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U.S. HIV Cases Up in 2006—Maybe

BY BOB ROEHR

Names-based reporting of HIV diagnoses totaled 52,878 in the United States in 2006, according to data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) March 24.

At first glance, that was significantly higher than the 35,537 diagnoses reported in 2005, but once one sorted through the technical explanations of what was counted and where, there was no increase at all.

The confusion comes from the fact that the CDC has always required the reporting of AIDS diagnoses by name, but not HIV diagnoses. Initially, that made little difference because of rapid disease progression and death, but the introduction of powerful antiretroviral therapies in the mid-1990s changed the natural course of disease.

Some states sought to protect patient confidentiality by developing alternatives to names-based reporting for HIV. However, the CDC demonstrated that those alternatives can lead to duplication when people test several times or move, so it began to require names-based reporting. It takes several years for a state system

to become established and report "clean" data.

The big jump in diagnoses in 2006 came from adding for the first time figures from seven newly reporting jurisdictions—California, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Oregon, Rhode Island and Washington, D.C.

If you compare data from just the states that reported in both 2005 and 2006, the total number of new HIV diagnoses actually declined by about 2 percent. Five states did not have names-based reporting of HIV in place in 2006 and their data was not included in the national totals. They are Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana and Vermont.

Among adolescents and adults, 75 percent of the HIV diagnoses were in males and 25 percent were in females. There were 566 reported cases in children. The epidemic disproportionately affects people of color and more than 60 percent of those living with AIDS contracted the disease through male-to-male sexual contact.

HIV diagnosis does not necessarily reflect recent infections. In fact the vast majority of those diagnoses occur when the patient shows up at an emergency room with an opportunistic infection and a low CD4 count, generally below

200. The infection occurred several years, perhaps more than a decade earlier.

The CDC is pushing increased testing for HIV so that more people will learn if they are carrying the virus and begin therapy before too much damage is done to their immune system.

Last March the CDC launched a program of heightened prevention outreach to the African American community. It has not gone well, with revolving leadership, poor communications with the community and no new funding for anything beyond testing.

"This seems like yet another grand vision outlined in a glossy document that is, in fact, ill-equipped to make any real dent in new infections," said Kenyon Farrow, spokesman for the Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP).

HIV prevention advocates are calling for the U.S. to adopt a national AIDS strategy with measurable goals, rather than the status quo of programs fragmented between various government agencies. It is something that the U.S. government requires of other nations that it assists in the fight against AIDS.

Amy Sedaris: Funny Girl

BY AMY MATHENY



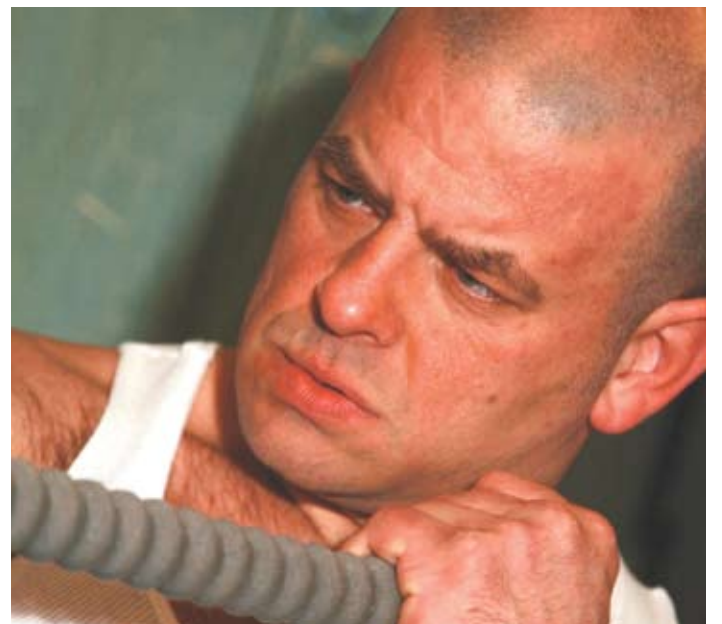
One reason that actress and comedian Amy Sedaris is so unique is her versatility. From her hilariously provocative series, *Strangers with Candy*, to her book *I Like You: Hospitality Under the Influence*, which has taken Sedaris from Letterman's couch to Martha Stewart's kitchen, she proves you can wear many hats and wear them all with great panache.

Amy Matheny: Are you a southerner or a New Yorker?

Amy Sedaris: Well, when I'm in North Carolina I say I'm a New Yorker, and when I'm in New York, I say I'm from North Carolina.

AM: What was it like working with Dolly Parton on her new video "Better Get To Livin'" and how did that happen?

AS: The director, Flip, was looking for me. He went to a couple of neighborhood merchants to try to get in touch with me, and he did! And I got



Jinx Titanic: Hello Goodbye

BY DAVID BYRNE AND TONY PEREGRIN

How untimely. Jinx Titanic makes his grand return to the Chicago stage—his first in two years—just to bid his fans adieu. Not only does the Fri., April 4, *Flesh Hungry Dog Show* at Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark, mark the three-year anniversary for the LGBTQA music showcase, but it will be Ti-

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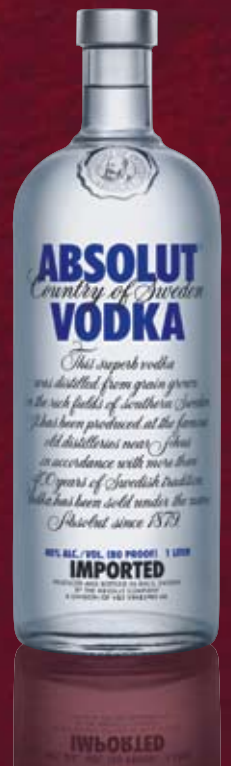
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WINDY CITY TIMES

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Sweet Charity (above) is one of several theatrical productions reviewed in this issue. See page 11.

Photo by Johnny Knight

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Kathie Berquist (above) was among 30 women who took part in a local version of Eve Ensler's The Vagina Monologues. See page 6.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

OUTLINES

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This week's online-only features include:

- Media Watch
- Landscaping hints
- Theater: Brontë
- An interview with metal group OTEP (right)
- World roundup
- Interior Motives



Photo by Paul Brown

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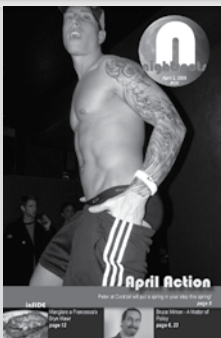
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APRIL ACTION

Peter at Cocktail will put a spring in your step this spring.

Photo by Kirk Williamson



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Advocates Challenge Polish Homophobia

BY BOB ROEHR

The president of Poland, Lech Kaczynski, used a video from the civil wedding of an American couple in Canada, Brendan Fay and Tom Moulton, to illustrate his contention that gays "challenge the moral order of Poland." The speech was broadcast on national television on March 19 and has created an international uproar.

Gay advocates spoke out during a March 24 news conference hosted by Human Rights Watch in New York City. Attorney Normal Siegel called the incident "an opportunity to advance the civil rights agenda of legal recognition for same-sex couples, including same-sex marriage."

"This is a universal issue, it can't be isolated just to Poland, it percolates in every nation in this world." He called on public officials in the US and around the world Europe to confront this issue of equality.

Kaczynski's outburst is no one-time affair, he has impressive credentials as a homophobe. As mayor of Warsaw he sought to prevent gay pride marches in that city in 2004 and 2005. He refused to meet with parade organizers and said, "I am not willing to meet perverts." He is allied with archconservative and xenophobic groups within the country.

Last month, at the end of a three-day visit to Ireland, Kaczynski said the promotion of homosexuality would lead to the destruction of the human race. It drew scorn from across the political spectrum in Ireland.

This latest incident is part of a personal campaign against adoption of broader human rights obligations by the Polish legislature, as they had pledged in joining the European Union.

Complicating the picture are rumors that his identical twin brother, Jaroslaw, is gay. The never-married Jaroslaw, 58, lives with his mother. Those charges, and reports from secret police files, have aired widely in the Polish media.

The "terrible twins" exercised a conservative grip over Poland. Jaroslaw was a party leader and Prime Minister of Poland for nearly a year and a half, until suffering a defeat in parliamentary election last November.

Brendan Fay said he was outraged by use of his wedding video, "a very sacred moment for us as a couple...to foster hate, intolerance, and fear."

The pair and their attorney will be meeting with Poland's Consul General on Tuesday evening to discuss the matter and present a letter to be delivered to president Kaczynski. They also are investigating whether they have any legal recourse over unauthorized use of that video.

Human Rights Watch LGBT program director Scott Long acknowledged that "George Bush and his lot use the specter of same-sex marriage in the same kind of way" as Lech Kaczynski. But there also are some important differences.



Scott Long. Photo by Bob Roehr

"They usually don't talk about specific couple, they do it in a kind of wonderful abstract way where one day they can introduce a constitutional amendment, and the next day they can go off to the christening of Mary Cheney's baby."

"Here they took a particular couple and held them up and said, here is the danger to western civilization. My friend Brendan is not a danger to western civilization. And his loving relationship with Tom is not a danger to Europe."

Daniel Domagala, with the Polish group Campaign Against Homophobia, said that most Poles do not support the homophobia of their president. That is particularly true of the younger generation. But the Catholic Church and an old guard who grew up under Communist rule remain socially conservative.

Long acknowledged that "the level of homophobia from elected officials in the administration has gone down substantially" since members of the conservative coalition suffered losses in elections last November. But while the new prime minister has made promises with regard to discrimination and human rights, he has not yet acted.

WCT Seeks 30 Under 30 Nominees for Awards

In 2000, Windy City Times established an award to acknowledge the young movers and shakers of the LGBT community: the 30 Under 30 Awards. Eight years later, another 30 will get their day in the sun.

Nominees should be under 30 years of age and should have made some substantial contributions to the LGBT community, whether in the fields of entertainment, politics, health and/or other areas. (The deadline to nominate individuals is Fri., April 25.)

Individuals themselves, organizations, co-

LOCAL NEWS Civil-Union Lobby Day Nears

BY AMY WOOTEN

As the finish line approaches, local civil union legislation supporters are urging LGBT Illinoisans and their allies to take action.

The April 9 Lobby Day for civil unions in Illinois is quickly coming up, but supporters can also easily and quickly participate by visiting the just launched www.civilunionsillinois.org. There, individuals can voice their support to their state legislators. Now that a new legislative session is just beginning and the bill could soon be called for a vote, it is imperative people all over Illinois show their support, proponents stress.

"We're just a handful of votes away," said Rep. Greg Harris, D-Chicago, who authored the civil union bill. "The first ones are easy, ...but those last handful of votes are, by far, the hardest to convince."

Civil union legislation introduced in the House currently awaits full debate on the floor. Similar legislation recently introduced in the Senate by Sen. David Koehler, D-Peoria, needs to make it through the Senate Judiciary Civil Law Committee. If passed, Illinois would provide same-sex couples all the same rights as marriage. The legislation would also recognize same-sex civil unions and marriages performed in other states.

For those who can't attend the lobby day in Springfield, the Web site offers a simple way to be active. At www.civilunionsillinois.org, supporters can send a quick and free message to their legislators and share their personal stories and support. By filling out a simple form, visitors to the site can also help spread the word and encourage family and friends participate.

"It's not enough for us to hope for equality; we must participate in the political process," said activist and Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago board president Jeremy Gottschalk. "It is incumbent upon every member of the LGBT

workers, etc. can nominate a person by sending an e-mail or fax to WCMG. The nomination should be 100 words or less and should state what achievements or contributions the nominee has made. Nominators should include their own names and contact information as well as the contact information of the nominee. Those nominations can be sent to Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com or faxed to Andrew Davis' attention to 773-871-7609. (NOTE: Following the policy instituted in 2005 that individuals can only win once, those have won the award since that year are ineligible for this year's awards.)

Honorees will be notified in May and recognized in a ceremony at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, on Tues., June 24, 6-7:30 p.m.

community (and their supporters) to make their voices heard. That means that each one of us must contact our legislators and encourage our friends and families to do the same and let our legislators know that we support civil unions."

Civil-union legislation supporters are utilizing the Internet to gather more forces. There is also a Facebook group called Students for the Illinois Marriage Equality Bill, which boasts over 8,000 members.

In terms of support, Harris told Windy City Times that things are going well, but people need to raise their voice, no matter where they live in the state. He said it is important to reach out to all legislators, even ones who have expressed that they support the bill.

"I hear all the time from legislators, 'We just got 20 letters from gay and lesbian couples—I had no idea so many lived in my district!' Harris said.

Harris wants to remind people that conservatives are constantly battling the legislation.

"Our opponents are out there organizing and lobbying frantically," Harris said.

From Chicago to Champaign, Evanston to Moline, Harris and others need people to write their representatives. "For those who may be trying to weight it, you never know whose personal contact will sway them to our side," Harris said.

You don't have to know the ins and outs of civil union legislation to write your legislators. "Just share your story," Harris suggested. "Maybe you were denied visitation when your partner was in the hospital. Just share your story."

Equality Illinois is sponsoring the upcoming lobby day for civil unions at the state capitol. See Eqil.org.

See www.civilunionsillinois.org.

Rev. Wright's Surprise Appearance

Embattled minister The Rev. Jeremiah Wright made a surprise appearance March 28 at Saint Sabina Church, 1210 W. 78th, to help celebrate poet Dr. Maya Angelou's birthday.

As he entered the church, Wright hugged Saint Sabina minister The Rev. Michael Pflieger, according to WBBM-TV.

Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama—who has called Wright his spiritual advisor—has distanced himself from remarks the minister recorded on videotape that some have interpreted as racist and anti-United States. On an episode of the TV show The View that aired earlier that day, Obama said, "Had the Reverend not retired, and had he not acknowledged that what he had said had deeply offended people, and were inappropriate and mischaracterized what I believe is the greatness of this country, for all its flaws, then I wouldn't have felt comfortable staying there at the church."

Wright spoke briefly but did not mention Obama or the videotape, according to CBS2Chicago.com.

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Local Trade Group Supports Gay Worker

BY AMY WOOTEN

Chicago Women in Trades is one of several organizations that filed an amicus brief in support of an openly gay factory worker who was fired from his job.

Twenty-one organizations joined in the filing of an amicus brief prepared by the Women's Law Project that pertains to *Brain D. Prowel v. Wise Business Forms*, a case currently under consideration by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third District in Philadelphia. Prowel was fired from his job in 2004 after he revealed he was suing for years of alleged sexual harassment and gender stereotyping. The U.S. District Court in Western Pennsylvania ruled against Prowel in September 2007, arguing that the case involved sexual orientation discrimination, not sex discrimination. Sexual orientation is not a protected category.

Prowel worked as a factory worker for Wise Business Forms for 13 years. He claims he was regularly harassed because he failed to conform to gender stereotypes.

"This case is about a man who was harassed on the job because he didn't live up to expectations of how a man should act," said Chicago Women in Trades' Director of Advocacy Jayne Vellinga. "The lower court decision allows the employer to escape responsibility for this hostile work environment, by claiming the discrimination wasn't based on gender stereotypes, but on his sexual orientation, in a jurisdiction where there are no gay rights laws."

The local organization strives to improve women's economic equity, in part by increasing the number of women in skilled trade jobs by helping eliminate barriers. Chicago Women in Trades, and the other 20 organizations that have voiced support, hope the lower court's decision

is overturned.

Chicago Women in Trades joined in the filing of the amicus brief because women in skilled trade jobs are often targets of harassment and gender stereotyping, and if the decision stands, it can harm future sexual harassment cases. The 21 organizations say that if the ruling of the lower court is adopted, it could have a serious impact on women's struggle for workplace equity, especially in nontraditional work environments.

"The argument is of concern to us because women in nontraditional jobs, like construction, are also frequently harassed because they may not live up to stereotypes of how a woman should act," Vellinga said. "We—women's groups—have been able to fight this as sexual harassment because it creates a hostile work environment, using Title VII, but if this decision stands, it weakens our ability to use that legal argument."

Other groups that joined the amicus brief are the American Medical Women's Association, Equal Rights Advocates, Gender Public Advocacy Coalition, Hard Hatted Women, the National Association of Women Lawyers (also headquartered in Chicago), National Organization for Women and many others.

Out at CHM Looks at Sexuality and Citizenship

BY YASMIN NAIR

Siobhan Somerville, an associate professor in the Department of English and the Gender and Women's Studies Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, presented her ongoing research project, "Queer Exclusions: Sexuality and U.S. Citizenship," Thurs., March 27, at



Siobhan Somerville and Jennifer Brier at Out at CHM. Photo by Yasmin Nair

the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark, as part of the Out at CHM series.

Somerville's talk addressed the history of sexuality and immigration, and its relevance to ongoing battles around queer immigration issues, such as the HIV ban (in place since 1987) and the Uniting American Families Act (UAFSA). She touched upon different points of this complex history, starting with the 1967 case of Clive Boutilier, a Canadian immigrant who was denied citizenship and deported back to Canada because of evidence of his homosexuality. According to Somerville, Boutilier's is a tragic example of the overt exclusion of gays, but focusing only on how sexuality has been part of exclusionary mechanisms in relation to citizenship allows us to rely on a "liberal model of inclusion" as a corrective. In her talk, Somerville sought to complicate the issues surrounding the link between sexuality and immigration. In particular, she focused on the rhetoric of family and family reunification, a driving principle in immigration reform, used both by straights and gays seek-

ing to ensure that their non-citizen partners and families be allowed to stay with them.

Somerville touched upon points in the history of U.S. immigration law where "family" has been defined in racialized and sexualized terms. For instance, the Dawes Act of 1887 resulted in Native American lands being divided into allotments for individual Native American families as a condition of their naturalization into U.S. citizenship. (Somerville pointed out the strangeness of Native Americans having to petition for citizenship in a land that had been theirs to begin with.) Such allotments replaced a traditional collective mode of ownership with privatized ownership, and also enforced changes in the family structure: Native American women were admonished to emulate white women of the time by reducing themselves to their roles as keepers of their home. Similarly, 19th-century immigration laws that specifically targeted Chinese immigrants forbade the entry of prostitutes and single women. All these cases show "...the historical context for how family rhetoric was deployed to produce [an] economic sexualized, and racialized capitalist model of household labor."

She returned in the end to immigration issues facing queers today, including asylum, the HIV ban and UAFSA. According to Somerville, the UAFSA has captured attention in part because it's framed within an either/or binary: those against it are deemed homophobic and those for it gay affirmative. But it still ties us to a concept of family that has a history of excluding specifically raced and gendered subjects. She suggested that it was necessary to ask why we should remain in the bind of family, given its history in immigration law: "What's the model driving our preferences?" and what might be alternatives to family-based reform? The question and answer session raised issues about alternative models of defining family, issues around health care, and immigration reform.

THE INAUGURAL G.L.B.T. LECTURE AT ELMHURST COLLEGE

HOMOPHOBIA AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: Lessons from the Life of Bayard Rustin

Bayard Rustin (1912-1987) was one of the most remarkable social activists of the 20th century. A champion of racial justice, he advised Martin Luther King Jr. and helped organize the momentous 1963 March on Washington. A gay man, he was stigmatized as a "sexual criminal," a smear that limited his ability to lead the movements to which he contributed passion and ideas.

John D'Emilio

John D'Emilio, Ph.D., is a professor of history and gender and women's studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His landmark biography of Bayard Rustin was a *New York Times* "Notable Book of the Year" and won the Stonewall Award of the American Library Association.




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Mindy Berkson.

Forum Focuses on LGBT Parenting

BY YASMIN NAIR

The Lesbian Community Care Project of Howard Brown, 4025 N. Sheridan, held a presentation Wed., March 26, on the issues facing would-be LGBT parents. The event was part of its Lesbian Health Drop-In series. The presenters were Mindy Berkson, an infertility consultant and founder of Lotus Blossom Consulting, and Daliah Mehdi, Clinical Operations Manager at Howard Brown, who spoke about adoption.

According to Berkson, while giving birth is an option for most lesbians, they're faced with the kind of legal questions that heterosexuals don't encounter. For instance, insurance companies will not work with lesbians who are infertile because infertility can only be defined as such when there has been unprotected sex with an opposite-sex partner for a substantial period of time. Lesbians must consider questions about the relationship between the birth parent, the

donor, and partners. There're also the possibilities of social stigma; political and cultural isolation; and the high cost of treatments like in vitro fertilization and artificial insemination, on which she gave detailed information. Berkson stressed the need for LGBT would-be parents to consider the variables of cost, which includes the number of children they hope for in the long term and the range of options from lesser-priced embryo donation programs to clinical insemination.

Dahlia Mehdi spoke about adoption for same-sex couples, drawing upon her own experience of currently waiting for an adoptive child. For Mehdi, the advantage of adoptions is that it places both parents on an equal footing since one person cannot be designated the birth mother. In Illinois, both parents (in the case of a couple) are designated equal parents right away but other states may require second parent adoptions. Mehdi stressed that LGBT people are adopting children in a more accepting environment. She also discussed the shift towards open adoptions, where the birth mother can maintain contact with the child, and the fact that domestic adoptions are cheaper alternatives to fertility treatments. Overall, the two speakers, while generally optimistic about the scenario of parenting for LGBT people, stressed the need for preparedness with regard to the different legal, financial, and emotional issues that lesbians in particular have to face, regardless of the options they pursue.

Man jailed again for keeping silent about HIV status

A man has been imprisoned for the second time for not telling his female sexual partners that he is HIV-positive, reported the Sun Times. Casey Yonts, 24, already served prison time for criminal transmission of HIV. The paroled sex-offender will return to jail for the same offense. Yonts' girlfriend and her sister filed charges.

Black caucus to discuss 'Sex and Eroticism'

Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus will hold an HIV/AIDS-related forum entitled "Sex and Eroticism" Thurs., April 3, 6-8 p.m., at the DuSable Museum of African-American History, 740 E. 56th Place.

Dinner will be served at the event, which will feature Tajaleenie "Mega Body" Tahji, who wrote G-String Dreams (Confessions of an Exotic Dancer), and erotic film star JC Carter.

See www.lovethebrotha.com.

State voters favor med marijuana bill

A survey conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, Inc., showed that Illinois residents favor allowing seriously ill patients to use medical marijuana for illnesses such as multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS.

Voters approved use by a 68-27 percent margin.

The poll surveyed 625 randomly selected registered Illinois voters Feb. 9-16. The survey asked if respondents believe "seriously and terminally ill patients should be allowed to use and grow

medical marijuana for personal use if their doctors recommended it." Support was strong across the state, ranging from 70 percent in Chicago to 65 percent downstate.

Festival shows gay Latino documentary

The 24th Chicago Latino Film Festival will feature the world premiere of Tal Como Somos (Just As We Are), a documentary that follows the lives of several gay and bisexual Latino men and a transgender woman.

The film touches on issues such as race, culture, gender, immigration and HIV/AIDS.

Meet those behind the film at the world premiere April 11, 9 p.m., at Instituto Cervantes, 31 W. Ohio. Tickets are at the door.

See www.latinoculturalcenter.org.

Central Ill. gay paper folds

The Prairie Flame, a central Illinois newspaper that concentrated on LGBT issues, has folded after almost a dozen years in existence, according to The State Journal-Register.

Like many other businesses, the newspaper was a victim of the current economic downturn.



They Are Women, Hear Them Roar

An all-star cast of 30 of Chicago's leading women in the LGBTQ community took part in a benefit performance of Eve Ensler's hit play The Vagina Monologues March 26 at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted. An awards pre-reception honored the staff of Center on Halsted's Anti-Violence Project, Chicago Foundation for Women, Vernita Gray of the State's District Attorney's Office and transgender activist Lois Bates for their work in curbing violence against women and girls. The event was part of A World of Women: A Month-Long Series of Events for Women and Their Allies. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see more at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and www.MysticImagesPhotography.com

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GUEST VIEWPOINT

WINDY CITY TIMES

VOL. 23, No. 29, April 2, 2008

The combined forces of Windy City Times, founded Sept. 1985, and Outlines newspaper, founded May 1987.

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**JIM
 PICKETT**

Our Mission: Fight HIV/AIDS in Illinois

On Wed., April 2, 150 HIV/AIDS advocates from across the state of Illinois were scheduled to have taken our "Mission: Possible" to the statehouse in Springfield and demand sound public policy and adequate resources to expand HIV care and prevention services to the most vulnerable among us.

The eighth annual Illinois HIV/AIDS Lobby Days has taken on the "Mission: Possible" theme in 2008 to recognize the extraordinary effort and determination it will require to advance our goals in a challenging and fractious political climate in the capital. As well, our theme acknowledges that our "superagent advocates" have the training, savvy and grassroots passion to make change possible.

Advocates will focus their mission on three primary issues—all requiring new funding and legislation—chosen through an extensive community input process that began last year and engaged hundreds of folks.

While there are approximately 40,000-42,000 people living with HIV in Illinois, an estimated 10,000 Illinoisans are unaware that they are HIV positive. The state moved to change this sorry situation last year by passing a law, Illinois Public Law 95-0007, to modernize state HIV testing laws. Unfortunately, the funding to make this

modernization possible remains insufficient. Advocates will ask their legislators to support a \$2 million HIV testing appropriation to expand voluntary HIV testing in emergency rooms and community clinics and to enable providers to identify undiagnosed individuals and connect them with needed HIV medical care and counseling.

The lack of health insurance continues to enact profound damage across our state. Well over a million Illinoisans remain uninsured—hundreds of thousands of whom are very poor, earning less than \$10,000 per year. Because they do not meet certain health program requirements, they fall through cracks in the publicly funded health care system, leaving thousands of HIV/AIDS patients to languish without regular, comprehensive, quality medical care. Senate Bill 1925 would reduce the numbers of uninsured in Illinois, slow the growth in healthcare spending and extend significant benefits to those living with HIV/AIDS.

HIV infection and drug overdoses are among the myriad health concerns affecting people who inject drugs. Services for users should include strategies to help them stay alive, safe and free from HIV and hepatitis infection while supporting those who are ready and able to accept substance abuse treatment services. Senate Bill 2155 would expand prescription of naloxone—a safe, effective and low-cost prescription drug used to reverse overdoses caused by drugs such as heroin, methadone or OxyContin. A Chicago-based naloxone prescription program run by the Chicago Recovery Alliance has already achieved remarkable success, saving over 800 lives since 2001. Wider prescription of naloxone and expanded training on its use among drug users would save hundreds of individual lives per year throughout the state. Research indicates that naloxone availability and training heroin users to administer naloxone actually leads to a reduction in heroin use by keeping them alive and



ILLINOIS HIV/AIDS LOBBY DAYS 2008

connecting them to appropriate resources, so this is a fantastic bill all around.

If you'd like to accept our mission but won't be joining us in Springfield April 2, you can still use those superagent skills we all have by making a telephone call or hitting send on an e-mail to your state representative, your state senator and to the governor. Tell them why you support Senate Bills 1925 and 2155 and why your community needs to help people voluntarily learn their HIV status and receive the care and treatment they require. Visit www.aidschicago.org to learn more.

The sure path to change is your involvement—whether from your laptop at your favorite cafe or in the Capitol Rotunda. To paraphrase famous social scientist Margaret Mead, never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned and motivated superagent advocates can change the HIV/AIDS landscape in Illinois to broaden access to care and enact sound, compassionate legislation. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has, or will. Your voice will assist these initiatives in moving from what is possible to the probable, and to what simply must be.

Jim Pickett is the director of advocacy for AIDS Foundation of Chicago.

LETTERS

Ronen's thankful

Dear Friend,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to be your voice and represent your values in the Illinois General Assembly during the past 15 years. It has been a tremendous privilege to serve, and I am very proud of the things we have been able to accomplish together:

- raising the minimum wage;
- expanding equal pay protections to more women;
- passing landmark human rights legislation;
- universal pre school and early childhood expansion;
- increasing funding and services for HIV related illnesses;
- creating the first child safety product legislation in the nation;
- expanding health care to more working families;
- protecting a woman's right to reproductive choice;
- establishing universal health care for every child; and
- creating more opportunities for nurses to provide quality health care.

While I appreciated the opportunity to serve you in Springfield, I decided last October that it was time to give a new person a chance. Announcing this decision early allowed the Democratic primary voters in our district to choose my successor. I am pleased that Heather Steans won the primary election after a vigorous campaign. She will be a strong advocate and a steady voice on the issues our community cares about so deeply.

My plan is to continue working on these critical issues, but from a different perspective. I

have accepted a leadership position in state government for human service policy. This new job will enable me to keep working to expand health care, reform human services and work with advocacy groups and community partners on a wide range of issues that affect the quality of life for millions of Illinoisans.

In addition to working in state government, I will continue to guide the future direction of the Democratic Party. As the newly elected Democratic Committeeman of the 48th Ward, the State Central Committeewoman of the 9th Congressional District and a member of the Democratic National Committee (yes, a "superdelegate"), I will be a strong voice for our community's priorities and concerns. The distinct possibility that Barack Obama may be our next president provides great promise to change the direction of our politics—and of our country.

I have been blessed with so many incredible experiences over the past 15 years and have met so many people who have taught me so much:

The constituent struggling to care for a disabled child who needed state help to keep the child home instead of being institutionalized; the couple who lost their child because an unsafe crib that had been recalled was still in use at a child care center; the dedicated advance practice nurses who could provide service in every state except Illinois; the young woman who shared a note from a landlord who refused to rent to her because she was a lesbian; the tireless advocates who visit Springfield every year to stand up for people who don't have PACs and can't afford high priced lobbyists.

Nothing is ever accomplished in public life without the hard work and dedication of people joined together in a common cause. I take great satisfaction in knowing that much of what we

accomplished over the years is having a significant impact on the lives of so many people. I want to thank each of you for giving me the opportunity to make a difference. And don't be surprised if I come calling on you again.

Warmest regards,
 Carol Ronen
 Chicago

Pot peeve

Without a doubt, medical marijuana should be made available to people with most fatal illnesses.

When it comes to legalizing recreational marijuana, it's not controversy—it's hypocrisy! The power of the tobacco and alcohol business lobbies has kept marijuana from becoming legal. Like sex, what consenting adults do in the privacy of their home or on private property should not be regulated by local or federal laws. If the same laws would apply to pot as alcoholic beverages, there be a lot fewer alcoholics and a lot more healthier people. It would still be unlawful to drive under the influence, or made available to minors. I never heard of anyone overdosing on weed!

Everyone who now smokes pot would not mind if it was taxed like cigarettes or alcohol. Back in the 1960s and '70s, the average lid (one ounce) cost \$7 to \$10 bucks. Today, it sells for \$200 to \$300. The chances of balancing the budget, state or federal, by taxing marijuana products, could be done realistically in a lot less time.

Jerry Pritikin
 Chicago

NATIONAL ROUNDUP

BY AMY WOOTEN

It looks like **homophobic Republican Oklahoma state Rep. Sally Kern will face a challenge in the fall.** A social worker backed by the Democratic Party announced that he will run against the anti-gay lawmaker in November. Democrat Ron Marlett said he will oppose Kern, who has come under fire since a video of her comparing gays to terrorists was leaked on YouTube. In the video, Kern said that homosexuality is a greater threat to the nation than terrorism. Although many have called for her resignation, Kern has stood by her words and refuses to apologize.

The Oklahoma City chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) recently met with Kern. The group expressed its concern with her anti-gay comments. According to the group's president, at the meeting, **Kern said she agrees that LGBT employees should not be fired because of their sexual orientation.** The Oklahoma City PFLAG chapter called the meeting "an important first step forward" for Kern.

A Michigan attorney is utilizing the **"gay panic" defense** for his client, who is accused of killing a 62-year-old man with a baseball bat, according to Edgeboston.com. Steven Scarborough, 22, is on trial for the murder of Victor Manious. His attorney claims that Manious, who led an alleged secret gay life, sexual assaulted his client, who then defended himself. According to the defense, it was Scarborough's friend who had the idea to lock Manious, still alive, in the trunk of his own car. Manious was found dead in the trunk days later.

The Body Shop and MTV have joined forces once again to launch an HIV/AIDS campaign effort. The two joined forces for the "Move Your Lips" Campaign 2008, the second annual campaign to fight the spread of the disease through awareness. The campaign's goal is to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in young adults, due to the fact that half of all new HIV infections impact those under the age of 25. See www.moveyourlips.com for more information.

Non-profit Truth Wins Out (TruthWinsOut.org) launched a **new multi-media Web site to help warn against "ex-gay" or "conversion" therapy.** With the revamped site, the organization hopes to help debunk the "ex-gay" myth and industry. The organization hopes the new site will serve as a one-stop-shop for information on the ex-gay myth. It features various resources,

including daily blogs, videos and more.

A gay **former University of Wisconsin-Platteville student settled a civil lawsuit** against one of the men he alleges gay-bashed him near campus at a local restaurant. According to Brett Timmerman, two men attacked him in 2005 for being gay. The terms of the settlement have not been released, and the lawsuit against one of the alleged attackers is still pending. Timmerman is being represented by Lambda Legal. Wisconsin has a hate crimes law.

The Advocate reported that an **Oregon transman, Thomas Beatie, is five months pregnant with a baby girl.** The 34-year-old transgender male decided to stop taking his hormones and have a child because his wife is unable to. According to Beatie, both he and his wife have severe suffered discrimination from the medical community along the way. However, despite opposition, he is excited to carry their child. Beatie wrote, "Our situation sparks legal, political, and social unknowns." The baby is due in July.

The Queer Media & Entertainment Conference (Q-Me Con) and AfterEllen.com announced a **lesbian/bisexual web series contest.** They are seeking several web series that feature lesbian and bisexual women, or a lesbian/bisexual story line or theme. The winners will have their web series published weekly on AfterEllen.com. The deadline submission is April 15. Up to three winners will be announced in May. See AfterEllen.com for guidelines for submissions.

UPS announced that it is expanding its supplier diversity program to include LGBT-owned businesses through a partnership with the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC). The company's supplier diversity process provides UPS business opportunities for small businesses owned by minorities, women, veterans and LGBT people. Businesses certified by NGLCC can register to participate. The organization currently represents about 1.4 million LGBT-owned businesses. They hope the announced expansion will help more LGBT businesses grow.

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QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

"WE ARGUE ABOUT IMMIGRATION BUT WE DON'T TRY TO SOLVE the immigration problem.

It's an argument that is all about people's passions instead of trying to figure it out. We argue about gay marriage. In the meantime the planet is ... potentially being destroyed. We've got a war that is bankrupting us. And we're going to argue about gay marriage? I mean, that doesn't make any sense." — *Presidential candidate Barack Obama speaking in Medford, Ore., March 22.*

"I NOW THINK IT'S TIME FOR THE POLITICIANS TO CATCH UP TO THE PUBLIC.

The notion that you lock people up for smoking marijuana is pretty silly. I'm going to call it the 'Make Room for Serious Criminals' bill." — *Gay U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., announcing he will introduce a bill to decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana, on HBO's Real Time with Bill Maher, according to Politico.com, March 22.*

"I WOULD LOOK FOR LOVE ALL THE TIME AND I MADE A DECISION, 'I'm not going to look for love anymore,' and when I made that decision, love walked through my front door and found me [in the person of David Furnish in 1993]. He's incredibly intelligent. He's not afraid to be honest. He had his own car, his own place. This was new for me. I mean, this is Elton who took hostages and took people's lives and completely just said, 'Right, you're putting your life on hold. You come around the world with me.' Which of course always ended in tears." — *Elton John to CBS News, Feb. 25.*

"I'M IN A FANTASTIC RELATIONSHIP. It's been about four years. I'm in love with [Christine Marinoni] because she's her. If she were a man, would I be in love with her? I don't know." — *Sex and the City's Cynthia Nixon (Miranda) at a press event for the upcoming Sex and the City movie, according to New York's*

Daily News, March 6.

"I DON'T THINK MY GENERATION IS BETTER or had it better. The one thing you'll never see again—and I'm not so sure it's bad you missed it—was the sexual revolution. You can't imagine what it was like to go home and have sex with someone different every day. ... People really did! In Provincetown there was a bar called Piggies, totally mixed, gay and straight, but it was outside of town and everyone had to walk home and every person would just have



Photo by Rex Wockner

And we're going to argue about gay marriage? I mean, that doesn't make any sense.

—Presidential candidate Barack Obama

sex in the graveyard along the way. I mean, those days will never happen again. Going to places like Hellfire in New York City, you look back and it's so amazing, and that certainly did lead to terrible things like AIDS—and AIDS ruined everything for the rest of our lives. It ruined people taking chances. That's over. You missed that." — *Gay filmmaker John Waters to New York magazine, March 24.*

"I DON'T BELIEVE IN STRAIGHT OR GAY. I really don't. I think we're all degrees of bisexual. There may be a few people on the extreme if it's a bell curve who really truly are gay or really truly are straight." — *Rubyfruit Jungle author Rita Mae Brown to Time magazine, March 18.*

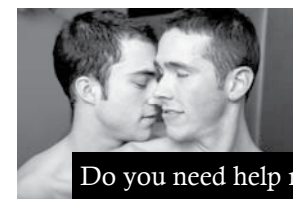
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SURF'S UP

Shelter, a movie that features surfers and a gay love story, will be out this week. See page 20.

THEATER

Is 'Beastly' a bust?
page 15



MUSIC

Patti stirs it up.
page 15



EVENTS

One day you're
in...
page 21



Postcard from New York

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

It's Team Steppenwolf in August vs. Kosovo

There are ensembles, and then there are *ensembles*. It takes the latter to overcome the uncompromising and uncontrollable sort of 500-alarm rumpus raised by a newly sovereign nation. As the lights came up on August: Osage County Feb. 17, the ensemble found itself pitted against exactly that. Having just declared independence from Serbia after a bloody, 12-year war, Kosovo was in a mood to celebrate. And so it did. By the millions in the Eastern Europe, and by the tens of thousands all up and down New York City's Broadway. The streets were essentially impassable around the Imperial Theater, as hundreds of honking cars and joyously screaming marchers created a kinetic, all-but-impenetrable barricade that stretched the length of midtown Manhattan. As cabbies cursed a blue streak, cops gave up trying to direct traffic.

Inside the Imperial, August was battling the ambient cacophony of history in the making. Think of a fire engine at full-screaming throttle. Now multiply that by a few hundred decibels and add in a screaming mass of humanity bellowing with Gay Pride Parade gusto. In all, it was sound design hell. By the time Violet Weston a.k.a. Deanna Dunagan reached the drug-addled Eric Clapton sing-along that is the first act finale, the cast had already expended the amount of energy it usually uses to get through the duration of the entire show. Or so opined an usher who claimed to have seen August 40 times (and could, incidentally, recite vast swaths of dialogue on command).

"We can't do anything about the Kosovo!" she repeated patiently as intermissing Imperial patrons demanded that the blaring car horns/screaming crowds/celebratory gunshots be silenced. "They're on oxygen backstage," she added. "They've had to adjust their volume to



August: Osage County. Photo by Joan Marcus

compete."

If it was a competition, Team Steppenwolf emerged victorious. Truthfully, Kosovo didn't have a chance. It takes an ensemble of brass balls, iron will, extraordinary focus and essentially superhuman thespiasity to overcome the din of a victorious revolution. But that is basically the definition of an ensemble wherein fire-breathing duo of Dunagan and Amy Morton lead the likes of Francis Guinan, Jeff Perry, Mariann Mayberry, Sally Murphy, Ian Barford and the force of nature that is Rondi Reed into the breach six days a week.

"We were all cracking up backstage," Morton noted after the performance, "Welcome to New York."

Since it left Chicago, August: Osage County has become even more emotionally explosive and bitterly, blackly hilarious. There is an increasing insistent drumbeat foretelling a Pulitzer for playwright Tracy Letts, multiple-Tonys for the cast, and a national tour. On April 29, the production moves next door to the Music Box Theatre for an extended run.

And amid all the blazing success of August: Osage County, there is loss. Cast member Denis Letts, 73, died Fri., Feb. 24. The playwright's

father played patriarch Beverly Weston, whose disappearance triggers the galvanic familial meltdown that unspools over August's riveting three and a half hours.

Letts' opening monologue was plainspoken poetry, a sardonic, wry, wise and melancholic symphony of ruminations on T.S. Eliot, weariness and the profound absurdity of life. It the sort of quietly breathtaking scene that makes the heart leap like a marcher in a joyful parade.

For more information about August: Osage County, visit www.augustonbroadway.com.

Seafarer a devilishly fine voyage

Walk a block west of the August marquee where Deanna Dunagan's rattlesnake glare looms down on 45th Street and you'll find another rivetingly dysfunctional family in Conor McPherson's *The Seafarer*.

Meet the brothers Harkin: Sharky (David Morse), a dry drunk trying mightily and miserably to stay off the Poteen while tending to his whiskey-guzzling, all-but-incontinent, soap-averse older sibling Richard.

(Jim Norton is spry as a demon leprechaun as the kind of endlessly resourceful alcoholic that only the desperation of impoverished, rural Ireland can produce.)

Those who recall Morse only from his underrated days as an intern on TV's *St. Elsewhere* are in for a marvelous revelation: Morse has fathoms television never hinted at and, in Sharky, creates a complex antihero of both terrifying anger and boundless, weary compassion.

McPherson's supernaturally spooky tale is a long night's journey into Christmas Day, unfolding over the course of a Christmas Eve poker game where the stakes are hellishly high. Literally. The wild card in the game among the Harkins and their equally dissolute friends is Mr. Lockhart (Ciaran Hinds), a stranger in an ominously well-cut suit. As a Christmas-averse menace intent on claiming a debt with eternal implications, Hinds is as sharp and scary as the point on a pentangle.

McPherson (who also directed the piece) is a

master of that singular wit that's as black as the rotting potatoes of the Great Famine. With *The Seafarer*, he's in devilishly fine form. And not that anyone asked, but we've figured out the perfect cast for its Chicago production with John Mahoney as Richard, John Judd as Sharky and Larry Yando as the diabolical Mr. Lockhart.

For more information about *The Seafarer*, visit www.seafarertheplay.com.

CRITICS' PICS

The Caretaker, Mary-Arrchie Theatre Company, through April 12. Chicago's ensemble style is a perfect fit for the plays of Harold Pinter, and veteran storefront actor Richard Cotovsky is perfect to play the itinerant drifter at the center of this enigmatic drama. MSB

Carousel, Court Theatre, through April 13. The great, dark Rodgers & Hammerstein classic performed by an attractive cast in a dramatically intimate but visually sweeping production, accompanied by strings and woodwinds. Court's best musical to date. JA

In a Dark, Dark House, Profiles Theatre, through May 11. Once more director Joe Jahraus and Off-Loop leading man Darrell W. Cox team up for a dark Neil LaBute tale, this one about brothers on a psych ward dealing with traumas of the past. Delicious. CS

M. Butterfly, Bohemian Theatre Ensemble at Heartland Studio; through April 20. This artful storefront production of David Henry Hwang's 1988 breakthrough drama is scathingly intelligent and funny. SCM

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge, Morgan and Sullivan

Stage Door Jonny

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

A rare interview with Stage Door Jonny's friend playwright **Edward Albee** will be telecast on WTTW-Ch. 11 Fri., April 4, as part of *In the Life*, the Emmy-nominated LGBT documentary TV program. Ch. 11 has wavered in its support for *In the Life*, but now has confirmed the 10:30 p.m. time slot for the show on the first Friday of each month.

Now *this* is what Jonny calls hot dish! English forensic and historic experts have identified a headless, mutilated body found in an abbey graveyard as that of Sir Hugh Despenser the Younger, reputed gay lover of King Edward II. The remains bear the hallmarks of having been hung and then castrated, disemboweled, drawn and quartered while still alive, which is how Sir Hugh was executed as a traitor in 1326 after Edward's fall. Furthermore, the abbey is on land known to have been part of the estate of Sir Hugh's brother-in-law.

Sir Hugh is an important character in Christopher Marlowe's play, *Edward II* (and in the Derek Jarman film adapted from the play, which many readers may have seen). As chance would have it, Chicago Shakespeare Theater will produce **Edward II** as part of its 2008-2009 season, directed by the edgy Sean Graney, who would surprise no one if he exposed body parts.

Speaking of hung men, Jonny's old friend **Steve Kimbrough** closes the Cabaret Series at Bailiwick Repertory, Sun., April 6, at 4 p.m., sharing the stage with Yolanda Davis. Will Steve twang his ukulele? The three-week festival has



Beckie Menzie and Tom Michael.

featured nine performances, each with two different performers. The final week also offers 7:30 p.m. shows April 3 and 5. Tickets are just \$10.

Another songster, Bill Larkin, of the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus, is appearing currently at the Annoyance Theatre as one half (the gay half) of **Mere Fluff**, a sketch comedy act with Robyn Scott. *Mere Fluff* runs Wednesdays at 9:30 p.m. through Wed., May 7. Tickets for this one are just \$10, too. Jonny's dear readers may recall that Mr. Larkin is the author of *The Ten Commandments: The Musical*, which was successfully presented by Chicago Gay Men's Chorus.

The Chicago cast and company of **Wicked** is repeating the fund-raising effort for Season of Concern, for which it raised \$15,000 over the holidays. For its Easter-Passover holiday appeal, which is through April 26, the cast of *Wicked* will make a curtain-call appeal for donations at every Wednesday matinee and Saturday evening

performance. The fun part is that *you* may be able to help! Season of Concern (SOC) needs two volunteers at each performance to help with collections. Volunteers come to the theater shortly before final curtain, join the actors and stage managers in the lobby after the show, and hold an SOC donation bucket to collect the audience donations for half an hour. Then, you just turn in the bucket and try to pick up the cast member of your choice. Wednesday matinees already are fully booked, but a few volunteers still might be needed for Saturdays. Call SOC at 312-332-0518 or e-mail volunteer@seasonofconcern.org. FYI, Season of Concern is the Chicago theatre industry's HIV/AIDS charity.

This month offers several Beat and off-beat performance events. Jack Kerouac, anyone? One of the original Beat writers (along with Ginsberg and Burroughs and that object of everyone's desire, Neal Cassady), Kerouac (who was actually

shy) is the subject of **Visions of Kerouac**, presented by the Theatre Conservatory of Roosevelt University, April 11-13, and is directed by David Zak. Performances are at Roosevelt's O'Malley Theatre, 431 S. Wabash, 7th floor; 312-341-3831; \$10.

Sketch comedy troupe GayCo indulges in some off-beat erotica as part of a variety show focused on sex. **Literally Sexy**—burlesque, drag, bondage, erotica, comedy—does its titillating thing one night only, April 11, 10:30 p.m., at the Victory Gardens Biograph Theater. Besides GayCo, participants include the Neo-Futurists, the Flaming Dames, 2nd Story, Arlene Malinowski, and Time Out Chicago sex columnist Dr. Debby Herbenick. Your host(ess) for the evening is none other than David Cerda. Cocktails available for purchase. 773-871-3000; \$15. Jonny suspects the old Biograph hasn't been riddled with so much sexuality since the mythically endowed John Dillinger was riddled there back in 1933.

Jonny offers a generous tip of the hat to Chicago's own Beckie Menzie, the genial and talented cabaret diva who is marking her 20th anniversary of making music at Gentry. Way to go, girl! Of course, Ms. Menzie performs at other venues and with many other artists. Every Saturday at 8 p.m. this month, Beckie and Tom Michael will perform **Postcards from the Road: The Travel Show** at Davenport's, 1383 N. Milwaukee (\$18 cover; two-drink minimum). The show will feature such classics as *Sentimental Journey*, *April in Paris*, *Leaving on a Jet Plane* and *You Belong to Me*. FYI: Tom's two CDs have been very well-received everywhere and even written up in *The Advocate*. Way to go, girl!

Stage Door Jonny is sad to tell you that the Barenaked Lads have ended their multi-year run at Bailiwick Repertory. The Lads now are in residence at Stage Door Jonny's house!



Sweet Charity.

what a set up, holy cow. This is a show that—to continue with Dorothy Fields lyrical stylings—leaves you with a tingle in your toes and a tingle in your feet. And in your heart. It is also unquestionably the best production—in terms of design work, acting and choreography—that the Drury Lane has done since Gary Griffin was in charge back in the 1990s.

The show's choreography will forever fall within the shadow of the great Bob Fosse, particularly the TKO showstopper "Big Spender." But Mitzi Hamilton (BTW, the inspiration behind the character of Val in *A Chorus Line*) has managed to both honor Fosse and wrest the piece from the iconic choreographer's mighty grasp. Whether lined up at the rail dourly cooing at potential clients to have a few laughs or slanting their way through the exquisite (and hilarious) *Rich Man's Frug*, Hamilton has the ensemble moving like a well-oiled machine redolent of sex and exhilaration. Also worth noting for its ultra-groovy, utterly infectious humor is *The Rhythm of Life*, wherein cool cat messiah Daddy Brubeck (Darren Matthias) leads his acolytes through a writhing gospel of peace, love and illegal herbal smokes.

At the huge heart of *Sweet Charity* is Summer Smart, whose Charity Hope Valentine—dance hall hostess at night, hopeless romantic 24/7—is rarely less than the quintessence of *joie de vivre*, even when she's as down on her luck as a drowned cat in a Central Park pond.

The whole shebang comes under the emotionally intelligent and playful direction of Jim Corti, who crafts a 1960s world straight out of a Peter Maxx poster. Brian Sidney Bembridge's set—a psychedelic panorama of colored lights and swirly blue backdrops—is a clever stunner.

As for the corps of sardonic taxi-dancing beauties, they're as wry and cynical as you'd expect gals who find that eight years later they're still stuck in their temporary jobs.

And for all Charity's obsession with finding the right man to rescue her from the Fan-Dango Ballroom, *Sweet Charity* is no sexist throw-back to the time when finding the right—or any—husband was all. Charity, in the end, stands on her own, resilient, optimistic and a bona fide survivor.

Musical Spotlights Teddy Pendergrass

The Black Ensemble Theater, 4520 N. Beacon, is hosting the world-premiere presentation of *I Am Who I Am* (The Story of Teddy Pendergrass).

The musical is produced, directed and written by Taylor, and features three new songs penned by Pendergrass and co-writer Bill Jolly.

Soul singer Pendergrass initially gained recognition by being a member of Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes (with songs like *If You Don't Know Me By Now*) in the early '70s. He subsequently gained more fame as a solo singer before being paralyzed from a 1982 auto accident.

Tickets are \$45 (\$40 for previews). Call the theater box office at 773-769-4451 or Ticketmaster at 312-902-1500, or visit www.ticketmaster.com.

Seldoms to Dance in April

Chicago dance company The Seldoms will premiere *Monument* at the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn, April 3-5 and April 10-12 at 8 p.m. *Monument* explores the relationship between the human and natural environments, and the extent to which that relationship has become unbalanced.

Tickets are \$12-\$18. See www.theseldoms.org or call 312-328-0303.

THEATER REVIEW

Sweet Charity

Playwright: Neil Simon, book; Cy Coleman, music; Dorothy Fields, lyrics
At: Drury Lane Oak Brook, 10 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace
Phone: 630-530-0111
Runs through: May 18

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

A few years back, a bus and truck touring production of "Sweet Charity" rolled through town. We dutifully attended the opening and we were left with a profound sense of 'eh.' It wasn't exactly boring, just rather pointless. Charity's mishaps with men hardly seemed worth the two-hour time investment, never mind the ticket prices that non-critic civilians would shell out to see the show.

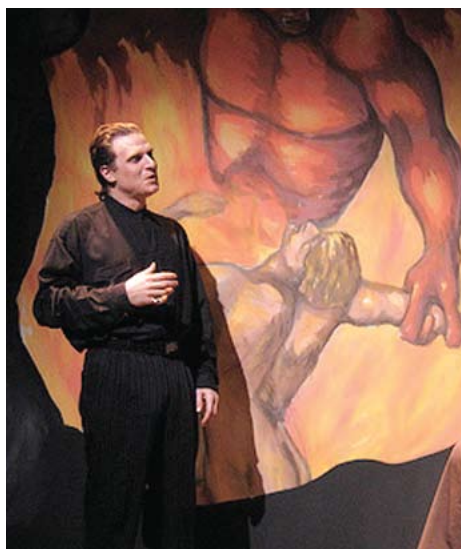
And while it's a bit below the belt to compare productions, after taking in the Drury Lane Oak Brook's *Sweet Charity*, all we can say is—to quote one of the show's more jubilant numbers—

SPOTLIGHT



The Strangerer recreates the first 2004 election debate between Prez George Bush and his Democratic rival, John Kerry, moderated by PBS stalwart Jim Lehrer. Instead of discussing geo-politics, the candidates offer verbal combat about the morality of murdering Lehrer. That's the story in *The Strangerer*, which channels politics through Albert Camus' seminal existential novel, *The Stranger*, in political satire at its very best. *The Strangerer* was a surprise hit two years ago for esoteric Theatre Oobleck, which now revives it to launch its 20th anniversary year. Author Mickle Maher himself plays Kerry. *The Strangerer* is performed at Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division; 773-347-1041; \$10 if you've got it, free if you're broke. Photo by Kristin Basta





The Last Days of Judas Iscariot.

THEATER REVIEW

The Last Days of Judas Iscariot

Playwright: Stephen Adly Guirgis
At: The Gift Theatre, 4802 N. Milwaukee
Phone: 773-283-7071; \$20, \$15
Runs through: May 4

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

There exists a despair so deep it buries one in a catatonic stupor, rendering its victims unreachable by even the most skilled therapists and potent pharmaceuticals. Blessedly, it's an emotional state most of us will never encounter. But Judas Iscariot was not so blessed, and it is his story—a tale of rage, anguish and harrowing human failing that Jefferson Park's Gift Theatre tackles in its galvanizing production of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*.

Director Kevin Christopher Fox displays a complex understanding of the unbearable grief at the broken heart of the material and a keen ear for the incongruous humor that pervades the piece—and make no mistake, this is a drama as rife with humor as it is with sorrow. And at the epicenter of a 16-member cast of hellions, Purgatorians, heavenly hosts and celestial beings, is the continually extraordinary Michael Patrick Thornton as the man who sold his soul for 30 pieces of silver.

Guirgis' dense saga boils down to a single, profound question: If God is all forgiving and unconditionally loving, why is Judas damned to an eternity of unbearable grief? And why do the others who betrayed Christ—and there were many, from Pilate, who as governor of Judea had the sole authority to order Christ's execution to Peter, the disciple who denied any knowledge of Christ once the Romans moved in for the kill—spared the awful fate and historical legacy of Judas Iscariot?

With a cast of 16 playing almost twice as many characters, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* is a wildly ambitious piece of work for a tiny storefront such as the Gift, yet they pull it off with a mighty passion and humanity. As Judas' trial unfolds in a corner of Purgatory called hope, the piece flies by as everyone from Sigmund Freud to Caiaphas the Elder (Mark Czoske, whose astounding turn on the witness stand stands as one of the most angry, intense and astonishing monologues of the season) and Satan (Paul D'Addario in an award-worthy devilishly fine turn) take the stand.

The trial begins when—armed with a writ from God—the whipsmart, gorgeous and—as we later learn—deeply damaged attorney Fabiana Cunningham (Kathleen Logelin, aggressive and righteous in all the right ways until Satan ruthlessly reduces her to rubble) goes up against the pompous, smarmy El-Fayoumy (Benjamin Montague, unctuous in the best possible way and eliciting belly laughs with every line) before the impatient no-time-for-justice Judge Littlefield (Czoske) to try Judas.

The show opens on an extraordinarily powerful note, as Judas' mother (Deborah Smith) describes—in the most devastating terms imaginable—burying her son alone in an unmarked dirt pit.

The vast ensemble matches that opening emotional intensity throughout “*Judas*,” from Liza Fernandez sassy, brassy Saint Monica to Laura Shatkus sad-eyed Mary Magdalene. And the final confrontation between Jesus and Judas, well, it's a moment that provides hope even within the deepest despair.

THEATER REVIEW

Free Radicals

Playwright: Brenda Kilianski
At: Stockyards Theatre Project at the North Lakeside
Cultural Center, 6219 N. Sheridan
Phone: 773-936-7896; \$10-\$15
Runs through: April 25

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

As the curtain rises, we discover a middle-aged woman, recently released from prison after completing a sentence for her dissident activities in the aftermath of the Vietnam war, being held

captive in a snowbound cabin by the child of an innocent victim killed in the violence perpetrated by the matronly ex-con long ago. In dramatic terms, this means we have a grown-up daughter, angry at having lost her mother, and a past-prime mother, regretful over her own daughter's estrangement. Neither of them can leave. Now, what does the latter do to defuse a potentially volatile situation?

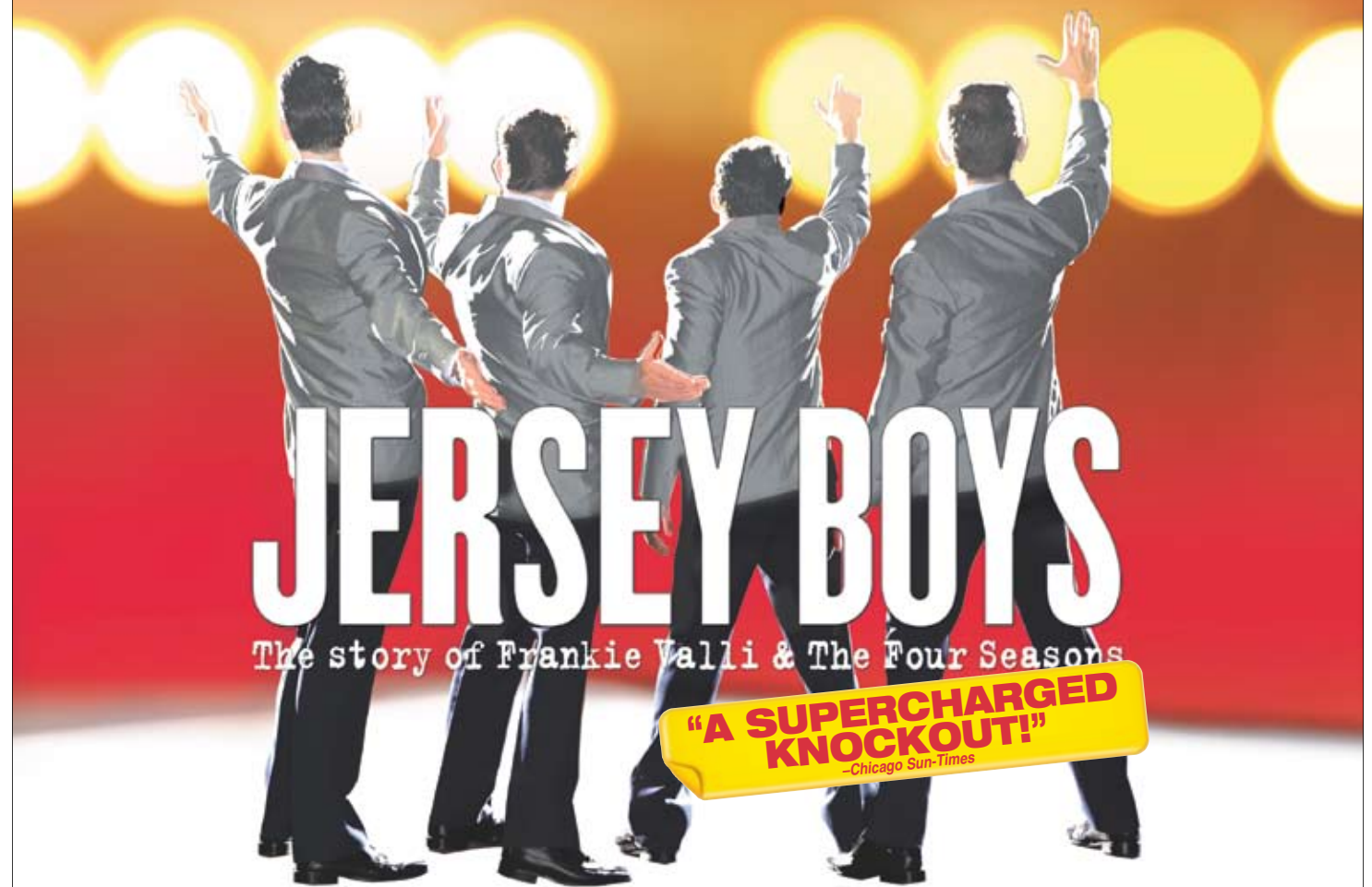
Playwright Brenda Kilianski's solution is as textbook-predictable as her premise: after reciting a few obligatory retro-platitudes, Lydia proceeds to cajole the hostile Nancy with good-mommy overtures. Her warder resists just long enough to extend the conflicts to appropriate feature-length playing time, whereupon both embrace in tearful remorse for lives shattered by lofty intentions and fickle circumstances.

What indelibly labels Kilianski's soapy duet as classroom exercise, however, is not the two-way Stockholm Syndrome dynamic at work from the first moments, nor even the occasional anachronism (did teenagers still play their records on the “hi-fi” in 1974? Or self-styled white rebels boast of their “street cred”?), but the smug tidiness of its dialogue, as when Lydia protests, “I'm not the monster you hoped to see!”, to which her antagonist swiftly ripostes, “You're not the savior you hoped I'd see!”. We are told that

Nancy has only a community-college education, and that Lydia earned a jailhouse degree in law (what? Not psychology?), but their discourse is that of doctoral students in English Lit.

Iris Lieberman and Jenn SavaRyan struggle mightily to lend human dimension to the stereotypes they are forced to occupy (see if you recognize the face in the “wanted” poster on the playbill cover). Their success might have compensated for the shallowness of their material, if Kilianski's artificial construct could have illuminated some greater abstract issue. But in 2008, nearly a half-century after the fact, does it come as a surprise that the counterculture wasn't as unified as its promulgators claimed? Or that idealistic maidens entranced by “the movement” were duped into subordinate roles? “The media is responsible for a lot of mythologizing of the 60s” sighs Lydia at one point. Kilianski's goal may have been to refute the romantic nostalgia surrounding that turbulent period in American history, but ultimately *Free Radicals* only serves to promote them.

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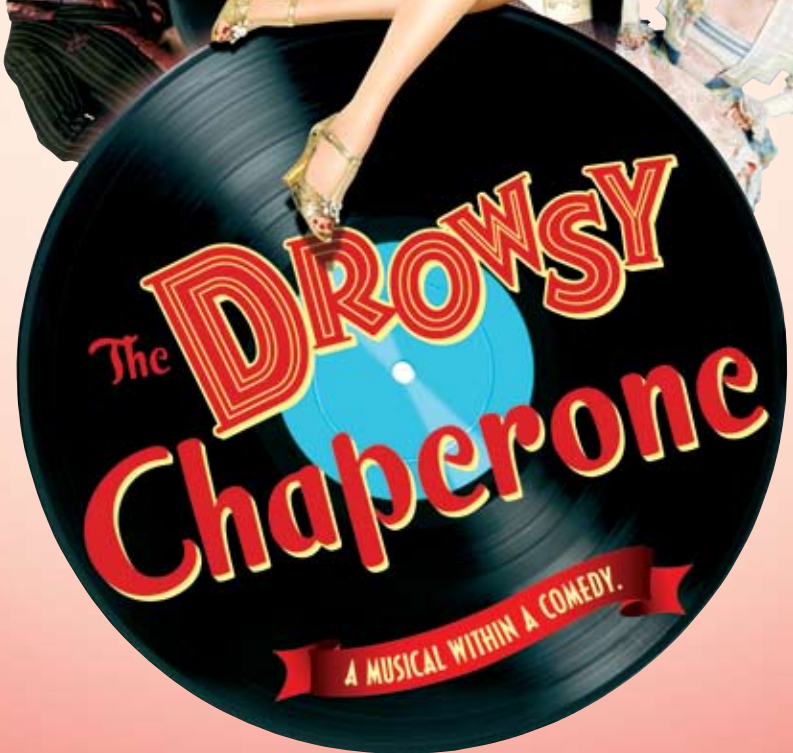
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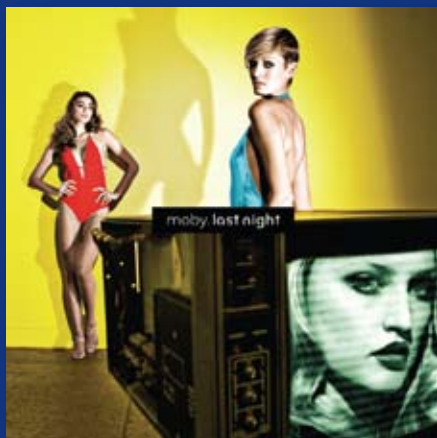
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THEATER REVIEW

The Beastly Bombing

Playwright: Julien Nitzberg (libretto) and Roger Neill (music)

At: Trap Door Theatre, 1655 W. Cortland

Phone: 773-384-0494;

\$20-\$25 (2-for-1 Thursdays)

Runs through: May 3

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Jesus strips to a loincloth as U.S. President Dodgeson sings, "Looking like a long-haired queer, my Savior did appear." The Beastly Bombing is that kind of show, virtually guaranteed to offend Christians, Muslims, Jews, gays, straights, skinheads, Arabs, cops, drug users, priests, terrorists and patriots. Blacks, Latinos and Asians might be included, too, depending on how one casts the show.

Billed as a post-9/11 comic opera, The Beastly Bombing is written as a parody of a Gilbert & Sullivan operetta and on a purely musical level works rather well. Whether you find it amusing or not depends on the thickness of your own racial-sexual-religious-political skin and your taste for over-the-top, vulgar, outrageous burlesque. It's definitely not satire, which requires both subtlety and intellectual inquiry.

Two skinhead terrorists and two Islamic terrorists foil each other's plot to bomb the Brooklyn Bridge, but find themselves united in mutual hatred of Jews and the supposed Zionist conspiracy. Fleeing capture, they disguise themselves as--what else?--Hassidic Jews (confused with Sephardic Jews; not the same), only to be jailed with a gay priest and the drugged-out and promiscuous twin daughters of--who else?--craven President Dodgeson, who invokes Jesus and orders the nuking of Chad before revealing that ... well, I'll save the surprise for those who see the show.



Patti LaBelle. Photo by Vern Hester

MUSIC REVIEW

Bent Nights

BY VERN HESTER

Patti LaBelle at the Arie Crown Theater, March 28

Just where Patti LaBelle lands on the all-time ultimate diva list is hard to place. Aretha Franklin's got that "Queen" title, Tina Turner gets all the unconditional respect and Chaka Khan's got that love mojo all tied up. But LaBelle has, in a crowded field (and, obviously, mere mortals need not apply to this bunch) embraced reinvention so often and so successfully that she's almost impossible to categorize. There's the '60s Patti (Patti and the Bluebelles); the radical-ahead-of-its-time funk of Labelle (with Nona Hendryx and Sarah Dash) in the '70s; and a solo career that's

Julien Nitzberg's book needs much work. It's slapdash, hasty and lazy with vulgarity and shock substituting for wit. His song lyrics are better and more pointed, although frequently just as offensive. For instance, Prez Dodgeson sings "I don't care if they support Jihad, I love the Royal House of Saud," a lyric too true to be good. On the other hand, Roger Neill's music is exceptionally tuneful, merry and complex, often approaching the Sullivan standard. What's more, the rich pre-recorded musical accompaniment provides a full orchestra. The Trap Door troupe isn't always up to the demanding music which employs counterpoint, coloratura, head voice and falsetto. Several performers are forced beyond their vocal ranges, notably Stephen Lydic pushed too low as an otherwise deft Dodgeson.

Kevin Remington choreographed The Beastly Bombing in Los Angeles and both directs and choreographs here. He's a better choreographer. Working with a large cast (12 playing 30 roles) on Trap Door's tiny stage, his musical staging is the show's strongest production element, especially with song-and-dance workhorse Matt Gottlieb portraying four different characters (gay priest and beefcake Jesus among them) in four different numbers. Alas, in dialogue scenes Remington relies on motion and high energy but has no instinct for comic understatement or irony.

Personally, I can't accept the loathsome Protocols of Zion as a comedy subject. Others may find the show's equal-opportunity-outrageousness and dominant camp/gay aesthetic just their cup of mint tea.

ONLINE THIS WEEK:
—Brontë,
at Remy Bumppo Theatre

covered and redefined everything from soul workouts to slow grooves to power ballads. Anyone who has paid even the slightest attention can't be unaware of her ... drive.

The through line of LaBelle's 47-year career, of course, is that powerhouse voice. But for almost half that time, her rep as a live performer overshadowed her recordings. More seldom equaled more on vinyl in her case, but in the mid-'80s with "If Only You Knew" she opened up an entirely new avenue by quieting down.

All of LaBelle's facets were on full display Fri., March 28, in a nearly full Arie Crown. Strutting out wrapped in mink with plenty of leg showing, she opened the show shaking and shimmying through a giddy, percolating "New Attitude." A mid-tempo "If You Asked Me To" uncorked what started out as a greatest-hits blast into an innervating evening of complex surprises. The Rev. Al Green's "Love and Happiness" got an extended pulverizing workout while "You Are My Friend" was plaintive and so openly sincere that it embraced the whole room. (OK, OK—she sang this one through tears, thanking her fans for sticking with her for decades.) Reaching back to LaBelle's (the group's) fine swan song album "Chameleon," she offered a meditative "Isn't It A Shame" with the announcement of an upcoming reunion tour and new album (something that this fan has been waiting for). And then there was "Lady Marmadade"—You didn't think they'd let her out of the building without that one, did you?—reworked (for audience members to sing with her onstage), punched up and worked out. Even that—surprise, surprise—was hard to top.

It was all very personal, with LaBelle being open about her bouts with diabetes, losing her family to cancer and lots of kidding about her age (she's 63?) with jokes about her wigs, her new line of beauty products and an array of expensive stiletto pumps that she kept kicking off. Grand diva? No question. *Ultimate?* Yeah...

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TITANIC from cover

Titanic's farewell concert. Titanic is planning on performing his solo work from Stuporstardom! as well as rocking out with a reunited Super 8 Cum Shot.

It has not quite been six years since Chicago's premier queer punk band formed. Facing a constant change in line-up, only the devilishly handsome frontman and drummer Posey Parker remained throughout the outfit's legacy.

Whether under the name Super 8 Cum Shot or Jinx Titanic, these guys are renowned for their live shows at Pride Fest and Northalsted Market Days. The fast-paced delivery of authentic rock numbers like "Oh Daddy," "Check Your Nuts" and "Homo Go Home" is not overlooked by stage antics like cock rings and bags of peanuts being tossed into the audience and, of course, the gut-

ting of a watermelon during the set.

Windy City Times caught up with the outspoken Titanic on an early spring afternoon at his Gold Coast home, while we recount the band's history and the consequences of the previous night's decadence.

Titanic still finds himself indebted to WCT Publisher Tracy Baim. He elaborated: "This band would have never have started without Tracy. In 2002, the Windy City Times sponsored a series of queer music nights at Nevin's Live in Evanston. On our first night, we were on the bill with Ellen Rosner and Dylan Rice."

Strolling down memory lane, he even finds himself amazed at the feats he has been through. It is quite impressive, considering this is a true DIY venture.

"Finally, I had the rock band I couldn't quite get together while in high school or college," Titanic said. "There's something funny about do-

ing this when other people in your age range are buying property in Andersonville or Edgewater." He continued: "The first reviewer got it, saying 'This is the kind of fun you should have at a gay bar.'"

Titanic will tell you how his music mirrors gay culture, albeit humorously. Look at the narcissism depicted in "Hollywood Beach" and the true story within "Happy Fag". Some of his work even has a gospel feel, reflecting his previous inspirations to be a country or gospel singer. A favorite is "There's a Porn Star Shining Down On Me" from Booted & Cuffed, a song that definitely has ties to church music. Then there's the rendition of "Trouble of the World" from last year's Stuporstardom! Mahalia Jackson's version is the standard, where she sings in a deep dirge-like manner. Titanic speeds it up, capturing a modern-day, overly caffeinated chaos.

The rugged rocker returned to the conversa-

tion with a chest filled with magazines, porn and clippings. As he opened it, he insisted he is not having a Gloria Swanson moment. Upon going through a stack, including an issue of Tetu, he said, "France really digs us; I don't know why. Out magazine picked me as one of the top independent artists in the country and now it's all over. We worked really hard and plotted things out. Stuporstardom! is a great peak to exit on. It was recorded with Steve Albini (Pixies, Nirvana, PJ Harvey), one of the best recording engineers of our generation."

"We had so many things happen that we never believed possible. It was five years of unbridled recklessness. Like a speeding train. So there is no turning back to country. It was crazy, such a fun, great run," he quipped.

Unfortunately, Super 8 Cum Shot encountered obstacles other than being a queer punk band. Three TV deals fell through, but the frontman shrugged it off: "Now that I see what is on gay TV, it doesn't upset me at all."

Stuporstardom! came out last year, but back surgery prevented any live performances to promote this solo bow. It also received mixed reactions from the LGBT press. Titanic added, "Some say it's homophobic. Well, I fear a community that screams diversity that's not."

What's next for Mr. Titanic? A clue lies in the Bible sitting out in plain view in his living room. "I want to create an aggressive ministry that is really an excellent guide book to living well with other people," he said. "The supernatural is far too exciting to have some conservatives make the rules on how to live. There is no reason to fear supernatural belief, the cosmic collective or eastern religions. Eventually I would like to moderate a comparative religions show for people with alternative lifestyles. After the concert, I am going to go away to study, form a new band and kick ass all over the mother fucking place in perspective of fighting back."

He even embraced the oft-forgotten golden rule, saying, "There are all different kinds of factions. If you want people to respect you, you should respect them. If somebody has been able to find something that gives him or her peace and solace without hurting anybody else, so what? Don't attack all of Christianity because it is abused."

This should not be such a revelation to fans. Super 8 Cum Shot's eponymous debut has a track called "Manifesto", on which Titanic warns listeners, "They will use the words of Jesus and the book to kick you down/ they'll distort science and reason/they will beat you to the ground."

"Those were fun times, but now I have souls to save. Religious under-currents have always been there. I still believe it 5 years later," Titanic said. "After pausing to do some math, a laugh fills the room: 'That's when you gotta stop—when you mix up the years.'"

Also slated to perform at the April 4 are the Joans and Bric-a-Brac. Plus there is always a chance that Titanic's farewell show will shadow those of Cher or Ozzy Osbourne, both have had drawn out farewell tours. But Jinx assures me, "by the way things are going, by saying this is the last Jinx Titanic show, it's the last."

Read the timeline of Jinx Titanic and Super 8 Cum Shot at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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SEDARIS from cover

back in touch with him and he offered me this part. I'm a big fan of hers. Then, once I met with him and with wardrobe and the guy that was going to make all my costumes, I was like, "This is great!" And I got to work with a monkey too, so between a monkey and Dolly Parton, I was like, "This is a fantasy!" But it was a lot of fun. I'd never worked on a video before, so the whole experience was really nice, and she was incredibly sweet. I really liked her.

AM: Did you trade craft tips? I mean Dolly herself, she's her own work of art, you know?

AS: Yeah. No we didn't trade anything like that. I did talk to her a little bit in her camper where it was just the two of us, but we didn't really. She was on the set the whole time, so we just found that little bit of time to talk a little bit.

AM: You're in this new drama, Snow Angels, coming out this month, starring Kate Beckinsale. It's getting such amazing reviews. Who are you playing? It's obviously a different side to you that people are getting to see.

AS: Right. I play Barb, Kate Beckinsale's best friend. We both work in a Chinese restaurant, and she has an affair with my husband, but I kind of forgive her because her child goes missing, and we find out that her child dies. Which I think I would do in real life too, you know. When your best friend needs you, you're going to be there for her no matter what. It was a really great experience, and it was fun being on a set that was so serious. Of course, I like to go for the laugh, and it was very hard not to do that, but still my part was light enough. It wasn't like I had to cry or fight an attacker or anything like that.

AM: What would you want to be asked that no one ever asks you?

AS: I just had a seven-year-old ask me, "When does summer start?" and I thought that was a pretty good question. And I didn't know the answer. I wasn't sure. I just sent him a calendar. No one has ever asked me that.

AM: I want to know, does Piglet [one of the characters Sedaris does] have any feelings on the upcoming presidential campaign?

AS: She doesn't give a furry fuck. That's what. [Piglet voice] A furry fuck! Doesn't give a furry fuck about it! [Sedaris reverts to her normal voice] Piglet doesn't care. And that's all I'm gonna say for Piglet because she's foul and I don't want to offend anybody.

AM: You're going to be signing your New York Times bestseller, I Like You: Hospitality Under the Influence. It includes so many practical tips that you just do not find in other hospitality books.

AS: I just entertain a lot, and I have a lot of recipes, and I knew that I wanted to do a visual book, about something that I felt I knew enough about.

AM: Do you love spring? Is this a good time for party-throwing?

AS: I like all the seasons, you know? And I like living somewhere where you get four of them. My least favorite is summer. I just don't care for summer holidays, and I'm not a big fan of the heat. But I like them all; it's just my least favorite.

AM: You are gracing the pages of Vanity Fair in April with a lot of funny ladies, from Sandra to Tina and Wanda ... women ending in "a". Did you ever dream that you would be a fashion and [comedy] icon?

AS: No. It was so nice that they gave me a call. I love all those girls. They're all really, really funny. I haven't even had a chance to open the issue. I've seen the picture, but I haven't read anything because I've been away. But it's sitting on my coffee table so I can't wait. It was a lot of fun to do that shoot.

AM: It's a fantastic, fantastic spread. So your connection with Chicago is as a company member at Second City and the Annoyance Theater, correct?



Amy Sedaris.

AS: Yeah. I like Chicago. It's the first place I moved out of North Carolina, so I was still pretty fascinated by all the different neighborhoods, how big it was, and I liked the working-class people, and I like how it's like a walking city. I just liked the energy of it, and all the tall buildings, and my brother was living there. And then I worked at Second City. I think I was there like five or six years and then I came here. I was amazed at how clean Chicago is.

AM: When you were creating Strangers With Candy, there was a big thing about using the word "faggot" and many other non-PC words. Since then, "faggot" [has become] this watershed, right? [You have] awful people using it like Ann Coulter, then television stars using it and denying using it. What do you think it is about this word? You're able, with Jerri Blank, to cross lines that are so politically provocative yet funny.

AS: There were a couple conversations we had when we were writing. They wanted to lay down some ground rules at first. Like we couldn't say something in episode one, but we could say it in episode four. They were just trying to set up boundaries with us. Then, after a while they trusted us a little bit more. Jerri was just likeable somehow. It wasn't like an Andrew Dice Clay kind of a situation. After a while, we tended to get away with a lot more. In the beginning, I think they were just trying to test us.

The Lifeline benefit with Amy Sedaris is Thurs., April 10, at 6:30 p.m. at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E Washington. Tickets are \$100; call 773-761-4477 for visit lifelinetheatre.com. For more on Amy Sedaris, visit www.amysedarisrocks.com.

Read the entire interview at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and listen to Amy Sedaris talk with our Amy Matheny at www.WindyCityQueercast.com.



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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was filed by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook Country. File no. D07109203 on the OCT 05 2007 under the assumed name of Destiny Boutique with the business located at 4827 N. Sheridan Rd #1007 Chicago, IL 60640. The true name and residence address of the owner is: Moriliat Reed, 4827 N. Sheridan Rd #1007 Chicago, IL 60640. (4/02/08-3)

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D08111812 on the MAR 20 2008 under the assumed name of BS Unique Store with the business located at 1917 W. Touhy Apt 1 Chicago, IL 60626. The true name and residence address of the owner is: Amiku A. Egebebi, 1917 W. Touhy Apt 1 Chicago, IL 60626. (4/16/08-3)

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Film Notes

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

There are lots and lots of choices for LGBT movie audiences this week, among them:

—**Shelter**, which was the opening night selection at last fall's Reeling Gay Film Fest, is now getting a commercial run. The debut feature from out writer-director Jonah Markowitz (complete with an interview with him in this issue) will open Fri., April 4, at the Music Box, 3733 N. Southport. The film follows the coming-out of Zach (the brunette, buff cutie pie Trevor Wright), a talented art student from a poor family who has been forced to give up school in order to help support his dysfunctional family. Enter Shaun (Brad Rowe, the blonde, blue-eyed heartthrob Sean Hayes yearned for in Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss), the older brother of Zach's best friend who, like Zach, is a dedicated surfer. Their shared enthusiasm for sun and surf leads to a close friendship, a heated romance and, then (gulp!), love—all amidst a slew of complications for Zach, who must decide between responsibilities; his art-school dreams; his new, hottie boyfriend, etc.

—The Music Box is also the location for a week of terrific films celebrating the glorious legacy of United Artists, with several movies of particular interest to gay audiences. **The United Artists 90th Anniversary Film Festival** plays Fri.-Thurs., April 4-10, with Raging Bull (a new print) and Bananas kicking off the celebration. The Good, the Bad & the Ugly screens Sat., April 5, and West Side Story (based on the iconic musical entirely created by gay men) will run Sun., April 6.

The showings are part of an 18-month global celebration that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer announced March 11.

Two Billy Wilder films are next and will screen Mon., April 7. The first is the Wilder curio Kiss Me Deadly while the second is Wilder's acknowledged masterpiece, the 1959 roaring '20s drag classic Some Like It Hot. Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis and the exquisite Marilyn Monroe star in the story of two musicians hiding out (in drag) in an all-female band in sunny Florida after witnessing the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. Monroe, as the forlorn Sugar Kane, talks about always getting the "fuzzy end of the lollipop" while Tony Curtis does double drag—as both the saxophone-wielding Josephine (whose pursed lips, as Curtis recalls in The Celluloid Closet, were inspired by Eve Arden) and as a phony millionaire playboy (complete with Cary Grant imitation) romancing Monroe. But it is Lemmon who steals the show as Daphne, who literally shakes his maracas after a night tangoing with rear-end-pinching Osgood (Joe E. Brown), who answers Curtis' query, "But why would a guy want to marry a guy?" with a heartfelt, "Security!" A new print will be shown.

Stanley Kubrick's The Killing and the chilling political thriller The Manchurian Candidate (with bisexual star Laurence Harvey in his best role and Angela Lansbury as his vicious mother in one of hers) will run Tues., April 8. Gay actor Charles Laughton's only film as a director, the masterful Night of the Hunter, will be shown

Wed., April 9, while 1969 Best Picture Oscar winner Midnight Cowboy (which got its initial "X" rating because of the scene in which a teen-aged Bob Balaban tries to pick up Jon Voight in a movie theater men's room) is set to screen Thurs., April 10. Also, Peter Finch and a pre-Mommie Dearest Faye Dunaway are showcased in the black comedy Network, which won them both Oscars. www.musicboxtheatre.com

—A free screening of **Freeheld**—Cynthia Wade's powerful and moving Oscar-winning documentary that follows Lt. Laurel Hester's struggle to make her pension benefits available to her partner, Stacie Andree, before her impending death from lung cancer—will be held Tues., April 8, in the Hoover-Leppen Theatre at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted. A pre-screening reception begins at 6:30 p.m. with the screening at 7 p.m. and a Q&A with DePaul University professor Beth Kelly to follow. Kelly, a member of the City of Chicago's Advisory Council on LGBT Issues (ACLGBTI), was a college friend of Hester's and acted as a consultant on the film. The screening kicks off a push for civil unions in Illinois that will continue April 9 with a lobby day in Springfield. Individuals from across Illinois will travel to the state capital to urge passage of H.B. 1826, which would legalize civil unions here. ACLGBTI, Center on Halsted and Equality Illinois are sponsoring the film event. More information about H.B. 1826 and civil unions in Illinois can be found at www.civilunionsillinois.org and further information on Freeheld is available at www.freeheld.com.

—**The 24th Annual Chicago Latino Film Festival** runs Fri.-Wed., April 4-16, and this year will showcase more than 100 feature films and shorts from Latin America, Spain, Portugal and the United States. Several of the movies (which are being screened at various venues around the city) in the fest will be of particular interest to LGBT audiences, including *Las Dos Caras de Jano* (The Two Faces of Janus), the story of a private detective (played by Puerto Rican star Modesto Lacen) trying to track down a serial killer dubbed "The Angel of Bachelors" who preys on closeted gay male socialites in Puerto Rico. The film screens Sat., April 5, at 4 p.m. and Sun., April 6, at 8:30 p.m. at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema, 2828 N. Clark. *Tal Como Somos* (Just As We Are), a documentary that follows the lives of six Latino gay and bisexual men (including a Chicago couple) and a transgender woman, is also part of the fest and will screen Fri., April 11, at 8:30 p.m. at Instituto Cervantes, 31 W. Ohio. Jesus Ramirez-Valles, the executive producer of the film and Judith McCray, the director-producer, are both Chicago residents. An interview with Ramirez-Valles will appear in next week's Windy City Times. Find further information on both films, tickets and festival particulars at www.LatinoCulturalCenter.org or call 312-409-1757.

Check out my archived reviews at www.windycitytimes.com or www.knightatthemovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter Web site, where there is also ordering information on my new book of collected film reviews, **Knights at the Movies 2004-2006**.



Shelter.



Jonah Markowitz.

Jonah Markowitz: Gimme 'Shelter'

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Out writer-director Jonah Markowitz is justly proud of his first feature film, *Shelter* (which opens Fri., April 4, at the Music Box Theatre, 3733 N. Southport). It's an appealing queer-themed, love story that focuses on two hunky surfers in sunny California: Zach (newcomer Trevor Wright) and Shaun (played by Brad Rowe, who is familiar to gay audiences as the object of Sean Hayes' lust in Billy Hollywood's Screen Kiss). Markowitz talked with Windy City Times about the film as he drove through L.A. traffic.

Windy City Times: Shelter has characters that are into surfing. Is that in your back-ground?

Jonah Markowitz: I started surfing when I did a movie called *Blue Crush*. I worked as an art director on that movie so I started doing that. More than anything, I wanted to do a film that fell in love doing something that was sort of very traditionally "male"—something that men do to bond and usually out of doors—like hunting or camping or dirt biking or snowboarding or surfing that had that element as well as being an urban environment.

WCT: You sure it wasn't just an excuse to spend lots and lots of days around nearly naked hunks? [Laughs]

JM: Well, living in California that's sort of a given. It served a couple of purposes, I'll just say. [Laughs]

WCT: As a surfer yourself and being integrated into that subculture a little bit, is it a group that's particularly homophobic? My guess is that it would be a little more laid-back.

JM: I think it's both. I think it's like anything else in the sports world, you will find both. Mostly it's about people out there surfing because that's what they love and they're not really interested in what other people are doing.

Read the full interview with Jonah Markowitz at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

UNACCUSTOMED

EARTH

JHUMPA LAHIRI

BOOK REVIEW

Unaccustomed Earth

Written by Jhumpa Lahiri

\$25; Knopf; 333 pages

REVIEW BY YASMIN NAIR

Unaccustomed Earth is Jhumpa Lahiri's new collection of short stories, and it doesn't stray far from the literal and fictional territory, of aliens living alienated lives, that she's best known for. But it does take the reader away from adults by focusing on their offspring. Part One is a set of five discrete stories, while Part Two's three tales are linked by protagonists Hema and Kaushik. The results are fresher than Lahiri's previous work, and her typically somber characters yield insights into more than the awkwardness of straddling two cultures.

Lahiri is especially good at portraying children. She's never condescending, and she grants them complex thoughts and inner lives. In "Year's End," Piu and Mia are only seven and ten. But they're also preternaturally adult, and gracious and polite towards their shockingly cruel and much older stepbrother Kaushik, even years after he subjects them to a humiliating tirade about their mother. In other stories, children must work at becoming typical American teenagers and simultaneously help their parents navigate a strange land, their foreignness always in evidence. Lahiri has an especially sharp eye for the details of social class. In "Once in a Lifetime," the upward mobility of Hema's parents is in stark contrast to the easy wealth of Kaushik's world. In India, the two families would never have met. In America,

they're thrown together out of the necessity of bonding as foreigners.

While Lahiri provides interesting and nuanced glimpses into what happens when immigrants grow up in and into the countries they inhabit, she's on unsure footing with emotional weight, leaving plots struggling to match the portentousness with which she imbues them. For instance: Crushes are common in these stories, either fumbled with in close quarters or savored at a distance. In "Nobody's Business," Paul secretly admires his roommate Sangeeta and watches her romance with Farouk, who turns out to be unfaithful to her. Distraught, she asks Paul to drive her to Farouk's home; confronts him; breaks a vase; tries to lock herself in a closet; and eventually has to be dragged out by the police. Stripped to the plot's essentials: Sangeeta is obsessed with Farouk and Paul has a crush on her. It's like an episode of *Friends*, only sadder.

And then there are the endings. Lahiri's best in stories like "Year's End," where the emotional distance and coldness between people are left to linger, without any false or saccharine attempts at reconciliation. It's the power of the unsaid that conveys the full force of Kaushik's betrayal, and which creates one of the best pieces in the collection. But in "Hell-Heaven" and "Going Ashore," the endings are downright cheesy—torn from the headlines and tacked onto stories that could have benefited from more ambiguity.

Unaccustomed Earth is fresher than Lahiri's previous work, but it often seems like too much is made of slight situations. And yet it also suffers from the numbness that's described perfectly in "Only Goodness," as one character recalls her parent's marriage: "It was neither happy nor unhappy, and the lack of emotion in either extreme was what upset Sudha most."

Jhumpa Lahiri will appear Tues., April 8, at 7:30 p.m. at the Swedish American Museum, 5211 N. Clark.

Also: Read a review of Karen Abbott's *Sin in the Second City* at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com. Abbott will appear Wed., April 2, at the City Club of Chicago Luncheon, Maggiano's, 111 W. Grand, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; Wed., April 2, at the Edgebrook Historical Society, 6173 N. McClellan, 7 p.m.; and Sat., April 5, at the Altrusa Spring Fling Luncheon, Flossmoor Country Club, 1441 Western, Flossmoor, 11:30 a.m. For more info, see www.sininthesecondcity.com.

WHAT TO DO?

Wednesday, April 2

Women & Children First Bookstore Jane Kotapish: Salvage. 7:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., 773-769-9299, www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Thursday, April 3

CALOR Nonclinical Mental Health Support Group for men and women. Bilingual. 6-8 p.m., 3220 W. Armitage, 773-235-3161 ext. 232

Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus Meeting about the adult entertainment industry and the Black gay community, "Sex & Eroticism." Dinner will be served. Doors open 5:30 p.m., 6-8 p.m., DuSable Museum, 740 E. 56th Place

Windy City Gay Idol 2008 Fifth event of 6th annual talent search contest. 7 p.m. sign-up/8 p.m. start, The Closet, 3325 N. Broadway, www.windycitymediagroup.com for rules/regulations, www.myspace.com/2007windycitygayidol

Friday, April 4

CALOR Conexiones: Social support group for gay/bi Latino men 25 and older. Bilingual. 8-10 p.m., 3220 W. Armitage, 773-235-3161 ext. 237

Center on Halsted Art exhibit Sprung: A Visual Commemoration of Spring, opening reception. Runs through April 30. 6:30-9:30 p.m., \$5 donation, 3656 N. Halsted St., www.centeronhalsted.org

Chicago Gay Men's Chorus Apple Pie. CGMC's election year tribute that features patriotic songs, notable moments from American history from CGMC's perspective, more. Three shows! 8 p.m., also April 5 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m., Athenaeum Theater, 2936 N. Southport, see www.cgmc.org, www.ticketmaster.com

Citizens for Harry Osterman LGBT fundraiser. 6-8 p.m., \$74 individual, \$300 host, \$1,500 chair, Big Chicks, 5024 N. Sheridan, citizensforharry@yahoo.com, 847-736-1951

Flesh Hungry Dog Show Three Year Anniversary Show with Jinx Titanic, The

Joans, Bric-a-Brac and Fleshtones Burlesque. 9 p.m., \$10 at door or \$8 online at www.fleshhungrydog.com, Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark St.

Music Box Theatre Opening of the film Shelter, about a young, gay man forced to give up his dreams to take care of his family. 3733 N. Southport, www.musicboxtheatre.com, www.heretv/sheltermovie

Plagiarists Theatre Company Art in the Time of Plagiarism: A Plagiarist Art Show benefit. 6-10 p.m. (and April 5 1-10 p.m.), Lotus Keep Gallery, 1017 N. Western Ave., www.theplagiarists.org

Saturday, April 5

Bash Back! This newly formed group of tradical transfolk, queers, anarcha-feminists and allies had a queer/trans convergence through April 6. Focus: to organize against the Party Conventions. More info at backbackchi@riseup.net or www.myspace.com/bashback

Chicago Lesbian Brunch Group Gathering for this social networking group. 8 p.m., Museum of Contemporary Art, http://gaypros.meetup.com/283, pphd1226@yahoo.com for more info

Coady Roundball Classic The largest gay basketball tournament in the world. More than 25 teams from all over the country. And April 6. University of Illinois at Chicago Gymnasium, 901 W. Roosevelt Rd., www.wcaa.net/basketball/crc17 or chicagobasketball@sbcglobal.net for info

Davenport's Beckie Menzie & Tom Michael perform in new show, Postcards from the Road: The Travel Show. Every Saturday in April. 8 p.m., \$18 cover, two-drink minimum, 1383 N. Milwaukee Ave., RSVP recommended at 773-278-1830

Gerber/Hart Library "Welcome Spring" wine tasting event. 4:30-6:30 p.m., KAFKA Wine Co., 3325 N. Halsted St., \$25, tickets through PayPal or call 773-381-8030 or visit 1127 W. Granville Ave. during library hours

Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association "Twelfth Night" Annual Gala. \$150 if purchased by March 21, \$135 if purchased by March 7, The Hyatt Lodge at McDonald's Campus in Oak Brook, call 708-848-0273 for tickets and info

Sunday, April 6

Berlin Madonnarama-Remixed, a special night of Madonna remixes, 954 W. Belmont Ave., BerlinChicago.com

Brando's L Lounge, a party designed by women for women. 9 p.m.-2 a.m., 343 S. Dearborn, free admission

Women & Children First Bookstore Judy Norsigian: Our Bodies, Ourselves: Pregnancy and Birth. 4:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., 773-769-9299, www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Monday, April 7

CALOR UNIDad: Social support group for young gay/bi men. 7-9 p.m., 3220 W. Armitage, 773-235-3161 ext. 0

Northwestern University Sex Week 2008. Through April 11. The 2nd Annual Sex Week features informative and provocative programming, including panel debates, a movie screening, speakers, etc. See groups.northwestern.edu/sex-week for complete information.

Tuesday, April 8

CALOR Proyecto Unidad. Group for young gay/bi men 14-24 conducted in Spanish. 7-9 p.m., 3220 W. Armitage, 773-235-3161 ext. 232

Center on Halsted Free screening of "Freeheld," Cynthia Wade's award-winning documentary followed by Q&A session. Pre-screening reception 6:30 p.m., screening 7 p.m., 3656 N. Halsted St., www.freeheld.com, www.civilunionsillinois.org

Women & Children First Bookstore Jhumpa Lahiri: Unaccustomed Earth. 7:30 p.m., tickets free with book purchase, Swedish American Museum, 5211 N. Clark St., call 773-769-9299 to order book and reserve ticket

Wednesday, April 9

CALOR HAH: Hombres Apoyendo Hombres. For gay/bi men with HIV/AIDS, in Spanish. 7-9 p.m., 3220 W. Armitage, 773-235-3161 ext. 223

Equality Illinois Lobby Day for Civil Unions in Illinois. Free, buses depart on Chicago's North Side at 7 a.m. to Springfield after a short stop in Bolingbrook, depart 6 p.m., see www.eqil.org, 773-477-7173 or email info@eqil.org

Windy City Gay Idol 2008 Sixth event of 6th annual talent search contest. 9 p.m. sign-up/10 p.m. start, Club Krave, 13126 S. Western in Blue Island, www.windycitymediagroup.com for rules/regulations, www.myspace.com/2007windycitygayidol

Women & Children First Bookstore Isabel Allende: The Sum of Our Days. Tickets free with book purchase, Swedish American Museum, 7:30 p.m., 5211 N. Clark St., call 773-769-9299 to order book and reserve ticket

Thursday, April 10

Lifeline Theatre 25th Anniversary Benefit, featuring "Strangers with Candy" actress Amy Sedaris. 6:30-10:30 p.m., \$100 a ticket, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., 773-761-4477 for tickets

Ronny's Girl in a Coma performs, local ban 8 Inch Betsey opens. 2101 N. California Ave. 9 p.m., \$7, www.mpsshows.com

Schubas Bitch and the Exciting Conclusion perform to promote their new EP, "B+TEC." 3159 N. Southport Ave., see www.bitchmusic.com or www.myspace.com/bitch for more info

Point Foundation Benefit. Cornerstone Society event. Hosted bar and hors d'oeuvres. 6-8:30 p.m., Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., RSVP required at 866-337-6468, www.point-foundation.org

Thurs., April 3, and Wed., April 9



IDOL SIGNS

Windy City Gay Idol will take place at The Closet, 3325 N. Broadway (April 3), and Club Krave, 13126 S. Western, Blue Island (April 9).

Photo by Kirk Williamson

Sat-Sun., April 5-6



HOOP, THERE IT IS

The Coady Roundball Classic is on tap for the weekend at the University of Illinois at Chicago, 901 W. Roosevelt.

Photo by Mel Ferrand



'Runway' Success

AK Anne Klein presented Nina Garcia, Elle magazine fashion director and a judge on TV's Project Runway, March 20, at Macy's, 111 N. State. Garcia spoke and signed copies of her work, The Little Black Book of Style. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see more at www.MysticImagesPhotography.com.

You Should Be Dancing, Yeah

As part of its 2008 spring series, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago held its "Gay Community Event: Celebrity Cast Party" Sun., March 30. A dance performance was held at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph, followed by a party at The Fairmont Hotel, 200 N. Columbus. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see more at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and www.MysticImagesPhotography.com



Sam Coady (above) at the 2006 Gay Games Opening Ceremonies. Photo by Ross Forman

and certainly will make the basketball more interesting," said James Simmons, 29, of Chicago, who serves as the tournament publicist. "I'm sure all of the other teams will step up their play—because it is the Rock Dogs and there will be cameras there filming the games.

"It definitely will be an interesting tournament."

As always.

The CRC is a National Gay Basketball Association (NGBA)-sanctioned event and serves as the National Gay Basketball Association Championship tournament. And the Rock Dogs are the defending champions, not to mention gold-medal winners at the 2006 Gay Games in Chicago.

"The Rock Dogs are pretty awesome, just fun to watch," said Simmons, a three-time CRC player who will watch from the sidelines this year due to a knee injury. "The Rock Dogs have some former college players and a few who even played professionally [in Europe].

"To me, the Rock Dogs represent a new generation of LGBT athletes—they're gay, they're good and they're out. They are visual progress toward social acceptance."

Are they beatable?

"Rarely, but yes. New York gives them a run for their money quite often. Long Beach does as well."

The CRC attracts some of the best LGBT players from across the country, and also a few international athletes. (The London-based team that has participated for the past three years is not playing this year.)

Still, the CRC has experienced tremendous growth over the past few years. Prior year tournaments have featured 25 teams. This year, there are 28 teams, with the possibility of more being added before play begins, Simmons said. There are one female and three male divisions, with players representing cities such as Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Dallas, Salt Lake City and Memphis.

"This tournament definitely shows that there are lots of LGBT basketball players," Simmons

said. "We're playing at a top-notch facility and some of the [event] organizers have been around for all 18 years.

"This tournament definitely draws the best LGBT players from around the world; they want to come to this tournament to, hopefully, become the NGBA champion. If [your team] wins, you're the best team in the nation [and,] arguably, the world.

"The tournament has the highest level of play you can get in gay basketball."

Sam Coady, the namesake founder of the annual event, will be playing in the B Division, which has 16 teams, the most of any division. There are seven top-tiered A Division teams, such as the Rock Dogs. There are four Recreation Division teams and four female teams. About 280 players will participate, and the level of play is expected to be, "equal to, or a little higher, than past tournaments," Simmons said.

Some of the best Chicago-based participants are Matt Reuer, Ted Cappas, Mike McRaith and Kevin Blair.

"One of the best parts of this tournament—much more than any other LGBT sports tournament or league—is that the players are like a family," said Simmons. "And that family truly spans the rainbow—there are Blacks, whites, Asians, Hispanics, truly a little of everything. And there usually is a mix of cultures on the court at the same time, which is great to see, especially since no one even bats an eye at [the diversity] or even really thinks about it.

"Basketball for me is far more racially-integrated than other sports."

Simmons said about 80 percent of the players are LGBT.

"This is one of the marquee gay sports, not just a marquee event in basketball," he said.

SPORTS NEWS

Weir Wins Bronze at Worlds

At the World Figure Skating Championships in Gothenburg, Sweden, Johnny Weir turned out to be the only bright spot for the United States' team as he won a bronze medal March 22. In doing so, he saved the U.S. from going home without a medal for the first time since 1994.

Canadian Jeffrey Buttle won the gold while France's Brian Joubert took the silver. Weir's placement allowed the United States to have three places for the men in next year's world championships, to be held in Los Angeles.

The U.S. was shut out of the ladies competition, won by Japan's Mao Asada, as well as pairs and ice dancing.

Blackhawks Convention in July

The inaugural Chicago Blackhawks Convention will take place in downtown Chicago July 18-20. The "puck drops" Friday, July 18, at 5 p.m. with opening ceremonies at the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan.

Highlights include autograph and photo sessions with former and current Blackhawks; interactive games; and a Q&A session with Blackhawks General Manager Dale Tallon regarding hockey operations.

Weekend passes are \$50 each and can be purchased at the United Center Box Office, chicago-blackhawks.com, at Blackhawks home games, or through TicketMaster at 312-559-1212.

For more info, see www.chicagoblackhawks.com/convention.

SPORTS

18th Coady Classic Ready to Roll

BY ROSS FORMAN

The cameras will be rolling, literally, at the 18th annual Coady Roundball Classic (CRC)—the largest and longest-running gay and lesbian basketball tournament in the world—set for Sat.-Sun., April 5-6 at the University of Illinois-Chicago gymnasium, 901 W. Roosevelt.

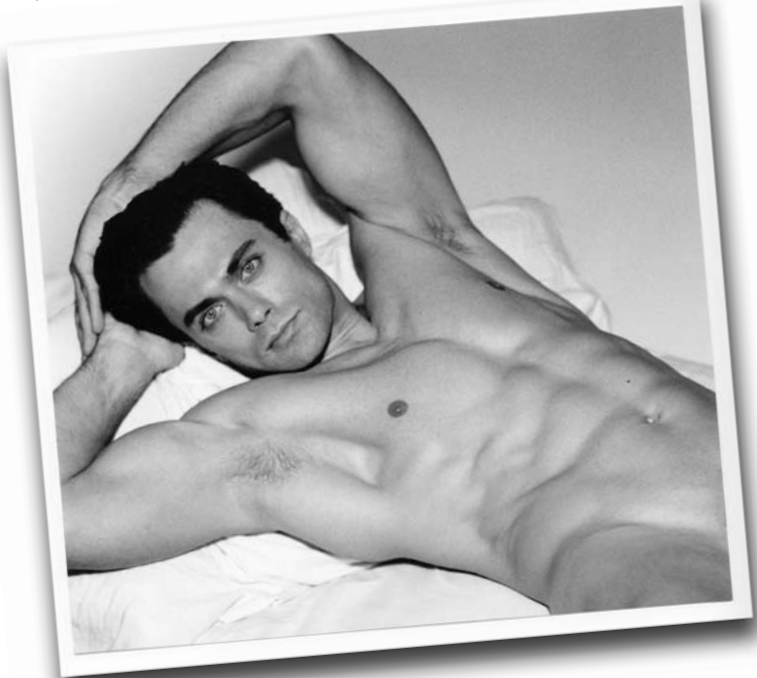
Logo, the gay-driven cable TV station, will descend upon Chicago to film the San Francisco Rock Dogs for an upcoming reality TV show about the team.

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CMSA Hall of Fame Adds Five

The Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA)— the largest not-for-profit gay and lesbian sports organization in the Midwest—held its Hall of Fame induction ceremony Sat., March 29, at Spyners Pub, 4623 N. Western. This year's inductees were Rich Essig, Art Johnston, Bobby Nicholson, Doug Malm and Sidetrack. Photos by Mel Ferrand

Boystown Pool League

Week #6	W	L	Git'R'Dun	67	59
Rack'm Bitch	79	47	Shot Blockers	63	63
Ball'N Hand	73	53	Miss Cues	61	65
Hot Rack	68	58	Mixed Breed	53	73
Sex & Candy	68	58			

Bowling - CMSA Mixed Standings

Division A	W	L	Bowlers-A-GO-GO	35	56	Wells Fargo ONYX 5	58	33
Cornelia's	66	25	5 Pins 10 Balls	35	56	Rough Trade	54	37
Hamburger Mary's	60	31	Gutter Fluffers	30	54	Juana Bees	53	38
GYOF	54	37	REMAX Edge	33	58	Windy City Sweets	46	45
Second to None	53	38	Marty's	17	74	Wicked	45	46
Funky Five	52	39				Looney Tunes	44	47
FVB Interiors	43	48	Division B	W	L	Castaways	40	51
Jury's	39	52	Bobby Love's	81	10	Scot Shotz	38	53
Crew's Ball Busters	38	53	Great Scots	67	24	Extremely Striking	33	58
North End	36	55	Halsted Bar & Grill	63	28	Lady & Her Tramps	32	59
Bowleros	35	56	Salon Michael	58	33	Done More 5 Less	23	68

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