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Back to Laramie

The actors and actresses behind the local production of 'The Laramie Project' speak out.
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JANUARY 18, 2002

INSIDE



Annise Parker, the only openly lesbian member of the Houston City Council, sees little hope for gay-friendly measures under the new makeup of the panel.

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Longtime gay rights activist Dianne Hardy-Garcia, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Right Lobby of Texas, resigns.

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'Lonely Planet' pulls both tragedy and laughter from two men trying to deal with the effects of the AIDS epidemic.

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Mixed reviews for Bush's first year



After a year in office, Texas native President George W. Bush has shown both pro-gay moves and anti-gay actions as he has settled into his role at the White House.

At one-year mark, president draws praise, criticism for actions on gay rights, AIDS

by LOU CHIBBARO JR.

WASHINGTON — Since taking office one year ago, this president has amassed a record on gay and AIDS issues that is historic for his party. His administration has made four openly gay appointments, including a gay ambassador who moved into the U.S. Embassy compound in Bucharest, Romania, with his same-sex partner.

A popular political operative who worked closely with gay political groups during the presidential campaign became White House counselor to the president and a high-level adviser to the vice president, whose lesbian daughter brought her partner to the inauguration.

The president signed a bill allowing domestic partners to register their relationships in the nation's capital, ending a nine-

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TX governor's race a draw for gays

No standout foes or friends on gay rights among candidates for state's highest office

by PENNY WEAVER

An incumbent with a lukewarm record on gay rights issues and competition among challengers with similarly bland histories with gay voters may add up for an insignificant governor's race for gay Texans.

But despite the potential for a break-even result no matter who the state's next leader is, the race for the Governor's Mansion includes at least one candidate with a gay-related scandal in his political past.

Current Texas Gov. Rick Perry, a Republican, seeks a new term after he succeeded former Gov. George W. Bush upon

Bush's election to the White House a year ago. Several other politicians have stepped up to challenge Perry.

Among Democrats, businessman Bill Lyon, former Texas Attorney General Dan Morales, oilman and attorney Tony Sanchez and attorney John WorldPeace have launched campaigns for governor. The Green Party's Rahul Mahajan, a research assistant, also is campaigning, as is Libertarian Jeff Daiell, that party's 1990 nominee and a 1988 U.S. Senate nominee.

Morales and Sanchez are considered top runners for the Democratic nomination, to be decided in the March 12 primary election.

Perry's support on gay rights issues is lukewarm at best, political observers say. Dr. Richard Murray, political scientist at the University of Houston, said Perry cannot be expected to be a friend to gay Texans.

"He's probably not going to be any

> Continued on Page 7



Incumbent Gov. Rick Perry (pictured), a Republican, faces potential challengers including Tony Sanchez and Dan Morales, former Texas attorney general, both Democrats who face off in the March 12 primary election.

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Hopes dim for gay-friendly Houston Council

Observers expect little positive for gay voters to come from new makeup of Houston panel

by PENNY WEAVER

The new Houston City Council is in office and at work, but political observers expect little in the way of gay-friendly action from this panel.

"There's not a lot of gay issues we can deal with," said Annise Parker, the only openly gay member of the Council.

Parker won re-election to her At Large Post 1 seat without a runoff. She is one of six women who now serve on the Council, the most female representatives ever for Houston.

"In general, I'm pleased with the new Council," Parker said this week, just days after city officials took their oaths of office. "I like the fact that we've gone from two women on the Council to six. The new Council members seem to be very focused on ... getting as much information as they can."

But for gay Houstonians, this may be a quiet term at City Hall, in contrast to last



New Houston City Council members Michael Berry, At Large Post 4, and Shelley Sekula Rodriguez, At Large Post 3, may be the most interesting Council freshmen to watch this year on gay-related issues, according to political scientist Dr. Richard Murray.

year's hot-button topics of the city's non-discrimination legislation and debate over domestic partner insurance benefits for Houston workers.

"Initially, I don't see any gay-related issues [this term]," Parker said.

New At Large representatives include Shelley Sekula Rodriguez and Michael Berry. Neither is likely to be a standout proponent for gays.

"It is early," notes Dr. Richard Murray, a



political scientist at the University of Houston. "I guess we'll just wait and see."

Murray pegs Rodriguez and Berry as the two to observe on this Council for gay constituents.

"I think Berry and Sekula Rodriguez would be the most interesting to watch: whether they go over to the more opposed members — [Bruce] Tatro, [Burt] Keller — on some of these [gay] issues, or whether they go with the more moderate members

of the Council," he said. "I think it'll be a few months before we know that answer."

As Murray pointed out, new Council member Ada Edwards, who represents District D, which includes heavily gay Montrose, is a known friend to gay Houstonians.

"She's probably a reliable member on issues of concern to gays and lesbians," Murray said.

Another possible friend to gay constituents is Carol Alvarado in District I, who is known to be politically close to gay-friendly Mayor Lee Brown. Murray said Addie Wiseman in District E is another Council member to watch on gay issues.

With the new members, Houston's panel of leaders now is equally split along party lines, with seven Republicans and seven Democrats. Parker pointed out that fall elections took at least one pro-gay voter, Chris Bell, out of the picture.

"We had a net loss of support on Council," she said.

Berry takes Bell's old post — while Rodriguez has the seat formerly held by Orlando Sanchez, not known as a friend to gays — and both are known as moderate Republicans. Neither Council member was endorsed by the Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus. Both previously opposed pro-gay legislation.

Obituary

Danny Carver, musician

Danny Wayne Carver of Houston died of AIDS on Jan. 7, 2002, following a decade-plus battle.

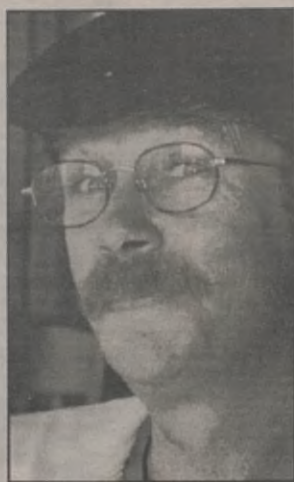
Services are 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 27, at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Houston. A reception will follow at the Pink House on Bomar.

Friends recall that Carver's life was varied and creative. He served in the U.S. military. He was a florist and a pianist who also was known for his humor and dry wit.

Survivors include his partner, Robert Wittliff; father, A. D. Carver; brothers, Doyle and Randy; and a number of cousins, nieces, nephews and friends.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Omega House.

—From staff reports



Hardy-Garcia resigns from LGRL

Activist cites 'sense of completion' in resigning from statewide lobbying organization

by PENNY WEAVER

AUSTIN — After nearly a decade leading the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby (LGRL) of Texas, activist Dianne Hardy-Garcia is stepping down as executive director.

"I feel a sense of completion in my work," Hardy-Garcia told the Voice on Thursday. "I had contemplated leaving last year, but really feel good about the decision to stay and finish."

"I do think it's always good to bring in new blood into an organization," she added.

As the executive director, Hardy-Garcia lobbied and organized on a statewide level for lesbian and gay equal rights in Texas, according to LGRL. Under her direction, LGRL helped stop the Texas version of the Defense of Marriage Act three times.

Hardy-Garcia's vision and organizing skills helped prevent the passage of legislation that would have barred gays and lesbians from adopting or providing foster care. She organized the first passage of the Non-Discrimination in Education bill that included sexual orientation and gender identity in the Texas House of Representatives.

Hardy-Garcia is perhaps best known for her work against hate crimes. In the last eight years, she helped lead efforts to pass stronger hate crime laws in Texas, which culminated in the 2001 passage of the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act. The historic legislation came in the wake of 30 anti-gay murders over the last decade in Texas.

It also marks the first legal recognition of gay Texans.

"It's been a very intense time. I was so lucky to be able to

work on something I passionately believed in, but it was also a very intense experience," Hardy-Garcia said. "I think I need to take some time to put that into perspective. You don't go through this work without getting some battle scars."

She said that while she sometimes is surprised by the naiveté of young gays, she is encouraged by the hopefulness of youth now taking over some of the battles for gay rights.

"My job is not to tell them how hard it's going to be; my job is to make their path softer and to tell them to go for it," Hardy-Garcia said.

Gay rights advocates said this week that Hardy-Garcia's presence will be missed.

"This departure will be a great loss to our organization and to the community at-large. The gains we've made under Dianne's leadership are nothing short of historic," said Jill Ireland, LGRL board co-chair.



Longtime activist Dianne Hardy-Garcia, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, announced her resignation this week. She said she wants to take time off to deal with 'battle scars.'

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Md.'s House majority leader quietly comes out

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — When the Maryland General Assembly convened its opening session Jan. 9, Delegate Maggie L. McIntosh (D-Baltimore) was introduced as the first female House Majority Leader, a position she was appointed to last July. But what many watching the proceedings didn't know is that McIntosh is also the first openly gay person in the state legislature. McIntosh came out before an audience last October during an acceptance speech for an award from the Women's Law Center of Maryland. This was the first time McIntosh had publicly said she was a lesbian, but no media was present. "It wasn't a surprise to anyone, everyone already knew," McIntosh said. "It was the right thing to do at that time." Activists note that it speaks to McIntosh's political prowess that she was appointed to a powerful position because she is a woman, a lesbian, and from Baltimore, a city known for its liberal politicians.

Maggie McIntosh (D-Baltimore) became Maryland's first lesbian and female House Majority Leader on Jan. 9.



Calif. judge won't stop dueling AIDS rides

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The California AIDS Ride, a fund-raising event that has become a state institution, can expect competition for bicyclists this year, a judge ruled Jan. 14. Superior Court Judge David Yaffe refused to issue an injunction against the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center, which have set up an event to rival the nine-year-old San Francisco to Los Angeles California ride. Pallotta Teamworks, which organizes the AIDS Ride, sued to stop the rival AIDS/Lifecycle ride, arguing that its scheduling two weeks before the Pallotta event would dilute support from the original. "One if not both of these rides is going to fail," Pallotta attorney Jayne Kacer told the judge. "There just isn't enough community." The nonprofit agencies planned the AIDS/LifeCycle Ride after accusing Pallotta of overspending and mismanaging last year's event, which raised \$11 million. The charities said they received just 50 cents of every dollar raised by riders, who spent a week traveling 575 miles.

Lesbian festival in conflict over trans inclusion

WASHINGTON — Years of controversy over the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival policy of only letting in "womyn-born-womyn" for their festival has resulted in a petition being circulated across the country via e-mail requesting that festival organizers change their policy. The 25-year-old festival is well known for cultivating a women-only space for a week in rural Michigan, while providing music, workshops, camping spaces and vegetarian meals. The popular event has been the center of controversy for years surrounding its policy not to allow trans-identified women on its premises, and has spawned a transgender camp across the street from the festival. Sadie Crabtree, editor of strapon.org, based in Washington, D.C., said the petition is intended "to heal the rift, honor our differences, and create a cohesive movement towards inclusion of trans people in women-only space."

Vt. court dismisses civil union lawsuit

MONTPELIER, Vt. — Gay civil rights supporters applauded the Vermont Supreme Court's favorable legal decision Dec. 26 on that state's civil union law that has been the subject of an ongoing struggle. But one leader there said political challenges remain. "I think the law is safe from challenges in court," said lawyer Beth Robinson, chair of Vermonters for Civil Unions and co-counsel for the plaintiffs in the 1999 lawsuit that led to enactment of the nation's only civil union law. "The bigger worry has always been political challenges. We lost our pro-civil union majority in the [Vermont] House in the November 2000 election, and our pro-civil union majority in the Senate has dwindled to two votes," she said. The court ruled that town clerks may not refuse to offer civil union licenses on the basis of their religious beliefs and that votes by members of the Vermont House who engaged in a "betting pool" about the civil union legislation's outcome in the House should not be nullified. The law took effect in July 2000.

Court: Gay Tempe mayor's term extended

PHOENIX (AP) — The state Supreme Court upheld Tempe voters' decision to lengthen their openly gay mayor's term of office, allowing Neil Giuliano, a Republican, to continue to lead Arizona's seventh largest city until July 2004. The Supreme Court said Jan. 11 in a brief order that a May 2000 approval of Proposition 100 by voters "was a valid election and Proposition 100 was properly approved by a majority of voters." The measure lengthened mayoral terms to four years from two. Giuliano said he was pleased by the ruling. "I am looking forward to serving this community for the remainder of my final term." Giuliano's term was set to expire this summer. Challengers had argued that the vote was invalid because Tempe did not properly publicize it. They also argued that the charter amendment was an unconstitutional "special law" intended to benefit Giuliano.



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Bush appointees include gays, conservatives

➤ Continued from Page 1

year federal policy blocking this local, District of Columbia ordinance.

The anti-gay Family Research Council responded to these and other developments by denouncing the White House for embracing a "homosexual political agenda" and "imparting legitimacy to the homosexual political cause."

Was this the first year of the Clinton administration? To the dismay of many of the nation's anti-gay political groups, and to the surprise of a number of gay Democratic activists, these developments took place during President George W. Bush's first year in office.

"President Bush has not only confounded his many gay detractors but has also enraged the far right, stood down their criticism, and moved ahead with his inclusive agenda," said the national gay group Log Cabin Republicans, in a written review that unabashedly gloats over the president's gay rights record.

"Remember how every other gay organization was predicting disaster for the nation and the beginning of an 'extremist' anti-gay era?" Log Cabin states in an essay in its January 2002 newsletter. "What a difference a year has made."

But as Bush ends his first year at the nation's helm, officials with non-partisan gay political groups, like the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, are far less compli-

mentary in their assessment of his record.

"The president's gay appointments are on the positive side of the balance sheet," said NGLTF Executive Director Lorri L. Jean. "But they may be the only significant positive things he's done, unless you decide to list the fact that he didn't do something bad as a positive."

NGTLF, for example, notes that Bush has appointed a number of high-level officials from the Republican Party's socially conservative wing who have anti-gay records. Among them is Attorney General John Ashcroft, an outspoken opponent of gay rights during his tenure as a U.S. senator from Missouri.

The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay political organization, argues that while Bush says he will hire without regard to sexual orientation, he won't say whether he would sign the gay civil rights bill pending in Congress known as the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would enact that policy into federal law.

HRC political director Winnie Stachelberg said the administration has not responded to HRC's request that it endorse ENDA and another bill that would give the federal government authority to prosecute anti-gay hate crimes.

"Many questions remain unanswered," Stachelberg said about the administration's gay rights positions.

Stachelberg and officials with other gay civil rights groups acknowledged that while

Bush has yet to make major policy advances on gay issues, he has so far chosen not to roll back the advances made by the Clinton administration.

Bush has left in place two key executive orders issued by President Clinton. One prohibits job discrimination against gay federal workers and the other bans government agencies from denying security clearances to an individual based solely on sexual orientation.

However, the White House announced last June that Bush had discontinued a Clinton practice of issuing annual presidential proclamations designating June as Gay Pride month.

Gay picks rile right-wing

Most gay activists view Bush's gay appointments as a positive development, although some note that Bush hasn't appointed nearly as many gays as Clinton to high and middle level administration jobs during the former president's first year in office.

In June, Bush nominated gay State Department official Michael Guest for the post of U.S. ambassador to Romania. The Senate confirmed Guest by a unanimous vote. Secretary of State Colin Powell drew attention in the press when he recognized Guest's domestic partner during a swearing-in ceremony, which Powell administered.

Anti-gay groups were especially angry over the appointment Guest. The Family

Research Council opposed the nomination on the grounds that his sexual orientation would be unacceptable to Romanians, but government officials there have dismissed the concern, praising Guest for his experience and knowledge of Eastern European affairs.

AIDS record

Some AIDS activists said Bush's appointment of Scott Evertz, a gay man, as director of the White House AIDS office was an important symbolic development because it recognized the strong interest in AIDS issues within the gay community.

But groups such as the National Association of People With AIDS called Bush's record on AIDS mixed, saying Bush has retained the Clinton administration's overall policies, which some AIDS activists have called adequate but not sufficient to address the AIDS epidemic.

"For the most part, the new administration has continued the policies of the Clinton administration," said NAPWA's Anderson. "To many of us, that's OK, because some people feared they would pull back from what we have now."

Log Cabin officials say the Bush administration has given Evertz the green light to work closely with a wide variety of constituencies, including gay and AIDS advocacy groups, to help shape the administration's policy on AIDS in the next three years.

Sanchez, Morales top Dems in governor's race

➤ Continued from Page 1

help at all on [gay] issues down the road," Murray said.

Just more than a year ago, Perry ascended from his lieutenant governor post under Bush to serve as governor. At the time, most gay rights proponents did not expect Perry to get in the way of any gay-positive legislation, but also did not expect Perry to stand up for gay constituents either.

In May 2001, Perry signed the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act into law, although he was noncommittal on the measure until he gave it his signature. The law strengthens the penalties for offenses against minorities including gays.

Perry's predecessor, Bush, had refused to support the measure two years earlier, saying all crimes are hate crimes.

"I think we've gone from one intellectually mediocre governor to another," Clarence Bagby, Houston gay activist and member of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, told the Voice about Perry a year ago.

Other gay rights advocates also initially saw Perry as a conservative Democrat.

"Rick Perry is more closely aligned with the right-wing [than Bush]," said state Rep. Debra Danburg, D-Houston, a longtime supporter of gay rights.

Murray also pointed out that Perry is strongly connected with conservatives in Texas.



Wealthy oilman Tony Sanchez is among top Democrat runners campaigning for governor this year. Most political observers consider Sanchez and Dan Morales, former Texas attorney general, top contenders for the party's nomination.

"He is generally in a much weaker position than former Gov. Bush is to stand up to ... the far right and Christian [conservatives]," Murray said.

On the Democrat side, Sanchez and Morales have emerged as top runners for that party's nomination for governor. Murray expects Sanchez to win the primary, largely due to his ability to finance his campaign.

A wealthy oilman and attorney, Sanchez

has never held public office. He endorsed gay-friendly Mayor Lee Brown in the fall Houston elections.

"Texas' diversity is one of its greatest strengths and Lee Brown has been an excellent mayor to all Houstonians," Sanchez said in endorsing the incumbent.

But last spring, Sanchez sent a letter of apology to Texas Secretary of State Henry Cuellar in relation to a gay scandal.

Private investigators hired by Sanchez's lawyer, who was looking into the origin of a reportedly threatening letter, told Cuellar's friends and family he is gay. That prompted Sanchez's letter of apology, but he stopped short of apologizing to Cuellar for alleging that he wrote the threatening letter to Sanchez, the Voice reported in April 2001.

Cuellar responded by saying that Sanchez needed to also apologize to Cuellar's family and publicly admit that he did suspect Cuellar of writing the letter.

At the time, the Associated Press reported that Kathy Walk, a spokeswoman for Perry, called the incident "character assassination." That prompted at least one gay activist to question why a person's sexual orientation would be perceived as so harmful.

Although Walt told the Voice at the time that she did not use the term attributed to her by the AP, Dianne Hardy-Garcia, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights

Lobby of Texas, said that if Walt did call the accusation that Cuellar is gay "character assassination," her comment was "unfortunate."

"We still live in a society where even a suspicion that you're gay is seen as somehow harmful to people's reputation," Hardy-Garcia told the Voice at the time. "It shouldn't be any big deal who you are."

Sanchez also is a University of Texas Regent. He has been endorsed by people including longtime gay activist Sue Lovell, a member of the Democratic National Committee, and Carroll Robinson, Houston City Council member and DNC member.

Morales is the former two-term Texas attorney general and officially entered the race for governor on Jan. 2. In 1990, he became the first Hispanic elected to a non-judicial statewide office in Texas.

As attorney general, Morales handed down legal decisions that included mandates to deem declarations of domestic partnership not "documents required or permitted by law to be recorded," the Voice has previously reported. His successor, John Cornyn, cited those decisions when ruling that county clerks are not required to accept registrations of same-sex domestic partnerships.

Cornyn currently is campaigning for Texas' U.S. Senate seat to be vacated with conservative Phil Gramm's retirement this year.

Two gays join Mass. governor's ticket

Republican governor backs gay candidate for lieutenant governor, ready to support would-be treasurer

by LOU CHIBBARO, JR.

Two gay Republicans have announced bids for statewide office in Massachusetts, vying to run on a slate headed by acting GOP Gov. Jane Swift.

The interim governor surprised supporters and detractors alike when, on Jan. 3, she announced her selection of Patrick C. Guerriero, 33, an openly gay former mayor and state representative, to be her candidate for lieutenant governor.

Less than a week later, on Jan. 9, Dan Grabauskas, 38, the registrar for the Massachusetts Department of Motor Vehicles, announced he was running for the Republican nomination for the office of state treasurer. Although Swift had not selected him for that post, she indicated through a spokesperson that she would have no objections to having him on her slate if he wins the nomination.

"Both of them running at the same time is a bit of a coincidence," an unnamed Swift administration official told the Boston Globe. "But it's

not a coincidence that you have a lot of talented people in the party who happen to be gay."

If Guerriero is successful in overcoming a series of hurdles, including a hotly contested Republican primary, and if the Swift-Guerriero ticket wins the November general election, Guerriero would become one of the nation's highest-ranking openly gay elected officials.

Grabauskas, who is credited with transforming an inefficient motor vehicles department into a well-run, consumer-friendly agency, has good name recognition and may also have a shot at winning, according to Garry Daffin, co-chair of the Massachusetts Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus.

In a telephone interview, Guerriero called Swift's decision to select him "a bold move" that confirms her commitment to "fairness" for gay men and lesbians.

"I hope I will show that it is my credentials, character, and work ethic that counts, not my sexual orientation," Guerriero said.

Guerriero is a lifelong resident of Melrose, Mass., a suburb of Boston. He became the youngest member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1993, when he won a special election at the age of 25. He won re-election in 1994 and 1996 by lopsided margins. He was elected Melrose's mayor in 1998 at age 29, and was re-elected in 2000.

Last May, he resigned to become Swift's deputy chief of staff.

Gay Democrats praised Swift for selecting Guerriero but noted that he was not openly gay when he ran for and served as a state representative and mayor. Guerriero only came out after Swift asked him to join her ticket as candidate for lieutenant governor. They said many of the state's political leaders knew his sexual orientation for some time.

Guerriero said that although he never before publicly acknowledged being gay, he also never sought to conceal his sexual orientation. He said he has been visible within the gay community and has participated in events sponsored by Log Cabin Republicans, a gay GOP group.

But gay Democratic official Steve Drischol, co-chair of the Gay & Lesbian Caucus of the Massachusetts Democratic Party, noted that Swift does not support gay marriage, while Guerriero does, which could lead to friction.

Mark Goshko, former president of the state's Log Cabin Republicans, pointed out that no Democratic candidates for governor, or even the state's two liberal U.S. senators, Edward Kennedy and John Kerry, support gay marriage, either.

Guerriero's formidable primary opponent is James Rappaport, a multimillionaire who served as chair of the Massachusetts Republican Party in the 1990s.



Acting Gov. Jane Swift of Massachusetts, a Republican, tapped a gay man, Patrick C. Guerriero, as her running mate in a move seen as part of a trend by the state's Republicans to stake out liberal ground on social issues.

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MTV, Showtime confirm plans to launch gay channel

Race for all-gay channel heats up while gay media group fears shock-jock jokes

by ANDREW KEEGAN

In a span of four days, two separate entertainment companies announced plans to launch cable networks devoted to gay programming, with a third expressing interest in expanding its current Canadian gay-based digital cable channel into U.S. markets.

MTV: Music Television

Judy McGrath, President
1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10036-8901
212-258-8184

Showtime Networks Inc.

1633 Broadway
New York, NY 10019
212-708-1600
E-mail: talk2@SHO.com

ALT 1-TV

David McKillop
202-248-1264
E-mail: mckillop@alt1.tv

Pride Vision TV

370 King Street West, Suite 308
Toronto, Ontario
M5V 1J9 Canada
877-PRIDE-TV

MTV and Showtime, both owned by media giant Viacom, will collaborate on a national cable channel devoted to gay programming, according to a Showtime official.

"The notion of a gay channel was first mentioned in 1994 but really got serious attention last year, after the success of 'Queer As Folk,'" said Gene Falk, senior vice president for Showtime's Digital Media Group.

Around the same time, executives at MTV were also toying with the idea.

Since MTV and Showtime are sister companies, it made sense that by collaborating on the project, a channel that would do justice to the concept and community could be produced, said Falk, who is gay.

Viacom research indicated that 6.5 percent of television households are occupied by gay viewers.

First, we have to get distribution in place and secondly, we have a responsibility to deliver programming that lives up to the gay community's high standards," Falk said.

The Showtime/MTV collaboration isn't the only proposed gay channel eyeing the U.S. market. The Canadian network PrideVision, which is owned by Headline Media Group Inc., a publicly traded Canadian company, began operations last September and is actively seeking to enter the much larger gay market in the U.S.

The company has been in talks with executives from MTV and Showtime, but a collaborating business relationship between

the two parties has not been finalized, said Anna McCusker, senior vice president of marketing for the company.

"It's not a matter of if we are coming to the States," she said. "It's just a matter of when."

Also entering into the fight for gay viewers is MDC Entertainment, a Washington, D.C.-based company, which hopes to be up and going by 2003.

The project has been in the works for about nine months, according to Chance Mitchell, co-founder of ALT 1-TV, the name chosen for the gay channel.

ALT1-TV will be launched as an ad-supported network, which is different from the mini-pay service being explored by other industry players, said Mitchell.

While the gay channel announcements drew praise from some potential gay viewers, a national gay media watchdog group warned its supporters to be on the lookout for radio commentators who use the news to defame gays.

Within a day of the announced MTV/Showtime collaboration earlier this month, some radio talk jocks across the country had a field day commenting on the likelihood of an all gay channel, according to the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

"I thought there already was a gay channel. What about the 'Home & Garden' or 'Food Network' channels?" quipped Jimmy Baron, co-host of the "Morning X" show on Atlanta radio station 99x.

Meanwhile, at WKTU in New York City,



MTV and Showtime will collaborate on a gay cable channel — after the success of Showtime's 'Queer As Folk' series, according to Gene Falk, a senior vice president for Showtime who is gay.

GLAAD said a DJ suggested parodies of current shows which could show up on a gay network, including "Malcolm Up My Middle" and "FAG."

"This type of humor concerns me as long as gay youths are still dealing with harassment in schools," said Hallie Whitaker, GLAAD's interim Southern regional manager. "In many of these morning shows, there's not a balance, it's just the gay jokes."

But Baron, of the Morning X in Atlanta, disagreed.

"Yes, some are distasteful and are made out of meanness, but you have to look at the source. We may ruffle feathers, but it is not done out of spite," Baron said.

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STAFF

Executive Editor
Chris Crain

Editor
Penny Weaver
editor@houstonvoice.com

Production
Kyle Willis

Contributors
Kathleen Lee, Kay Dayus, Andrew Keegan
George Jonte, Lou Chibbaro

Webmaster: Douglas Wright

Photographers
Dalton DeHart, Kimberly Thompson

Advertising Sales
Wanda Faulkner
Sales Manager
wfaulkner@houstonvoice.com

Edward Anthony
Account Executive
eanthony@houstonvoice.com

Administration & Sales Support
Carolyn A. Roberts
croberts@houstonvoice.com

National Advertising Representative
Rivendell Marketing Company, Inc.
212-242-6863

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Financial Director: Chris Reid
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(713) 529-8490
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Issue 1108

EDITORIAL

When is brutality not worth a headline?

By Chris Crain

It was a sick way to ring in the New Year.

On Jan. 1, in a city in southwestern Saudi Arabia, three men were beheaded by the Saudi Arabian government in a public square for the crime of "extreme obscenity and ugly acts of homosexuality, marrying among themselves and molesting the young."

But even more remarkable than the brutality of the Saudi regime has been the utter silence about the crime, and about the treatment of gays generally in that part of the world, from the American media and the U.S. government.

Despite all the attention focused right now on the Middle East, the Washington Post judged the Saudi story worth only a single sentence buried at the bottom of page nine. And this wasn't Woodward and Bernstein journalism: The item was repeated from Reuters, which was itself reporting the story secondhand from an Arab news service.

As worthless a job as the Post did, most news outlets performed even worse. Even with the luxury of 24/7 coverage of the crisis in the Middle East and the "war on terrorism," the cable news networks didn't touch the story. Not a single news operation outside Saudi Arabia, with the apparent exception of this newspaper, has made any effort to do an original report on the executions.

No doubt as a result, the U.S. government has also taken a pass, declining to comment on the beheadings when asked by the *Blade*, and not expressing even a whit of concern for the fate of these men and others who face brutal murder at the hands of an American ally for a crime no worse than being gay.

There is no good excuse for this abject failure of the American media and the U.S. government. But for the sake of argument, let's consider the most likely offerings:

Excuse No. 1: Gays have always been repressed in Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan; there's no "news" here.

The same could be said for the treatment of women in this region of the world, but that hasn't stopped their plight in Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia from becoming a cause celebre in the American media. Time magazine even devoted a cover story to the topic. CNN repeatedly broadcast a mini-documentary, "Behind the Veil," that highlighted the repressive history of women under Taliban rule.

The press has reported that in Saudi Arabia, our ally, women are made to live under at least some of the same restrictions as under the Taliban, and even female U.S. service members are required to wear long garments when off-base and on Saudi soil.

The coverage of women under conservative Islamic rule has provided some of the finer moments thus far for the American media, which generally prefers to focus on endless footage of caves and bombs, explained to us by retired generals pointing at maps with arrows. It's been all about who's got the "big mo" in the war in Afghanistan, much as the press has turned our political contests into poll-driven horse races.

But as disturbing as it is that women in Afghanistan were forced to wear head-to-toe garments and denied an education, the treatment of gays by the Taliban was far more brutal. Men discovered to be gay were executed, by crushing rock walls on top of them.

And as troubling as it is that our Saudi allies won't permit women to drive, it is surely at least worth coverage that they behead by sword those discovered to be homosexual, along with the murderers and rapists.

Excuse No. 2: You can't compare the treatment of women to the treatment of gays; even in America gay rights remains very much an unsettled question.

True enough, and it's a point often lost on gay activists who complain when the mainstream press publishes views about gays that they wouldn't touch if the target were women or blacks or other minorities.

Our society's take on homosexuality is still very much "in play," and it is fair game for the media to take that into consideration. That's why it is OK for a reporter doing a story about gay parenting to seek comment from the Family Research Council, even when the same reporter wouldn't necessarily seek out the "other side" in a story on interracial parents, for example.

But that doesn't excuse the inattention of the American media to the plight of gays in the Middle East. However wrong and sinful our lives are viewed by social conservatives in this country, very few advocate our execution, much less by brutal and public means. Even the rabidly anti-gay "Rev." Fred Phelps, who routinely celebrates our ultimate descent into hell, has not argued that the U.S. government should send us there.

So to the extent that the disparate treatment of women in Afghanistan and Saudi

Arabia has driven coverage of that story, the same justification is there for shedding light on the heartless treatment of gays. In some ways, it ought to make for an even better story, as journalists could put conservatives in and out of our government on the spot about whether their anathema for gay rights at home has colored their willingness to tolerate the execution of gays abroad.

Excuse: The war in Afghanistan is about terrorism, not gay rights.

Maybe so in the initial weeks of the military campaign there, but not since November, when the Bush White House launched a calculated campaign to use the Taliban's mistreatment of women as justification for American bombing there.

The Washington Post has catalogued the ways in which the president and his staff have pushed the issue, including an unprecedented radio address by First Lady Laura Bush that urged support for the war in Afghanistan in part as a way to liberate Afghan women.

At a joint appearance with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Bush called the Taliban "the most repressive, backward group of people we have seen on the face of the Earth in a long period of time, including and particularly how they treat women."

The vice president similarly chimed in, telling the BBC that the Taliban had "seriously mistreated and abused women." The State Department even issued a report, "The Taliban's War Against Women," which described rights abuses there. And Victoria Clarke, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, held a conference call with female chief executives in this country to further spread the word.

White House talking points, issued to American officials around the world, called the Taliban "one of the world's leading perpetrators of human rights abuses." Mary Matalin, a gay-friendly Republican political operative on the vice president's staff, said, "The president doesn't see this as a women's issue. He sees it as a justice issue."

Why has the State Department failed to issue even a single statement, much less a full-fledged report, about the execution of gays by Islamic regimes? Where is the press, to ask each of these officials about the brutal treatment of gays by the Taliban, and by our allies in Saudi Arabia?

The White House has insisted that its conscious effort to shed light on the Taliban's treatment of women was not a cynical attempt to shore up support for the war in Afghanistan at a time, last fall, when progress seemed slow and pundits had begun to second guess.

But without even the slightest pressure or attention from the press corps, the callous hypocrisy of American policy toward gays in the region will apparently go unchallenged.

Chris Crain is executive editor of the *Houston Voice* and can be reached at ccrain@window-media.com.

Corrections

An article in the Jan. 11 issue of *Houston Voice* chronicling movies in which gay plotlines were removed mistakenly identified Stanley Kowalski as the gay character in "A Streetcar Named Desire." In the play, it is Blanche Dubois's husband who is gay, a fact that is omitted from the movie version. The story also reported that Billy Hayes, the Turkish-held prisoner depicted in the movie "Midnight Express," was gay. In his autobiography, Hayes wrote that he had a sexual relationship with another prisoner, but never indicated that he was gay.

Houston Voice regrets the errors.



VIEWPOINT

Two firemen find love at Trade Center disaster

by MUBARAK DAHIR

This is a remarkable but sad and true story of unlikely love, and its untimely loss.

Two firemen working side by side at the site of the World Trade Center initially were unaware of each other's orientation, incognizant even of their strong attraction to each other. But in the face of unimaginable devastation, they discovered their improbable love.

But while they found each other in the face of near-death, they were ultimately unable to hold onto each other in the face of everyday homophobia.

Sitting in his Midtown Manhattan office where he is a part-time Internet consultant for a large telecommunications company, "John" was finishing off the last bites of his breakfast bagel when he heard the news that American Airlines Flight 11 torpedoed into the north tower of the World Trade Center.

As a battalion chief and 20-year veteran of the Fire Department of New York, John knew all available hands would be needed to tame a burning building the size of a World Trade Center tower. Even before he understood the country was under attack, even before the second plane smashed into the south tower, John

dashed from behind the desk and down to his truck parked on the street below.

Three hours after leaving his office, John finally made it through traffic to the World Trade Center. By the time he arrived, both towers had crumbled to the ground like sandcastles. "I couldn't believe what I was looking at," he says.

His mind jumped instantly to his crew, the group of 30 firefighters he worked

working at Ground Zero nonstop since the attacks occurred. Exhausted, sleep-deprived and emotionally distraught, John was in no condition to drive. The fire department assigned Richard to chauffeur John to a Bronx firehouse, where the two men were given a couple of days to recuperate.

When they arrived at the station, it was virtually empty. Perhaps it was the solitude of the desolate fire station, or maybe

around each other, the two men began to kiss. Unexpectedly, they spent the night making love.

While so much was lost in the face of death and destruction from Sept. 11, these two men miraculously managed to find each other. But their love was not to last long. Too many outside forces would soon tear them apart.

They continued their affair for two and a half months. But on the weekend following Thanksgiving, John reluctantly called it off. Extreme conditions brought them together. But everyday ones tore them apart.

John, who is in his early 40s, is married and has a small child. He concedes that he's gay, but he can't muster the will to tell his wife or his family and friends. Especially now, he can't deal with the repercussions a coming out would entail.

Richard, still so young, is slowly discovering what it means to be gay and love men. Neither can imagine living openly in the machismo world of firefighters.

John breaks down as he talks of the agony of letting Richard go. "It's almost too much to bear. First, I lost all my buddies. Then I lost the only person I ever truly loved."

Mubarak Dahir is a syndicated columnist living in Astoria, N.Y., and can be reached at MubarakDah@aol.com.

Extreme conditions brought two New York City firefighters together, but everyday pressures ultimately tore them apart.

alongside at the station. They had been called to the World Trade Center immediately, and had arrived before either building tumbled. John would discover that 28 of them perished in the towering infernos, including his two best friends, "brothers, really" as he refers to them.

But there was little time for grieving. John, like other fire department officers, was assigned a group of 19 men to supervise in the rescue and relief effort. "Richard" was one of the men assigned to John's team. At 22, Richard was a new recruit, fresh out of the academy. John took little notice of him until the evening of Sept. 14.

That's when the fire department began rotating out battalion chiefs who'd been

it was just the first opportunity either of them had to reflect on the horror of the past three days. But alone in the station, the two men burst into tears together.

Despite their fatigue, neither could sleep. "By this time, our emotional state was dangerously volatile," says John. "The dam just burst. We talked and cried and hugged for several hours."

John doesn't know what Richard was thinking, but he doubts Richard even knew he was gay at the time. "I think at that moment he just needed to be loved, and I was the only person around."

For whatever reason, about an hour after John retired to bed, Richard came to him and asked to be held. Arms wrapped

Let us know what you think!

Send the editor your letters (400 words maximum) or op-ed submissions (800 words maximum). Include a name and phone number for verification.

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The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of Ethan Green

Calling Him.



So it turns out that Ethan's latest boyfriend prospect is named Peter Filmore. Eeth just got his phone number from directory assistance.



It's 11:15 in the morning at Channel 12, where Ethan is employed. A minute ago he was working up the nerve to call Peter ---but just now he was interrupted by his nosey-parker boss, TV Weather Personality Monty Poole.



by eric orner

If Monty ever gets lost, Ethan is definitely gonna make the call.



Now it's 11:24am---which is a good time to call some guy if, like Ethan, you're currently too chickenshit to actually talk to him, but still wanna check out his answering machine to see if he sounds normal, or like a freak.



And if, you're surprised, and the guy actually does answer the phone at this mid-morning hour when responsible boyfriend prospects are at work, well dude, he's not a guy you wanna date anyway.



Phew, it's a machine. OK, so early indicators are good. Nice voice...



...But what's that weird noise in the background? A goat? Could he have a pet goat? No, sounds like a bird. A large bird..





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"That rumor wasn't true, bro."

Pittsburgh Steeler quarterback Kordell Stewart, responding to long-standing gossip that he is gay and was caught having public sex, to ESPN Magazine



Kordell Stewart

"If we don't succeed, Vermont's 'civil union' law will infect marriage laws in all 50 states like a flesh-eating bacteria."

Rev. David A. Stertzbach, president of Vermont Defense of Marriage Political Action Committee, in a letter to supporters reminding them that "God-fearing" people nationwide were watching and praying that the landmark gay rights law would be overturned



Larry Kramer

"AIDS Activist Larry Kramer Dies"

The headline on an Associated Press story sent out on the newswire several days after the 66-year-old playwright and AIDS activist received a liver transplant on Dec. 21. The headline was in error; Kramer was released from the hospital on Dec. 26

"At least he went down fighting."

AIDS activist Jeff Getty, in a telephone message to Larry Kramer's partner Rodger McFarlane, upon reading the AP headline; Getty was subsequently elated to hear that Kramer was recovering

"We shouldn't face a death sentence because of who we are or who we love."

Larry Kramer, arguing that more HIV-positive patients needing organ transplants should receive them, to the New York Times, Jan. 8

"We'll go from Coors Light to Coors Light in the loafers."

Max Mutchnik, gay creator of "Will & Grace," on the anticipated trend toward more targeted advertising to gay consumers

"I want to see mushy romantic moments with people like me. As a friend of mine says, gay people want trash, too."

Gene Falk, a Showtime vice president who is developing a new gay cable channel, to the New York Times, Jan. 13

"The Weakest Twink" (game show): Randomly selected nightclub patrons compete to answer incredibly easy questions to which the answer is usually 'Stonewall.' Dismissive host Ian McKellen gets snippy when they don't know the answer."

Washington Post writer Hank Stuever, suggesting TV shows for the new gay cable network in development by Showtime

"Bitchy Switches" (lifestyle): Lesbian couples swap houses with male couples and each has just two days and \$1,000 to completely redecorate a room in the other's house. Pilot: Fur flies when Rita Mae and Sneaky Pie Brown add wood paneling and Napa Valley style to Jann and Matt's ultra-minimalist loft."

Washington Post writer Hank Stuever, suggesting TV shows for the new gay cable network in development by Showtime

"The question was would you support civil unions, ... and his answer was that he would be open to a discussion but he wasn't familiar with all of the legal aspects."

Matt Szabo, deputy press secretary to California gubernatorial candidate Richard Riordan, recounting the former Los Angeles mayor's comments at a forum sponsored by a West Hollywood gay group, as reported by the Associated Press, Jan. 9




Elton John

"As a gay man, I'm very lucky not to be infected. My concern nowadays is that young people think they are invulnerable, but they're not."

Elton John to ITV news, Jan. 8

— From staff and wire reports

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Out on the Bayou

houston voice • January 18, 2002

Inside the Minds of LARAMIE

'Laramie Project' takes to Houston stage with its tale directly from townspeople involved in Matthew Shepard tragedy

by KAY DAYUS

On Oct. 7, 1998, Mathew Shepard was brutally gun-whipped, beaten bloody and left to die, strung up like a scarecrow on a fence in Laramie, Wyo. It was a cold night, near freezing, and he was to die like a common murderer or thief.

In actuality, Shepard's only "crime" was to be a young gay student at the University of Wyoming who stumbled into the wrong bar on the wrong night.

The sad story of Shepard unfolds in the play, "The Laramie Project," now open at Stages. His character never appears in the play; fodder for the production is gleaned from interviews with Laramie residents shortly after the crime.

A preacher in Laramie told an interviewer that although he denounced the crime, he hoped Shepard saw fit to reflect on his "lifestyle" in the agonizing hours he spent bleeding to death. His remarks seem to reflect not only the bigotry but also the ignorance of many of Laramie's residents.

Rob Bundy, Stages artistic director, says, "You can't condone someone for ignorance; you have to appeal to them another way. But we still have to eradicate their ignorance."

Written by Moises Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Project, the play looks at how hate is born and nurtured in a seemingly friendly small town like Laramie, Wyo.

Kaufman and Tectonic Theater members visited Laramie four weeks after the death of Shepard and returned five times during the next year. They conducted more than 200 interviews with residents of Laramie and from those interviews produced this play about hope, fear and courage.

Although the piece looks at the ugly details of the murder, it is not a dramatization of the actual events. It is an investigation into the meaning of the events from the perspective of the men and women of Laramie.

According to reviews, the play has an intense effect on the audience and players alike. Several cast members of the Stages production expressed their feelings to the Voice in recent interviews.

Bundy reveals that, as a gay man, the play has been for him, "a healing journey through hell." He says he is lucky to be able to work on this play, a production that is one of the "most hopeful plays I've worked on." And he wants to share its sentiments with others.

Bundy grew up in Boulder, Colo., so he says he can at least empathize to some extent with the mentality of the folks in Laramie.

"It's the prairie, with prairie mentality," he explains. "These people were totally blindsided by this crime committed by their own youth. They had to confront what had happened."

"But they couldn't process the grief and worldwide media attention and so they shut down."

He feels the interviews and this play give the people of Laramie some hope and healing. "Isn't that beautiful? It's the power of the theater."

Everyone interviewed in Laramie is fairly represented without comment in the play, according to Bundy. "We hear redneck bigotry versus anti-gay senti-

ment," he says.

Essentially, the play is about the all-American boy who frequents a bar and picks up a girl, Bundy relates. "Add one change: Now he's gay and it's suddenly 'pervert picks up boy.' And if he happens to be HIV, suddenly he's a demon spreading AIDS," he says.

One woman, wife of a police officer in Laramie, described Shepard as a "gay going to bars spreading AIDS," Bundy says.

However, he adds, he has to fairly represent this woman in the play. "She has a right to her feelings."

It is a little known fact that Shepard was HIV positive. It was discovered in the hospital where they tried to save him. It is likely that Shepard himself did not know he was HIV positive.

In the final analysis, Bundy says, "This play teaches me tolerance and compassion from my side of the fence."

Houston actress Ann C. James plays more than one role in the play, as do all the actors. The pivotal role for James is that of the female police officer who was the first official to reach Shepard at the fence.

"The police chief was apparently cheap and they had run out of plastic gloves," James says. The female cop, Officer Flutie, had cuts on her hands from working at home, but she didn't hesitate to make direct contact with Shepard, who was covered in blood.

After Flutie learned Shepard was HIV positive, she underwent six months of rigorous testing and personal agony before she was assured she did not contract the disease.

She acted quickly because he was still breathing but tied tightly to the fence, James says.

"She wanted to get the little one to the hospital — he was very small for his age you know," the actress says of Shepard. He

> Continued on Page 14

appts

ongoing

DiverseWorks presents Claude Wampler's latest film, "Ambulance," with premiere screening at 7 p.m. Jan. 18. Wampler has established a reputation as one of the most provocative visual and performing artists working today. Through Feb. 2. DiverseWorks, 1117 East Freeway. 713-223-8346. www.diverseworks.org.

sunday, jan 20

The 2002 Compaq Houston Marathon steps off at 7:30 a.m. from George R. Brown Convention Center. The route runs from the center in a single loop that includes downtown Houston, Woodland Heights, Montrose, Hermann Park, Rice University, the Galleria and Memorial Park. More than 8,000 runners are expected to participate in the marathon and also in a half-marathon and the Uptown Park 4 on the same day. Marathon runners include Houston firefighter Richard LeJorza, who will participate to raise money for the Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative. www.compaqhoustonmarathon.com.

monday, jan 21

The Center for AIDS, in association with Alley Theatre, plans an encore performance of "Falsettos," directed by Alley's Paul Hope. The one-time production

benefits the Center for AIDS: Hope and Remembrance Project. The theater hosts the event followed by a reception with the cast.



Winner of the 1992 Tony Award for Best Book and Best Score, "Falsettos" is a story about a neurotic family searching for family values amidst a chaotic contemporary America. Tickets: \$36.50 & \$51.50. 7:30 p.m. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. 713-228-8421.

'Project' finds hope after senseless Shepard tragedy

➤ Continued from Page 13

was in fact only 5'2" and weighed just 105 pounds.

As an African-American woman, James says she knows all about discrimination and meets it in subtle and not-so-subtle ways daily. She equates discrimination against blacks to that against gays.

"It just affects a different population; the hatred comes from the same seed," she says grimly.

Veteran actor Rutherford Cravens says being in the play is an emotional experience for him.

"It's incredibly moving and I think we all had a sense of mission doing the play. I hope it will get people to look at a lot of issues, especially the toxic issues of our culture," he explains.

Cravens says the killers, Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, "are certainly not typical of our culture, but still a product of that culture. It raises a lot of questions and makes us look at what's going on in this country."

One of Cravens' characters is the emergency room doctor tending to Shepard. Ironically, this same doctor was tending to McKinney, who got into another fight after beating up Shepard and had gone to the emergency room for treatment.

The doctor was pulled away from



Actors and actresses in 'The Laramie Project' each play several roles during each performance.

McKinney to treat the mortally wounded Shepard.

"It's strange," Cravens says. "One has this sense of inevitable trajectory of these three lives coming together and all three lives being destroyed by that coming together."

Kelli Cousins also plays several characters in the local production, but for her the most memorable is Zubaida, an Islamic student at the University of Wyoming.

"She's incredibly clearheaded," the actress says of Zubaida. "She's the moral barometer of the play. She is saying, 'We

need to own up to this. Be sad that it happened, but own up to it.'"

Cousins laughs a little wryly when she tells the story of Shepard renting a limousine to take him to gay bars across the state line in Colorado. Laramie was a small town with a population of less than 27,000 and no gay bars. So it is quite clear that Shepard knew he was in a straight bar that fateful night he met McKinney and Henderson.

For Shepard, it was as sad and irretrievably a fateful night as it was for those who loved him, but for those left behind, there must be hope that something can be learned from this senseless tragedy.

INFO

"The Laramie Project"

Through Feb. 10

7:30 p.m. Wednesdays & Thursdays

8 p.m. Fridays & Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sundays

Tickets: \$19-23, preview performances;


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THEATER REVIEW

'Lonely' brings tears, laughter

Tragic comedy features men dealing with the loss of all their friends to AIDS epidemic

by GEORGE JONTE

"We will leave some traces, for we are people and not cities."

That quote is attributed to absurdist playwright Eugene Ionesco in his play, "The Chairs." American playwright Steven Dietz draws a reference from that quote to create one of the most compelling dramas in modern theater repertoire, "Lonely Planet."

Currently being given a stunning production at Actor's Theatre of Houston, Dietz' "Lonely Planet" showcases the writer's talent to weave pathos and humor into a tragicomedy that packs a wallop but still leaves you with a feeling of hope.

Consider, if you will, having lost everyone who is near and dear to you through an incredible epidemic. Granted, this epidemic is the all-too-familiar AIDS crisis. AIDS remains an unconquered disease that has been a cruel thief to us all. People still sit around and lament that all of their friends are gone. And that is what makes this a timely piece of theater even 20 years after the AIDS crisis first began.

The play takes place in Atlanta in a small map store owned by Jody (George Brock) and centers around him and best friend Carl (Kent Johnson) and how they deal with the epidemic. Jody has dealt with the loss of good friends by turning inward and becoming a recluse — almost an incurable agoraphobic. He has an apartment close to the map store but has set up living just in the store. So horrified by the ordeal, Jody has even refused to be tested for the virus.

He surrounds himself with his maps and his globes to create an alternate reality, but, instead, creates much frustration and anxiety for his persona as well as his friend's. He often refers to the way various map-makers disproportionate the map representations to substantiate each one's philosophy of whether the earth is flat or round.

Carl, on the other hand, is Jody's link to the outside world. And he is faced with the Herculean task of trying to get Jody to reconnect with reality, with the world, and to get tested. He visits often and starts bringing chairs into the tiny store, providing an incredible stage metaphor with its clutter, thus pointing out even further the horrifying reality of the AIDS epidemic.

As the play unfolds, the audience learns that the chairs have far reaching significance — each belonged to one of their friends who has just died. This is only one way in which Carl tries to deal with the situation. He is also alternately a restorer of fine art, tending office plants and a myriad of other professions. Each of these profes-



Kent Johnson plays Carl and George Brock plays Jody in the current stunning production of 'Lonely Planet' at Unhinged Productions, presented by Chris Wilson's Actors Theatre.

sions belonged to one of the friends who died. This is his way of holding on — if he pretends he is in their shoes and in their chair, he doesn't have to face the reality that they are gone.

Actors' Theatre has chosen to mount this production in Unhinged Productions' intimate space on LaBranch. The stage at Unhinged provides the proper setting, drawing the audience into every moment. Brock has designed a very functional set and mood lighting that capture the full effect of this stirring script.

Foster Davis has directed tightly yet with a sensitive hand, allowing the pathos to slap us in the face but at the point when we are just short of wrist slitting, allowing the humor to attack us with the same velocity. Though young in age, Davis has brought certain maturity to the helm and it works beautifully.

Brock's Jody has all of the quiet pain and inner turmoil you would expect from his character in great contrast to the more effusive and outward characterization of Johnson's Carl. They work beautifully together, meshing all those quiet subtle moments that almost bring you to tears and then back to laughter.

With a winning combination of compelling script, beautiful direction and seamless acting by two of Houston's brightest actors, you can't help but have a sure winner in "Lonely Planet."

INFO

Through Feb. 2
 Tickets: \$10 or \$8 for seniors and students
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 3304 La Branch
 Chris Wilson's Actors
 Theatre of Houston: 713-529-6606

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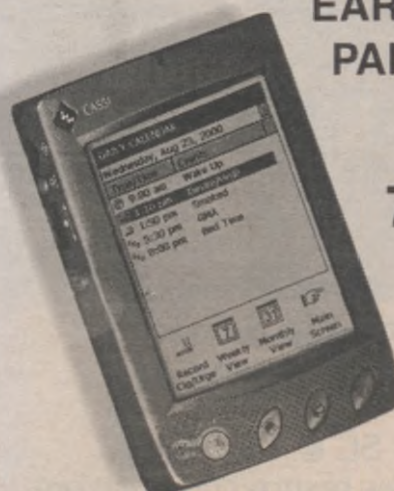
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January 27th "Salvation - Receiving God's Gift" Rev. Janet Parker

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community calendar

saturday, jan 19

Classic Chassis Car Club. Houston annual winter video party. Home of Joe Wilson, 1522 Gardenia. 713-680-0141.

Houston Area Bears. Social at Mary's, 9 p.m.-2 a.m. www.houstonareabears.com. 713-867-9123.

every saturday

All-Spanish Worship Service/Culto en español. 6 p.m. Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2026 W. 11th. 713-303-9403 or 713-861-9149 After Hours.

KPFT 90.1 FM. 12 a.m. to 3 a.m. 713-526-5738.

Dignity mass. 7:30 p.m. for gay Catholics. 713-880-2872.

Gay & Lesbian Breakfast Club. 9:30 a.m. 281-437-0636.

Houston Chain Gang Bicycle Club. Call for ride locations. 713-863-1860.

Houston Wrestling Club. Practice. 1:30 p.m. 713-453-7406.

Q-Patrol walks the streets 9:30 p.m. Convenes at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatrolinc@aol.com

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Rosary 8 a.m. 1805 W. Alabama. 713-528-6665.

Houston Gay & Lesbian Community Center. Drop-in noon-4 p.m. • Center cleanup, 10 a.m. • Texas Association for Transsexual Support, 3 p.m. • STAG (Some Transgenders Are Guys), 7 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

sunday, jan 20

every sunday

Anarchist Black Cross Federation/Anarchist Reading Group. 1 p.m. www.houstonabc.org. 713-595-2103

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Services at 8:30 & 10:50 a.m. Sunday school 9:45 a.m. 713-526-1017.

Community Gospel. Service at 11 a.m. & 7 p.m. Sunday School for children 10 a.m. 713-880-9235 or www.communitygospel.org.

Covenant Church, Ecumenical, Liberal Baptist. Service 9:30 a.m. & education hour 11 a.m. 713-668-8830.

First Congregational Church (Memorial). Service at 10 a.m. Christian Education, 11:30 p.m. 713-468-9543 or fcc-houston.org.

First Unitarian Universalist Church. Services at 9:30 & 11:30 a.m. Brunch available, 10:30 a.m. Panel discussion, 1:30 p.m. 713-526-5200. church@firstuu.org.

Gay Catholics of St. Anne's-Houston. 5 p.m. worship service. Dinner and social. alexcam@wt.net. 713-623-0930.

Grace Lutheran Church. Sunday school for all ages 9 a.m. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-528-3269. Houston Mission Church. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-529-8225.

Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m. to noon. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

Maranatha Fellowship Metropolitan Church. Service, 6:30 p.m. 713-528-6756.

Rainbow Riders. A bicycle club for women.

713-869-1686.

Resurrection MCC. Services. 9 and 11 a.m. Adult Sunday School, 10 a.m. Youth Sunday School, 11:15 a.m. Handbell Choir rehearsal, 1:30 p.m. 713-861-9149.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Holy Rite Eucharist I, 7:45 a.m.; Holy Rite Eucharist II, 8:55 a.m.; Education hour, 10 a.m.; Choral Eucharist, 11 a.m. 713-528-6665.

The Women's Group. Meeting and discussion. 10:45 a.m. 713-529-8571.

Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Adult discussion, 9:45 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. 281-277-8882. www.tuuc.org.

Unitarian Fellowship of Galveston County. 502 Church St. Service, 10:30 a.m. 409-765-8330.

Unitarian Fellowship of Houston. Adult forum, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. 713-686-5876.

Houston Gay & Lesbian Community Center. Drop-in 2-5 p.m. • LOAF (Lesbians Over Age Fifty), 2 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. • 713-524-3818.

monday, jan 21

every monday

AIDS Mastery. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

Frost Eye Clinic. Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.

gayDAR. Wellness Community. Support Group. 7 p.m. 713-526-1017, Ext. 211.

Gay Fathers/Fathers First. Support group. 8-9:30 p.m. Grace Lutheran Church. Tom, 713-726-8736.

www.geocities.com/gaydadhouston/

Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. Open rehearsals, 7 p.m. 713-521-7464.

Grief & Divorce Support Groups. 7 p.m. Bering. 713-526-1017, ext. 208.

HIV testing. STD exams and treatment. Free. AVES. 1-6:15 p.m. 713-626-2837.

Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. 713-692-2703.

Kolbe Project. Eucharist 7:30 p.m. 713-861-1800. Lesbian & Gay Voices Radio Show. 8-10 p.m. KPFT 90.1. 713-529-1223.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. 936-441-1614.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

tuesday, jan 22

Bi-Net Houston. Men's meeting. 713-467-4380.

every tuesday

Bering Support Network. Lunch Bunch Gang, 11 a.m. 713-526-1017.

CPR Classes. 3 p.m. 713-607-7700.

For Mature Audiences Only. Support group. 7 p.m. Bering Memorial UMC. 713-526-1017.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m. to midnight. Club Houston. 713-830-3000.

Gay Men's Process Group. 7 p.m. 3316 Mt. Vernon. 713-526-8390.

Gay youth. New program for young gay males, ages 18-29. 7 p.m. 614 Avondale. 713-533-9786.



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community calendar

Helping Cross Dressers Anonymous. Support group. 7 p.m. 713-524-0439.

Houston Women's Rugby Team. No experience necessary. Practice, 6:30-8:30. Westland YMCA. Kay, 713-208-1529.

HTGA. Support group. 7 p.m. 713-520-0439.

Men's Network. Discussion group for social, educational development of gay and bisexual men. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 281-633-2555.

Rainbow Ranglers. Free C&W dance lessons. Brazos River Bottom. Two-hour free dance workshops. No partner needed. Beginner. 2 Step, Waltz, Shuffle & Swing. Drop in anytime. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Lesbian Coming-Out Group, 7 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

wednesday, jan 23

Center for AIDS. Women's mixer. 1407 Hawthorne. 713-527-8210.

every wednesday

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Dinner, 6:30 p.m. Various support groups, 7 p.m. 713-526-1017.

Bible Study. Noon & 6:30 p.m. St. Stephen's Episcopal. 713-526-6665.

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. 713-793-4026.

Freelance Art Classes. By Kermit Eisenhut for HIV+ individuals. 1-4 p.m. Lunch provided. 713-523-9530.

Houston Pride Band. Open rehearsal. 1307 Yale. 713-527-0931. www.houstonprideband.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:30-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontenniscb@aol.com. Lesbian Literature Discussion Group. 7 p.m. Meets every other Wednesday. 713-383-6738.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 936-441-1614.

Spiritual Uplift service. 7 p.m. Bible Study 7:30 p.m. Resurrection MCC. 713-861-9149.

Women's Network. Montrose Counseling Center discussion group for social, educational development of gay and bisexual women. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Free HIV testing, counseling, 6-9 p.m. • Houston Committee for People's Radio, 6:30 p.m. • Bi-Net Houston, 7:30 p.m. 713-524-3818.

thursday, jan 24 every thursday

Community Gospel. Service. 7:30 p.m. 713-880-9235. www.communitygospel.org.

Free HIV Testing. By the Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m. to midnight. Toyz Disco. 713-830-3000.

FrontRunners. Running club. 6:30 p.m. 713-522-8021.

Gay Houston. New social group for all ages. 7 p.m. 713-526-9318.

Hep C Recovery. Support group. 6:30 p.m.

Bering. 713-526-1017, Ext. 211.

HIV Art Therapy Program. 1-4 p.m.

Kermit Eisenhut. 713-523-9530.

Houston Women's Rugby Team. No experience necessary. Practice, 6:30-8:30. Westland YMCA. Kay, 713-208-1529.

Lambda Skating Club. 8 p.m. Tradewinds.

Skating Rink. www.lambdaroll.org. 713-410-7215. Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 281-633-2555.

Rainbow Ranglers. Free C&W dance lessons.

Two hours free line dance instruction. No partner required. Drop in anytime. Brazos River Bottom. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

STD exams & treatment. Free. AVES. 713-626-2837.

Spanish Charla Conversation Group. Empire Cafe, 7 p.m. Email charlahouston@msn.com. 713-416-7203.

Women's Clinic. Montrose Clinic. 713-830-3000. **Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center.** Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Monthly board meeting, 7 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

friday, jan 25

Kolbe Project. Movie night. "Moulin Rouge." 1030 heights Blvd. www.kolbeproject.org.

every friday

Frost Eye Clinic. Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.

Govinda Yoga Club. Free yoga classes at 3115 West Loop South, No. 21. 713-439-0455.

Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.) Meeting. 713-942-7002.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:30-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontenniscb@aol.com

Kolbe Project. Morning prayer, 10 a.m.

713-861-1800.

Lesbian & Gay Voices. KPFT 90.1 FM. 7 p.m.

713-526-5738.

Q-Patrol. Walks the streets. 9 p.m. 713-528-SAFE.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center.

Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Hawthorne Men's Club, 7:30 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818

volunteer/self-help

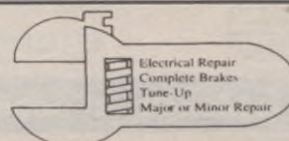
Gay & Lesbian Help line. For gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Staffed by volunteers of all ages. 6-11 p.m. Monday-Friday, 5-10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. 888-340-GLBT.

Peer Listening Line. Youth only. Staffed by GLBT youth for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. 5-10 p.m. Monday-Friday. 800-399-PEER.

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To list an event, call 713-529-8490, fax at 713-529-9531, or e-mail editor@houstonvoice.com. Deadline is Monday at 5 p.m.

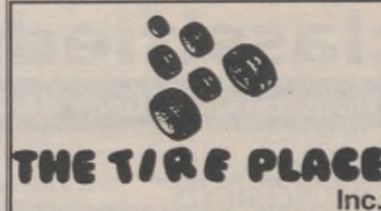
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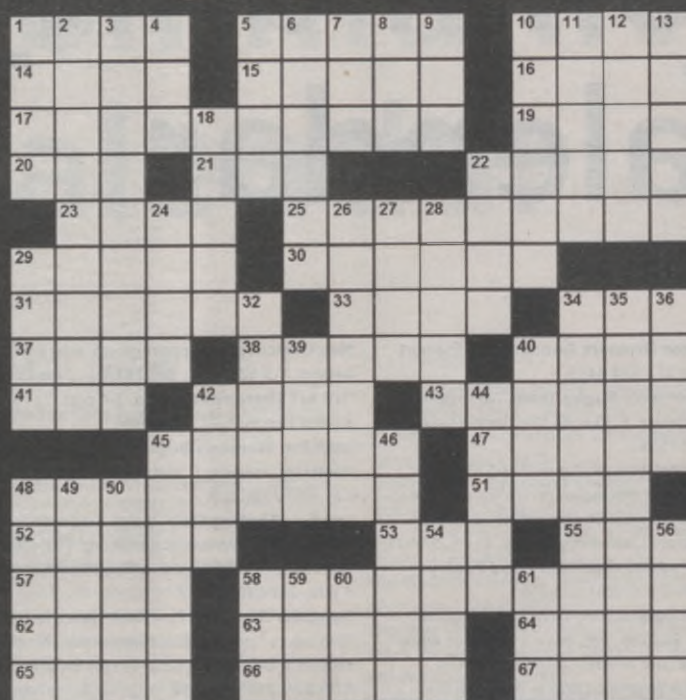
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Q Puzzle



"TRU BELIEVER"

ACROSS

1. Beginning of "Rent"
5. Singer Korniloff
10. Sexy clothing material
14. Stuff for oral gratification
15. "___ the book" (excuse for not seeing "The Wizard of Oz")
16. Ulrich of a landmark gay rights case
17. City of Capote's birth
19. Spin like a top
20. Directional ending
21. Earhart concern (abbr.)
22. Reacts to Philadelphia, perhaps
23. Some of Rita Mae's digits (abbr.)
25. Writer who modeled a character after Capote
29. Milo of "Ulysses"
30. Nuts of a tall one
31. Lovers hit them
33. Coagulate
34. ___ Francisco
37. It might zoom toward a nude model
38. ___ ass (moves quickly)
40. Like Eddie Izzard's comedy
41. Queer
42. Transgender hero of "Stone Butch Blues"
43. Corrects
45. Where Muffin Spencer-Devlin takes her driver?
47. Very queer
48. With 58-Across, Capote novel
51. ___ Wu of verse
52. Bea Arthur's TV maid Esther
53. ___ polloi
55. Personal-ad info
57. Britney Spears' "___ Curious"
58. See 48-Across
62. Roehm's refusal
63. Joe of JFK
64. San Francisco's Castro Suites et al.
65. "Anything ___"
66. Like Mary
67. It goes on a hero's meat, maybe

DOWN

1. Harold's problem in "The Boys in the Band"
2. Beloved, like Chastity's mom?
3. Guitarist Pete
4. "Sands of ___ Jima"
5. "To ___ a Mockingbird" (novel with the character modeled after Capote)
6. Franklin, who sang "Through the Storm" with Elton John
7. Room opening?
8. "Fixer Chao" author Ong
9. Meas. of a braggart?
10. They cut leaves of grass
11. Cotton Club singer Waters
12. R.E.M. frontman Michael
13. Hung like a ___
18. Charged
22. ___ to the bottom (sank)
24. Queens rule over them
26. Singles out, perhaps
27. Use X
28. Alice Walker output
29. 1952 Olympics site where Dick Button won gold
32. Bundle of faggots
34. Madre of Mary?
35. Boy George characteristic
36. Org. that may include bears
39. Dog in "The Thin Man"
40. Rip Torn's voice role in "Hercules"
42. Part of a Margaret Cho routine
44. Bernstein theme, e.g.
45. Chicken hawk's weapons
46. Hoagland's "Lesbian ___"
48. Etheridge's "___ Me Some Water"
49. Julian's partner in a porn flick
50. Interior designer de Wolfe
54. Out ___ (drunk)
56. Old name in oil
58. Invitation to a manhunt? (abbr.)
59. Address book abbr.
60. "The Waste Land" author's initials
61. Prepare to shoot off

Answers on Page 22

4 HANDS ON

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OCCASIONS

CCCC Member John P. blows out his candle on Jan. 20

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Sexy Jim Sorgini celebrates his birthday on Jan. 22

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AD POLICY: Houston Voice reserves the right to edit, reclassify or reject ads not meeting Houston Voice standards. No refunds for early cancellation.

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Deadline for ad submission is: MONDAY at 12 NOON

1 PICK YOUR CATEGORY

FREE: Call for guidelines

- HIV Services & Education
- Volunteers
- Non-Profit Organizations
- *First 20 words

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- Roommates
- Personal Web sites

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- Help Wanted-Seeking
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- Licensed Massage
- Moving Services
- Professional Services
- Real Estate For Rent
- Real Estate For Sale

Call 713-529-8490 for other categories

2 WRITE YOUR AD

Please print clearly

CATEGORY: _____ # OF ISSUES: _____

Giant or Bold Headline - Not to exceed 14 characters and spaces

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

TEXT: _____

3 TOTAL YOUR COST

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Up to 20 words: \$10.00

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Bold headline: 5.00 (per week) _____

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Total: \$ _____

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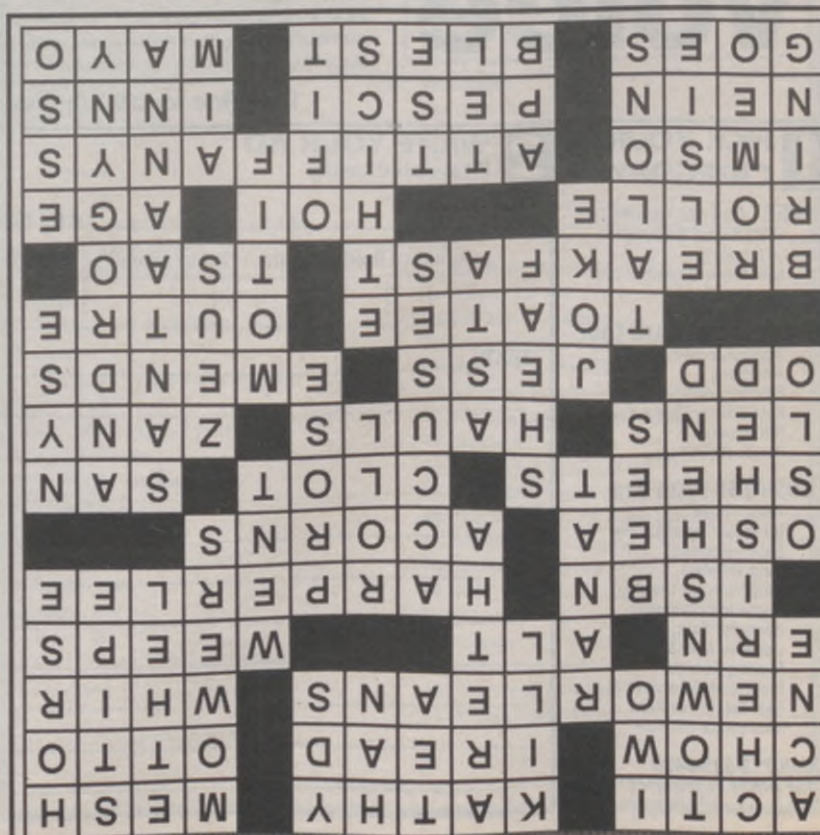
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Answer to Puzzle on Page 20



My Stars!

by JILL DEARMAN

YOUR WEEKLY HOROSCOPE



Jan. 18 – Jan. 24

**ARIES (March 21 to April 20)**

Your ruler Mars is spreading passion and intensity through your body and your mind, darling. Act while you are feeling fearless. A Cancer wants you to hit the gas and go.

**TAURUS (April 21 to May 20)**

This is the right time for you to organize your agenda. Make a list and check it twice. Only you can make your career what you want it to be. A Pisces wants to bring more love into your life, darling.

**GEMINI (May 21 to June 21)**

The moon meets Saturn in your sign on Jan. 24 and could make you feel a bit heavy and oppressed. Allow your emotions to guide you to action, darling. You need to move, before you stagnate and stiffen up like the Tin Man in the "Wizard of Oz." Luckily, another Gemini can help you to find your heart.

**CANCER (June 22 to July 22)**

Five planets in your house of serious relationships are pushing you to dig deep within your soul and face your fears of commitment. Yep, you talk a good game about love and marriage but your knees are knocking. A Virgo wants to see how far you can go.

**LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)**

With several planets in your opposite sign of Aquarius, you need to take a rest, darling. Let other people fight for you and take care of you. Act helpless for once. It's not an act! You don't have much control these days but you do have a lot of love on your side, especially from a Libra.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)**

Jupiter in your friendship house is spreading sweet platonic vibes. Avoid the urge to make everything sexual, darling. Your compulsive side needs a rest. An Aries is ready to start something decidedly un-platonic.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)**

Take several small steps, darling, before you do anything radical. You have the ability to travel in very special circles. Use your ability to wear different masks to learn more about the world. Your diplomacy leads you to a multilingual Gemini.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)**

Lay low in late January, darling. Figure out what other people need from you and give it to them. This is your time to be as accommodating as possible. Out of character for you, I know, but just do it. A Leo just wants to do you.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)**

Several planets hook up in your communication sector in late January, which means that you can remove the foot from your mouth and say many profound things. Kudos! An Aquarius is impressed by your transformation.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)**

Money makes your world go 'round - now more than ever, baby - as several key planets transit your house of finances. Get as much bang for your buck as you can, dear. This is the time to increase your wealth. A Virgo can help you increase your stamina.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)**

You may go on a thrilling emotional ride in late January, as your birthday season begins. Let go and let love rule. A Scorpio can introduce you to a truly passionate way of life.

**PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)**

This is a particularly poignant time in your life, Pisces. You know you have to let go of an old love, but letting go is so hard for you. A Libra can help you to put your misery behind you.

Jill Dearman is the author of the best-selling "Queer Astrology for Men" and "Queer Astrology for Women" (both from St. Martin's Griffin). For information on charts and consultations, call 212-841-0177 or e-mail QScopes@aol.com.

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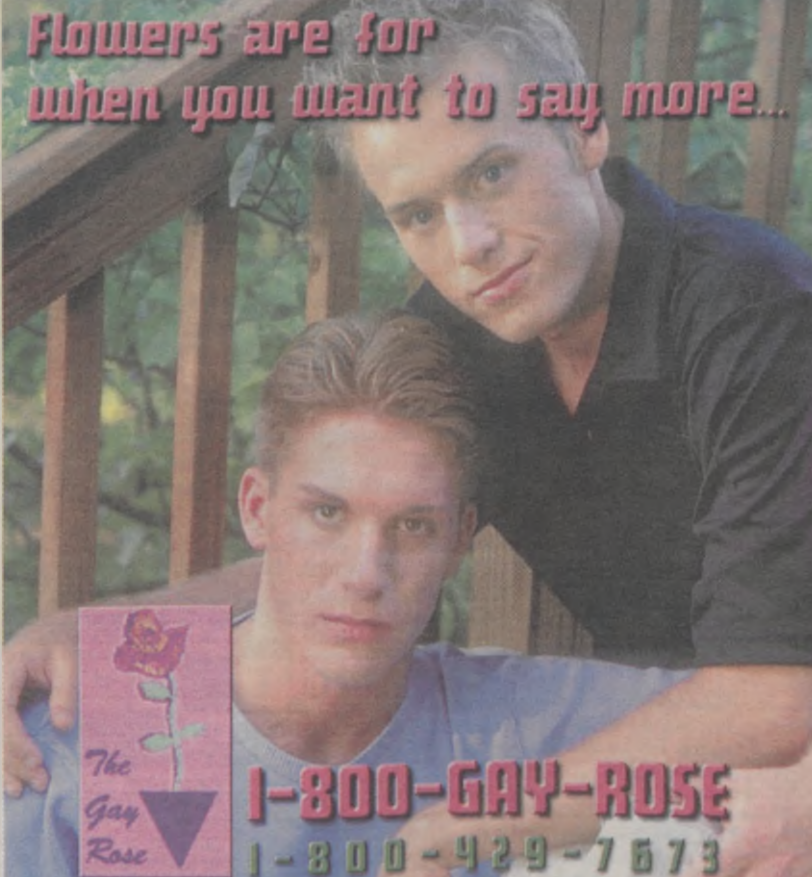
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