

houston VOICE



lips and chains

Director Mary Harron muses on the pin-up icon with 'The Notorious Bettie Page.'
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APRIL 28, 2006

Nothing but net profit

Sheryl Swoopes brings championship style to Houston club

By DEBORAH MONCRIEF BELL

The mirror balls are hung and the large screens are in place as workers, with a little less than a week to go before grand opening, are frantically putting the finishing touches on Swoopes 22 Sports Bar & Nightclub.

"I want this club to be a place that will be comfortable for women in particular," said Sheryl Swoopes, basketball legend and out lesbian. "So many clubs have a younger crowd, and I want my club to be where mature, professional women can meet up with friends, relax and enjoy themselves."

Swoopes came out in an ESPN the Magazine interview in October 2005. Following her coming out announcement, Swoopes quickly associated with Olivia, a lesbian-owned vacation cruise business.

Promising to be a hot new nightspot for Houston's GLBT community, Swoopes 22 Sports Bar & Nightclub takes its name in part from the number on Swoopes' Houston Comets jersey. The club is designed to enhance the gay Houston nightlife and social scene, for locals and visitors alike.

Swoopes uses the term "alternative lifestyle" to describe the club, but emphasizes that it will be "straight-friendly."

The club's cavernous 6,500-square foot interior features a warm peach tone and other color accents designed and renovated by designer Jim Bacy



WNBA star Sheryl Swoopes (right, with partner Alisa Scott), says she didn't always know she was gay and feared at one time that coming out could jeopardize her status as a role model. Now she's gone very public with the opening of Swoopes 22 Sports Bar & Nightclub. (Photo by Johnny Hanson/AP)

of J. Bacy & Associates of Dallas. Bacy described the look of the club as, "South Beach meets funky."

Bacy has teamed with Swoopes and entrepreneur Deidre Sam to open the upscale entertainment environment where, they said, people from all walks of life will feel welcome.

The large cube-shaped building stands out in its location near Chinatown, featuring bright blue and sea-form green with contrasting Comets red stripe accent.

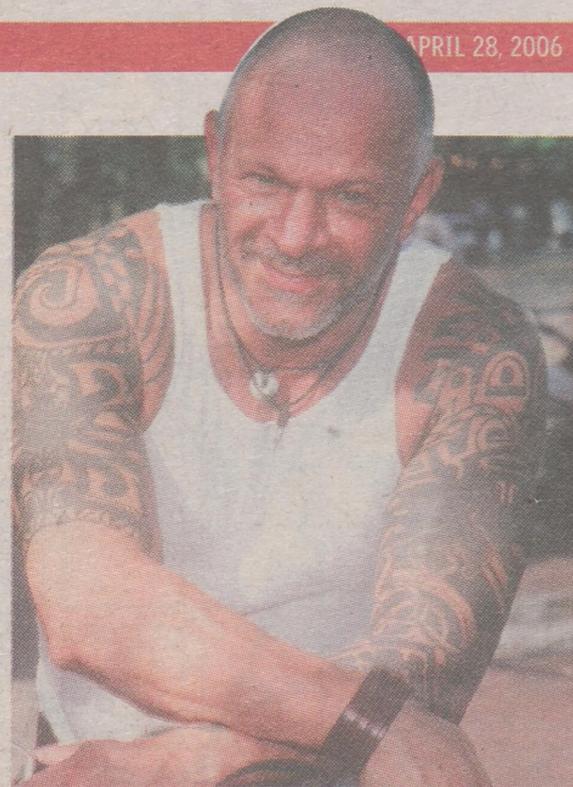
The former movie theater and one-time after-hours club is costing more than \$300,000 to renovate, Bacy said. Comfortable contemporary furniture

throughout, much of it custom designed, will add to the upscale ambiance the partners hope to create.

Other features of the multilevel club include state of the art technology with amenities like a sunken dance floor and a 50-foot bar designed to avoid human traffic jams. There are multiple flat screen plasma televisions, a video wall, a concert stage and video tabletop games. A special element is the customized basketball themed pool table.

Upstairs provides a private cigar lounge and Swoopes' own VIP skybox,

Please see **SWOOPES** on Page 3



Junior Vasquez' journey to DJ superstardom took a detour through an addiction to crystal meth. At 60, he is healthy, strong and inspired by his 24-year-old partner. He plays Rich's on Saturday.

A new day for Junior

DJ Junior Vasquez returns to Houston with a 'gay' album

By JOEY GUERRA

Junior Vasquez's Saturday-night set at Rich's nightclub is being billed as his first Texas appearance. In fact, the legendary DJ has been to Houston before, but under less festive — if ultimately more significant — circumstances.

"I had a major turnaround in my life in that [George Bush Intercontinental] airport. I had a seizure there. Bit my tongue, had to go to the hospital," says Vasquez, who battled a six-year addiction

Please see **VASQUEZ** on Page 7



HIV activists condemn Bush's abstinence-only sex education programs as deadly for kids.
News, Page 4

Celebrate and reminisce with Marion Coleman at Kindred Spirits' reunion.
Local Life, Page 8

Jay Leno gets a tongue lashing from a gay author. And not in a good way.
Dish, Page 17



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news in brief

Poole makes history as nation's first trans caucus president

Still exuberant from endorsing three out of three successful candidates in Houston's April 11 primary runoff election, the Houston GLBT Political Caucus this week announced the election of Jenifer Poole as the incoming HGLBTPC President.

Poole is the first transgender president of the Caucus and, they say, the first transgender president of a gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender political group in the U.S.

The operator of her own consulting company specializing in organizational services and construction management, Poole said she is humbled by the Caucus' faith in her leadership abilities.

"I recognize the huge responsibility in leading an organization that is so vital to our community," Poole said.

"The HGLBTPC has given me tremendous opportunities to be involved and make a difference starting as a member, and then a board member and now as I assume the role of president."

Poole's election represents historical significance both at the local and national levels, said Tammi Wallace, HGLBTPC vice president. "Our board is focused on insuring the 'T' in GLBT is fully represented in this organization without exception."

Poole praised outgoing president, Maria Gonzalez, for her "tremendous job" leading the Caucus.

"I know I have big shoes to fill, and I am confident as we have an extremely talented and dedicated board."

Poole said she will focus her efforts on membership growth, organizational visibility, database development and voter identification work.

"The most important work we can be doing is electing pro-equality candidates and we'll



A native Texan who moved to Houston in 1980, **Jenifer Poole**, Houston GLBT Caucus' new president, has been active in the gay community since 1994. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

build on our most recent successes," she said.

Poole will assume her new role at the next HGLBTPC meeting scheduled Wednesday, May 3, at 7 p.m. For more information, call 713-521-1000 or log on to www.hglbtpc.org.

Progressive dinner buses scheduled to roll May 6

Two of Houston's most progressive organizations are joining forces once again to produce an aptly titled event.

AssistHers and Uncommon Legacy-Houston have announced plans for their annual Progressive Dinner, a gourmand tour through some of the community's most beautiful homes and most gracious hosts. The unique culinary event is scheduled for May 6, 2006 at 6 p.m. Participants, organizers said, will "ride in style as luxurious buses take diners from house to house" to enjoy appetizer, soup and salad, entrée and dessert courses.

Two separate routes converge at the dessert stop where all participants will meet to compare notes and round out the evening, organizers said. Bus captains designated for the trip are Friends of Pride founder Carol Wyatt and Houston Voice editor Nancy Ford.

Space is limited to 110 participants, with tickets costing \$75 per person. To reserve tickets, call AssistHers at 713-521-4628 or log on to www.assisthers.org.

AssistHers' mission is to help lesbians live as normally as possible while coping with life threatening illnesses, while Uncommon Legacy is dedicated to enhancing the strength, visibility, and vitality of the Houston lesbian community.

Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church promotes Rev. Ralph Lasher

In a ceremony scheduled to take place on May 7 at 3:30 p.m., the Rev. Ralph C. Lasher will be installed as the assistant pastor of Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, an open and affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ, announced Pastor Walter McFadden.

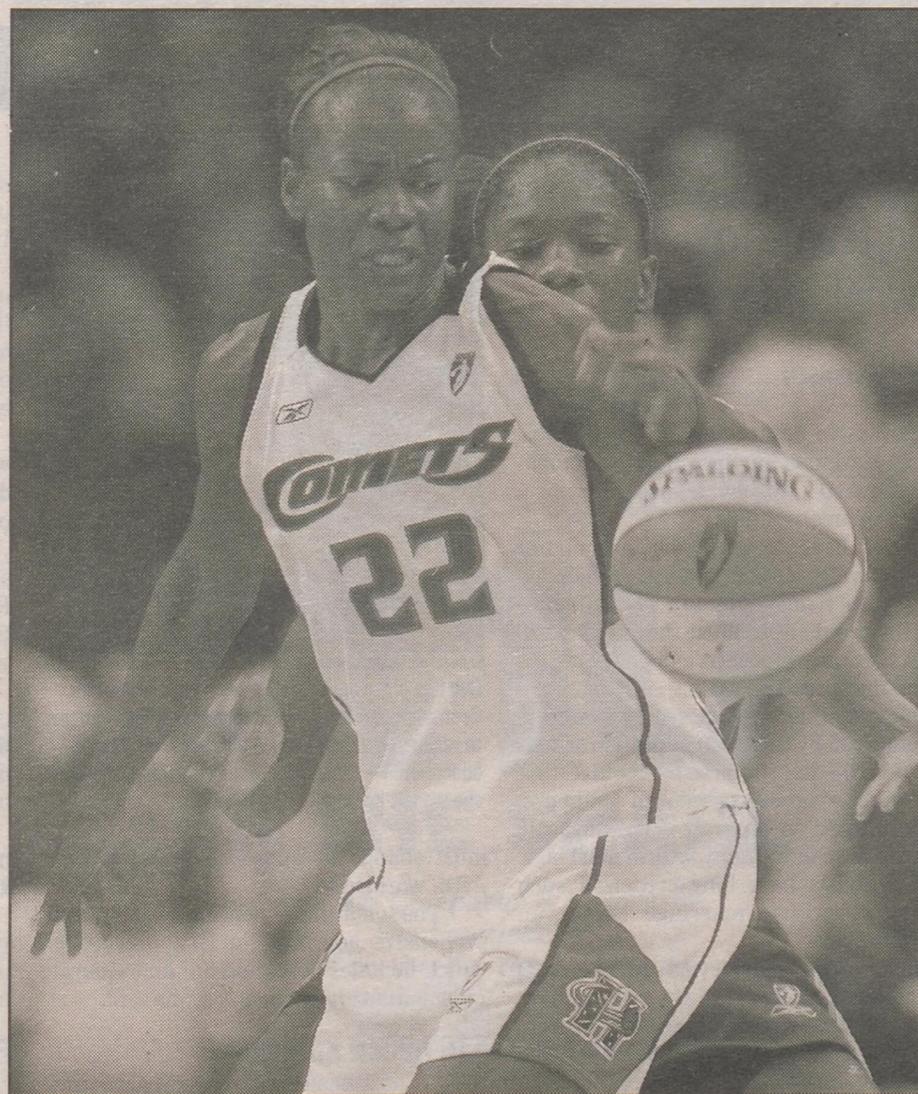
Rev. Lasher, a longtime leader in Houston's GLBT community, joined the pastoral staff of Bethel in late February. He currently leads a Saturday evening bilingual worship service known as "Noche de Oracion en Betel," which translates to a "Night of Prayer at Bethel." Lasher also oversees the church's social action ministry.

Bethel is affiliated with the United Church of Christ, a Christian denomination known for its progressive stances on social issues, including advocacy of equal marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples.

Rev. Lasher's installation service is sponsored jointly by Bethel Church and the Houston Association of the United Church of Christ, and is open to the general public. Bethel's Pastor, the Rev. Walter L. McFadden, will offer the installation sermon.

From staff reports

houston news



Olympic gold medalist, four-time WNBA champion and three-time Most Valuable Player **Sheryl Swoopes** hopes Swoopes 22 Sports Bar & Nightclub is a slam-dunk in Houston's gay and lesbian nightlife scene.

Sheryl Swoopes opens 'alternative' nightclub

SWOOPES, continued from Page 1

featuring a salt-water aquarium. Special VIP packages are available to those wanting to access those levels of the club.

While Sam said she is the "idea person" behind the club's development, she said Swoopes is not just lending her celebrity to the venture, but has a hands-on role and is making the big decisions.

True to her nature as a basketball world champion, national champion, and collegiate champion, Swoopes said she hopes Swoopes 22 will bring together the concepts of a sports bar and a nightclub.

The club, just a few blocks from Toyota

Center is designated the official pre- and post game party location for all Houston Comets home games with appetizers, prizes, and special guest appearances.

Comedian Karen Williams is scheduled to host Swoopes 22's grand opening, scheduled May 3 to coincide with the Houston Comets' first preseason home game.

The first 50 people to walk through the doors will receive free T-shirts, with the Product Band performing at midnight.

Though the nightlife "superstop" will feature and specialize in sports and dance-based themes, it will also have fashion shows, concert events, a variety of entertainment and will provide a venue for community events.

The opening week of the club coincides with Houston Splash weekend, and additional opening-weekend events include a "surprise celebrity appearance" on Friday.

The club then hosts the 2006 Black & White pageant and social event, a Houston Splash celebration, on Sunday.

i MORE INFO

Swoopes 22 Sports Bar & Nightclub
2020 Leeland Ave.
Houston, Texas 77002
713-227-9667
www.swoopes22.net

international news

Abstinence push hurts global AIDS fight: report

U.S. requires health field teams to downplay condoms

By JOSHUA LYNSEN

Aggressive promotion of abstinence-only education is hurting efforts to combat HIV and AIDS worldwide, according to a new government report.

The United States Government Accountability Office recently concluded U.S. health field teams are less effective than they could be because they must heavily promote abstinence as a primary means to stop the spread of AIDS.

The guidelines — imposed by Congress and enforced by the Bush administration's Global AIDS Coordinator — require that field teams spend 33 percent of their prevention funds on programs that advocate abstinence or monogamy within marriage. AIDS activists have long criticized such messages because marriage is not an option for gays.

Field teams interviewed for the GAO report dated April 4 said the requirement precludes them from using their prevention funds in more effective ways, like delivering comprehensive messages that include information about condom use.

According to the report, 17 of 20 country teams said the spending requirement challenges "their ability to respond to local prevention needs." The requirement also is impeding work in certain "focus countries," where the epidemic is most severe.

"About half of the focus country teams indicated that adherence to the spending requirement can undermine the integrated nature of HIV/AIDS prevention programs," the report says.

Domestic and international AIDS groups said congressional Republicans and the Bush administration are hampering the worldwide fight against the epidemic.

"This report confirms for me that the administration has created an ideologically driven program," said Jodi Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Health & Gender Equity in Maryland. "It's an unethical policy, and it goes against basic human rights principles."

Rob Noble, spokesperson for Avert, an international AIDS charity based in the United Kingdom, said the United States



Deb Murphy, youth services worker at Montrose Counseling Center, has strong words when it comes to relying on an abstinence-only approach to sex education. 'Abstinence-only sex education kills kids,' she says. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

must change its approach to better fight AIDS worldwide.

"The scientific evidence supports a comprehensive approach to HIV prevention, which includes providing full and accurate information about condoms," he said.

\$15 billion initiative

The abstinence-only spending requirement stems from the president's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

Announced in January 2003, PEPFAR is a \$15 billion initiative to combat the global AIDS epidemic through prevention, treatment and care interventions. It aims to avert 7 million HIV infections in 15 focus countries by 2010.

In the focus countries — Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam and Zambia — heterosexual intercourse is generally the primary mode of transmission.

PEPFAR aims to prevent HIV transmission through three main strategies: promote the "Abstain, Be faithful, or use Condoms" approach, also called the ABC model; through abstinence-only education; and through supporting local prevention efforts.

The ABC model allows field teams to additionally promote condoms, help manage sexually transmitted infections, and advocate against injected drug use.

Field teams must spend 50 percent of their prevention money on blood safety programs and similar, nonsexual safety issues. Another 33 percent must be spent on abstinence programs, while the remaining 17 percent goes toward ABC programs.

The GAO report says this predetermined budget has caused some field teams to "cut funding for certain prevention programs. For example, one country team told us that, to meet the spending requirement, it had to limit funding for comprehensive ABC messages to populations at risk of contracting HIV."

The GAO report also found the emphasis on abstinence-only education has created confusion in the field, with teachers giving inconsistent messages.

The report cites several cases, including one where teachers working with teenagers felt constrained when teenagers asked about condoms. The report notes educators didn't want "to say more than is allowed under PEPFAR guidelines."

In another case, educators reportedly worked with the understanding "that condom demonstrations, even to adults, are prohibited under PEPFAR."

Deb Murphy is the youth services worker at Montrose Counseling Center. Every Friday and Sunday evenings she facilitates HATCH, Houston's youth group for GLBT youth.

Sex, drugs, HIV and other health-related challenges facing youth are often topics in the meetings, she said. "We often correct misinformation, like, you can't get HIV from kissing," she said.

She believes, realistically, that whether or not adults like to think about it, young people are having and will continue to have sex.

"It is our responsibility to make sure young people have all the information they need to make good choices and to stay healthy," she said.

Field teams seek control

Jacobson said these problems show why U.S. field teams need more control over the implementation of localized prevention efforts.

She said people who are supposed to benefit from PEPFAR are instead being hurt by the inadequate, inconsistent and incomplete information it provides.

"They need comprehensive messages," she said, "but under PEPFAR, they're not getting those messages."

Noble said U.S. officials would better combat the epidemic by replicating successful campaigns from Uganda and Thailand, where the ABC model was reiterated by relief organizations, religious groups and others.

"An effective HIV prevention program must employ all approaches known to be effective, rather than just implementing one, or a few select actions, in isolation," he said. "Responses to HIV/AIDS should be evidence-based and should be tailored to local conditions. They should not be based on ideology."

Carl Schmid, director of federal affairs for the AIDS Institute in Washington, D.C., said the abstinence-only spending requirement was an arbitrary mandate with no scientific basis.

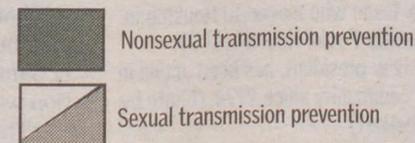
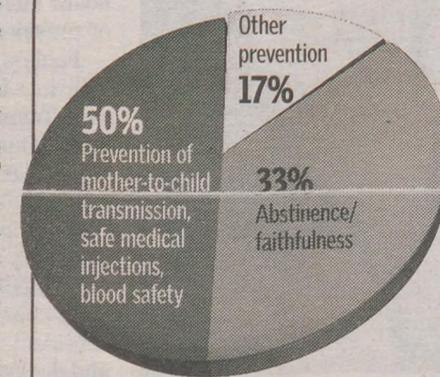
"It was ideologically driven, completely," he said. "These barriers are impediments to what should be done."

Despite the spending requirement, Schmid said the field teams are providing much-needed relief.

"They could do better if they didn't have the restrictions, but I think they are doing a good job," he said. "They've made a remarkable difference in a lot of countries that didn't have these efforts before."

Paying for abstinence

After spending the minimum on abstinence-until-marriage programs, here's what is left:



Source: GAO

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Earmark unchanged, targeted

In a joint response to the report, the State Department, Global AIDS Coordinator and others reiterated their commitment to fight AIDS.

They wrote, "Only a vigorous and comprehensive prevention approach will turn the tide against the global HIV/AIDS pandemic."

Officials said they would work to clarify confusion among field teams, so consistent messages are being given, but opposed moves to lessen the amount of money dedicated to abstinence-only education.

Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), who helped write legislation authorizing PEPFAR, said she is planning to introduce a measure to repeal the abstinence-only education earmark.

"Our global AIDS prevention policy should be based on proven, evidence-based science," she said in a statement. "The abstinence-only earmark prevents our country teams from carrying out programs that respond directly to the needs of the population they are trying to serve."

Noble said that Avert would welcome changes that make PEPFAR stronger and more versatile.

"President Bush has committed to spending around \$3 billion per year on combating HIV/AIDS worldwide, which is a lot more than his predecessors spent," he said. "The initiative has already helped tens of thousands of people around the world to access life-saving treatment. What is sad is that PEPFAR could be a lot better than it is."

MORE INFO

HATCH
713-529-3590
www.hatchyouth.org

Avert
4 Brighton Rd.
Horsham, West Sussex RH13 5BA (UK)
www.avert.org

national news

'Ex-gays' take a page from gay activist schoolbook

Effort under way to include 'Gay to Straight' clubs in schools

By ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG

Conservative groups are taking a page out of the gay activist playbook in a new effort to promote the "ex-gay" movement.

Liberty Counsel and Parents & Friends of Ex-Gays & Gays have launched a new campaign called "Change is Possible," which mimics the effort by gay rights advocates to create student clubs and participate in school-sponsored "diversity days."

Instead of gay-straight alliances, the "Change is Possible" campaign urges students to start "Gay to Straight" clubs.

The Alliance Defense Fund has even sponsored a "Day of Truth" to counteract the "Day of Silence," a day when students remain silent to protest harassment and discrimination targeted at gay students. The "Day of Truth" — scheduled for April 27, one day after the "Day of Silence" — was "established to counter the promotion of the homosexual agenda and express an opposing viewpoint from a Christian perspective."

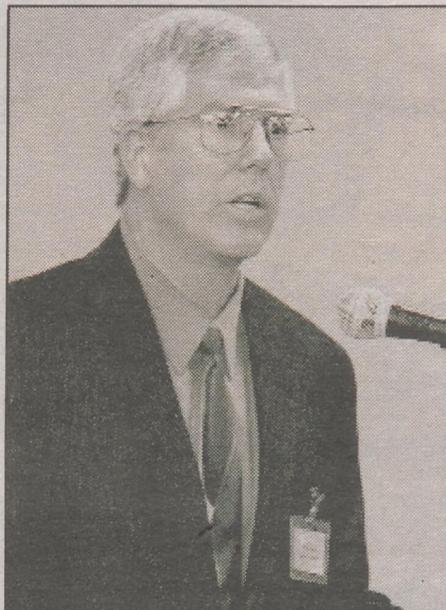
As part of the "Change is Possible" campaign, which was announced earlier this month, the Liberty Counsel website details "health statistics" for ex-gay student activists such as: "Acting out on same-sex attractions also has devastating psychological effects, including increased drug and alcohol abuse."

"If we're having a diversity day, it ought to be really a diversity day and show different perspectives," said Mat Staver, president of Liberty Counsel.

The University of Connecticut and Ohio State University already have resisted attempts to include ex-gays in diversity days, he said.

"We're going to see if we can resolve the matter or [if we have to] resort to legal challenges," he said.

Last year, Liberty Counsel and PFOX sued the Montgomery County, Md. school district for excluding information about ex-gays in a revised sexual education cur-



Mat Staver, president of the conservative group Liberty Counsel, says 'diversity days' at schools should include 'ex-gays' as well as gays. (Photo by Mark L. Thompson/AP)

riculum and over complaints that it "normalized homosexuality."

For Regina Griggs, PFOX executive director, it's an issue of tolerance.

"What parent wants to teach their children that tolerance for all people is not acceptable?" she said. "Teaching respect is key to all of this."

'Cleverly disguised bigotry'

Critics argue that schools should not condone unsubstantiated, unscientific opinions by including those views in the curriculum or in a diversity day presentation.

"They have no more business in the health curriculum than flat-Earth theories in the geology curriculum," said David Fishback, a member of Teach the Facts, a Montgomery County, Md., parents group that formed to support a comprehensive sex-education program that addresses homosexuality.

"The ex-gay viewpoint is not just another viewpoint — it's at odds with what our doctors tell us," said Fishback, citing the American Psychological Association. "Trying to slam round pegs into square holes, the pegs are going to get hurt."

Ken Choe, an ACLU staff attorney, said that just as students can form gay-straight alliances, their peers can start "Gay to Straight" clubs.

Gay rights groups now use the 1984 Equal Access Act to ensure that schools permit gay student clubs.

"When talking about free expression you can't have your cake and eat it, too," said Choe. "If you're going to seek a constitutional protection you have to let others seek the same protection."

MORE INFO

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Orlando, FL 32854
800-671-1776
www.lc.org

Teach the Facts
info@teachthefacts.org
www.teachthefacts.org



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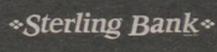
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national news

Doctored photos used in Minn. fight against gay marriage

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (AP) — The gay marriage debate in Minnesota has already seen the release of secret audiotapes, and now some doctored photos are being thrown into the mix. Minnesotans in Defense of Marriage, a group pushing for a statewide vote on a constitutional amendment to prohibit legal recognition of same-sex relationships, recently started running newspaper ads bashing several Democratic state senators who voted against the amendment in committee. The ads feature obviously doctored photos of senators thumbing their noses at the camera, with accompanying text arguing that's what the senators are doing to voters. "We're using parody to make the point that this is what's being done to Minnesota voters," said Jeff Davis, director of the group. He said senators who oppose the marriage amendment can expect more aggressive advertising if the measure doesn't get to the November ballot. Among the senators targeted was John Marty (D-Roseville), who said he expected the tactics would alienate all but the most hard-core supporters of the marriage amendment. "It's a cheap shot. It's juvenile," Marty said. "To me it's what a sixth-grader would do to ridicule someone they don't like."



Minnesotans in Defense of Marriage, an anti-gay group, has been running newspaper ads bashing several state senators who voted against the amendment in committee.

Growing number of gays plan to be parents, survey says

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Two-thirds of lesbians and a third of gay men in the United States plan to add children to their families over the next three years, according to a marketing survey. Those numbers have increased dramatically over the past four years, according to Jeffrey Garber, president of OpusComm Group, which conducted the annual survey of gays along with Syracuse University. In 2002, just 15 percent of lesbians and 5 percent of gay men told the researchers they would add children to their families. "People are saying they're more comfortable with their sexuality, that they have a right to a life partner. And along with that — if they have a loving home — why not a child?" Garber said. In the same time period, the proportion of gay people surveyed who reported being "out" increased from 93 to 97 percent. Of those surveyed this year, 21 percent of lesbians and 5 percent of gay men said they currently have a child living at home.

U.N. office says gay Iraqis being targeted and killed

NEW YORK — The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that gay Iraqis are increasingly targeted for violent threats, kidnappings, attacks, and murder solely because of their sexual orientation. In response, the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission has written to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on the issue. "IGLHRC is alarmed by the documented escalation of violence against gay people in Iraq," wrote Paula Eitelbrick, executive director of IGLHRC, in the letter. "We call on the United States, political leaders around the world, and Iraqi authorities to take responsibility for speaking out and stemming the targeting of gay people for kidnapping and murder, and seeing that those committing these crimes are punished." In March, the British gay-rights group Outrage held a protest over a fatwah issued by Shiite Iraqi leader Grand

Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani that supports the killing of gay people "in the most severe way." Bush administration officials have not commented publicly on Sistani's fatwah.

São Paulo skinheads attack gay youths

SÃO PAULO, Brazil — One man remains critically injured with stab wounds suffered in an attack by a group of 10-15 apparent skinheads on a street in São Paulo that is a traditional meeting spot for young gays, lesbians, drag queens and punks. Police say the attack, which took place in the early morning hours of April 22, was unprovoked and probably motivated by bias, according to local media reports. Jefferson Marcelo dos Reis Silva, 22, was stabbed several times and is still hospitalized after surgery, the newspaper O Estado reported. A 15-year-old male, punched in the face by the attackers, was treated and released, while two females, ages 14 and 15, were less seriously injured, the paper reported. São Paulo city officials are taking heat for the attack, which came only two days after gay activists met with government representatives to complain about an increase in skinhead activity at that exact location.

Gay Methodist ministers plead for acceptance

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Dozens of gay and lesbian Methodist ministers have anonymously signed a letter acknowledging their sexuality and calling for further inclusion in the church. The message was released April 18 by the Chicago-based Reconciling Ministries Network, which calls for allowing people of all sexual orientations to fully participate in the United Methodist Church, in advance of a meeting of the church's Judicial Council that began April 19. About 75 gay clergy were said to have signed the letter, though their names were kept secret and held by an attorney for the Chicago group for fear that they could be disciplined.

From staff and wire reports

national news

Gay newspapers to remain in Ohio public library

Challenges to gay-themed publications on the rise

By ERIC ERVIN

Conservatives failed in their most recent battle to remove gay-themed publications from public libraries, but the Ohio dispute is not expected to close the book on efforts to limit materials available at the facilities.

A library trustee in Columbus, Ohio, was rebuffed in his effort last month to remove gay newspapers from a public library in the suburb of Upper Arlington.

Trustee Bryce Kurfees of the Upper Arlington Public Library Board tried to have Outlook Weekly and Gay People's Chronicle removed from the facility, calling their contents "garbage" and not suitable for young eyes.

"What is a publication that has this garbage within it doing in our library?" Kurfees said, according to minutes from the board meeting where the issue was discussed. "It's dropped off at our front door and we're bringing in into our library."

Kurfees did not respond to an interview request.

As a compromise, trustee Brian Perera introduced a resolution to have "certain free publications" removed from the lobby and placed in another location as a way to monitor who reads them. The resolution defined the publications as free periodicals that library officials don't request or pay for.

But Perera withdrew his motion at the six-member board's March meeting. Last year, the two gay publications were moved near the reference desk.

Library director Ann Moore said it's within policy to provide a variety of materials that will appeal to everyone.

"We provide an open forum for any material," Moore said. "We have so many publications that are brought to us."

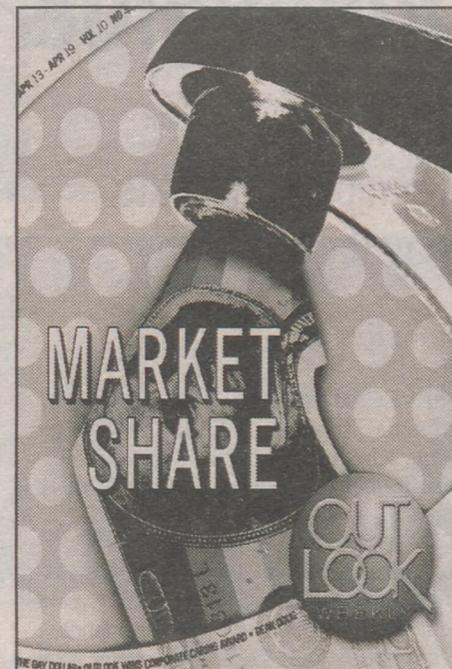
Editors of the two gay newspapers could not be reached for comment by press time.

Officials with the Ohio chapter of the ACLU had threatened to sue if the publications were removed from the Upper Arlington library.

More attacks on gay publications

The effort to remove gay publications from public libraries is not limited to Ohio.

According to the American Library Association's 2005 State of America's Libraries report, there were 404 cases in which people tried to get material removed from public libraries last year. In the previous year, there were 547 cases. But while censorship attempts dropped overall, officials said challenges



Outlook Weekly is one of two gay publications recently targeted for removal by a trustee at Upper Arlington Public Library in Ohio.

to gay-themed materials increased by 20 percent from 2004 to 2005.

Judith Krug, director of the association's Office of Intellectual Freedom, said those who object to gay-related library materials should just not read them.

"None of my colleagues stand there with a gun or a whip saying, 'You're going to read this,'" Krug said. "Libraries serve everyone."

Krug said gay-themed material in public libraries has become a hot topic in recent years, a development she credited to the increasing visibility of gay issues.

Last October, members of American Veterans in Domestic Defense shredded privately owned books to symbolize what they would like to do to children's books that deal with homosexuality available at public libraries in Montgomery County, Texas.

Last June in Hillsborough County, Fla., a library book display commemorating Gay Pride Month sparked county commissioners to impose a ban on county government recognizing the celebration. Commissioner Rhonda Storms, who introduced the measure, said she did not want to be forced to explain homosexuality to her 6-year-old daughter if the child passed by the display and started to ask questions.

MORE INFO

American Library Association
50 E. Huron
Chicago, IL
800-545-2433
www.ala.org

Remembering the past, financing the future

Kindred Spirits reunions celebrate gay days gone by

By NANCY FORD

SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE KINDRED Spirits' 5th annual reunion celebration was scheduled to open its doors, the excitement in Marion Coleman's voice is already easily discernable.

"It's Kindred Spirits time!" she says in anticipation of Saturday's party.

Kindred Spirits, a bar billed as a gathering place "for women and their friends," first opened in 1980 in a strip center shopping complex just outside of Montrose, the Houston neighborhood that few gay men or lesbians ventured out of at that time.

Kindred Spirits wasn't Houston's first bar predominantly patronized by lesbians, but it was the first that provided women with a safe, uplifting, welcoming atmosphere.

"There weren't any bars like that," Coleman says, recalling a time when gathering places for gay people usually reflected the attitude of self-loathing that was pervasive in the emerging gay community at that time.

"I don't like to be critical, but the bars were dingy and dirty and didn't provide security," Coleman says. "But they were there when there was no place else, and I'm grateful for that."

Nonetheless, Coleman knew it was time for an upgrade.

The main reason she and equally concerned friends opened Kindred Spirits, Coleman says, was to provide more security to people who, simply because they were seen walking into or out of a gay bar, could be targeted for robbery — or worse.

Coleman's decision to open Kindred Spirits was cemented after a friend was raped after walking to her car, following a night of partying in one of the neighborhood bars.

"She'd had to walk a couple of blocks," Coleman recalls, wincing. Requests to the bar's owner for additional security were denied, based on economic reasons. Besides, the owner told Coleman, the women should know better than to walk at night alone and should walk in groups.

"I said, 'What if they came alone or they didn't know anybody? Can't you provide someone to walk them to their car?'" Coleman says.

i MORE INFO

Kindred Spirits Reunion Celebration
April 29, 8 p.m.-1 a.m.
Edwin Hornberger Center
2151 W. Holcombe Blvd.
Houston, Texas 77030
\$20 advance tickets at House of Coleman
\$25 at the door
713-523-2521
www.kindredspiritshouston.org

AT THE DAWN OF THE '80S, COLEMAN saw a definite need for community in the community.

"It was time for caring for the individual, and paying attention and trying to be helpful," a trait pick up on by her staff, Coleman says.

Kindred Spirits first opened on Valentine's Day, 1980, to a packed house. Coleman says she chose that particular day so that people's hearts would be opened to that "spirit of caring."

Women who visited the club for the first time that night were greeted not by dark corners and boarded-over windows, but by live plants, works of art hanging from the walls, matching décor and, yes, ample parking with security.

People were mesmerized as they walked through the door, Coleman remembers. They would get as far as just inside the door, and be so surprised by the surroundings that they would just stop in their tracks, stunned.

"I had to keep moving them along," Coleman says.

"The atmosphere encouraged people to take care of it, and each other."

Evolving into something more than just a place to enjoy a cold beer and a game of pool, Kindred Spirits parlayed that feeling of community and caring into something much bigger, becoming a gathering spot for local politicians, sports groups and social clubs at a time when a GLBT community center was little more than a dream. It also became a gathering spot where leaders discussed the emergence of and their response to a new "gay cancer" that was infiltrating Houston's gay male community.

"We needed to care for each other," Coleman says.

ECONOMIC FACTORS WERE responsible for the closing of Kindred Spirits in 1989, but its impact on the lives of its patrons were evident when Coleman, at the urging of friends who missed the establishment, organized a reunion celebration in 2001.

In addition to people coming from



Kindred Spirits' alums, like Marion Coleman, keep the spirit of caring alive with reunions that benefit local organizations assisting Houston's gay and lesbian community. AssistHers, Bering Support Network, Houston Buyer's Club and Lesbian Health Initiative are receiving proceeds from this year's event.

Texas and the surrounding states, people also came from California, New Jersey, New Mexico, Massachusetts, New York, responding to the opportunity to get together with old friends and reminisce about a landmark period of their lives.

"They just couldn't believe there was going to be a Kindred Spirits reunion! They literally ran into each others' arms because they hadn't seen each other since Kindred Spirits closed!" Coleman recalls. "Some women dressed elegantly, and some dressed the way they normally dress — just like at the bar.

"And they couldn't believe we had ample, secure, free parking — just like at the bar," she says, reprising a familiar theme.

After that first reunion, Coleman received an abundance of letters begging her to continue the tradition.

Accordingly, the Kindred Spirits tradition continues Saturday with Terry Flores, owner of Bocado's Restaurant & Bar, reprising her role as DJ for the celebration. As in years past, there will also be a dance floor with free video games and pool. The evening will also feature a silent auction with items donated by area merchants and a montage of '80s era photos produced by Judy Woods projected on a large screen to jump-start individuals' memories of the club.

Other highlights of the evening, Coleman says, will be a raffle for a rainbow ring valued at \$6,000, donated by Michael Kemper Coiffures. Additionally, Joe Cummins, owner of Keys West nightclub, will be honored at the celebration for his ongoing assistance to the reunion parties and Houston's GLBT community.

out in houston



Thank you kindly

Bering Omega board members Frank Staggs, Dr. Mark Nichols, Dr. Bruce Smith, Ken Bohan, Dr. Ed Cordray and Earl Krieger at the group's volunteer recognition event at Stages Repertory Theatre.



Your art is better than ice cream

Dominick D'Aunno, Matt Harris and Alfred Padron at Matt Adams' art opening at Amy's Ice Cream.



More to love — and tip

Shy Anne and Chris Beck emcee the Krewe of Olympus' 'Big, Bold & Beautiful' show at the Brazos River Bottom.



The big 4-0

Philip Wattel (center) celebrates his 40th birthday bash with friends at Berryhill Montrose.



TG safety first

Houston Police Department's officer Cathy Burnett discusses personal safety with members of Tau Chi and other transgender groups. Also pictured, from left, are Jill, Terry, Frances, Gail, Peggy, April, Melanie, Ronnie, Chris and Leslie at Houston's GLBT Community Center.

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He loved his five children as well as Thomas's children beyond measure and inspired them to believe in themselves and their dreams, no matter what.

"I mostly will miss him every day when I wake up, and no longer hear his 'Good Morning!' But I pray for the day when I will hear it again.

I love you always, your partner, companion and lover."
 ~Thomas John Posas Conner

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Forum

editorial

Déjà bash all over again

The reminders came from as far away as the Caribbean, South America and Europe, and as close as the street where I work: two steps forward, and one step back.

By CHRIS CRAIN

THE REMINDERS WERE everywhere, even if I really didn't want them to be. There was the horrible news that CBS producer Dick Jefferson, who I know from years of traveling the same journalism circles, had his skull fractured in a vicious gay bashing earlier this month on the Caribbean island of St. Maarten. His friend and CBS colleague Ryan Smith suffered severe brain damage in the attack and is conscious but cannot speak.

When local police reacted with indifference, Jefferson called publicly on the Dutch government — St. Maarten is part of the Netherlands Antilles — to investigate the crime more aggressively. Since then, one suspect has been arrested and local law enforcement has placed newspaper ads seeking leads from the public.

Then last week, a group of swastika-toting skinheads who for weeks had been menacing the gay youth who gather on a quiet, tree-lined street in São Paulo, Brazil, had struck with unusual violence. Four youths were taken to the hospital, including one 22-year-old who remains in critical condition with repeated stab wounds to his chest.

These incidents remind me, even if I don't want to be, of what happened exactly one year ago this weekend, when my boyfriend and I were spat on and beaten up by a group of seven young men, probably Moroccan, who were angry that we walked the streets of Amsterdam holding hands.

Dick Jefferson's appeal this month to the Dutch government made perfect sense to me, since officials at all levels there took very seriously our attack last April, and local police immediately classified it a bias crime.

THE ATTACK IN SÃO PAULO SENT chills down my spine, and my boyfriend's as well, because we know that street all too well. Since my boyfriend returned to his native Brazil last fall, we have been staying together in a hotel on that street, just a few blocks away, every time we reunite.

We were there, on Rua da Consolação, earlier this month, and I smiled as always as we walked countless times past the throngs of young gay guys and girls who

gather on the sidewalks every weekend evening, many hugging, kissing and holding hands in a public way unimaginable to most gay Americans, not to mention most gay Brazilians.

My boyfriend didn't smile as much; he mostly shuddered, worrying aloud on more than one occasion about the danger these youths might face for daring to live by the same rules for public displays of affection followed by the rest of society.

The response by police and city officials in São Paulo has, so far at least, resembled much more their disinterested colleagues in St. Maarten than their more aggressive counterparts in Amsterdam.

Local gay activists had met with São Paulo officials just two days before the attack, warning that skinhead activity was on the rise in Jardins, the wealthy neighborhood that is home to Rua da Consolação, a number of gay bars, and the shopping and restaurant district that attracts most American and European tourists.

But the current city fathers aren't exactly gay-friendly. The mayor, José Serra, ousted an incumbent who had embraced the city's huge gay population, and he has already earned ire by refusing to grant permits for the massive Gay Pride parade in June, which was already moved once so as not to conflict with Brazil's first World Cup soccer match.

All eyes are on Serra now, to see whether he cares enough about his gay constituents, and the millions poured into the city's economy by gay visitors, to take the skinhead attacks more seriously.

THE REMINDERS THIS WEEK WEREN'T all negative. Amsterdam's mayor, Job Cohen, made headlines of a different sort last week by writing to his counterparts in eight other European cities, calling on them not to erect barriers to block gays from holding Pride parades and demonstrating.

Cohen had written my boyfriend and me last year to apologize for our attack, and he invited us at the city's expense to return last August for the legendary Amsterdam Gay Pride celebration — a weekend we won't soon forget. According to a BBC News report, his letter last week was the result of a city council motion expressing concern over a rise in anti-gay attacks in that most gay-friendly of cities.



One year after my boyfriend and I were beaten up for holding hands on the streets of Amsterdam (bottom), a friend's skull was fractured in the Dutch island territory of St. Maarten.

Since Cohen's letter was undoubtedly translated into Portuguese, since the mayor of Lisbon was among its recipients, Cohen should forward it to Mayor Serra in São Paulo as well. Because what Cohen understands, and we all need to remember, is the inherent connection between Gay Pride demonstrations, on the one hand, and gay bashings, on the other.

These attacks aren't just the product of hate; they are a form of backlash against gays everywhere being more assertive in seeking equality, and in simply living their lives. My boyfriend and I were spat on because we dared to hold hands in the street. We were beaten up because we dared to turn and (verbally) confront the spitter.

We all walk a fine line, of course, judging each situation in context. But if we cower back into the closet, keeping our hand-holding and cheek-kissing in private, then "they" win.

Reports from São Paulo are that one night after the attack, the number of gay youths who gathered Saturday night on Rua da Consolação was much, much smaller than normal. And that's exactly what the skinheads want.

The happiest reminder of all this week came from the street where I work, U Street in Washington, D.C., where I saw more gay couples holding hands on the sidewalk this week than any in memory.

Perhaps it was coincidence, but I prefer to think of it as progress.

Will you be a part of it?

@ Chris Crain is executive editor of *Houston Voice* and can be reached at ccrain@houstonvoice.com.



action alert

Raw deal for gays?

National sushi provider has ties to anti-gay Christian group

By BO SHELL

GAY SUSHI LOVERS MAY WANT TO think twice before picking up their chopsticks, as they could be indirectly supporting a controversial Christian group led by an outspoken anti-gay leader.

New Jersey-based True World Foods, with 21 North American branches, provides sushi-grade seafood products to 6,000 U.S. restaurants, according to its website, making it one of the largest sushi providers in the country.

But the website provides little information about the origins of the company and its link to religious leader and outspoken gay rights opponent Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who founded the Unification Church and whose followers are often called "Moonies."

Moon and his Unification Church own the Washington Times, a conservative publication that regularly publishes news articles with an anti-gay bias, including the use of quotation marks around the word "marriage" when applied to gay couples, even in places like Massachusetts where it is state-sanctioned.

In a June 2004 speech reported in the newspaper, Moon said gay people would be "eliminated."

"There will be a purge on God's orders, and evil will be eliminated like shadows. Gays will be eliminated, the three Israels will unite. If not, then they will be burned," Moon said. "How do gay people make love? How? You may know. Even animals don't do this. ... We must end the false viewpoint of human rights that is promoting homosexuality."

THE UNIFICATION CHURCH'S involvement with True World Foods was recently documented by the Chicago Tribune. In an article published April 11, the newspaper detailed speeches Moon made to his loyal followers.

Moon's 1980 "Way of Tuna" speech made clear his intentions to dominate the seafood market, one industry at a time. With the help of his followers, Moon delivered what he promised, building an empire of marine businesses: True World Marine for boats, True World Market for retail grocery supplies, True World Restaurant chains and True World Foods.

The Tribune reported that Moon is not only the author of the seafood strategy, but helped fund its start-up and served as director of one of its early companies.

The most direct connection, the Tribune reported, is that True World's boat manufacturing division, U.S. Marine Corp., shares its office with the church and lists the church as its major shareholder.

Rev. Phillip Schanker, a Unification Church spokesperson, told the Chicago Tribune that the seafood empire was "not organizationally or legally" connected to Moon's church, but they are "businesses founded by members of the Unification Church" in line with Moon's vision.



Rev. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, has been outspoken about opposing gay rights, but has kept under wraps his ties to the lucrative sushi-quality seafood company True World Foods. (Photo illustration by Bo Shell)

Neither True World Foods nor Schanker returned calls for comment.

OSAKA JAPANESE RESTAURANT IS located at 515 Westheimer Rd, in the heart of Montrose, Houston's gay hub. Since opening in 2002, the upscale restaurant has played host to many gay and lesbian organizations that choose the restaurant as a convenient location to have meetings, including the Houston chapter of the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association.

Andy Lee, a chef at Osaka, was surprised to learn of True World Food's anti-

gay connections, and was happy to say that Osaka does not purchase sushi from the company.

"I do not do business with them!" Lee said emphatically.

"We have freedom in this country and people should be able to do what they want," he added, in support of his many gay and lesbian customers.

@ ABOUT ACTION ALERT: Action Alert is a Forum section feature that informs readers of issues for response and lobbying. Send comments to forum@houstonvoice.com.

ACTION! INFO

True World Foods
32-34 Papetti Plaza
Elizabeth, NJ 07207
800-486-3474
www.trueworldfoods.com

THE
Q
Has "Will & Grace" done a good job of portraying gay life, or has it just perpetuated stereotypes?



"Will & Grace" opened doors to portray gay life. I really don't think it perpetuated stereotypes. It presented gay life.

JOE CULOTTA, 55
Houston
Artist



More times than not "Will & Grace" was quite stereotypical, but mainly from a man's perspective the way it portrayed the male characters.

KELLY ROWELL, 34
Perfusionist
Austin



Jack is portrayed as your stereotypical over the top gay man. Don't get me wrong — I love him! But I do not know a gay man who is that gay 24/7! Will is what I think is a typical gay man; the relationship he has with Grace is similar to what I had with my gay friends when I was married to a man.

SUZANNE HARRIS, 31
Student and bartender
Houston



Although it did not portray gay life well, it exposed millions of watchers to the variety of gays and lesbians who color our beautiful community. For that, I applaud "Will & Grace."

JOHN BUFFINGTON, 37
Office manager
Houston



The answer isn't black or white, but any positive portrayal of gay life is a good thing.

ERIC MILLER, 27
Consultant
Houston

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Interviews and photos by Dalton DeHart

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on the record



"You think gay people are great material. I think of a silent holocaust that continues to this day. I think of a silent holocaust that is perpetuated by people like you, who seek to minimize us and make fun of us and who I suspect really, fundamentally wish we would just go away."

Gay playwright **Jeff Whitty**, author of Broadway musical "Avenue Q," in an open letter to "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno accusing the comedian of telling anti-gay jokes (April 24)

"Tom Cruise was apparently there in the delivery room and said he had never in his life seen something anything more beautiful — which I think is how I think a lot of us feel the first time we see a vagina."

Talk show host **Bill Maher** on the birth of Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes' child (HBO's "Real Time," April 20)

"Do everything in your political power to open up marriage for same-sex couples and safeguard the right of public demonstrations in your city."

Amsterdam Mayor **Job Cohen** in a letter to the mayors of eight cities — Warsaw, Prague, Lisbon, Dublin and Vienna and the Baltic capitals of Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius — urging them to support gay rights (Agence France-Presse, April 24)

"The majority of men were disappointed that I was gay and the women couldn't care less. By the way, that is not good for your ego."

Gay Congressman **Barney Frank** (D-Mass.) on polling of his district after he came out in 1987 (Salt Lake Tribune, April 21)

"It's as if the primary concern of Rosie O'Donnell was presenting to the mainstream TV audience a scrubbed-up, politely tidy image of gay men and women — a portrait meticulously devoid of the drag queens, pierced nipples and campy vamping one often sees when a local TV station rushes off to cover a gay-themed event."

Washington Post TV critic **Tom Shales**, panning "All Aboard! Rosie's Family Cruise"; Shales referred to O'Donnell's partner, **Kelli Carpenter**, as "her current girlfriend" (April 6)



"Gay Republicans can be among the most homophobic of all Americans. ... Today the bottom line is that there simply is no excuse left for any gay man or woman to embrace a party whose prime agenda is to stop him or her from enjoying the same rights as every other American. Read George Bush's lips: The party doesn't want you. Can you hear that?"

Writer and blogger **Gene Stone**, as Log Cabin Republicans gather this weekend for their annual convention in Washington, D.C. (HuffingtonPost.com, April 24)

"The only thing distinguishing this musical from its late, unlamented predecessors is that the lead vampires play for the, er, other team. 'Lestat's' contribution to art and equality is demonstrating that a gay vampire with a two-octave range can be just as dull as a straight one."

Washington Post critic **Peter Marks** in a review of the new Broadway musical 'Lestat,' which features songs by **Elton John** (Washington Post, April 26)

"Even our chef, who's gay, was at a gay ski lodge, and some guy came up to him and said, 'Robin Williams is gay.' He goes, 'No, he isn't.' 'Oh, I know he is. ... I know people who've been with him.' They should tell me, because I don't remember."

Actor and comedian **Robin Williams**, denying rumors about his sexual orientation (GQ magazine, March issue)

"[I'm a] big fan of the puss. Always addicted to puss. Came from one."

Robin Williams, on the same topic (GQ, March issue)



eclipse

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retro tunes

k.d. lang twangs up the torch with her newest CD release, 'Reintarnation.'

PAGE 17

APRIL 28, 2006

The notorious P.A.G.E.

Director Mary Harron brings camp lesbian icon to big screen

By JOEY GUERRA

BETTIE PAGE WAS THE HIGH PRIESTESS of 1950s pin-ups, the frolicking fetish queen whose fashionably severe bangs and dangerous curves launched millions of male — and female — fantasies.

Half a century after her high-heeled heyday, Page remains an icon of intense interest. Biographies, comic books, playing cards, T-shirts and lunch boxes abound. Page's official website (www.BettiePage.com) has received 588 million hits over the last five years.

Director and screenwriter Mary Harron thinks she knows why.

"She represents something ... with female identity," says Harron, talking from her home in Brooklyn. "Growing up, you have different things that you're supposed to be. Everybody's putting different roles on you as a woman," she says.

"Is how you use your sexuality going to put you in danger? Is your sexuality going to make you submissive? Who controls it?"

Harron's previous credits include "I Shot Andy Warhol" and "American Psycho," bravura flicks featuring tour-de-force performances from Lili Taylor and Christian Bale, respectively.

Her Bettie Page opus features an equally compelling turn from Gretchen Mol, heretofore known for slim roles in a pair of Woody Allen films.

"People already knew about Lily, and Christian had been a child actor, but with Gretchen, because she's this beautiful starlet, she had the girlfriend role, minor roles. For this, she brought so much to it," Harron says. "I think directing actors is not about telling them what to do all the time. Part of it is if it's going right, don't get in the way, but also just creating an atmosphere in which they can go there."

"The Notorious Bettie Page" was co-written by Guinevere Turner, who also

scripted and starred in the modern lesbian classic, "Go Fish." Until recently, Turner portrayed Gabby Deveaux on Showtime's "The L Word" and served as one of the series' main writers.

"I think what girls get from Bettie is this great, triumphant, kind of play-acting she did," says Harron, who has also directed episodes of "Oz" and "The L Word."

"I think that girls like to be able to play without fear at being sexy or naughty or whatever."

THAT NAUGHTY-BUT-NICE CONTRAST is what makes "The Notorious Bettie Page" a unique movie-going experience.

The film follows Page as she leaves behind her strictly religious Nashville home and an abusive marriage for 1949 New York City. Once there, she catches the eye of a black police officer and part-time photographer, who asks her to pose for some impromptu pictures.

One quick hairstyle change later, and Bettie is the new face — and figure — of men's magazines.

"She was clearly somebody who was, by nature, very open-minded and non-judgmental, which I think was the other thing that I liked in her story," Harron says. "After all these bad things that happened to her, she somehow retained this openness."

At the same time of her seemingly overnight cheesecake celebrity status, Page begins taking acting lessons at a Greenwich Village studio. She is intent on becoming a serious actress, but movie parts and respectability elude her.

Page eventually does land a life-changing role, but it's likely not the one she initially aspired to. The naive girl from Tennessee crosses paths with Irving Klaw (Chris Bauer) and his half-sister Paula ("I Shot Andy Warhol"'s Taylor), whose Movie Star News sells Hollywood head shots and movie stills.

BEHIND THE GLAMOUR SHOTS, however, the Klawes run a private business for "special" clients, whose requests include photos of women in high-high boots, brandishing whips or tied up in mock terror.



Gretchen Mol has some very big pumps to fill in 'The Notorious Bettie Page,' her third feature film, which opens Friday, April 28, in select Houston theaters.

Page seems initially unsure what to make of the situation, but she dives in with energetic aplomb. She also collaborates with photographer Bunny Yeager (the breezily brittle Sarah Paulson) on a series of glamorous nude shots. Yeager captures one of Page's most famous photos — wearing a Santa hat and a smile — that becomes the January 1955 centerfold in the year-old Playboy magazine.

"One thing I wanted to contrast was ... that there was the world of real-life, bad sex experiences, real-life sexual danger, and then there's a protective world, almost like children's games," Harron says. "I think that [Bettie] felt when she was doing the photographs, she was in that protected world. I think she didn't want to think about the clients or men

taking these photographs home."

Harron frames the film with scenes of the 1955 hearings of the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, where Page was summoned to testify. She is unaware how her photographs fit into the bureaucratic puzzle. It's a perfect example of how, even after so much life experience, Page was still very much the deeply religious Southern girl with a dream of stardom.

"I already had a picture in my mind of where [Bettie] came from and a little sense of her background," Harron says. "People think of religion as one thing or the other. Like, if you're religious, you are puritanical. Clearly, [Bettie] stepped outside of the boundaries. She kind of thought for herself about her own religion."

DINING: A little thing like Hurricane Katrina isn't going to prevent the Jazzy Café from serving up good eats. **Page 15**

NIGHTLIFE: Led by its glamorous co-chairs, HRC Houston gets ready for its biggest night of the year. **Page 23**

houston nightlife JOHNNY HOOKS

Swamped by Saturday night parties

This weekend the gay 'hood offers fun in every price range

HEY KIDS, WHAT TIME IS IT?

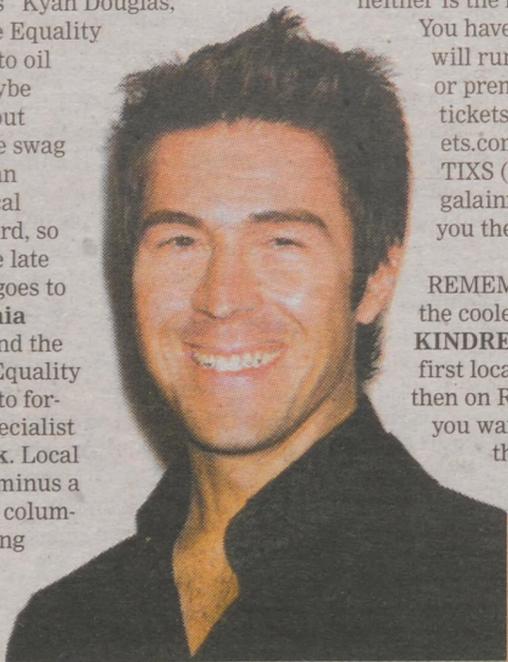
Well, it's springtime and right on cue our weather gives us one last show of seasonal temps we won't see until next year. Be warned, though. The scheduling gods and goddesses are throwing a lot at you on Saturday, April 29, but that means you can show off your snappy outfits to more peeps!

THE HIGHEST PROFILE AND VERY worthwhile event happening this weekend is the **HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN'S NINTH ANNUAL GALA**, this year with a roaring 1920s theme. Our local chapter recently won an award for their fabulous yearly event and it's easy to see why when you take a look at this year's special guests.

Not only is singing sensation and Grammy nominee **Oleta Adams** slated to appear but we also get to rub elbows with yummy "Queer Eye For the Straight Guy" style devo (a male diva!) **Kyan Douglas** and **George Takei**, the actor best known as Mr. Sulu from "Star Trek." Takei came out publicly earlier this year in a high profile interview with HotGG fave publication, California's *Frontiers Magazine*.

Their galas are always a grand affair, so do yourself and our community a favor if you are able and grab your finest black tie, little or not-so-little black dress and go! You can also opt for flapper or other roaring 1920s attire. The details for the gala follow: it's Saturday night, April 29 at 6 p.m. at the swank Hilton Americas-Houston, located at 1600 Lamar St.

Awards will be handed out to the following: The HRC Equality Award will go to "QEFTSG's" **Kyan Douglas**, the Corporate Equality Award going to oil giant BP (maybe they'll hand out free gas in the swag bags!) the John Walzel Political Equality Award, so named for the late great Walzel goes to Hon. **Senfronia Thompson** and the Community Equality Award going to former Army specialist **Tommy Cook**. Local media stars (minus a certain Voice columnist!) appearing are **Maria Todd** and **Atom Smasher** of



Along with a handful of high profile supporters, Human Rights Campaign Houston gala dinner dazzling co-chairs **Alton LaDay**, **Fiona Dawson** and **Matthew Burrus** welcome honorary co-chairs Bob Devlin and Houston diva and style maven Dr. Carolyn Farb. The 2006 gala governor is Thomas Downing.

radio's 104 KRBE, television's most beautiful anchor (sorry, Ms. Sachse) **Lisa Foronda** from KHOU-TV Channel 11, KPRC-TV Channel 2's most recent hire **Jerome Gray** and everyone's fave weather caster and ahem, big time supporter of gay rights **Frank Billingsley**, as well as **Gina Gaston** from KTRK-TV Channel 13.

Tickets are not cheap but remember neither is the fight for equality for all!

You have three choices: Patron will run you \$175, preferred \$275 or premium at \$375. To order tickets, visit www.boxofficetickets.com/hrc or call 1-800-494-TIXS (8497) or via Email at galainfo@hrchouston.org. See you there.

REMEMBER THE '80S? ONE OF the coolest bars was called **KINDRED SPIRITS**, that was first located Buffalo Speedway and then on Richmond at the Loop. If you want to kind of see what all the fuss was about, on Saturday, April 29

Queer and straight eyes alike will be on gorgeous **Kyan Douglas** at HRC Houston's gala. (Photo by Jennifer Graylock/AP)

Kindred Spirits is throwing a reunion from 8 p.m. until 1 a.m. \$25. Call 713-523-2521 or email ksreunions@aol.com.

DON'T FORGET **JUNIOR VASQUEZ** makes his Texas debut at Rich's this (when else!) Saturday, April 29. Online tickets are no longer available, but you may find some at still available at M2M Fashion, 3400 Montrose Blvd. and Hollywood Supercenter at 807 Fairview Ave. Full price tickets are available at the front door during the event. 2401 San Jacinto St.

NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY different. AIDS Foundation Houston's **MUKURU "ARTS FOR AIDS"** series presents "Love Triangle: The Music of Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms" on Sunday, April 30. This concert features the Three Romances for Violin and Piano by Clara Schumann, the Sonata in E Minor for Cello and Piano by Johannes Brahms, and the Piano Quartet in E-Flat by Robert Schumann.

All proceeds will benefit Houston through the Community Partnerships in HIV Prevention Program, developed by AFH. For concert and ticket information, please visit www.mukuru.org. 7 p.m. at Christ the King Lutheran Church, 2353 Rice Blvd. \$20 at the door, students \$10 with valid student ID.

appts.

FRIDAY

APRIL 28

DIVA MONTHLY HOUSE CONCERTS presents singer/songwriter Martine Locke. 5-10 p.m. Proceeds benefit KPFT. \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. GLBT Community Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd. www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org.

SATURDAY

APRIL 29

THE MIDTOWN FARMERS MARKET, a homegrown market, and intimate, friendly and community-based operation, presents live music with Smythe and Taylor. Support the hard-working local farmers. 8 a.m. 'til noon, 3701 Travis St. 713-524-6922.

LEGACY COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES, formerly the Montrose Clinic, is holding a garage sale in their parking lot at the 215 Westheimer Rd. location from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Check out their treasures, and Legacy will be offering free Ora-quick rapid HIV tests from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Free hot dogs with every test. 713-830-3000

Local gay authors **TIMOTHY JAMES BECK** (Timothy Lambert, Jim Carter, and Becky Cochrane) and Greg Herren sign their latest books at Borders Books, 3025 Kirby Dr. 7:30 p.m. 713-524-0200.

Volunteers are needed for THE HOUSTON EQUAL RIGHTS ALLIANCE (HERA) at the Human Rights Foundation Houston's gala. All volunteers are invited to attend the After Party at the hotel when the gala is over. Breakfast, lunch and dinner will be provided for volunteers during the day and in the evening of the gala. Email: volunteer@houstonera.org or phone 713-522-HERA. www.houstonera.org.

SUNDAY

APRIL 30

Catch "PEACE FROM THE PORCH" who'll be performing and selling their CDs at the International Festival. The line up is Beth Wood, Julie Lloyd, Erika Luckett and Susan Gibson. All proceeds go to the Houston Women's Shelter. Advance discount tickets are \$10 at Houston area H-E-B locations and online at ifest.org. Tickets at the gate are \$12. Children under 10 are free. 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Downtown Houston at Bagby St., upper and lower Sam Houston Parks, Tranquility Park and Allen Parkway.

THURSDAY

MAY 4

Emmy nominated "INNERVIEWS WITH ERNIE MANOUSE" airs locally every Thursday evening at 11 p.m. on Houston PBS, Channel 8. Supermodel IMAN is in the interview hotseat this week.



Legendary supermodel **Iman**, without her legendary bisexual husband David Bowie, has a face-to-face this week with PBS's legendary Ernie Manouse. (Photo by Richard Drew/AP)

dining J.A. CHAPMAN

Let the good food roll

Katrina blows Jazzie Café's taste of New Orleans into Houston

THE BRIGHT RED HOUSE WITH THE yellow and blue trim almost seems out of place on this industrial stretch of 19th Street. But it's a welcome sight for the many businesses in the area, whose employees are already keeping the Jazzie Café busy at lunchtime.

Opened by a hurricane Katrina evacuee, Jazzie Café serves up simple New Orleans favorites and a few Asian dishes as a nod to her Vietnamese heritage. Focusing primarily on hot wings and po-boys, the food is well prepared and comes in generous portions.

The classic shrimp po-boy (\$6.99) is a good place to start. The fresh, crispy shrimp are battered in house and fried just before serving. The eleven-inch French bread sub is so loaded with shrimp that they topple out as soon as the wrapper is unrolled. The po-boy is made with lettuce, tomato, pickle and mayo, but cocktail sauce and ketchup are available as well. It's a well-executed version of a classic.

For something a little meatier, try the

roast beef po-boy (\$5.99). A generous helping of marinated, thick sliced beef is fried on the grill and loaded into the fresh French bread sub. The usual toppings are available. The beef po-boy is full of flavor and an unexpected gem at Jazzie Café.

Hot wings are available in six, twelve or eighteen piece servings (\$3.19/\$5.69/\$8.19), and as combos with side dishes. The wings are large and meaty, and the vivid red coating is hot but not overpowering. They're a gooey, drippy, delicious mess. Unfortunately, they're served with a disappointingly anemic ranch dressing on the side, which adds little to the experience.

Appetizers and side dishes are a mixture of the usual and the unusual. Fries (\$1.59) and onion rings (\$1.69) are nothing remarkable. Both are perfectly serviceable versions of these standards. Be forewarned — the fries are loaded with salt, which seems to be something of a trend at Jazzie Café.

Boudin links (\$2.59) are available as an appetizer. They're imported from New Orleans, as the supplier in Houston didn't live up to expectations. Available in both pork and crawfish, they're soft, meaty and boast a slight heat that sneaks up on you.

No Louisiana style restaurant would be complete without gumbo (\$3.99) and Jazzie Café offers a reasonable chicken



Jazzie Café offers homesick hurricane evacuees and nostalgic New Orleans fans a familiar taste of New Orleans cuisine.

and sausage version. The gumbo itself is thick with a dark undertone from the roux, and has plenty of chicken, sausage and chunks of celery. Unfortunately it's served with more rice than anything else, making it a bit of a disappointment.

Hungry folks should give the platters a try. They're large enough to feed two, easily. The fried catfish on the catfish platter (\$7.99) is outstanding. Two large catfish fillets are hand battered and fried quickly. The fish is fresh and tender, and the coating is crispy, light and full of flavor. I intended to stop at one fillet, and couldn't help but finish them both.

The platters come with fries or fried rice, salad and toast. The rice is fried in a wok just before serving with your choice of shrimp or chicken. The shrimp are tiny little



Jazzie Café
1221 West 19th St.
Houston, TX 77008
713-426-5299

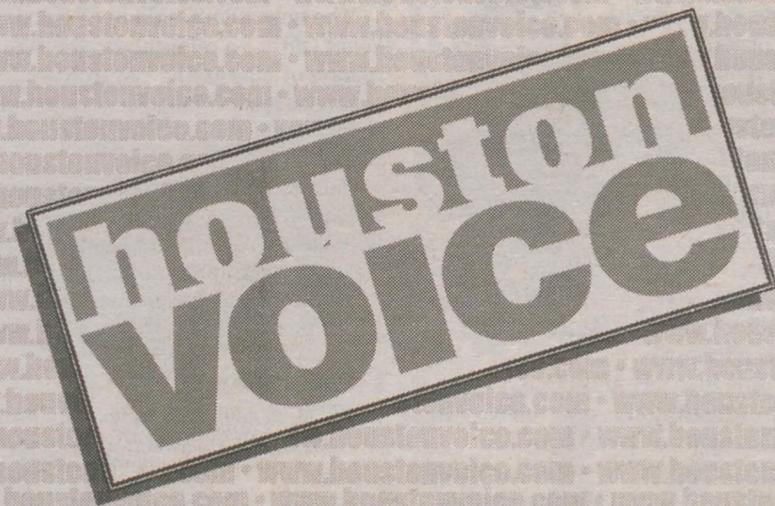
Food: 10 | 10 | 10 | 10
Service: 10 | 10 | 10 | 10
Value: 10 | 10 | 10 | 10
Scene: 10 | 10 | 10 | 10
☛ = Stay home and eat cereal
10 | 10 = Well, if you really must
10 | 10 | 10 = Fine for all but the finicky
10 | 10 | 10 | 10 = Worth more than a 20-minute drive
10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 = As good as you'll find in this city

red things that add a lot of color to the salty fried rice. The few pieces of iceberg lettuce and tomato slice that constitute the salad and the limp fried toast aren't impressive.

But, oh, that catfish. It's worth a visit just to give it a try.

Open only a few months, Jazzie Café is a work in progress. Two inside tables offer limited seating, and the outdoor dining area isn't quite ready yet. If it's a busy lunchtime, the small window air conditioning unit might not quite be able to keep up. But it's a cheerful place, with festive New Orleans-inspired pieces on the wall.

Jazzie Café is a fresh start for some New Orleans folks, but it's also another place for Houstonians to get good quality New Orleans food.



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-Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE

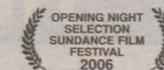
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-Kenneth Turan, LOS ANGELES TIMES



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dish

 There's a Fine Line Between Telling the Truth and Talking Trash

Fightin' words

Jay Leno gets dissed, Sully's gaydar fails him and Janet leads the 'Glamorous Life'

Dish has never liked JAY LENO because of his slightly horsey face and washed-up frat boy attitude, but JEFF WHITTY, gay author of the fab and twisted puppet musical "Avenue Q," takes it to a whole new level.

Whitty, fed up with Leno's tired gay jokes, wrote an open letter to the late night show host available on Whitty's website, www.whitless.com.

"When you think of gay people it's funny," writes Whitty to Leno. "They wear leather. They like Judy Garland. ... Gay people, to you, are great material."

Whitty then goes on list all the things that gay people are to him, and it's a pretty sad list. Beatings, name-calling and suicide are what he associates with gay folks.

"I think of a silent holocaust that continues to this day," the letter reads. "I think of a silent holocaust that is perpetuated by people like you, who seek to minimize us and make fun of us."

False reporting

No matter what some bitter victims of Dish's watchful eye might think, she gets her facts straight, which is not always the case with gay conservative Time blogger, ANDREW SULLIVAN.

On April 11, Sullivan wrote that the new Out magazine editor, Aaron Hicklin, is straight.

"I think it's great that a straight guy is now heading up a gay magazine," writes Sullivan. "Integration is now the baseline from which many of us operate."

But, of course, you're wrong, my little Republican Tory. Aaron Hicklin is gayer than pink tea. So much for integration.

Janet's countdown

Gay icon JANET JACKSON thrilled fans this week after re-launching her website (www.janet-jackson.com) complete with a personal message promising a new album this fall. But what really has fans buzzing is the inclusion of a countdown clock on the site, ticking down to noon on May 1. When the clock hits zero, Janet promises a big surprise to be



Andrew Sullivan



Jay Leno gets a tongue lashing from the gay author of 'Avenue Q,' Jeff Whitty, for telling too many gay jokes. (Photo by Sven Arnstein/NBC)

revealed exclusively on the site.

Could it be Janet's other breast will be revealed? News of a rumored duet with Mariah Carey?

Or maybe a marriage announcement to beau Jermaine Dupri?

The online buzz is that Janet will likely unveil a snippet of her new single due out this spring.

The new album, said to be titled "20 Years Old" — a reference to the 1986 release of smash hit "Control" — promises lots of dance beats and old-school Janet choreography, according to Dupri.

Janet's longtime producer Jimmy Jam was quoted as saying the debut single will feature a sample of Sheila E's "Glamorous Life." Sounds fierce to Dish.

And remember, girls, without love, it ain't much.

Prison buddies

While prison porn is terribly un-PC, it's still totally hot, even in soft-core scenes from HBO's "OZ."

In a remarkable twist of fate, Matthias von Fistenberg, one of the owners of Dark Alley Media, a gritty porn production company, experienced the prison scene from the inside.

While filming a new skin flick at a private estate in upstate New York, police popped in and took Fistenberg and two actors to the slammer after accusing them of "public lewdness."

Fistenberg said he had a grand old time in the big house.

"I ended up jerking off in the cell," he said. The cleaning crew must be thrilled.

The producer was ultimately released after paying a \$100 fine.



Janet Jackson

@ Send comments, suggestions to
Dish@houstonvoice.com

music BUCK C. COOKE

'Reintarnation' reflection

Singer k.d. lang ambles easily back toward her country-western roots

WHEN K.D. LANG BROKE INTO THE music scene more than 20 years ago, the Canadian crooner brought a new sound to country music, blending traditional flavor and a knockout voice with her own flair for songwriting and performance. She immediately garnered critical acclaim and won legions of fans.

Collecting songs from the first decade of her career, "Reintarnation" is an excellent opportunity for newer fans to catch up on lang's roots, while offering long-time fans a chance to look back. The collection blends foot-stomping tunes fit for a hoedown with ballads of longing and lang's trademark vocals.

In 1983, lang pressed only 500 copies of her first single, "Friday Dance Promenade," and sold them at concerts and live gigs. This song, a tribute to her hero Patsy Cline, is included on "Reintarnation," bringing it to a broad audience for the first time.

Long compared to the legendary Cline,

lang is definitely a worthy successor with clear-as-glass vocals and emotion that drips from every note.

Two songs were taken from lang's first album, 1984's "A Truly Western Experience." "Hanky Panky" was made for the dance floor — square dance, that is. The track is a rollicking good time as lang kicks up her heels and sets toes tapping. "Pine and Stew" is a ballad from the same album with some tongue-in-cheek lyrics.

THREE SONGS FROM "ANGEL WITH A Lariat," lang's major-label debut in 1987, made the cut for "Reintarnation," including the title track. It is an up-tempo love song ideal for swinging your baby around the dance floor. "Turn Me 'Round" is a rockabilly number about a rocking square dance.

"Diet of Strange Places" is quintessential lang, with equal parts country twang and powerful vocals. On this track, lang gives listeners a taste of what "Constant Craving" would prove once and for all years later: This woman is a vocal powerhouse to beat nearly all competition. She can make even the coldest heart warm with her big notes and commanding presence, even in a recording.

Only one song was taken from 1988's "Shadowland," which was filled with coun-

try standards. "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes" is a gorgeous update of a country classic. Since the album was incredibly well-received by critics and fans (certified as Gold), it is somewhat surprising that only one song was included on "Reintarnation."

A whopping seven songs were taken from "Absolute Torch and Twang," originally released in 1989. lang would go on to win a Grammy for Best Female Country Vocalist for this album. "Big Boned Gal," "Pulling Back the Reins," "It's Me," "Luck in My Eyes," "Big Big Love," "Trail of Broken Hearts" and "Nowhere to Stand" are included.

Three songs are taken from the soundtrack to "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues," the 1993 motion picture directed by gay Hollywood bigwig Gus Van Sant. lang and longtime collaborator Ben Mink wrote the songs for the soundtrack. "Don't Be a Lemming Polka" and "Cowgirl Pride" appear alongside "Curious Soul Astray," which is one of the most haunting tracks on this collection. Her vocals are chilling, and her longing is almost palpable.

UNLIKE MANY RECENT RETROSPECTIVES, "Reintarnation" only contains one unreleased song. "Change My Mind" was dropped from a project 20 years ago, but lang and Mink completed it for this collection. The lack of new material might



With her new CD, 'Reintarnation,' k. d. lang celebrates her sense of self, her creative clarity, and the roots of her successful career.

disappoint some, but the old tracks stand the test of time and still sound fresh.

This collection reminds us how strong lang always was — as a vocalist, songwriter, performer and just plain maverick. Before Melissa Etheridge, Ellen DeGeneres or Rosie O'Donnell, she paved the way for lesbian entertainers to be themselves, no matter the consequences.

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horoscope JENNIFER SHEPARD

The Lipstick Mystic™



Aries (March 21–April 19): The new moon in your sign has you venturing off in an unusual direction. Blonde bombshell Heather Locklear is rumored to be playing tonsil hockey with non-bombshell David Spade. And Will Smith's actress wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, is touring with her heavy metal band. Don't be afraid to make your own 180 degree turn. If you're the micromini chick, try a Mumu. If you date one gender, give the other a go.



Taurus (April 20–May 20): Gwyneth Paltrow's infant has been saddled with the name Moses. Tom Cruise's new daughter is named Suri. Brooke Shield's new baby is burdened with Grier Hammond Henchy. Somebody, stop the madness! Jupiter is making you obsess about all that is wrong with society. Cargo pants give guys a stupid droopy-drawers look. And every pair of low-rise jeans must be immediately burned. They give skinny girls a too-much-Haagen-Dazs tummy bulge.



Gemini (May 21–June 21): Brad Pitt has gotten a tattoo on his lower back. The Buddhist drawing is in honor of Brad becoming an adoptive dad Angelina Jolie's kiddies Maddox and Zahara. As Saturn traverses along, you could undergo your own transformation. You'll get a piercing in a painful and private place. You'll schedule an operation to have those man-breasts removed (Hint: when they're bigger than a B cup, it's time for a reduction).



Cancer (June 22–July 22): Meg Ryan cleared up her reputation as a home-wrecker during an interview with Allure. When asked if ex-hubby Dennis Quaid had cheated on her, she mouthed, "Yes!" Mars is inspiring you to stand up for yourself just like Meg. If your honey deserves blame, let him have it. "If you hadn't taken the job at the pastry factory and started bringing home free Devil Dogs, I never would have gotten this fat!"



Leo (July 23–Aug. 22): Molly Ringwald guest stars in a May episode of NBC's "Medium." Give this brat packer her own show, already. You miss the quirky "Pretty in Pink" star. Venus is stirring up longing for pop trends long gone. Get out those Pet Shop Boys albums (they have a new one coming out, you know). Dig in your drawers for your off-the-shoulder "Flashdance" shirts and legwarmers. If you're going to be nostalgic, you might as well go the whole hog.



Virgo (Aug. 23–Sept. 22): Kevin Federline told Spin magazine "I ain't getting' no divorce. F*** that!" And despite criticism that she's "too pretty" to play author Jane Austen, Anne Hathaway has signed on to play the writer in an upcoming film. The sun is helping you ignore criticism, just like Kevin and Anne. Who cares if your roommates are complaining about that all-bean diet you're trying? It's just a little gas.



Libra (Sept. 23–Oct. 23): The new moon opposite your sign is putting your empathy in overdrive. You're worried about Eddie Murphy's kids. His divorce from his wife Nicole just came through. What's going to happen to their five kids? And you're bummed that 16-year-old Kevin Covais was voted off of "American Idol." You were a big fan of the oddball "Chicken Little" songster. Sniff.



Scorpio (Oct. 24–Nov. 21): Steven Spielberg is going to collaborate with Chinese director Zhang Yimou on the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Jupiter is challenging you to push boundaries in your own career. Try for a two dollar an hour raise instead of fifty cents. Petition the human resources department to give you your own parking spot. Don't take, "No," for an answer.



Sagittarius (Nov. 22–Dec. 21): Scarlett Johansson and Josh Hartnett were photographed frolicking in Jamaica. They've been dating for a while, so maybe their relationship will last longer than the usual celebrity hookup. Optimistic Venus is showing you that anything is possible. Maybe you will lose that extra ten pounds or you might finally realize your dream of becoming a weather girl or traffic reporter. With the cosmic portents in your favor, don't rule anything out.



Capricorn (Dec. 22–Jan. 19): Michael Jackson, who has been living in Bahrain, is teaming up with a Bahraini music label to record an album. He's says he's happy to be in the studio making music again. Is a recording studio more fun than a courtroom? Mars is compelling you to push ahead with projects that might be ill-advised. Are the networks really going to go for your reality show pitch about the secret lives of hamsters?



Aquarius (Jan. 20–Feb. 18): Katie Holmes' father once blurted out that his daughter's pregnancy was a "Rosemary's Baby" situation. A few weeks later it was reported that some of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard's sperm was being stored on ice somewhere. Are these two things related? Should Katie put Mia Farrow on her speed dial so she can consult her for tips on raising the spawn of Satan — er, Scientology? Neptune has you contemplating the supernatural.



Pisces (Feb. 19–March 20): You might have a chance to become the new Mistress of the Dark. Cassandra Peterson, otherwise known as Elvira, will be passing on the mantle in a reality show. Contestants will compete for the chance to play Elvira for a full year. Pluto is stirring up that fascination with the dark side. But before you bite the heads off of bats, find out if you just need extra protein in your diet.

arts cover story

Vasquez kicks crystal meth, emerges strong

VASQUEZ, continued from Page 1

to methamphetamine, commonly known as crystal meth.

"It was pretty brutal. I was supposed to be on my way to Miami, through Houston, and then back to New York. My body, my brain wouldn't take anymore. I just collapsed when I got off the plane," Vasquez says. "That was the last of it for me. I've been clean a year and a couple of months now."

Today, Vasquez says he is "approaching life differently," which includes balancing his time wisely and daily gym workouts. Vasquez also lends time to Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) and is slated to be part of a crystal meth awareness campaign this summer.

A new day, indeed. But even as he approaches 60, the dance-floor deity shows no signs of slowing down the groove.

i MORE INFO

Junior Vasquez
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Junior Vasquez Music launched in 2000, and its stable of artists includes hot male vocalist Jason Walker, who has scored a slew of hits on Billboard Magazine's Club Play chart. Vasquez recently wrapped work on a new disc from gospel/house diva Vernessa Mitchell, and he presides over a weekly XM Satellite Radio show, 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. CST Saturdays.

"I have time to relax and do things that I like, but it's not about thinking back, where I've been," says Vasquez, who was born Donald Mattern in Pennsylvania. "I'm an absolute person of today. I'm just an in-the-moment person. I don't reflect, and I don't really look that far ahead."

Vasquez's spine-tingling remix catalog also continues to grow, with classics from Whitney Houston ("Step By Step"), Toni Braxton ("He Wasn't Man Enough"), Madonna ("Secret," "Bedtime Story") and Mary J. Blige (the endlessly elegant "Your Child") still guaranteed to pack a dance floor.

CURRENT PROJECTS INCLUDE reconstructed tracks for Pink, R&B starlets Keyshia Cole and Tiffany Evans, Bette Midler and a much-buzzed-about, as-yet-unnamed comeback single for Kylie Minogue, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in May 2005. Vasquez also produced longtime friend Kristine W. on a remake of

Diana Ross' disco classic "The Boss."

Hometown superstar Beyonce is proving to be Vasquez's latest diva obsession. His remix of her Pink Panther solo hit "Check On It" topped DJ playlists, and he recently reworked "Naive," a duet from little sis Solange's otherwise forgotten solo disc that should soon be equally ubiquitous.

The Destiny's Child track "Stand Up For Love" is a highlight of Vasquez's White Party 7 disc, an energetic compilation that features Deborah Cox, Amuka, "Someone to Hold" singer Veronica, Walker and Cissy Houston (Whitney's mom and a diva in her own right).

It serves as a perfect primer for Vasquez's newly focused energy.

"It was my first White Party album. I didn't want it to be dark. Not for any particular reason, but it's a gay album," Vasquez says. "It's for queens, so I just wanted it be totally that. I know from my being gay, my whole experience with circuit parties and that whole kind of music, it's up, and it's vocals, and you sing it. Those things haven't changed."

DESPITE SO MUCH DEMAND FOR HIS work, Vasquez continues to set new goals. He says he's "still on a mission to win a Grammy," among other things.

"I'd like to do songs for movies," he adds.

"Also, there is a reality show now being worked around my whole DJ thing. As you go along in life, things present themselves."

Reality shows, in fact are another Vasquez obsession. His must-see TV includes MV's spoiled-rich-girl serial, "My Super Sweet 16" and C-list carnival "The Surreal Life." And he blames it all on his own sweetheart.

"I have a boyfriend who's 24, and he lives for all that stuff," Vasquez says. "He got me into the reality shows. Those shows are hysterical. I hate to say that I like them."

"I can't miss 'American Idol.' I was so upset because I just was in Australia, and I missed it. Thank God I could record and watch it. I wouldn't talk to anyone so they wouldn't tell me who was tossed. I'm so into that show."

He likes rugged Chris Daughtry, by the way, but bets buxom chanteuse Katharine McPhee will take home the "Idol" prize.

Topping Vasquez's reality rundown, however, is another decidedly American-made "talent" competition.

"America's Next Top Model" — It's fun to watch because Tyra's so funny to watch," he says. "I've had a crush, all my life, on [fashion icon and "Top Model" judge] Twiggy. I would probably faint if I would ever cross her path. She's, like, the ultimate. If I could ever work with her in any kind of way ... That to me is, like, my God."

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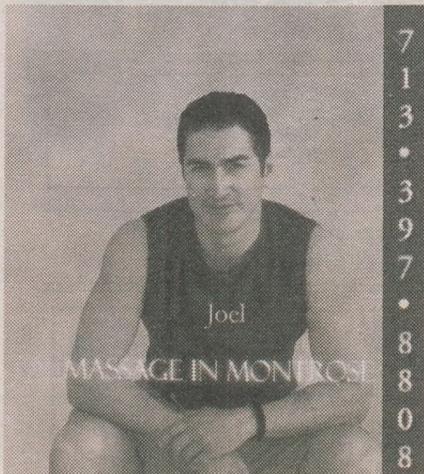
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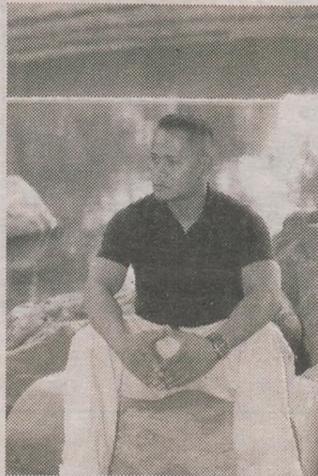
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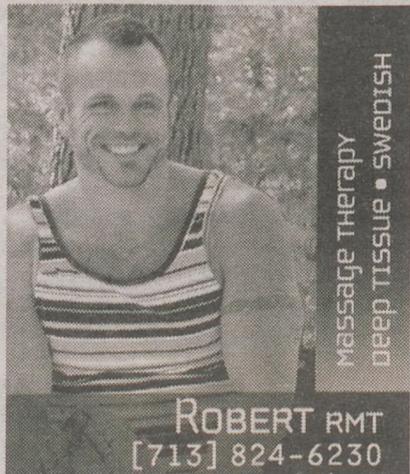
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I AM SO TIRED OF GAY MEN. ALL I want is a faithful relationship with a nice man who wants a commitment, and that seems to be impossible to find!

HOW CAN YOU DUMP SOMEONE who loves and cares for you after a year and a half in an e-mail, just because I was too sick to go with you on vacation?

WHY DO SO MANY OF YOU KIDS insist on using the word "curious" in your online screen names? Puhleeze, you're sluttier than the rest of us combined!

SOMEONE WHO REGULARLY SUBMITS bitches needs to find a synonym for "vipers." We get it already: You're bitter. Find a new way to express it.

HAVING SHORT HAIR AND BAD fashion sense doesn't make her radically gender-bending and therefore interesting! Face it, your girl's closer to a hillbilly dud than an edgy urbanite!

YOU CAN RUN TO ANOTHER country to live, but you're not "free" even if you can get married. You should have stayed here and fought the good fight.

To the butch dyke who said, "The world could end tomorrow. We should take advantage of it." Sweetie, if the world ended tomorrow, why would I spend it with you?

THE REASON THE GAY MEN YOU notice are either hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine is that those are the ones you notice.

TO THE PHYSICIAN WHO TREATS a lot of HIV patients and tells them to get off their lazy ass because they're healthy but receive disability: Remember those who might look healthy but are really sick! **Bitch Boy responds:** Let's hope the physician doesn't judge people simply based on appearance! After all, that's my job!

TO THE LESBIAN WHO WISHES Bitch Boy were a woman: I'm sure he's more than half-way there already, honey. With a little surgery, he can go all the way and join the trannies. Snip, snip Bitch Boy!

I REMEMBER MY FATHER HAVING a threesome with sheep while I was growing up. At least the sheep couldn't sue for child support.

WHY DO GAY MEN SAY THEY ARE "straight-acting?" You're either masculine or you're not. Being gay doesn't automatically equal being feminine.

WHEN YOU SEE WHAT I LOOK like, I'm too young for you, but when I state my age, I'm suddenly too old for you. Care to tell me which it is?

TO THE BITCH WHO ASKED WHY straight men can't shop for their own underwear: If it's not electronic, automotive, athletic or alcoholic, straight men hate to shop! Wise up!

"BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN" ISN'T advocating safe sex and is not a positive representation of the gay community. Didn't you see they were bare-backing!

NOTHING IS MORE DISTURBING than a superficial gay guy driving an expensive gas guzzling SUV. You might as well be a Republican.

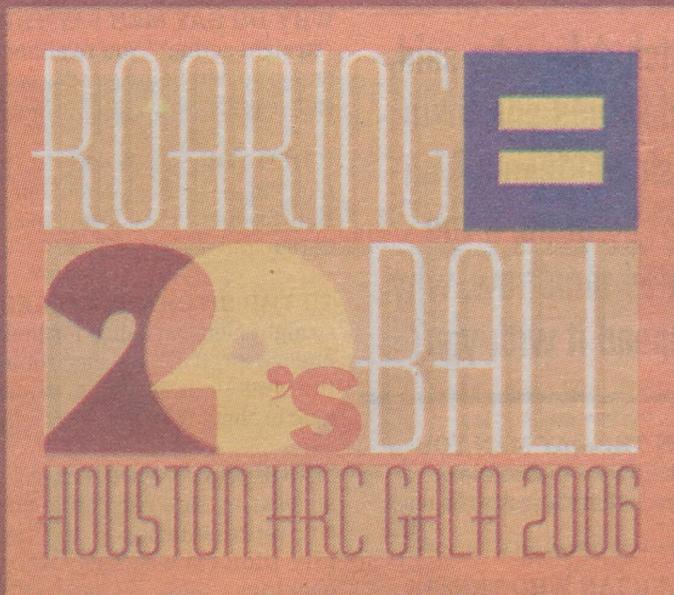
NO ONE WANTS TO HEAR YOU bitch about how the wine doesn't go with the meals, especially the one who brought it to your crappy "potluck" dinner.

Editors' note: These are real bitches, sent in by real readers, about gay life's little annoyances, and the big ones, too. Got a bitch? Call 1-800-858-8088 or e-mail: bitch@houstonvoice.com

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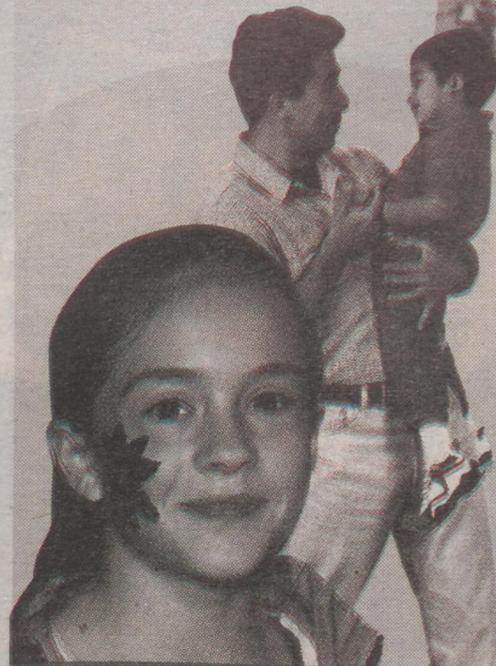
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