

SPECIAL "COPA" SECTION, PAGE 9

New research says sexual orientation is learned, not in-born. Story on page 3.

STAR NEWSPAPER CHAIN

MONTROSE STAR

Houston's Free Weekly Gay Newspaper / Issue #136 / April 20, 1979



MARILYN



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Travel

Tucson is nice, but small

Tucson, Arizona's second-largest city, has, since its cowtown days, had phenomenal growth and now boasts a metropolitan population of half a million — about a quarter the size of Houston. Size, however, is not this city's selling point; the weather is. There's sunshine year 'round.

My brother Norrie was born someplace in Arizona called Safford — wherever that is. Our paternal grandparents settled here back in 1912. That's before statehood and one of my most vivid childhood memories is when my great uncle would tell me hair-raising tales of warring cowboys and Indians.

Today, there are still some cowboys and quite a few Indians around, but, if anything, they're more apt to be balling than warring.

Tucson's gay circuit is unique in that it has more adult male bookstores than bars — and some are something more than bookstores. For example, take Caesar's at 2500 N. Mirale Mile. It has a very cruisy back room which truck drivers and other macho males frequent in the late afternoons.

Book Brothers, the Book Cellar, Fun Tyme and Pleasure World's four locations are also worth checking out, whether you're seeking erotica or seeking to be erotic.

Although the bar scene here is a little less sophisticated than Phoenix, it is a friendly western city and you should be able to find whatever you are looking for.

Dale's Graduate at 23 W. Third (University) is the oldest gay bar of note and has a cruisy cocktail hour. The clientele includes some "cowpokes," Latins, visiting bikers and older guys.

The battle of the discos is concentrated between the Joshua Tree/Back Pocket complex at 2921 N. First Avenue and Jekyll and Hyde's (also called the Last Culture) at 1455 N. Miralce Mile Road.

Joshua Tree gets some humpy numbers but is closed Sunday and Monday. The adjoining Back Pocket, in the rear, is open daily and serves lunches and dinners.

Jekyll and Hyde's opened a couple of years ago and was an instant success. It was recently sold and the new owners decided to call it the Last Culture, but this name hasn't caught on and it's still referred to usually as Jekyll's. It gets a young collegiate crowd of both guys and gals, plus a few drag queens because of the weekly shows.

Hair Tiz is a downtown type of bar situated in the sleezy-looking MacArthur Hotel at 345 E. Toole. This same hotel also houses a wild after-hours club for males called the Toole Box, which is a private club where you can take your own booze and get lost (or found) in a maze of pitch black corridors and

cubby holes. There's lots of action here and it's not the sort of place to tell your mother about. For admission, inquire next door at Hair Tiz.

For regular lodging, I prefer the Sheraton-Pueblo Inn or Royal Inn to the shabby MacArthur or X-rated Curve Inn.

And for good straight dining try Bobby McGee's Conglomeration, Cork'n Cleaver, La Cucina, La Fuente (Mexican), Palomino's, Woody Mercer's Cowboy or the posh Tack Room at Rancho del Rio. The latter is one of only ten Mobil five-star restaurants in America, and you'll need lots of cash or a credit card with an unlimited ceiling.

First-time visitors may want to see the University of Arizona campus, Mission San Xavier del Bac, Saquaro National Monument, nearby Nogales, Mexico or cruisy Himmel Park.

More timely information is available in Arizona Gay News, the weekly gay newspaper that serves Tucson and Phoenix. Copies are available free at most gay businesses.

But don't miss Tucson ... a great place to enjoy your share of fun in the sun.

BOB DAMRON

ON THE COVER is Lucky Ladd. (Now would we lie to you about something as important as a name?) He's just someone we put on the cover to grab your attention. (See, it worked.) Photo by James Jason.

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BarTalk

Art Festival is this weekend

Bar Talk appears as a matter of courtesy to Montrose Star advertisers.

There are two major *major* events this weekend, friends.

One, this is the weekend for the twice-a-year Westheimer Colony Art Festival and, two, this is the opening weekend for the new Copa Disco. Goodness.

o All up and down Westheimer Saturday and Sunday (if it doesn't rain), there will be booths selling gadgets and gimmicks, along with special shows and other goodies at Montrose gay clubs.

Mary's, the Silver Phoenix and the Venture-N have gone in together and will operate not one, but two (count 'em, two) booths, selling 50¢ beer (which you can take with you) and offering special prizes, games and balloons.

They'll have one booth set up next to Mary's (naturally) and the other in the parking lot at Numbers.

o The Midnite Sun, too, will have its own booth, in front of the club ... and inside: Super Shows with Cheree', Jerry Vanover, Maude Finley, Eartha Kitt, Donna Day, Burgundy Woods and Scarlet Fever. Shows will be both Saturday and Sunday, 2:00, 4:00, and 6:00 p.m. ... and with constant disco between, before and after, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. Wonderful!

o Other Montrose clubs will also be having their own specials, for sure, so check with your favorite.

o The Copa is here. Officially, it opens this weekend (Friday night, 8:00 p.m., 2631 Richmond) and will be open seven nights a week.

Unofficially, the Copa opened last Tuesday for a private preview party, attended by Houston's sexiest men. This issue of the Star has a special section on the Copa, starting page 9, including photos from that Tuesday night party.

Gene Howle and Lynn Ganey, the owners, have a number one, super club on their hands!

Deejay duties are handled jointly by Wayne Barton (the same Wayne Barton from the old Farmhouse clubs) and Ram Rocha (the same Ram Rocha who owns Ram's Records, is disco music editor for the Montrose Star, and formally dee-

CONTINUED PAGE 6

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New gay sex study released

BOSTON — In their first major sex study in nine years, Master and Johnson reported April 16 that there is no difference in the ability of homosexuals and heterosexuals to reach sexual satisfaction, and persons are not initially homosexual or heterosexual.

The Associated Press

quoted William H. Masters as saying, "We don't think we are born with a sexual preference. We are born male or female." Masters added he believes that homosexuality and heterosexuality are learned behavior.

"We can state with real security that there is no difference between homo-

sexuals and heterosexuals in their capacity to achieve orgasm," the press service quoted Masters as saying.

Masters and his wife, Virginia E. Johnson, commented at a briefing here before the publication of their new book, called *Homosexuality in Perspective*.

The team concludes that their finding that homosexuals and heterosexuals, whether men or women, respond identically to sexual stimulation should help ease discrimination against gay people.

"There is no basis in physical fact for the oft-repeated dictum, 'My way is better than your way,' they wrote. 'It is reasonable to speculate that, when absorbed, this finding should lead to significant modification in current cultural concepts.'"

The book also concludes that:

1) Women are fully as capable as men of enjoying sex, and their sexual appetites are equal.

2) Heterosexual couples who engaged in intercourse failed to reach orgasm four times as often as when they used the same sexual techniques as homosexuals. These are masturbation, partner manipulation and oral sex.

3) "Homosexual couples appeared to be more relaxed and gave the impression of more complete subjective involvement in the sexual activity than did their heterosexual counterparts."

4) Long-term homosexual couples were more willing than married heterosexuals to talk openly with each other about what turned them on.

Rhode Island boy still determined to take gay date to high school prom

CUMBERLAND, R.I. — The Cumberland School Department Monday, April 16, reaffirmed its decision to deny a public hearing to Paul Guilbert, a seventeen-year-old gay male who wants to bring a male escort to his junior prom.

"The overriding factor is that the parents objected," Superintendent Robert G. Condon was quoted by Associated Press as saying.

"The parent has every right to privacy in the upbringing of his minor child," Condon said he was advised by the department's lawyer, V. James Santaniello.

A hearing on the matter had been scheduled for April 12 but was canceled at the request of Eugene Guilbert, the boy's father.

After the hearing was cancel-

ed, Santaniello decided to review the issues involved in the case and prepare a written memo on whether the young Guilbert should be given a hearing.

Condon said Dantaniello's opinion means the department will take no further action, but Paul Guilbert said he was considering taking the matter to court.

He wants to go to the May 4 prom with Edward Miskevich, 22, a senior at Brown University.

Guilbert says he was jeered at by fellow students after local newspapers carried accounts of the story. "It was kind of sick," he said.

Both the National Gay Task Force and the American Civil Liberties Union have studied the case but both have kept hands off because of the fact that he is a minor.

Horoscope

Libra all set to bar-hop

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Your beauty and charm are surpassed only by your occasional lack of tact. A slip of that lovely lip has someone boiling. Remove foot and make amends. Mending a few fences can make good neighbors.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You will be on the go all summer, so there will be just no sense in a round of "ripping and tearing." But hurry, before the summer gets too old, and come in for an emergency landing. When smoke clears, attend to minor disasters brewing on home front. And do take time out to occasionally play comfy homebody, and you will be rewarded.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): That whistling you hear isn't "Dixie." It's the wheezing breezes of summer reminding you to take care of business first, then party in the sun later. As much as you hate to be rushed, you are going to have to keep up with your obligations. Now come on. Stop and smell the roses for only a limited time. You must also share in a little grindstone detail.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): The superior person needs no defense. Do not try to justify any of your actions with words. Even your most ardent critics will eventually be silenced by observing your gentle and consistently good nature. Seek comfort and cheer from one close at hand.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Others will press you for information before the month is out but you must move ever so slowly, revealing only those secrets you are ready to share. A raised eyebrow to overbearing loud-mouth will cool badgering. And this festival weekend will be good to you.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Some bar-hopping finds you in new territory this weekend. But there'll be nostalgia there too which may fill your head with poesies and promises — but remember, you have some home fires to tend and miles to go before you sleep. Beg off with a polite yawn and be on your way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):

Well, here's the bad news: Sometimes you are not only pound foolish, but you are penny foolish. Why buy two when one will do? Your cupboard is far from bare so fatten up your savings a bit. This weekend closes with the "clinking" of pennies, dimes and quarters into your piggy bank.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Retrace your steps of last winter. You have forgotten to do something important to your present project. Secret may be hidden in the obvious. A season of fun has ended with a sigh, but you keep on slinging. The solution is closer than you think.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): "Ship to shore" communications is weak, so pull in your sails and head for home port. However, a person you weren't able to get through to earlier this month will be ready now to answer your signals. Sometime during the latter part of the week, clear decks for an SOS that could be "secret option for sex."

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Step out to the beat of a different drummer. It's playing, you know, and you only need lift your noble mane out of the hammock long enough to hear. Partner has closed gates to old beaten path so you must look for a new way to go. If possible, fly united.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): After much steady plodding throughout the first 3½ months of this year, you will now stumble onto some adventure. You will become intensely interested in a person who is full of whimsy, magic and the boogie oogie oogie. Enjoy just enough of this intrigue to have a few beautiful memories. Remember, fascination with the flame has done in many a good moth, my friend.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): It's time to retreat, which is often not only the best policy but the only policy. To the rear, march! And on the double. Nothing will be gained by venturing further or voicing any more loud opinions. A mind is made up against you and anything you do is more grist for the mill.

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Cinema

"Once in Paris" has that certain French movie character

ONCE IN PARIS, not rated. Produced, written and directed by Frank D. Gilroy. Co-produced by Manny Fuchs and Gerard Croce. Starring Wayne Rogers with Gayle Hunnicutt and Jack Lenoir.

Assuming a self-consciously "mature" tone, Frank D. Gilroy's *Once in Paris* is an essay about an extra-marital affair. The questions addressed by the film include "Can an extra-marital affair be rewarding?" and "What does such an affair imply about marriage?"

A former star of TV's *M*A*S*H*, Wayne Rogers, stars as an American screenwriter who has been sent to Paris to doctor a script. He becomes friendly with his gregarious French chauffeur (Jack Lenoir), who engenders in him a typically French "joie de vivre." And he has his first extra-marital fling with a beautiful English businesswoman (Gayle Hunnicutt).

Once in Paris does its best to evoke the romantic spirit summoned up by the phrase, "In Paris in love." We recognize that Wayne Rogers' character undergoes the experience of a lifetime. From that special family restaurant serving the best bouillabaisse in Paris to a picnic in the country; from

THERE'S
MORE

ON PAGE 21
OF THE STAR

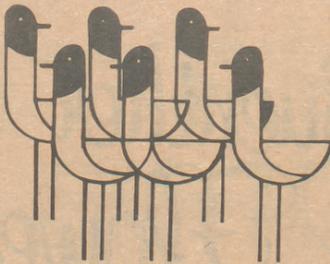
the athletic pleasure of male camaraderie to the ecstasy of passionate love; life couldn't be sweeter.

It's no wonder the screenwriter wants his reverie to last forever. He begs his new found love to run away with him but both she and the chauffeur, who has been a close observer of the affair, know better. A fling is a fling, and the screenwriter must do his work; he must return to his family.

The bittersweet complacency of *Once in Paris* will most certainly offend some viewers, but there is a proven market for this sort of thing — numerous French films are cut from the same fabric. American fans of such films as *Pardon Mon Affaire* will probably be delighted to see American characters go through the motions.

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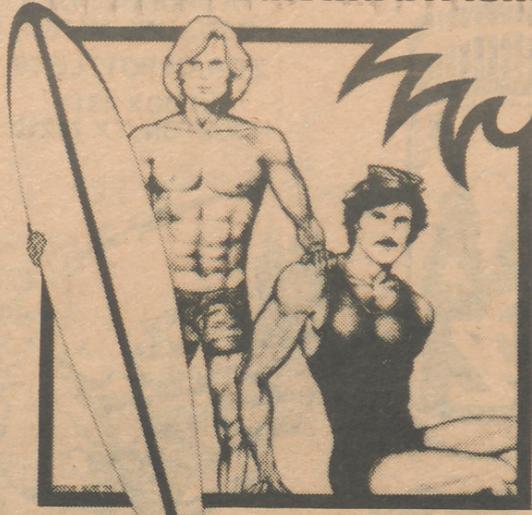
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BART TALK
FROM PAGE 2
deelayed at virtually every gay
disco that's ever been in Hous-
ton).

The light and sound systems
are something that cannot be
put into words. Only by actually
being there can you appreciate
it. So go! Tonight!

o Kojak's Greek Restaurant
at 1228 Westheimer (across
from the Tower Theater) is a
restaurant that a lot of Montrose
gay people have discovered but
they want more discoverers. So,
in conjunction with the Montrose
Star, Kojak's will give you a *free*
glass of wine with your full
lunch or dinner. All you have to
do is present them with the
coupon that's on page 22 of this
issue. So-o-o-o, clip it out right
now and try Kojak's tonight -
or tomorrow.

o The Tejas Motorcycle Club
won 1st place in club participa-
tion at the recent Mustang Run
- which turned into a very
successful event.

And yes, it's true. Sam
approved the food.

(What former first lady of the
Colt 45s spent the weekend at
the Mustang Run playing first
lady to the Texas Riders presi-
dent?)

(And, now that we're into
inside rumors: A big hello to
Bowsy-Wowsy. Bark, bark.)

o As you may know, the
Barn has a bridge tournament
every other Sunday. Well, this is
the Sunday. So bring your wits
and join 'em this Sunday after-
noon (free buffet also, of course,
every Sunday).

o Ms. Take II's pool touma-
ment winners from last week
were Sandy Willard (first place)
and Bobby May (second place).

And in another sport -
baseball - the Ms. Take II
Shooting Stars are playing in the
regular city league (they're the
only gay team in the league) and
this weekend they play the
CB'er Aces, at 630 Dunlavy.
They invite everyone to come
out and root for 'em. It's just
one big party!

o That's Bar Talk for this
week, except to remind you that
you're holding in your pretty
little hands the thickest issue
of the Montrose Star in over two
years. We're quite proud of it.

See you this weekend up and
down Westheimer.

**Star has new
photographer**

The photos in last week's
Montrose Star of the City Hall
rally, as well as those photos in
this issue of the opening of the
Copa Disco, are by James Jason,
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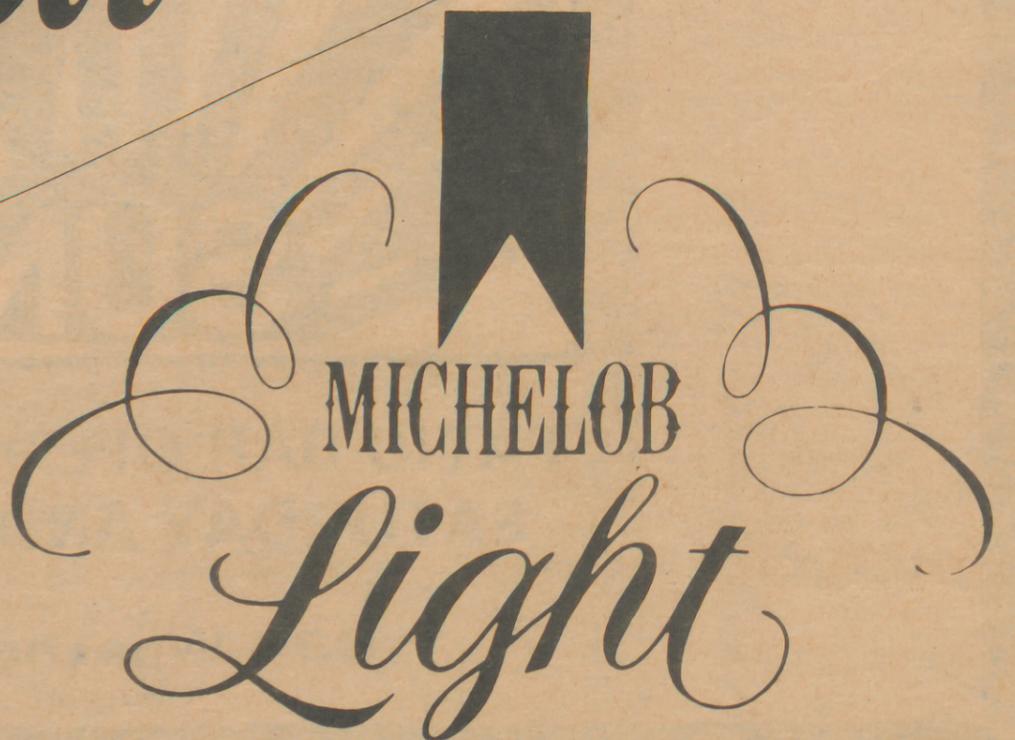


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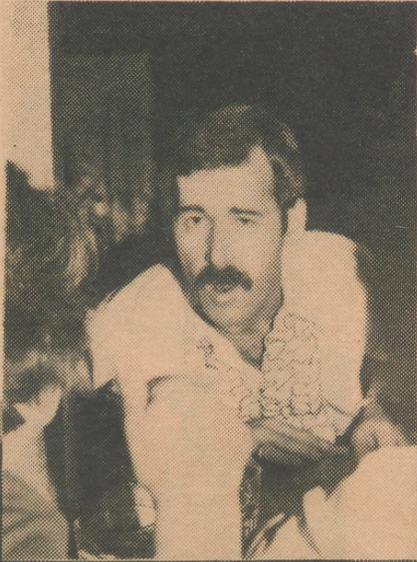
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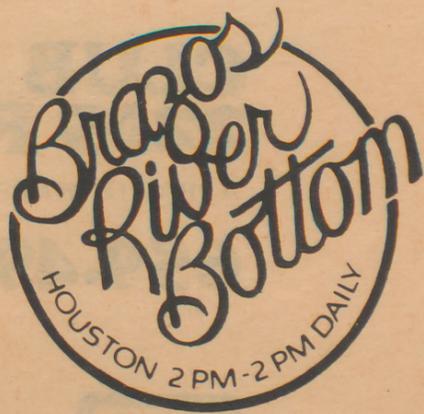
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*Best of Luck to
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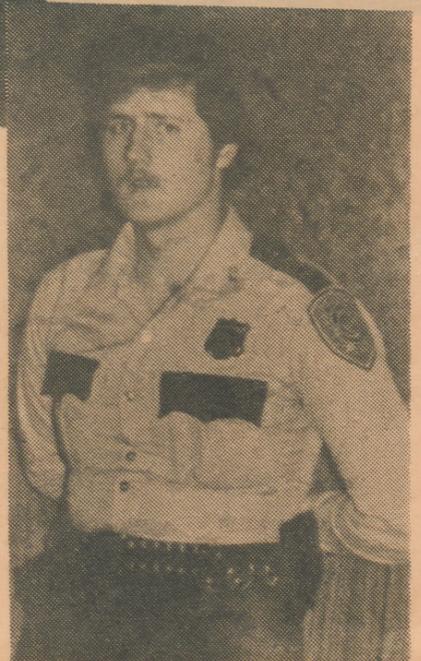
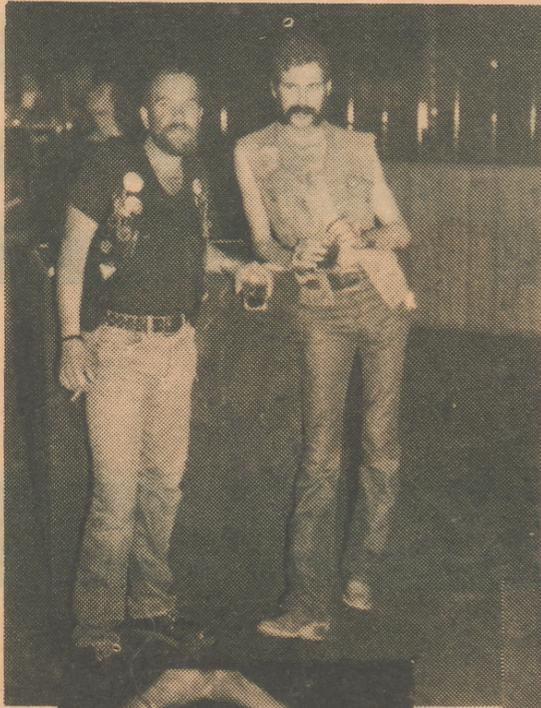
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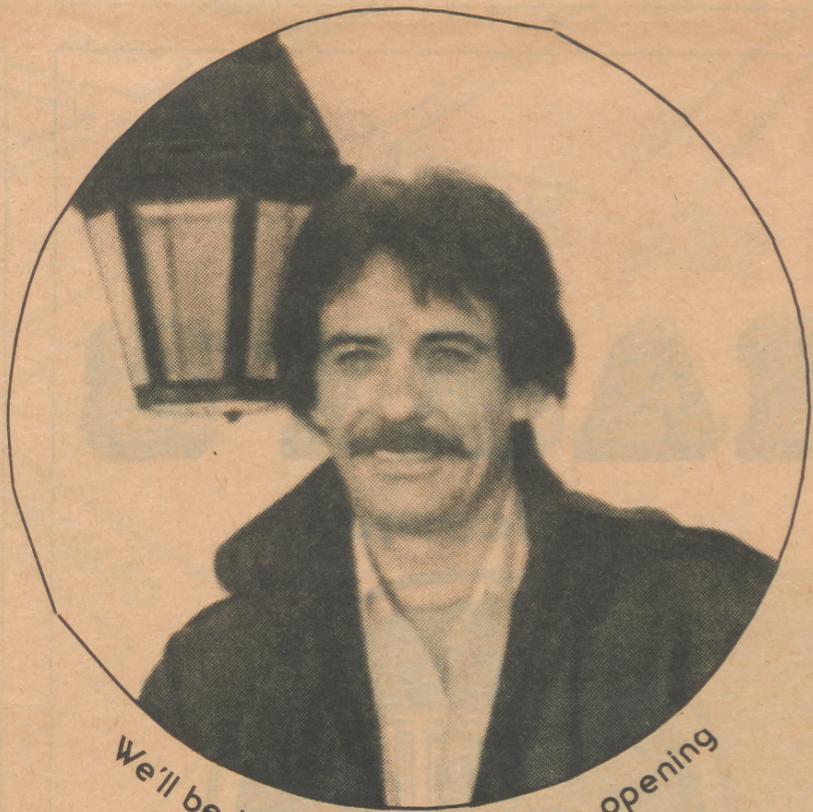
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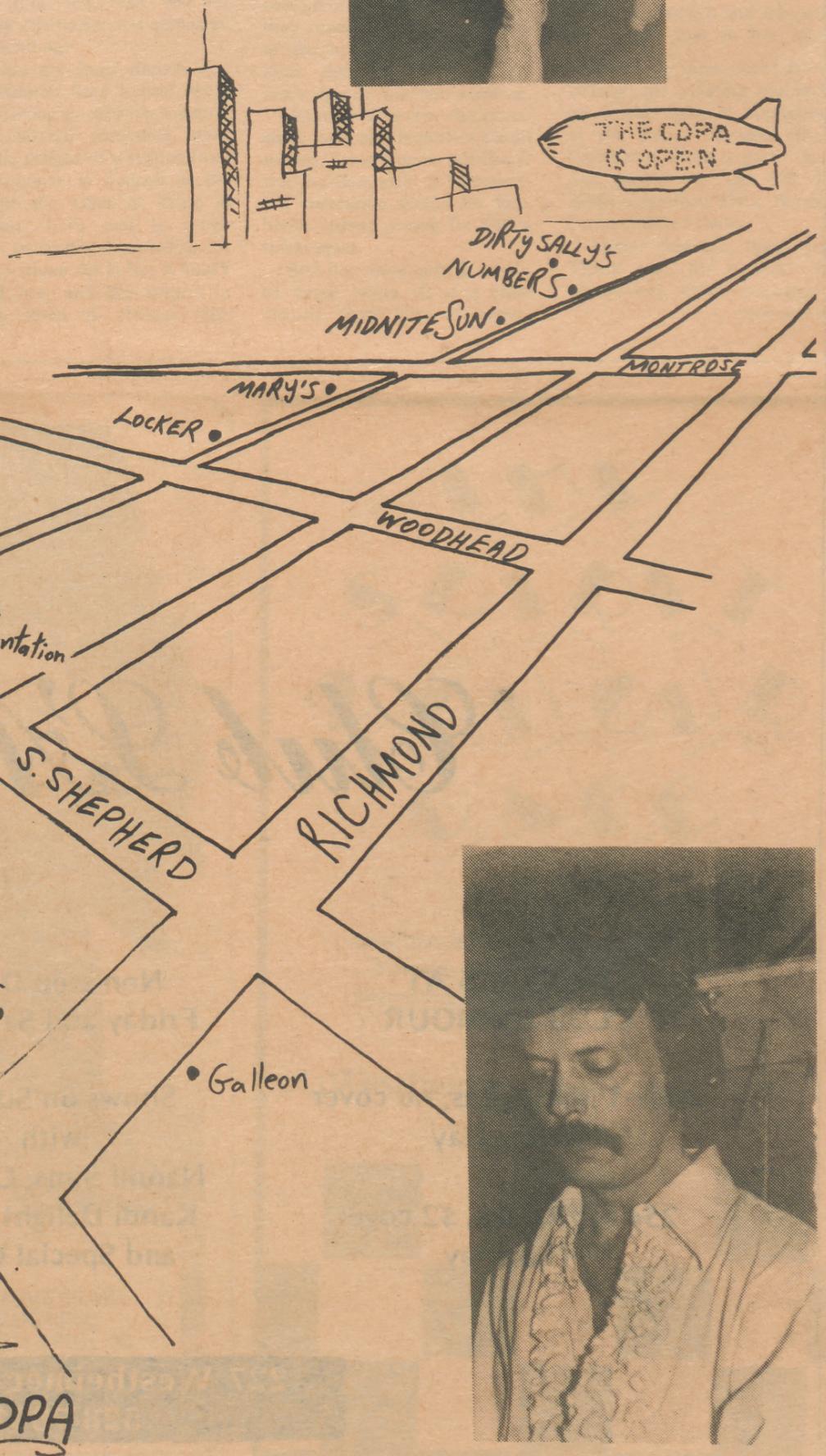
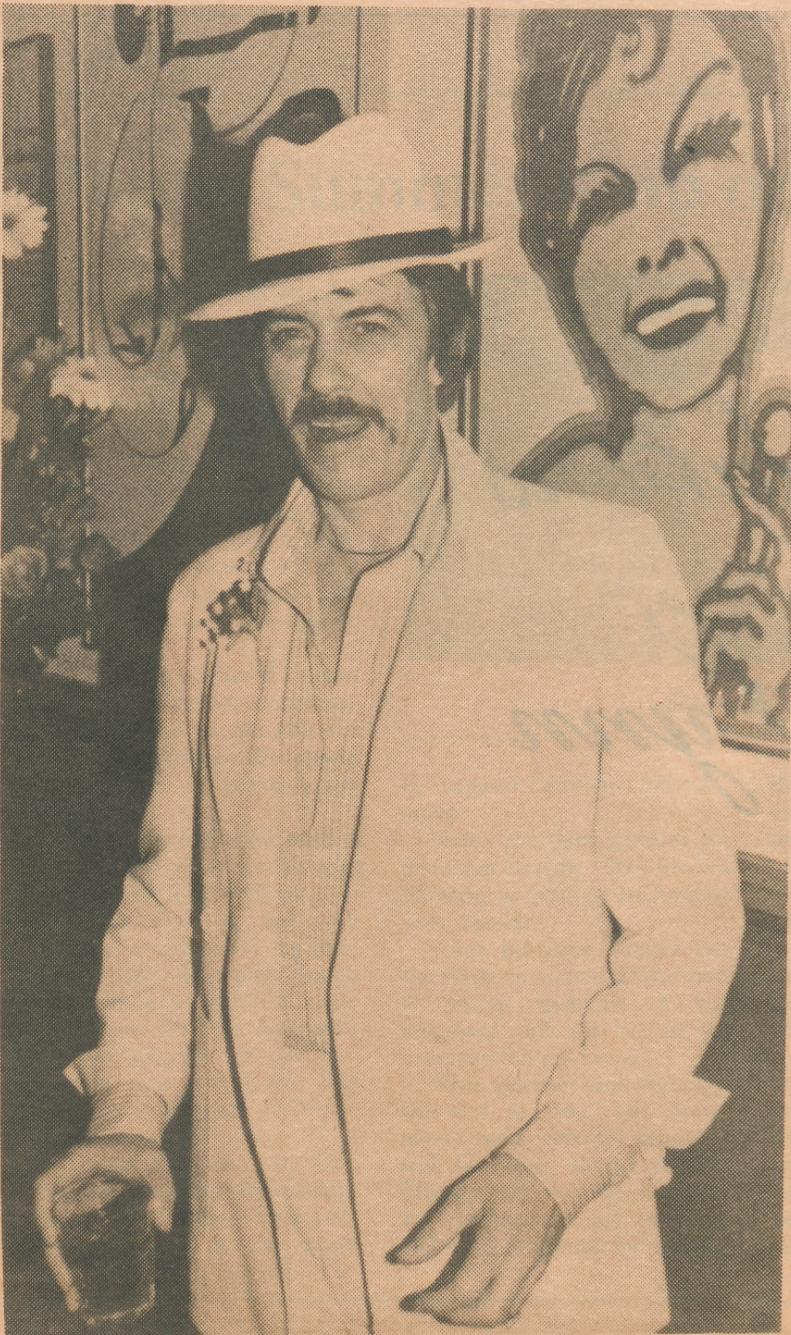


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Donna Summer is no ordinary lady, no ordinary concert

If you saw people last Monday night at the clubs around Houston in extra high energy moods, they no doubt had gone to the Donna Summer concert.

This was no ordinary concert and no ordinary lady.

What I expected was something along the *Live* album and that was basically what we got. What I didn't expect was her ability to grab hold of and build her audience into an absolute frenzy.

She had a wardrobe cabinet on stage and her numerous changes added to the grip she had on the audience. She played out fantasies in costume and music.

The concert started with a group called Brooklyn Dreams and they were sort of interesting. Unfortunately, they will probably always stand for comparison. The act is built around their harmony, which is quite good; however, the harmonies are not original and the impression was of Three Dog Night doing a bunch of Doobie Brothers songs.

I hope for their own sake they can overcome the similarities or else I hope there's a big enough market in the world



Donna Summer

to support another "me-too" group.

Note one thing positive for Brooklyn Dreams: They started on time, a rarity in performing acts, it seems.

After Brooklyn Dreams left the stage, an orchestra came out. A serious orchestra. I was impressed with the size of the company this girl keeps.

When Summer took the stage, she was reserved. Her movements were quietly measured and her dress almost virginal. Through the evening, however, she changed and got naughtier and naughtier, until, by the time

she strolled out in a sequined rag cut dress and throbbed out *Love to Love You Baby* in the midst of a floor fog, there was not hardly one person not completely turned on.

From my front, ringside seat the Summit floor looked like a huge, living amoeba-like creature with 80,000 oscillating arms.

The delight of watching Donna Summer in concert is the delight she takes in being in concert. Let's face it. Some smart marketing occurred to get her to where she is but it hasn't jaded her, and her delight in being loved is obvious. She

appreciates her fans.

When and if you ever get to see her on stage, I strongly recommend it, as you'll never see anyone control and propel a

crowd any better.

In fairy tales sometimes you see a little magic. If you got to see her, you know what I mean.

CHARLES CLINTON

Another view: Show had flaws

Donna Summer's performance was nothing short of a revelation, musically and dramatically. But there were flaws elsewhere in the show.

The Brooklyn Dreams appeared to me just plain boring. Their numbers were unnecessarily noisy. And they obviously forgot who the majority of the persons in the audience were, for they made remarks aimed only at the heterosexual set. I estimate that gay people easily made up over half the audience.

Another flaw was the excessively-loud and imperfect sound system. I don't know whether it was the Summit's or Summer's, but something should be done before asking people for \$12 a ticket again.

And one more note: It would be much better if, at a disco concert, taped disco music was

played before the show and during intermission instead of the horrible, distorted rock music forced on us.

Back to Donna. Time and time again she has expressed her desire to get away from songs that consist of sexual moanings, but she continues to sing them. I suggest she forget about wanting to switch and stay with the music that is her roots.

After the show, word spread through the audience that Donna would make an appearance at the Ritz, a straight disco. Casablanca threw a party there and picked up the bill for about a hundred VIP's. But Ms. Summer didn't show.

Donna Summer, thank you. Thank you for a short but oh-so-sweet disco occurrence.

RAM ROCHA

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Gay life is good life

The purpose of this editorial section is to give you our views on controversial subjects. Well, quite frankly, being a special-interest newspaper, it's difficult to come up with new controversial subjects each week.

There's the old standard — police abuse against gay people but we've talked about that the past three issues. What other controversial subjects of special interest to gay people are there?

The gay lifestyle is a very good one. Overall, it's just not too controversial *within*. The controversies lie *without* — in those areas where gay meets straight, so to speak.

Within the gay community, life is good. The gay social circuit is full of special events, concerts, super discos, private parties, even sports (the gay volleyball league is just getting underway), not to mention a constant flow of new faces (and bodies).

Ah, yes. Life in the gay community is good. Straights just don't know what they're missing. (Or perhaps, some of them do, and they're jealous, and that's where some of the friction comes from.)

Get involved in Gay Pride Week

Gay Pride Week is our week. It's a holiday we have set aside for ourselves and planning for this extended (ten-day) week is underway.

Initial ideas from the Gay Pride Week planning committee include a march down Westheimer. The Montrose Star thinks this is a good idea.

True, Houston has never had a really successful or large gay parade, and this one probably won't be any different, but it could be a great deal of fun. Imagine, if you will for a moment, winding its way down Westheimer, floats from the different clubs, the Montrose Activity Center marching band, a motorcycle caravan by members of the Houston Motorcycle Club, Texas Riders and others, hundreds of gay men and lesbians following, some in costumes, some not... this could really be a hoot!

Whatever the planning committee decides will be acceptable, but should it be to have a parade, oh boy!

This, by the way, marks the tenth anniversary of the modern gay rights movement. It was ten years ago that customers of the Stonewall Lounge in New York decided they'd had enough abuse from New York City cops. It was ten years ago that the police and their paddy wagon showed up at the steps of the Stonewall to haul everybody in *simply* because they were "queer."

But on this night, those "queers" had had enough. They threw everything they had at the police and the cops had to barricade themselves inside the bar and plead for backup support from headquarters.

(The police dispatcher must of had a tough time believing that a bunch of "fairies" were holding New York's finest at bay.)

You see, for up until this time, it was alright to routinely arrest people — whole groups of people even — just for *being* homosexual. And it was routinely done all over the country.

It's been ten years since the Stonewall riot. We've certainly come a long way. And we certainly have a long way to go... with the straight public and with the police.

But we're getting there!

Lovers: For real or for the birds?

I often watch with great fascination, if not outright awe, the extremes to which my gay brothers and sisters go in order to procure for themselves that which, for simplicity's sake, I shall call: "A Lover."

Whether we call them "lovers," "primary companions" or "significant others" (and there are subtle differences), we all know basically what we mean when we use these terms.

The question is: What is this driving compulsion which, at its extreme, can make us abandon friends, family and vocation, forsake all reason, logic and principles, and, if frustrated enough in this pursuit, revert to childish tantrums, deepest melancholia and the urge to commit suicide or violence, on others — all for the sake of one other person who in many, if not most, cases we really don't know as well as we did our high school English teacher or our Great Aunt Matilda?

Is it sex? Is it companionship? Is it the desire to have (or possess) someone of our very own? Is it our heterosexual upbringing which says everyone should get "married" or gay peer pressure which says it's "the ideal thing to do"?

Is it our fear of being "alone" or is it some kind of "essential" security blanket we seek?

Is it the need to share one's life, to give and take from one another that which neither can obtain on his/her own; Or is it that simple (but, oh, so complex) nebulous, chemical spark which we call "Love," which perhaps is a combination of all these things... or none of them?

Is having "A Lover" something which Nature her/his-self has ordained? Or is it a questionable, learned response from a larger society whose own statis-

tics and history haven't proved too successful in this realm?

I think I am awed and fascinated by all this because it has been obvious to me for quite a lone time that most gay people haven't done much questioning or thinking about 1) whether having "A Lover" or being "married" is valid for the non-reproductive gay lifestyle, or merely an apeing of the heterosexual whose values and goals are quite different from our own, and 2) exploring possible alternatives to having "A Lover" as a means for a fuller, more complete and more worthwhile life.

I don't question those for whom a one-on-one lover relationship proves to be a truly viable, realistic and workable system. I *do* question those for whom it is a vaguely romantic ideal to be achieved because "other gay people do it" or because "mommy and daddy did it."

Honestly, how many of you would really like some knight in shining white armor, mounted astride a white charger, to come along, zap you aboard and off to god-only-knows what? Or, to put it another way: Would you really like to ride off with someone into the sunset... only to be burnt to a cinder?

Yes, I do know quiet a few gay two-party lover relationships now into their second, third and even fourth decade — and God keep them! But I also know of infinitely more whose lover relationships foundered after mere days, weeks or months. And — I feel sure — the reader of this is also aware of this disparity.

Then, should we just stop trying for happiness with another person? No, but then why should a liaison with just "one other," or a series of "one others" be our end-all and

reason for being?

Why not find happiness, peace of mind and fulfillment in multiple areas:

1) Through our own personal growth and completeness as an individual, not relying solely on "becoming one" in a restricting union with one other;

2) Through establishing an extended gay family whose individual members can provide love, affection, companionship, encouragement, moral support, etc.;

3) Through dating or socializing with a number of those with whom in time one can establish compatibility of mutual interests, including sex and friendship (often ambiguously labeled "fuck buddies") — and from whose very diversity one can draw the many, varied physical and social needs which each of us demands and which is unlikely from a single individual; and

4) Through contributing to our own well-being, and others, by becoming involved in gay (and non-gay) organizations, clubs or groups — in essence a "paying of dues" to our fellow human beings.

Nor does any of the above preclude the possibility that some fine day just the right "one" may come along with whom can be forged a Jonathan and David or Ruth and Naomi relationship; but, if not, then a life — a whole and complete life — will have been built where all the basic human animal needs will have been met and our own personal self-worth validated. Equally important, our individual contributions to our community will warrant no criticism from others — or from ourselves.

One of the greatest things about being gay is that we have the opportunity, if indeed not the responsibility, to explore and probe into new, untouched areas of human relationships which may well start us — and possibly the rest of humanity (we gay people *are* trendsetters) — on the trail to freedom from jealousy, envy, greed and a thousand other petty traits escaped from Pandora's evil-filled box which have too long been locked into us by reason of tradition, superstition, law, habit and complacency.

A creed I developed many years ago said, in effect: "As an intelligent being, challenge all things, *but*, if Love comes along, don't question it... accept it."

In the beginning, even though the creed was of my own conception, my interpretation was too narrow and restrictive in that I applied it subconsciously to mean one other individual, and not on the broader, wider-based scale as I now perceive it.

Lovers: Are they real... or for the birds?

HANK BONNEY

Hot Shot



This photo snapped recently at Numbers Disco in Houston by Star photographer James Jason.

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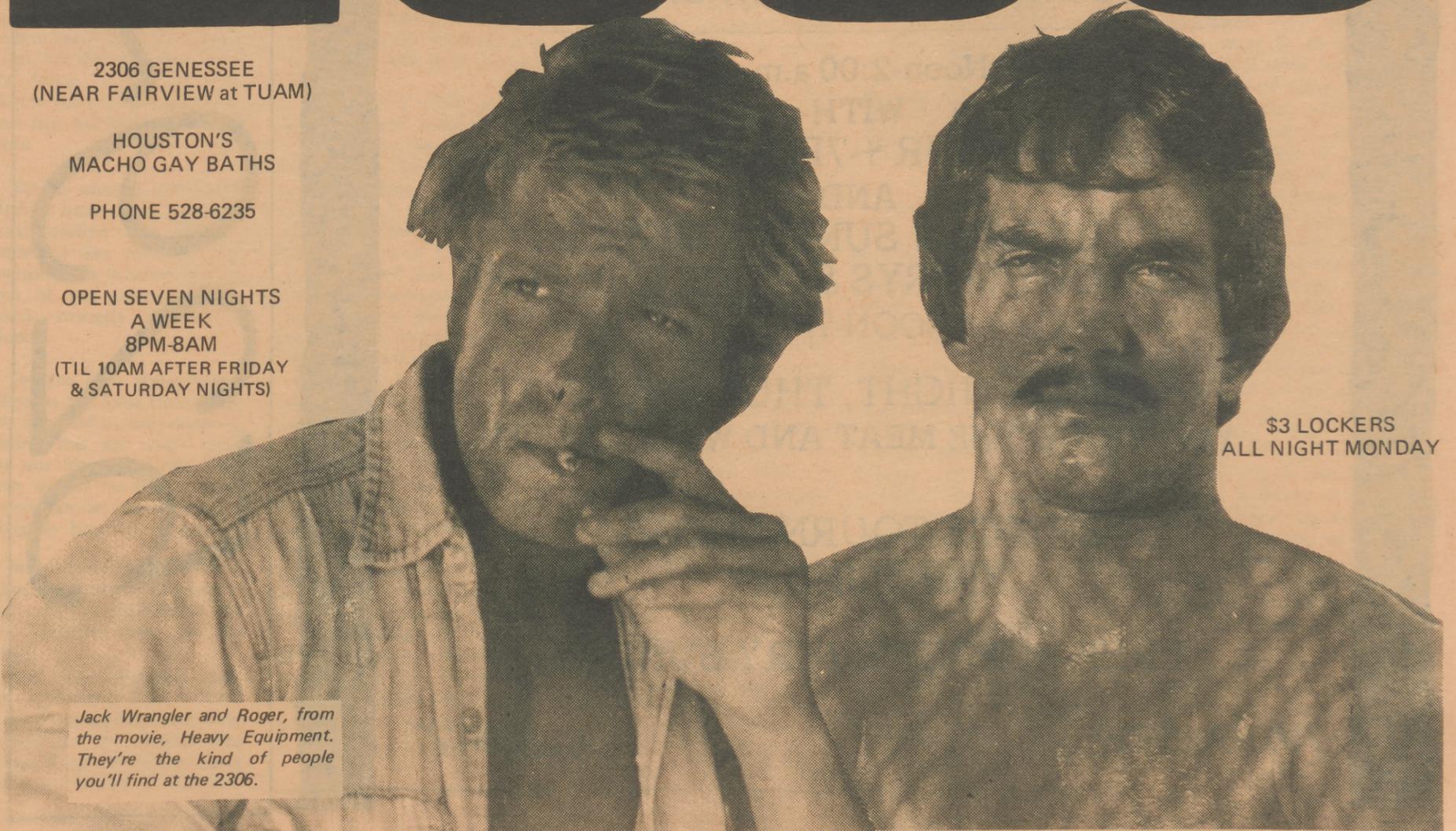
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“The Promise” hard to figure . . . but it’s a hoot

THE PROMISE, rated PG. Released by Universal Pictures. Produced by Fred Weintraub and Paul Heller. Directed by Gilbert Cates. Screenplay by Garry Michael White based on a story by Weintraub and Heller. Starring Kathleen Quinlan, Stephen Collins and Beatrice Straight.

The moral of *The Promise*, a contemporary Gothic romance, is that it’s wrong to get over the death of a loved one. Unless you see the coffin lowered into the ground, it’s always possible the person you thought had died is alive somewhere. You shouldn’t give up hope.

The hero of *The Promise*, a rich kid named Michael (Stephen Collins), is half-conscious in a hospital bed when he is informed that his fiancée Nancy (Kathleen Quinlan) didn’t survive the car crash that injured him.

The bearer of this bad news is Michael’s mother (Beatrice Straight), who never approved of the lower-class orphaned artist her son fell in love with. Marion believed that marriage would distract Michael from the family business.

One can’t blame Michael for not suspecting that Marion paid off Nancy’s plastic surgery in exchange for Nancy’s promise to disappear. Not only is Marion’s scheme diabolical beyond imagining, it’s difficult to understand why anyone would accept such an offer.

Does Nancy think her rich fiancé wouldn’t have been willing to pay for her necessary surgery — or that he wouldn’t love her despite her scars?

Nancy doesn’t trust Michael to love her despite her disfigurement, but she won’t forgive him for failing to find her after Marion has provided her with a new face and identity in a new town.

By an amazing coincidence, Michael meets Nancy after her transformation into Marie, a successful San Francisco photographer. He is, despite the fact that he still mourns Nancy’s death, strangely attracted to Marie.

Imagine poor Nancy/Marie’s dilemma. She loves Michael still, but is bound by her promise to Marion that she won’t reveal her true identity to him. She’s been waiting for him to come looking for her; she wishes he’d recognize her, but he doesn’t!

More confusing still, Marie is upset that Michael is attracted to her — she sees it as evidence that he’s forgotten his love for Nancy.

You might naturally wonder if director Gilbert Cates plays this deliriously loony story straight or for laughs. The answer is that, in the best camp tradition, *The Promise* is impos-

sible to pin down.

The ideas put forth in this film are so outlandish, the

plot lapses are so glaring, the execution is so fatuous, that the filmmakers couldn’t have taken

it seriously. But, not a single joke punctuates the story; the characters never crack a smile;

the film’s swooning romantic highs and gaudy tragedies are treated with reverence.

How can audiences be expected to respond to a scene like the one in which Nancy makes her compact with the devil Marion? The image of Nancy in her hospital bed, her head swathed in bandages, as she bitterly agrees to forsake true love rather than permit Michael ever to see her scarred, can as easily be viewed as a piece of inspired hokum or heartfelt nonsense.

In either case, whether the joke originates with the filmmakers or is at their expense, the scene — and numerous others like it — makes *The Promise* a hoot.

SETH CAGIN



Stephen Collins and Beatrice Straight in “The Promise.”

“Coming Home” shows hope and pain

COMING HOME, rated R. Directed by Hal Ashby. Screenplay by Waldo Salt and Robert C. Jones from a story by Nancy Dowd. Starring Jane Fonda, Jon Voight and Bruce Dern with Robert Ginty, Penelope Milford and Robert Carradine.

Editor’s note: “Coming Home” won 1979 Academy Awards for Best Actor (Jon Voight) and Best Actress (Jane Fonda). This review, however, was written prior to the awards.

The first images we see of *Coming Home* are set in a Veterans’ Administration hospital. Guys in wheelchairs watched by others confined to beds are playing pool when someone asks whether, given the chance, they’d return to fight in Vietnam. Voices are raised when one man in a wheelchair doubts another, equally crippled, who insists he would do it all over again.

The year is 1968, passions run high, and opinion about the American involvement in Vietnam is bitterly divided.

“Baby, Baby, Baby, you’re out of time,” sing the Rolling Stones, and abruptly the scene cuts to a close-up of the legs of an able-bodied man as he jogs across the countryside. He is, we soon learn, a Marine captain preparing for an upcoming tour of duty in Vietnam.

Within its first few minutes, in deft cinematic strokes matching image with image and image with sound, *Coming Home* has spoken volumes about the American tragedy in Vietnam. True to its fast start, *Coming Home* went on to become the first feature film about the Vietnam war to tackle head-on the pain and failure of the American experience in Vietnam.

Coming Home tells the story of Sally Hyde (Jane Fonda), the dutiful wife of the Marine captain, Bob Hyde (Bruce Dern), who ships out to Vietnam just as the film gets underway. In

her husband’s absence, Sally volunteers to work in a Veterans’ Administration hospital. There she meets and falls in love with Luke Martin (Jon Voight), a paraplegic Vietnam veteran.

A romance between a beautiful woman and a paraplegic sounds like innately mushy material, but as it’s directed by Hal Ashby — who successfully rendered the equally touchy love story between an elderly woman and an adolescent boy in *Harold and Maude* — Sally and Luke’s affair doesn’t become sentimental. Even the delicate matter of sex between them is handled without embarrassment.

Indeed, set among the living debris of war, the love between Sally and Luke is a potent regenerative force.

Over the course of their relationship, Luke’s bitter cynicism is tempered by Sally’s love for him. He moves from the hospital to his own apartment and starts a difficult reentry into mainstream society.

As for Sally, she is influenced by Luke into questioning the war. In her newfound independence, she lets her straightened hair go curly, she buys a fast car, and she rents a house on the beach.

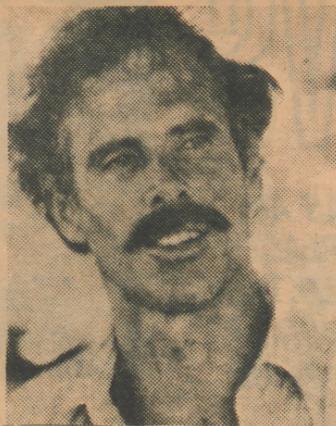
Like the culture they’re part of, both Luke and Sally undergo numerous changes in the space of a few short months.

Meanwhile, Bob Hyde is thanklessly fighting the Vietnam war. When he returns home to find his wife a changed woman, he is devastated; and when he learns about her affair with Luke, the film speeds toward what seems destined to be a climactic showdown.

Unfortunately, despite Bruce Dern’s manic, anguished performance as a man who has lost everything, *Coming Home* fails to resolve the tensions that the

first four-fifths of the film so successfully evoke.

Incidents that lead up to the final confrontation between Sally, Luke and Bob are contrived: for some obscure reason, the FBI informs Bob of his wife’s infidelity. Worse still, where the rest of the film explores specifically how the



Bruce Dern

times affected people, in Bob Hyde’s case we are asked to assume that Vietnam drove him insane.

Coming Home was clearly a labor of love on the part of its collaborators who are among the most talented artists in Hollywood. Jane Fonda, for instance, not only stars in *Coming Home*, but also instigated the project and co-authored the original story.

The film’s intensity of feeling attests to the fact that for Fonda, Jon Voight, Hal Ashby and others, Vietnam and the attendant cultural tumult of the sixties had consequences that reach easily into the present.

A strong sense of commitment shines in the performances by the actors. Fonda has blossomed into a veritable screen goddess and she throws her

talent fully behind the role of Sally Hyde. Her every gesture bespeaks the tensions that tear her between two men.

In his best part in years, Jon Voight triumphs as Luke Martin — sanctimonious and arrogant as if to frustrate our sense of pity, he wins us over by dint of his determination to get on with his life.

Coming Home was director Hal Ashby’s second excursion into the period. *Shampoo*, the first, was equally devastating scrutiny of the times; like *Shampoo*, *Coming Home* reflects a society in which everything from pop music to politics, and from hair styles to war, are interrelated.

At times, it all seems too much, as if there was an overabundance of talent at work. *Coming Home* ambitiously stretches — past a comfortable reach — striving to be a definitive chronicle of the waste and subsequent renewal America underwent in the sixties. Though the film is less than that, it is considerably more than a simple story of a love triangle.

Despite its flaws, *Coming Home* is a jolting meditation on the harrowing compromises, loud debate, and deep pain that characterized the Vietnam years.

The big question now may be whether movie audiences are ready for a full confrontation with anguish only recently relegated to history. It will be a shame if people stay away from *Coming Home*, for, though the film never shies away from the depressing destruction that came of Vietnam, at its heart there beats a dramatic, tonic love story.

The note that resounds throughout *Coming Home* is as much a hopeful one proclaiming the power of love as it is a cry of pain.

SETH CAGIN

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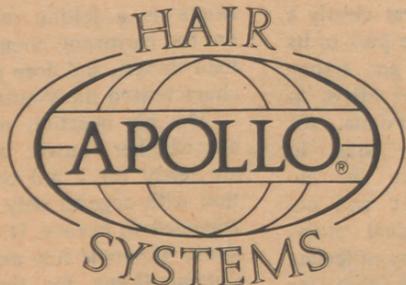
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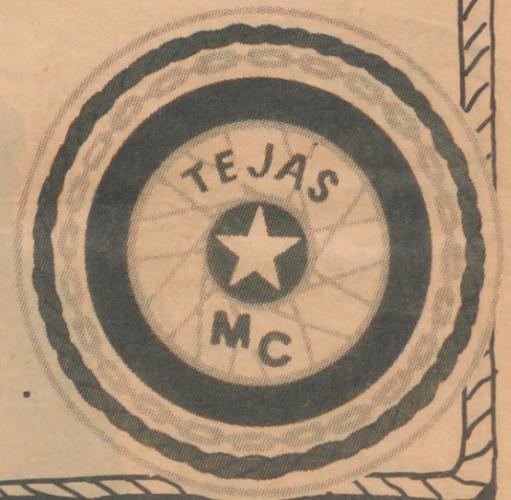


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