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Pride & Dining Guide

Pride and no prejudice

FOR 30 YEARS,

THE HOUSTON PRIDE PARADE HAS BEEN BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Pride and no prejudice

FOR 30 YEARS,

THE HOUSTON PRIDE PARADE HAS BEEN BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

June 26, 2008

HOUSTON★CHRONICLE

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A Hard Rock Anthology

Going Out

Houston Bands

Pride Idol finals showcase city's best

By Joey Guerra | HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Aspiring singers crooning cover tunes. Hard-to-please judges. Fast-and-furious public voting. Weekly eliminations. And one surprisingly early cut.

Sound familiar? It should. The second annual Houston Pride Idol is a singing contest modeled after TV juggernaut *American Idol*. There's even a snappier version of host Ryan Seacrest — local party boy and poet Todd “Toddicus” Gresley, who emcees the weekly shows at Guava Lamp.

The event is designed to coincide with Houston's 30th annual Pride activities and showcase undiscovered Houston talent. Last year's winner was soul diva Charlotte Simmons, and runner-up Robin Leigh is now a familiar face on the local scene.

Contestants don't have to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender — just open-minded and enthusiastic about representing the GLBT community.

“The goal was to introduce a new generation to Pride and get the community involved,” says Pride Idol director Frankie Qui-



Special events

Robert Earl Keen: 9 p.m. Friday, The Showgrounds at Sam Houston Race Park, 7575 N. Sam Houston Parkway; 281-807-8760.

Stone Temple Pilots: With Black Francis, 2 p.m. Saturday, Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, 2005 Lake Robbins, The Woodlands; 713-629-3700.

John Michael Montgomery: 8 p.m. Saturday, The Showgrounds at Sam Houston Race Park, 7575 N. Sam Houston Parkway; 281-807-8760.

Earl Gilliam Blues Revue: 9:30 p.m. Friday, The Big Easy, 5731 Kirby; 713-523-9999.

Redeye Carl and the Pirates: 8 p.m. Saturday, Castaways Beach Bar, 101 Fort Velasco, Surfside; 979-233-2241.

Kickback Koffee House: Steve Mills, Scott Vannater and Casey & Kings's Highway, 7 p.m. Friday, Memorial Drive United Methodist Church, 13194 Memorial; 713-468-8356 ext. 119.

The River Road Boys: 7 p.m. Friday, Southdown Park, 2150 Country Place Parkway; 281-356-7174.

Lonestar Symphonic Band: Celebrating their 15th anniversary season with a patriotic-themed concert, 3 and 7 p.m. Sunday, Houston Community College, Town and Country Campus Performing Arts Center, Theater No. 1; 713-893-5026

Concert in the Park: Live music every Sunday evening, this week Level One Band, 7-9 p.m. Sunday, Northshore Park, 2505 Lake Woodlands; 281-210-3950.

Scott Sileo, Saturday.

Baker Street Pub & Grill: 5510 Morningside; 713-942-9900. Citizen X, tonight; the Ruse, Friday and Saturday; Trey Clark, Wednesday.

Baker Street Pub & Grill: 15970 City Walk, Sugar Land; 281-494-0774. The McClanahans, tonight; Stephen Chadwick, Friday; Vertigo, Saturday; extreme karaoke, Tuesday; the Ruse, Wednesday.

Baker Street Pub & Grill: 25 Waterway, The Woodlands; 281-362-7431. Shinolah, tonight, Friday; Stephen Chadwick, Saturday; Sammy Hundley, Wednesday.

Baker Street Pub & Grill: 17278 Tomball Parkway; 281-517-0828. The Ruse, tonight; A-Rival, Friday; Bad Boyfriend, Saturday; A-Rival, Tuesday; the Matchsticks, Wednesday.

Baker Street Pub & Grill: 23501 Cinco Ranch; 281-693-0500. Bad Boyfriend, tonight; the Slags, Friday; Citizen X, Saturday; Jeff Canada, Wednesday.

Continental Club: 3700 Main; 713-529-9899. Beetle, The Greyhounds, tonight; Molly and the Ringwalds, Skyrocket, Friday; Ryan Scroggins and the Trenchtown Texans, Saturday; the El Orbits, Glover Gill, Monday; the Umbrella Man, Tuesday; Wicked Wednesdays Whiskey Boat, Wednesdays.

Dan Electro's Guitar Bar: 1031 E. 24th; 713-862-8707. Dan's Original Blues Jam, Thursday; Happy hour with Fahl & Folk, FondueMonks, Deebo's Chicken Coop, Friday; Joe's Roadhouse with Alan Aaynes, J.T.Coldfire 3-6 p.m.; J.T.Coldfire, Shea Van Winkle, Mojofromopolis, Saturday.

Double T's Bar & Grill: 14933 Bellaire; 281-568-3101. Ron Wright, tonight; the Orient Band, Friday and Saturday; karaoke, Wednesdays.

Crit

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★ **Noemi's Ta** walk-in closet, the East End gem feels kitchen. Mexican r sumptuous barba cheek and tongue, simple and swell o freshest bacon-an Skip the fajitas. B& Park Place, 713-64-

★ **One Hunder Taquito.** Authen fast food — sopes, barbecued meats, dessert. Try the fre taco garnished wit L&D daily. Cr. \$ (3 Freeway, 713-665-

★ **Otilia's.** An e this former Whata blander, and it see some of the edge o from the Mexican i chilaquiles and so electric. The pozol yourself trip. But o Huasteca steak pla potosinas are not L&D Tue.-Sun. Cr. 713-681-7203).

★★ **Pico's Me** Houston gets to P under the straw pa margaritas and nib calamari, cochinita moles or chiles en crowded, noisy, w there on off-hours. B,L&D daily. Cr. \$ 713-662-8383).

★★ **Romero's** the charming hanc breakfast chilaquil top, this family-ow spot is the stuff of formed. Distinctive long, elegant flaut enchiladas Teresit and chorizo. Defin

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Contestants don't have to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender — just open-minded and enthusiastic about representing the GLBT community.

“The goal was to introduce a new generation to Pride and get the community involved,” says Pride Idol director Frankie Quijano.

“We came across a few Pride Idol events in other cities, and me being an *American Idol* addict, I took to it like a fish to water.”

Over the course of seven weeks, singers have been eliminated via a mix of judges' scores (75 percent) and audience text-message votes (25 percent). Contestants sing live to tracks, which have veered from pop standards to gospel classics. They've also had to contend with

Please see **BAND**, Page F13



BILL OLIVE : FOR THE CHRONICLE

DOWN TO TWO : David Bermudez and Shelia Green are the finalists in *Pride Idol*, Houston's version of *American Idol*, that coincides with the 30th annual *Pride* celebration.

chron.com

LISTEN to clips of live performances from the two *Pride Idol* finalists. chron.com/houstonbands

John Michael Montgomery: 8 p.m. Saturday, The Showgrounds at Sam Houston Race Park, 7575 N. Sam Houston Parkway; 281-807-8760.

Earl Gilliam Blues Revue: 9:30 p.m. Friday, The Big Easy, 5731 Kirby; 713-523-9999.

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Concert in the Park: Live music every Sunday evening, this week Level One Band, 7-9 p.m. Sunday, Northshore Park, 2505 Lake Woodlands; 281-210-3950.

Mixers, Elixirs and Imax: The Fab 5, Fridays at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, a party with live music and IMAX film and access to the exhibits, 6-10 p.m., Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle; 713-639-4629.

Traders Village Summer Concerts: Drywater with Dixie Trahan, Saturday; Fidelity Maxx, Sunday, noon-4 p.m. both days, Traders Village, 7979 N. Eldridge; 281-890-5500.

Rock the Dock: Rat Ranch, 6:30 tonight, Kemah Boardwalk, Bradford and Second, Kemah; 281-334-9880.

Rock & pop Backyard Tavern and Chop House: 14555 Grisby; 281-752-6990. Jazz Trio, tonight; Dan Golvach, Friday;



Searchable live music listings at chron.com/music

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Double T's Bar & Grill: 14933 Bellaire; 281-568-3101. Ron Wright, tonight; the Orient Band, Friday and Saturday; karaoke, Wednesdays.

Katie's Bar: 315 Grand; 281-559-3773. Benny Braskett Band, tonight; JJ Dynamite, Friday; Scott McGill & Old Dog Mac, Saturday; Sunday Jam with the Amigos, Sunday; acoustic open mic, Tuesday; the James Reese Trio, Wednesday.

Rookies Sports Bar and Grill: 305-B Sawdust, The Woodlands; 281-362-9610. Not The Rachels, tonight, the Posse, Friday; the Rachels, Saturday; the Jack Trippers, Monday; DJ Greg, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Rudyard's British Pub: 2010 Waugh; 713-521-0521. LL Cooper, Dune TX, Friday; the Drunks, Saturday.

Sansone's West Oaks Bar and Grill: 14144 Westheimer; 281-558-4545. Karaoke with DJ Rusty the Party *Please see Page F6*

★ One Hundred Taquito. Authentic fast food — sopes, barbecued meats, dessert. Try the free taco garnished with L&D daily. Cr. \$ (3 Freeway, 713-665-

★ Otilia's. As a this former Whataburger, and it seems some of the edge comes from the Mexican chilaquiles and sopas electric. The pozol yourself trip. But o Huasteca steak platters potosinas are not L&D Tue.-Sun. Cr. 713-681-7203).

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★ Santos the T. Some of the best Mexican shrimp dishes hallmarks here. For hands are the principle (and the all-import fixings) can be very lump-crab quesadilla wrapped shrimp and shrimp grilled with which make fabulous charro beans, guac and chips are added daily. Cr. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (713-952-9909).

★ Seco's Latin. an unassuming brick Moran's Pan-Latin highlights sautéed

The ultimate guide to
Houston Pride

The weekend marks the 30th anniversary of the most interesting parade you'll see in Houston this year



Coc

Frid

I'VE always loved to do a prix fixe. T'afia, and my friend booked a p.m.

Normally the restaurant is open on Fridays, and gets in the kitchen cooks a three person lunch according to the

So I was taking some none-too-among the three per course.

There were short ribs that this town, even heat. They were fallish-sounding purée. Nope. A risotto with red broccoli, which was wrong for the

Finally, grilling the main dish lamb meatballs almond sauce springy, at least sounded fresh light.

Fortunately it ended up tasting better than it read. and desserts while I had issued courses, over a success.

First came a

The weekend marks the 30th anniversary of the most interesting parade you'll see in Houston this year



GARY LAIRD

MUSIC MAN : In order to promote his new album, *Artificial*, Josh Duffy performed late-night sets at clubs and other outdoor pride festivals throughout Texas and his home state of Louisiana. He'll play at the Houston Pride Festival this weekend. For a list of other performers and schedule of events, see pages F12 and F13.

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Everyone loves a parade. OK, maybe not everyone. And likely not some of Houston's anti-humidity contingent, who cringe at the thought of a late-June procession of floats, cars and waving city officials that often lasts three hours.

Still, the 30th annual Houston Pride Parade isn't necessarily about comfort. (Besides, there are always those cute mini-fans at your local drug store.) And Pride officials *did* move it to a later time slot 10 years ago, making Houston's the first official nighttime parade. Don't forget your glowsticks.

For so many of the 100,000-plus attendees, however, it is an evening of friendship and family.

"It is so much more than just an example of our pride," says popular PBS personality Ernie Manouse, who has emceed the parade for 10 years.

"It is a chance to educate the rest of the city on all aspects of the (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) community and give the viewer a chance to see their friends, neighbors, relatives, co-workers and realize just how many GLBT folks there are in each of our lives."



This year marks three decades of upholding Pride Houston's mission statement, to bring the "GLBT community together to celebrate individual pride, commemorate our community's history and educate society for the liberation of all people."

A tall order. But it takes on a new relevance in the wake of legalized gay marriage in states such as California and Massachusetts. New York state also has vowed to honor same-sex marriages from other states and countries.

It's a point reflected in this year's "We Are Family" theme. Unfortunately the giant disco ball that usually hangs over the intersection of Westheimer and Montrose will be missing this year — the victim of budget cuts.

If you've never experienced a Pride Houston weekend, it's a wholly unique experience. Girls with beads and boys in



COURTESY PHOTO

SPINNING THE TUNES: Roland Belmares will play at the Pride Houston after-party on Saturday at South Beach.

boas. Drag queens and straight couples. Groups of friends and makeshift families.

It is, for so many young members of the community, a rite of passage.

"This is the first year I came to terms with my orientation and accepted myself. What better way to celebrate?" says 20-year-old Nicholas Raijin Rodriguez, who has never attended a parade.

"I'm hoping for an extremely fun, exciting day where I can experience an environment at ease

the most significant events in my life," says DeHart, who has chronicled Houston nightlife for more than two decades and shot more than 700,000 images. DeHart formerly served as department chair of the language skills department at San Jacinto College and also taught English classes.

"It's a considerable honor. Being selected by the people that I love and respect adds a great deal of validity to what I do."

The usual suspects show up in the parade procession, too: Mayor Bill White, the Montrose Counseling Center, city controller Annise Parker, caffeinated Starbucks baristas.

The PFLAG float, with its barrage of proud moms and dads, is likely to put a lump in your throat. And the male go-go dancers always look a little bored and awkward.

So maybe it's too long. ("Houston's answer to the Academy Awards," Manouse jokes.) A little too hot. Maybe the floats could be prettier. Faster. Better.

But it is — for so much of the city's diverse population — a uniquely Houston event.

joey.guerra@chron.com



MADLY STUDIOS

FUSION: Kam combines an eclectic array of sounds for her unique take on soul music.

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SEE PHOTOS of past Houston Pride Parades and pride parades from around the country. chron.com/entertainment



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COURTESY PHOTO

POSITIVE VIBES : Cindy Pruitt says her speciality is tongue-in-cheek lyrics and '60s guitar riffs, some of which can be heard on her new record, *Songs From Inside the Bubble*.

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"I'm hoping for an extremely fun, exciting day where I can experience an environment at ease and feel free to be myself."

Houston's parade certainly doesn't have the star power of L.A., whose glitzy floats have boasted appearances from Paris Hilton, the late Anna Nicole Smith and desperate housewife Dana Delaney. And it's not San Francisco, whose 2008 celebrity grand marshals are — check the camp factor — Charo and Cyndi Lauper.

But the Houston grand marshals are equally, if not more, deserving of so much love from the nighttime crowd: AIDS Foundation Houston CEO Kelly McCann and prolific photographer Dalton DeHart, who always has a sweet word for everyone.

"I think it's probably among

Mayor Bill White, the Montrose Counseling Center, city controller Annise Parker, caffeinated Starbucks baristas.

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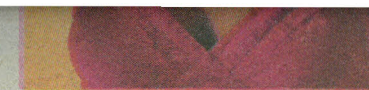
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joey.guerra@chron.com



COURTESY PHOTO

GOING SOLO : Houston-based musician Mike Ator is working on his own project, a digital album he'll release in the fall.



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MELISSA PHILLIP : CHRONICLE

CHILD'S PLAY: *Square by Square* is one of many items at the Children's Museum Gift Shop that will help keep kids entertained this summer.

SHOP CONTINUED FROM F5

that encourage emptying and filling, promote cause and effect, and allow the kids to be active. He says dolls, action figures, stuffed animals and puppets do double duty as security blankets and imaginary playmates.

Elementary school-age kids have lots of options that don't involve just using their thumbs. Games that allow them to solve puzzles and even create art proj-

of the most essential skills that engages the mind and helps pass the time," Ostfeld said.

Gift shops at the Museum of Natural Science and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, are also worth checking out. Museum members save money on gift-shop purchases.

Surprises, the gift and art boutique on Westheimer, has a robust children's department full of fun games for the road. I

Pride Festival features home-grown acts

By **Joey Guerra**
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

This year's Houston Pride Festival isn't anchored by a nationally renowned performer. But there will be diverse displays of music throughout the daylong event. (Previous festivals featured performances by Sophie B. Hawkins, Pansy Division, Taylor Dayne and *American Idol* finalist Kimberly Caldwell.)

Best of all, this year's edition features a bevy of home-grown acts taking the stage at the intersection of Westheimer and Yoakum.

Past and present Pride Idol contestants will also be showcased.

DJ music kicks off the festivities at noon, and the party continues until the 30th annual Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Pride Parade kicks off at 8:45 p.m. Saturday.

Here, a look at who — and what — you'll hear:

Robin Leigh: The Atlanta transplant was the runner-up during last year's inaugural Pride Idol competition. Since then, she's stayed busy with local gigs and is working on a disc with producer Alan Lett (who also helmed pop duo Jason & deMarco's *Til the End of Time*).

From the sound of new tunes *Comfort Zone* and *Open*, Leigh is mining a unique acoustic-soul sound.

Hear more: www.myspace.com/robinleighmusic.

Mike Ator: At first listen, Ator's contemplative songs seem a perfect fit for country radio.

But dip deeper and you'll hear

songbird incorporates hip-hop, jazz and Latin into her gospel mix, which is anchored by "spiritually uplifting lyrics."

Indeed, it wouldn't sound out of place next to Kirk Franklin and Mary Mary. Moore's new disc, *The Story Told Twice According to Shee Shee*, is due this year.

Hear more: www.sheesheesworld.com.

Cindy Pruitt: The lovable frontwoman for popular cover band Fluff the Kat is also a burgeoning solo star. She manages a folksy, atmospheric mix of originals that draw from a wide range of influences, including the Beatles, the Smithereens and K's Choice. Hear more: cindypruitt.com.

Kam: One minute, she's crooning like Ella. The next, she's bouncing alongside a hip-hop flow or rolling with a reggae groove. Wait a bit longer and she'll smooth it out like Ashanti. That's the art of being Kam, who calls her sound "experimental soul."

We just call it fierce. Hear more: www.myspace.com/bamitskam.

Robin Kirby: There's a Janis Joplin-esque quality to Kirby's music, but she's no copycat. Her originals — particularly the should-be-a-hit *I Played a Heart* — are earnest and earthy. Kirby also plays guitar, piano, harmonica and drums. Maybe we'll get a one-man band show during her festival set. Hear more: www.myspace.com/robinrevealed.

Josh Duffy: The New Orleans boy's polished pop sound is a perfect fit for any party. Duffy's debut disc, *Artificial* (also produced by Lett), has spawned three top 20 hits on the Sirius charts, including the irresistibly

Hear clips of songs from this year's Pride Festival performers. chron.com/music

GAY PRIDE EVENTS

A series of gay pride events in Houston this week culminates Saturday night with the 30th annual Pride Parade in Montrose.

■ **Houston Pride Idol Competition:** Final round. No cover. 9:30 p.m. Thursday, Guava Lamp, 570 Waugh. Information: 713-524-3359 or houstonprideidol.com.

■ **Pride Houston Kick-Off Party:** Cocktail party with community speakers. No cover. 7 p.m. Friday, Meteor, 2306 Genesee. Information: 713-521-0123 or myspace.com/meteorhouston.

■ **Pride Houston's 30th Birthday Celebration:** Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender festival features the Pride Oasis, dancing and live music on two stages from local artists. Vendors will sell clothing, accessories, souvenirs and food. Free, but donations encouraged. 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday, Westheimer at Yoakum. Information: 713-529-6979 or pridehouston.org.

■ **2008 Pride Parade:** The 30th annual parade is expected to draw close to 150,000 attendees. Free. 8:45-11 p.m. Saturday, lower Westheimer between Dunlavy and Crocker. Information: 713-529-6979 or pridehouston.org.

■ **Gay Pride Night/Official Parade After Party:** Special performance by adult video star Johnny Castle and guest DJ Roland Belmares. Tickets: \$20 (\$15 if purchased by 6 p.m. day of show). Midnight Saturday, South Beach, 810 Pacific Street. Information: 713-529-7623 or southbeachthenightclub.com

Saturday, The Wood Marriott, 1601 Lake 8677.

Bob Saget: 8 p.m. Wireless Theater, 51666.

Curt Miller Ma Show: 1 and 7 p.m. July 3; 1 p.m. July 4

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YOU DON'T MESS WITH
SEX AND THE CITY (R)
INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM (PG-13)
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MELISSA PHILLIP : CHRONICLE

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SHOP CONTINUED FROM F5

that encourage emptying and filling, promote cause and effect, and allow the kids to be active. He says dolls, action figures, stuffed animals and puppets do double duty as security blankets and imaginary playmates.

Elementary school-age kids have lots of options that don't involve just using their thumbs. Games that allow them to solve puzzles and even create art projects are good boredom busters.

A trip to the Children's Museum of Houston uncovered binoculars and hand lenses that can be used throughout a vacation, as well as secret-agent spy items that keep imaginations on point.

Other top picks: a portable Spiral Drawing Playset and Klutz books with small projects such as origami, building sets, card games, trivia challenges and mazes.

And don't underestimate the value of a good old-fashioned book, Ostfeld said.

"I cannot stress books enough. Whether they're books you read to your kids, books your kids read to you or books they read on their own, reading is one

of the most essential skills that engages the mind and helps pass the time," Ostfeld said.

Gift shops at the Museum of Natural Science and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, are also worth checking out. Museum members save money on gift-shop purchases.

Surprises, the gift and art boutique on Westheimer, has a robust children's department full of fun games for the road. I picked up a compact but sturdy travel bingo game there for under \$20.

Since traveling with children often involves eating in restaurants, parents will appreciate travel place mats that double as doodle pads at More Than You Can Imagine, also on Westheimer.

The children's travel selection includes 3-D Viewmasters with their own cases (for easy transport) and whimsical pop-up books; all these items are under \$20.

When all else fails and there's just no consoling a weary traveler, remember the box the game or toy came in. Sometimes that's entertainment in itself.

features a bevy of home-grown acts taking the stage at the intersection of Westheimer and Yoakum.

Past and present Pride Idol contestants will also be showcased.

DJ music kicks off the festivities at noon, and the party continues until the 30th annual Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Pride Parade kicks off at 8:45 p.m. Saturday.

Here, a look at who — and what — you'll hear:

Robin Leigh: The Atlanta transplant was the runner-up during last year's inaugural Pride Idol competition. Since then, she's stayed busy with local gigs and is working on a disc with producer Alan Lett (who also helmed pop duo Jason & deMarco's *Til the End of Time*).

From the sound of new tunes *Comfort Zone* and *Open*, Leigh is mining a unique acoustic-soul sound.

Hear more: www.myspace.com/robinleighmusic.

Mike Ator: At first listen, Ator's contemplative songs seem a perfect fit for country radio.

But dip deeper and you'll hear swirling electronic touches and a polished folk-pop sensibility.

Ator also performs with the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston and Resurrection MCC. Hear more: www.mikeator.com.

Shelia Moore: The soulful



Hear clips of songs from this year's Pride Festival performers. chron.com/music

band Fluff the Kat is also a burgeoning solo star. She manages a folksy, atmospheric mix of originals that draw from a wide range of influences, including the Beatles, the Smithereens and K's Choice. Hear more: cindypruitt.com.

Kam: One minute, she's crooning like Ella. The next, she's bouncing alongside a hip-hop flow or rolling with a reggae groove. Wait a bit longer and she'll smooth it out like Ashanti. That's the art of being Kam, who calls her sound "experimental soul."

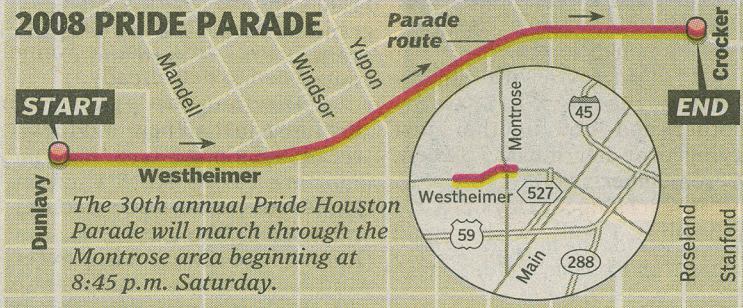
We just call it fierce. Hear more: www.myspace.com/bamitskam.

Robin Kirby: There's a Janis Joplin-esque quality to Kirby's music, but she's no copycat. Her originals — particularly the should-be-a-hit *I Played a Heart* — are earnest and earthy. Kirby also plays guitar, piano, harmonica and drums. Maybe we'll get a one-man band show during her festival set. Hear more: www.myspace.com/robinrevealed.

Josh Duffy: The New Orleans boy's polished pop sound is a perfect fit for any party. Duffy's debut disc, *Artificial* (also produced by Lett), has spawned three top 20 hits on the Sirius charts, including the irresistibly catchy *Call Back*, which topped the OutQ Hot 20 list last summer.

Hear more: www.myspace.com/joshduffyonline.

Houston Flyboys: No singing here, but this energetic



The 30th annual Pride Houston Parade will march through the Montrose area beginning at 8:45 p.m. Saturday.

ROBERT DIBRELL : CHRONICLE

cover. 7 p.m. Friday, Meteor, 2306 Genesee. Information: 713-521-0123 or myspace.com/meteorhouston.

■ Pride Houston's 30th Birthday Celebration: Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender festival features the Pride Oasis, dancing and live music on two stages from local artists. Vendors will sell clothing, accessories, souvenirs and food. Free, but donations encouraged. 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday, Westheimer at Yoakum. Information: 713-529-6979 or pridehouston.org.

■ 2008 Pride Parade: The 30th annual parade is expected to draw close to 150,000 attendees. Free. 8:45-11 p.m. Saturday, lower Westheimer between Dunlavy and Crocker. Information: 713-529-6979 or pridehouston.org.

■ Gay Pride Night/Official Parade After Party: Special performance by adult video star Johnny Castle and guest DJ Roland Belmares. Tickets: \$20 (\$15 if purchased by 6 p.m. day of show). Midnight Saturday, South Beach, 810 Pacific Street. Information: 713-529-7623 or southbeachthenightclub.com.

■ Htown Strip: A fundraiser combining burlesque and the "razzle-dazzle of Broadway," benefiting AIDS Foundation Houston. \$20; \$200 VIP packages. 8 p.m. Sunday, RocBar, 520 Texas Ave. Information: 713-529-6979 or pridehouston.org.

troupe, founded in 2002, will perform choreographed "flag-dancing" routines. They're regulars at local charity events and circuit parties. See more: www.houstonflyboys.com.

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*Special Engagements

Check out these tunes to gear up for Pride festival

By **Joey Guerra**
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Roland Belmares knows a few things about inspiring musical grooves. The Los Angeles-based DJ has spent more than a decade perfecting his trademark blend of high-energy vocals and tribal rhythms.

Belmares, who was born and raised in Austin, has showcased his unique sound at circuit parties all over the U.S. and beyond, including dates in Brazil. (He even has an upcoming Netherlands gig on the books.) He's also created original remixes for dance divas Amber, Kristine W and Debby Holiday.

Amid preparations for engagements at Houston hotspots

Meteor and South Beach, Belmares mused on his 10 essential Pride anthems:

1. Free, Ultra Naté: For me, I don't think a song more perfectly paints a better picture of Pride.

2. Proud, Heather Small: This song always makes me stop and contemplate, "What have I done today to make me feel proud?" I've always loved (former M People vocalist) Heather Small.

3. Pride (A Deeper Love): Aretha Franklin: Another true diva, and the title says it all.

4. We Are Family, Sister Sledge: I think even before I

came out, I knew this song was a staple of gay Pride. The update mixes by We Are Family All-Stars, too.

5. I Will Survive, Diana Ross: The diva herself. Also a flawless update, and I loved that the video was practically a filmed version of gay Pride in my now-home of West Hollywood.

6. Pride, Johnna: I didn't come out until the mid '90s, so this song was the first one I heard geared toward gay Pride.

7. Xanadu ('96 Remix), Olivia Newton-John: It's Olivia! Need I say more? It's become a signature song and fits right in with the

carefree feeling of Pride.

8. High, Lighthouse Family: This song is just such a happy song. I don't know that it's a gay Pride song, but it's such a feel-good, give-everyone-a-hug type of song that I have to include it on my list.

9. I Got My Pride, Barry Harris featuring Pepper Mashay: It just isn't a Pride dance party without Pepper Mashay.

10. Everlasting Love, Gloria Estefan: Such a great update of

this song and loved the many drag queen faces of Gloria in the video.

Pride Kickoff Party: 8 p.m. Friday at Meteor, 2306-08 Genesee. Free; 713-521-0123 or myspace.com/meteorhouston.

Official Parade After Party: 9 p.m. Saturday at South Beach nightclub, 810 Pacific. \$20 (\$15 if purchased by 6 p.m. Saturday); 713-529-7623 or at southbeachnightclub.com.

joey.guerra@chron.com

BAND CONTINUED FROM F4
a busy bar and endlessly chattering patrons.

As with any contest, there have been twists.

Front-runner Aike Jamal, who sang alongside Kelly Rowland on last year's *Clash of the Choirs*, got an early boot. (He also made it to Hollywood a few seasons ago on *American Idol*.)

And formally trained vocalist Lance Thomas, who has traveled on gigs to Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic, finished in fourth place.

"This is no silly competition, and the contestants past and present can attest to that," Quijano says. "In the future, I hope to beat off contestants with a stick because there are so many applicants."

This year's two remaining finalists have wildly different backgrounds and approaches to music.

Brooklyn, N.Y.,-born David Bermudez is a pop-soul belter with an impressive résumé, and Shelia Green is a scrappy gospel grandmother whose voice is in-

years ago, I had awful stage fright," Bermudez, 33, says. "Doing karaoke and stuff like that kind of helped me.

"But when it came to competing or auditioning for anything — when it actually meant something — it still remained. This is the next step of my personal evolution, to overcome that final fear."

Bermudez graduated from La Guardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts — yes, the *Fame* school — which he dubs an "unreal" experience.

While there, he focused concurrently on choir and steel drum.

He spent time with singing groups and as part of Astroworld's Rockin' Country Show. (Yee-haw!) Bermudez also hosted a local karaoke show and was named Mr. Gay Houston 2005.

When he's not gunning for the Pride Idol crown, Bermudez sings with Music by Midstream, a "party band" that pops up at weddings, hotel gigs and corporate events.

It's a dream that started when

resulted in some of the competition's best moments.

She injected heart and soul into stirring renditions of Caesar's *I Remember Mama* and Alicia Keys' *If I Ain't Got You*.

Her delivery isn't technically perfect, but it pulses with emotion.

At her best, Green echoes the searing sounds of Fantasia and Mary J. Blige.

"I want to be an influence to the people that have lost faith and courage," Green says. "I have a million songs in my heart, and I have a life story that could fill a book."

Indeed, Green's life story is a harrowing one.

She survived incest, two abusive marriages and a hit-and-run accident.

Green is also a recovering addict and has been sober for almost six years.

She is a manager/certified nurse assistant at Light Heart Memory Care, an Alzheimer's retirement home in Clear Lake.

Green calls Joyce, her partner of nine years, her "backbone."

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