Billboard Magazine favorite DJ Jimmy Skinner and frequent high-producing-value drag shows on Sunday. DJ Franky Boy spins Thursdays for Noche Latina Latin Night. 810 Pacific St. • 713/529-5086 • www.southbeachthenightclub.com

TONY'S CORNER POCKET

This comfortable club located close to downtown has one of the friendliest bar staffs in town, both inside and outside at its patio bar. The raised stage where local charities perform also features an amateur dance contest each Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 11 p.m. Opens daily at noon. 817 W. Dallas. 713/571-7870 • www.tonyscornerpocketbar.com

VIVIANA'S

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

Spring

RANCH HILL SALOON

With its two pool tables, 52-inch plasma televisions, and large dance floor, the gayest spot on the north side also accommodates private parties, holy unions, and receptions. Enjoy Wii tournaments Fridays, 7-9 p.m., and Sundays, 5-8 p.m. 247041-HSN, Suite 103. 281/298-9035 • www.ranchhill.com • www.myspace.com/theranchhillsaloon

Humble

WHISPERS

Northerly GLBTs meet at this comfy neighborhood bar that offers pool, darts, video games, karaoke Thurs., dancing to the Internet jukebox and live DJ on Fri. and Sat., and Steak night on Sun. 226 First St. • 281/359-2900 • www.whispersbar.com

Galveston

3RD COAST BEACH BAR

OutSmart readers voted this Seawall spot the island bar with the best happy hour in the 2005 Gayest & Greatest poll. Thurs. is karaoke night, with cabaret/variety shows on Fri. and Sat. nights. 31st and Seawall Blvd. • 409/765-6911 • www.3rdcoastbeachbar.com

THE PINK DOLPHIN

Opened by Eldridge Langlais, formerly the Paradise Guest House proprietor, this club in the former 3rd Coast Beach Bar location offers an expansive Gulf view, 9th and Seawall Boulevard • 409/621-1808

ROBERT'S LAFITTE

A neighborhood bar, the island institution attracts a colorful crowd of regulars and travelers. The private patio includes a swimming pool. On Sat. and Sun. nights, the Ladies of Lafitte show takes the stage. 2501 Avenue Q (at 25th) • 409/765-9092

Beaumont

THE COPA

This popular two-story club provides a friendly place for Lamar University and east Texas GLBTs to shoot pool, dance, enjoy karaoke, and take in the occasional drag show. Open Wednesday through Sunday. 304 Orleans • 409/832-4206 • myspace.com/officialcopanightclub

ORLEANS STREET PUB AND PATIO

The place to hang for food, fun, and booze in a newly renovated pub, in good weather or bad. Open every night from 7 pm-2 am. 650 Orleans • 409/835-4243

Bryan/College Station

HALO VIDEO BAR

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

Ryan White Planning Council

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2009

March 12, 2009

April 9, 2009

May 14, 2009

June 11, 2009

July 9, 2009

August 13, 2009

September 10, 2009

October 8, 2009

November 12, 2009

December 10, 2009

Attend a Meeting... Apply for Membership... Be a Participant...

Meetings are open to the general public and although only Council members are allowed to vote, public comment is always welcome. The Council meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 11:30 a.m. at our offices located between Westheimer and San Felipe in the Galleria area.

Call to put your name on the list for public comment, to request a calendar or membership application or for more information.

The calendar of all Council & Committee meetings and a wealth of other information is available on our website: www.rwpc.org. Check the calendar regularly for topics of specific interest to you.

We hope to see you soon!

Ryan White Planning Council

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by Lilly Roddy

The important item for this month is Venus going retrograde from March 1 through April 26. Venus retrograde affects relationships, financial matters, and aspects about self-worth and beauty items. If there are problems in these areas and you have been putting them off or avoiding them, expect them to be pushed to the surface at this time. You can take a positive outlook and think that you are supposed to confront these things and then you won't think that anything is wrong. This Venus retrograde affects Aries, Libras, Cancers, and Capricorns the most, but ultimately it affects us all. • This month the Sun begins her journey in Pisces and enters the sign of Aries the first day of Spring, on the 20th. Mercury is moving right along, starting the month in Aquarius, entering Pisces on the 8th and finally into Aries on the 25th. Venus goes retrograde in Aries for most of the month. Mars is flying through Aquarius and begins to wade through Pisces on the 14th.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). This month you are in a rest-and-retreat mode. You are happy to be around friends and associates, but you are not really interested in any activity that is too demanding. You can have a nice, social month and make some business contacts, but you won't have the drive to push the business end of the deal. You may feel compelled to work around your office, doing some cleaning up or rearranging; you prefer the atmosphere of a peaceful environment. As the month ends, expect to feel more energized and ready to face the world.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). There is a lot of emphasis on career this month. With Mars, planet of action, in your career sector, you are ready to address new projects. Make sure that you share your plans with your co-workers so you don't come across as seeming too pushy. This could also be a good time to start your own business or change jobs. You won't be the most patient of people during the first half of this month. Networking and business associations are especially beneficial during the last half of the month. Be sure and spend some time with your friends.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). March is a good month to keep your routines as varied as possible. You may get bored easily and need to find some other activities to keep your brain focused. Some of you take that energy and apply it to your career or work. You are very bored around the 12th if you are not doing something you like; I hope you find a new project to work on. You may even have trouble sleeping during this time. If you are unhappy with your current work situation, this is a good time to look for something new. Freedom is your watchword and that applies to all areas of your life, even your relationship. Don't let that slip into a pattern of boredom either, or you can expect problems there.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). You are experiencing a month of mixed energies. A part of you is being drawn toward a very deep and introspective look at some of your unconscious aspects. You are being made more aware of just what really drives



PISCES (February 19–March 20). What do you want for your birthday? This is the time when it is officially okay for you to put yourself first. And that seems to be very strong by mid month. But this is a reflective time when you are considering what you accomplished last year and what you are going to do this year. You are very career- and goal-oriented now, and don't have time to waste on people around you who don't want to behave like adults. And your patience will be exceedingly low at the end of the month. Overall, this is a great time to begin new projects or tackle something that you were not sure you could do. Romantically, you are ready for fun and adventure in your relationship. Make some plans and take a trip and enjoy yourself with your partner.

your choices and decisions. You find that you are not as apt to make rapid, chance decisions; you are more thoughtful about what you are going to do. Personal relationships are taking a deeper tone, as you want to get closer to your partner and remove barriers that might have existed for a long time. This may cause some growing pains as you get closer and begin to discover new things about you and your partner. You are more action-oriented as we move to the end of the month.

LEO (July 23–August 22). Relationships continue to be your major theme this month, taking the lead from last month. If you are in a relationship, this is the month to revitalize that relationship to avoid some problems that need addressing. If you don't, expect to be out looking for someone new. If you are single, this is a great time to be putting yourself out there. You are more magnetic than ever. And this can be good for romance, business connections, or self-promotion of any sort. Keep a handle on your finances and get those into shape.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). It seems that last month was only a warm-up to the idea of reorganization. You are on a tear this month, getting rid of all those piles and putting things away into their locations. You are more active about staying on your diet and health plan than you have been for several months. Co-workers may find you pushy, so try more of a subtle approach rather than knowing you are right, and they should follow what you say. Relationships heat up after mid-month. This would be a great time to get away with your partner and have an adventure. Otherwise, stale relationships produce disharmony. Flexibility is key this month.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). With Venus retrograde in your house of relationships, you can bet this is going to be a time all about relationships for you. The Venus retrograde accents how

you have constructed relationships in the past and how you don't really set your boundaries until you are well into the relationship. If you are guilty of this, it can come back to haunt you this month. Your partner's behavior may seem very self-centered, and you use this to justify thinking more about yourself than usual. You may be right in what you say, but you may not be so timely.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). Creating a happy and warm home and family environment is on your agenda for this month. You are actively pursuing this on many different levels. This is about your actual home. You are doing some repairs, remodeling, painting, etc. with the family; you are trying to make what you have work better and create a greater closeness between all family members. On a deeper emotional level, you are really exploring the idea of what makes you feel genuinely secure. Some of you may move this year. Others may make a commitment to a new career or job path that allows fulfillment of those dreams. At the same time, you are cutting the bonds of the past that have held you in check.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). This is a great month for travel, taking classes, catching up with friends, or meeting with groups and organizations. You are in a very social mood. You can parlay this into any kind of business activity as well. You are very flexible and seem to have solutions at your fingertips. There is an overriding concern about your career that helps keep a clear sense about what your plans need to accomplish. You have to justify to yourself the way you expend your resources. Make sure that you mix your business and social lives. That is the best way to use these energies for this month.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). You have two main areas of focus this month. One is your resources: your money, your talent, your skills, and what you invest your time in. Avoid carelessness with any part of those resources—they demand your attention. The other focus is your personal identity makeover. You are cleaning out what doesn't work in your life at all levels. For some of you, this may seem to be a very unstable time; others welcome the cleaning-out. By the end of the month, you are ready to put some stability back into your life.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). You are certainly more social and interactive than you have been in a while, taking the initiative and asserting yourself more than before. Your tolerance for rude people is very low. You may seem rather unstable to others and yourself. This could be a great time to start a new project that requires all your attention. Remember to take it easy on the 7th and 8th when you want time to yourself. Keep an eye on your finances this month; you could easily spend money impulsively. And you are not particularly patient this month.

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

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Ohio Players



Marc Broussard



Mavis Staples



April 18-19
& 25-26

Saturdays 12PM-10PM

Sundays 12PM-9PM

DOWNTOWN HOUSTON

St. Patty's Special..... **\$7.50**
until March 31, online only

Early Bird Ticket..... **\$10**
until April 13, online and H-E-B

Regular Ticket..... **\$15**
after April 14, online, H-E-B or Gate

Target Kids FREE
kids 12 & under free



haa houstonartsalliance



Photos by Dalton DeHart

OUT IN HOUSTON



Michael Flynn, Congressman Barney Frank, Annise Parker, Richard Maier, and Robert Vlasits at the Annise Parker fundraiser-reception on Feb. 17.



Theatre Under the Stars' cast of *Legally Blonde* at Out at TUTS night on Feb. 12.



Delma Cummings, Lucy Watson, and Pat Gandy at the Lesbian Health Initiative (LHI) 2009 Valentine's Dinner and Dance on Feb. 14.



Scott Thomisson, Josh Cones, Billy Underwood, Danny Villarreal, Pat Siddons, and Parker Langley at the Bayou City Boys Club Jungle 17 Kick-off Party on Jan. 25.



Alex Martinez, Jared Lano, Stephanie O'Keffe, Paul Scott, David Arpin, and Rob Scamardo at the Equality Texas' Merry Merry Martini Mixer Houston on Feb. 5.



Bob Houghton, Chuck Renslow, and Mr. Leather Houston Rene Cantu at the Dinner in Black on Jan. 25.



King Olympus XXXIX Ray Kroulik and Queen Olympus XXXIX Billy Bailey at The Krewe Of Olympus Ball on Feb. 7.



Tina Berry, Robert Ross, Liz Eynatten, Matt Sontag, and Daniel Siebert at ActOUT at the Alley Theatre performance of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* on Jan. 22.



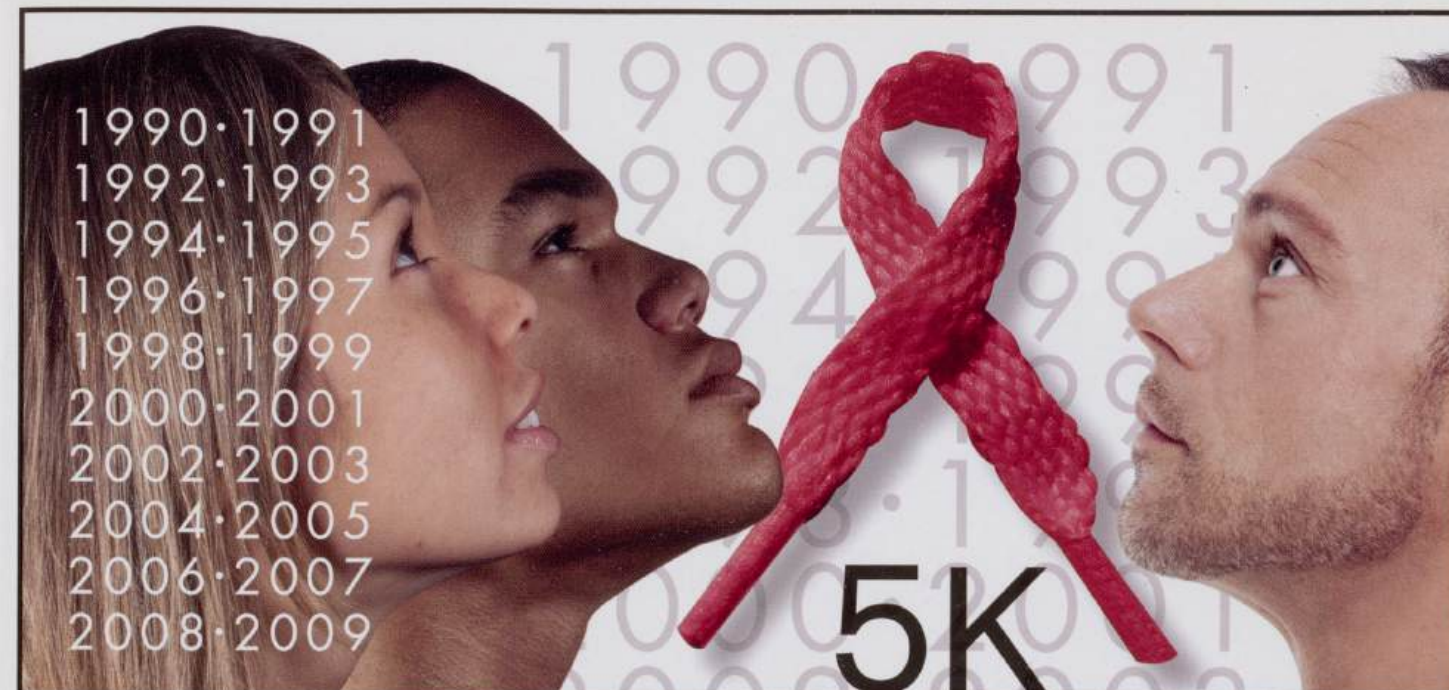
Christian Rogers, Vince Flickinger, Jason Davis, and Brandon Jeffries at the Bunnies on the Bayou 30th Anniversary Kick-off Party on Feb. 8.



Tom Conroy and Michael Crowder at AIDS Foundation Houston's Art4Life 2009 on Jan. 24.



Ryan Lindsay, Brad and Diana Wander, and John Palmer at John Palmer's Art Satori Collection on Jan. 24.



20TH year
OF
AIDS
WALK
HOUSTON
1990 - 2009

Sunday, March 15th, 2009

8 a.m. – Check-In

9 a.m. – Opening Ceremonies

10 a.m. – Walk Begins!

Sam Houston Park Downtown

1000 Bagby Street

Register Now!

(713) 403-WALK (9255)

AIDSwalkhouston.org

PRESENTED BY



PRODUCED BY



Benefiting AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc. as well as 14 outstanding HIV/AIDS organizations.

Join us at the AIDS Walk **Kick-Off Party** at
Salud! Winery Thursday, January 15th, 4:30–7:00
3939 Montrose Blvd., Houston TX 77006

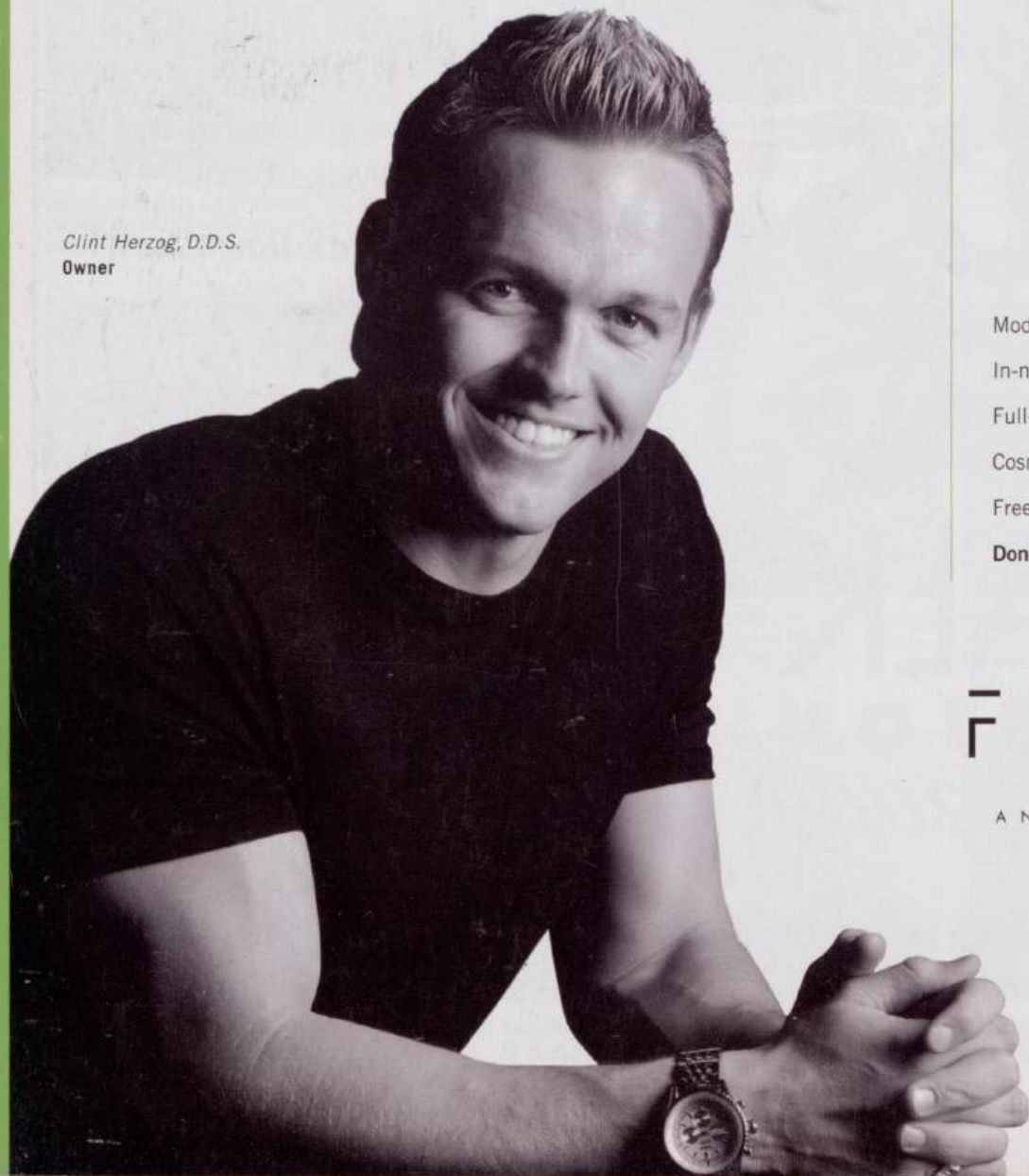


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