

A portrait of Ricky Martin, a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a dark red tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. A red patterned pocket square is visible in his suit jacket. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

qlife
MAGAZINE

THE THIRD ISSUE
MARCH 2017

LA VIDA VEGAS

Ricky Martin on his new
Las Vegas Residency,
being out and being a dad

PLUS: BROADWAY BARES, ANDREW CHRISTIAN, THE WARREN,
MEET RUPAUL'S SEASON 9 QUEENS



Ricky Martin opens his extended residency in Las Vegas at the new Park Theater at Monte Carlo Resort & Casino this April.

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MARCH 2017

THE THIRD ISSUE

Javier Echenique Introduces 12:05 Menswear	6
Survivor	8
LGBT Economic Summit	10
La Vida Vegas	14
Fashion Designer, Author, Activist	16
Blonde Leading the Blonde	20
DIFFA Las Vegas Hosts Fashion Preview	22
Flower Power	24
Kenyth Mogan Reveals Himself	26
Dangerous Beauty	28
Why Dining Out For Life Matters for Everyone	30
Topgolf	34
Outfest Fusion	38
Third Annual Truth Awards	40
LGBTQ Volleyball Returns to Sunset Park	44
Norma's Page	46
Snatched	48
Lambda Endorses Increased Minimum Wage	50
Lotus of Siam	52
Red Dress Recap	54
The Warren	58
Ménage a Trois	60
Broadway Cares	78
All About Susan	80
All in the Family	84
Making America Hopeful Again	88
A Patriot Act	92

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RICKY MARTIN

VEGAS RESIDENCY

PARK THEATER

AT MONTE CARLO

APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2017



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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

What an exciting issue! We made our debut in January with Cher and welcomed her to Las Vegas in February where she brings us Classic Cher, an incredible show that "turned back time". Willam graced our 3 covers in February in time for When We Rise, the LGBTQ docu-drama, airing on ABC this month.

This month we feature Ricky Martin on our Las Vegas and New York covers and for the first time Los Angeles gets a different cover featuring Susan Sarandon in her role as Bette Davis on FX's new show Fued: Bette and Joan. Our interview with Ricky will tell you all about his new residency at The Park Theater.

Each month we bring you more feature stories relevant to your communities. Our Los Angeles readers can read more about When We Rise with articles from Rachel Griffiths and Dustin Lance Black.

Michael Barbieri brings New York readers details on food and cocktails at The Warren and Ménage a Trois, a trio of powerful, talented women, who took to the stage at The Laurie Beechman Theatre. He also enlightens us on his recent visit to Topgolf in Las Vegas.

Andrew Christian stopped by for a visit and shared some more details about his new book SEX = POWER = FREEDOM. Don't forget to pick up your copy.

We can't wait for Season 9 of RuPaul's Drag Race. We're featuring a pictorial of each of the new queens. Be sure to visit <http://qlifemagazine.com> right after each episode for online voting of your favorite queens.

We know that the luck of the Irish is on our side, since our readers are our pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. We thank you for giving the LGBTQ community your voice. In today's political and social circles we know that the only way we have ever created change is to tell our stories. This opens the minds and hearts of those around us. We Will Rise, like we always have.

Two handwritten signatures in purple ink. The top signature is "Garrett Pattiani" and the bottom signature is "Russ White".

Garrett Pattiani
Russ White

FOUNDING MEMBER



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JAVIER ECHENIQUE INTRODUCES 12:05 MENSWEAR

Menswear fashion label, 12:05™, a collection designed and created by Spanish design prodigy, Javier Echenique, has announced today the official launch of the brand. 12:05™ originated five minutes past midnight on July 4th in Provincetown, Massachusetts, a date of significance marking the date of birth of its creator and the time when an unforgettable connection took place, a moment that Javier decided to celebrate with the creation of a clothing line.

Echenique was born in Madrid on the July 4th at 12:05 to a family of artists. Now based in New York, hailing from Miami, Javier continues to devote his time to the applied arts in architecture, interior design and painting, whilst simultaneously working on his newest, most exciting project, his fashion line.

The brand's introductory spring/summer collection is inspired by the gorgeous, artistic and bohemian Cape Cod. The arts have been an inexhaustible source of inspiration for Echenique making this line a daring fusion between art and fashion.

The new line offers exclusive designs paired with the highest quality fabrics and is currently sold through its e-commerce site www.1205.life, with stores to follow later this year. It includes everything from tees and polos to shorts and hoodies. Each piece includes Echenique's signature design taken from his visionary sand paintings, part of the Crystal Riviyea Custom

Series. In April, the line will be extended to include swimwear and accessories.

In keeping with Echenique's vision of making great design accessible, the collection is priced between \$55 and \$120. The MV Tank, inspired by Martha's Vineyard and made from soft cotton is \$55, the Trubo T costs \$65 and the Chatham Polo costs \$85. The Nantucket Shorts featuring a narrow leg, a refined cut and a clean look are priced at \$90, while the PTown Hoodie costs \$120.

Whilst dedicating a lot of his time to his newest, most exciting project his fashion line, Echenique continues to devote his time to the applied arts in architecture, interior design and painting. His artwork collections include abstract, collage, geometric, murals, portraits and sand paintings. Visit his website to find out more - www.echenique.com





My family has long battled pancreatic cancer. My grandmother lost her battle to pancreatic cancer before I was born. My mother was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer at age 36. As with most pancreatic cancer, it was found too late and it had already metastasized to her liver. As I grew up, I watched her battle. The numerous surgeries, specialists, check-ups...for thirteen years she fought a hard battle against this horrible disease. She passed away at the age of 49. We were fortunate to have her with us for so long; especially because the five-year survival rate for pancreatic cancer is just 9 percent.

After her diagnosis, she underwent genetic testing due to our strong family history. She was diagnosed with MEN 1, a genetic disorder that predisposes to neuroendocrine tumors throughout the body. The chance of inheriting this mutation is 50%. For me, I knew that the possibility of battling pancreatic cancer sometime in my life was very possible. I always prayed I would be fortunate enough to be the lucky 50% that did not inherit it. Unfortunately, that was not the case. I tested positive for MEN 1 in 2012.

Screening bloodwork and scans became a routine. I was continuously told that, "it's not if you will develop tumors, it's when and where." The thought was an ominous threat hanging over my head. I was diligent, but diligence doesn't stop cancer.

I will never forget that phone call three years ago that turned my life upside down. I was sitting on the floor playing with my soon to be two-year-old son, sitting next to my wife, 8 months pregnant with our second child, when the phone rang. It was my

gastroenterologist following up on a routine CT scan that took place two days earlier. My heart sank as I found out there was a mass in my pancreas.

The next three months were spent meeting with doctors, surgeons, having scans and scopes and biopsies, preparing for surgery and meeting my new daughter – born just 7 weeks before surgery. In May 2014, I had a distal pancreatectomy to remove my primary tumor. Pathology showed it was indeed a slow growing neuroendocrine tumor which had spread to one lymph node in the area, but they were confident they removed the primary tumor. I was lucky, we had caught my cancer early. I was lucky, my cancer was slow growing. I was lucky, I did not need chemotherapy or radiation. I was lucky, I was young and strong.

The pain was real and intense and the emotional and physical stress at times was more than overwhelming. It was an uphill battle, but one day at a time brought me closer to being myself again. Unfortunately, I developed complications a month following surgery



only to be hospitalized with a pancreatic leak and fistula. More home health care, antibiotics, drains...it seemed never ending. Again, I was lucky. Four months later, my drain was able to be removed and I was back on the road to healing. Three months later I was back to work full-time. Today, I am doing wonderfully. My latest MRI shows no areas of concern. I am lucky!

I am so fortunate to have a team of doctors who worked so hard to provide me with the best. I am blessed to be surrounded by great family and friends to care for me and lift my spirits up. And I am grateful for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (PanCAN) and my PurpleStride family who continue to give me hope.

The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network is the global leader accelerating the pace of research progress for one of the world's deadliest cancers. With an urgent mission to improve outcomes for pancreatic cancer patients and double survival by 2020, the organization executes a bold and comprehensive strategy to Wage Hope through research, patient services, advocacy and

community engagement.

PurpleStride is the PanCAN's signature family-friendly 5K that raises awareness and funds that support the programs of the organization. The event gives me an opportunity to share my story, give and receive support and shine a light on this devastating disease.

Each day I am grateful for my health, for negative test results and for another day to live this life. I know my battle is not over. I know the odds, but I will fight hard and never give up. I am proud to say that I am a 35-year-old, three-year neuroendocrine pancreatic cancer survivor!

I know our efforts to raise awareness and funds today, will bring hope to all those touched by pancreatic cancer tomorrow. I urge the Las Vegas community to join me and register for PurpleStride Las Vegas which will take place on Saturday, March 25, at The Green at Town Square. Together, we will Wage Hope for the future of pancreatic cancer.





The Greater Seattle Business Association will host the Western Business Alliance's first-ever LGBT economic summit on Thursday, March 16 to address economic factors and policy agendas that affect LGBT and allied businesses and communities in the western U.S. and Canada.

Through keynote presentations and panel discussions, attendees will share information, provide critical input to regional challenges, and form lasting relationships with LGBT and allied business leaders from Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, and British Columbia.

The full-day summit, Working Together for Shared Prosperity, includes the following topics and panels.

LEVERAGING THE POWER OF LGBT BUSINESSES

A panel of successful and diverse LGBT-owned business leaders.

Moderator: Roger Nyhus, Nyhus Communications
Roz Edison, Marination
Joe Fugere, Tutta Bella
Curtis Thornhill, Apt Marketing Solutions

WORKING TOGETHER TO PROMOTE DIVERSE SUPPLY CHAINS

Moderator: Bryan Adamson, Seattle University School of Law
Sam McClure, National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)

Michael Herrera, SoCal Gas
Mark Morales, State of CA, Dept. of Insurance, Diversity Task Force

LUNCH CONVERSATION: LEFT COAST POLITICS IN THE POST-ELECTION ERA

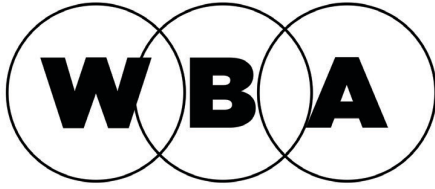
Sally Clark, former Seattle City Councilmember
Mayor Ed Murray, Seattle
Ken Yeager, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors

UNLEASHING THE POWER OF BRINGING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

A discussion with ethnic and minority chambers.
Moderator: Brian Surratt, Executive Director, Seattle OED
Jaebadia Gardner, OnPoint Real Estate, Jennifer Jimenez, Eastside Total Health & Lactation, Martha Lee, Chinese Chamber and the Ethnic Coalition of Chambers of Commerce, Frank Montes, California Hispanic Chamber, Beto Yarce, Ventures

BLUE STATE TOURISM

Tom Norwalk, Visit Seattle
Tim Robinson, Visit Spokane



WESTERN BUSINESS ALLIANCE

LGBT ECONOMIC Summit 2017

Thurs, March 16
Seattle, Washington

WBA CHAMBERS:

Desert Business Alliance

Golden Gate
Business Alliance

Greater Seattle
Business Association

Inland Northwest
Business Alliance

Long Beach Gay & Lesbian
Chamber of Commerce

Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian
Chamber of Commerce

LOUD Business
of Vancouver BC

Portland Area
Business Association

Rainbow Chamber of
Commerce of Silicon Valley

Sacramento
Rainbow Chamber

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LGBT ECONOMIC Summit 2017

“Working Together for Shared Prosperity”

Thursday, March 16

Renaissance Hotel

515 Madison St, Seattle

Register at theGSBA.org

COST: \$95 full day

(includes evening reception)

\$50 lunch only

8:30–9:00am		Registration and breakfast
9:00–10:30am		Breakfast Panel: Leveraging the Power of LGBT Businesses (a panel of successful and diverse LGBT-owned business leaders)
10:30–noon		Plenary Session: Working Together to Promote Diverse Supply Chains (Case Study, the Insurance Industry, WA and CA Insurance Commissioners)
noon–1:30pm		Lunch and Panel on Left Coast Politics in the Post-election Era
1:30–3:00pm		Unleashing the Power of Bringing Diverse Communities Together (Ethnic and Minority Chambers)
3:00–4:30pm		Plenary on Tourism
5:00–7:00pm		Power Connect Reception

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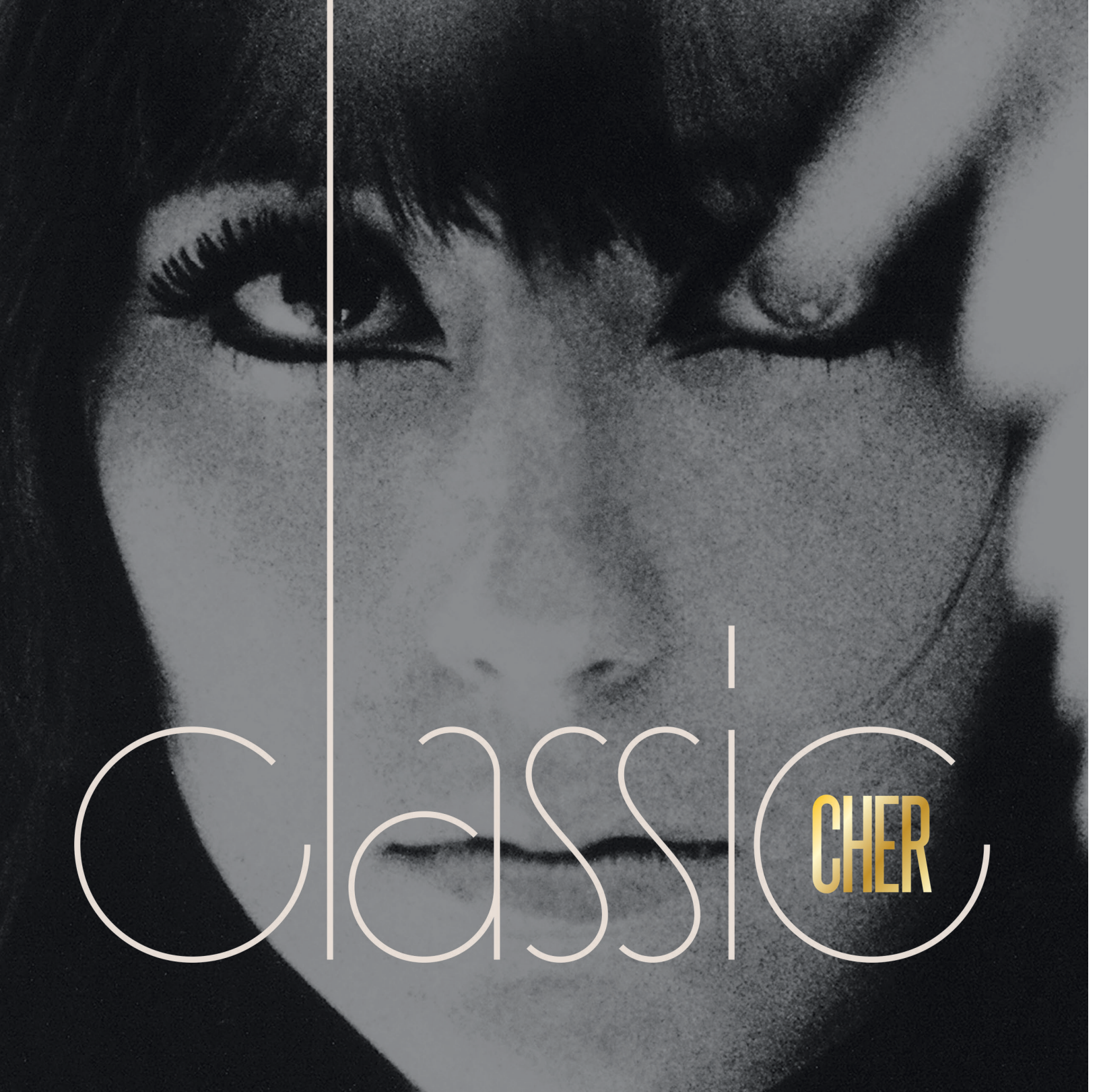
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LA VIDA VEGAS

[by Garrett Pattiani]

QLIFE had the amazing opportunity to interview the incredibly talented Ricky Martin ahead of his new extended residency in Las Vegas. A member of Menudo as a teenager, Ricky is now known for such solo pop hits as “Livin’ La Vida Loca” and “She Bangs.”

One of the most intriguing and impactful entertainers of all time, multiple GRAMMY® Award-winning artist Ricky Martin will headline the new state-of-the-art Park Theater at Monte Carlo from April through September, as well as performances at MGM’s new National Harbor in May.

After performing in all seven continents over the last three years around the globe, Martin is well-known for his high-energy and thrilling performances that have captivated millions of people throughout the world. Martin’s one-of-a-kind show, promises to thrill audiences with non-stop entertainment. Martin’s compelling repertoire includes his greatest and current hits and multiple costume changes, making it one of the most exciting events to come to Vegas, which will definitely leave you wanting more.

QLife: Welcome to Las Vegas! Are you as excited as we are to have you here?

Ricky: Of course, I’m so excited. The Las Vegas audience has always been one of my favorites because people come from all over the world. It’s been what we have talked about for years and I’m very happy to be able to do it.

QLife: How is having an extended engagement going

to impact your life compared to what you have done in the past?

Ricky: Well, I get to stay in one spot and it will be easier for us commuting from Los Angeles.

QLife: How has your life changed since becoming a father?

Ricky: My life has completely changed. Every decision I make now is about my boys where as before it was about me. My kids are my priority and I am a father first and foremost.

QLife: Now that you have been publicly out for a while, how do you look at your sexuality and how have your fans responded?

Ricky: Sexuality is how we feel about ourselves and I try to love myself the best I can so I can feel free to love. My fans are so loyal and I think they understand me sometimes more than I understand myself at times. It’s been a beautiful experience.

QLife: What can we expect from this show? Give us the inside scoop that our readers need to know.

Ricky: The cool thing about what’s going to happen in Vegas is that I’m bringing my culture with me. It’s a lot of energy...one hour and thirty minutes of



full on adrenaline!! It's an international show for an international crowd. We are going to go back down memory lane with all my hits, get ready!

QLife: What advice would you give to your younger self? What advice would you give to your older self?

Ricky: Never stop dreaming. Have fun and be present. It is extremely important to stay true to yourself and live with the conviction that each of us is destined to do something extraordinary. Be willing to fight for your beliefs and defend your identity. I am blessed that good people surround me. To have a strong family and team that stand behind me and keep me grounded. Always be kind, and surround yourself with good people.

QLife: When you aren't performing, what are your hobbies?

Ricky: I love art so I enjoy going to museums, hanging out with my friends, going to the movies and being with my kids, among other things.

QLife: What is your creative process like for developing a show like this?

Ricky: The first thing I did was hire my creative director Jamie King and from there, we put together all the ideas together and came up with a great concept created specifically for Vegas. I'm going to do things that I have never done before...I just can't wait.

QLife: In your experience, are you happy that you decided to come out? Did that impact your business (good or bad)?

Ricky: All I can say is that if I could do it all over again, I would. That's how incredibly amazing it felt. Did it impact my business? Yes, and I can surely say it has been a positive one. Absolutely no regrets.

QLife: Anything that you want to experience while you are in Las Vegas?

Ricky: Yes of course! Being there will allow me to take

some time to experience what the city has to offer not only for myself but also for my kids and family.

QLife: After your first month in Las Vegas you're off to MGM National Harbor the first weekend in May. What can you tell us about the new theater there?

Ricky: It's an intimate setting while having 3,000+ seats and state of the art sound. There is nothing like it at all in that area and I'm honored to be apart of the group of artists to perform there.

QLife: If you can tell your audience one thing, what would it be?

Ricky: To let go of all their problems or worries and to prepare themselves to have an amazing time with me. I'll see you all in Vegas!





FASHION DESIGNER, AUTHOR, ACTIVIST

[by Russ White]

On the heels of the release of his new book **SEX = POWER = FREEDOM**, Andrew Christain embarked on an international tour to promote his Indigogo-funded photo journal of the world-famous Andrew Christian models. I caught up with Andrew while he was in Las Vegas for a book tour and a preview of his spring fashion collection.

"Is that for me?" I said as Andrew greets me and unwraps the Gold Limited Edition. "It is," he replied. I had become familiar with the book last month with the announcement in our February issue but had only seen digital previews.

The project began last October when Andrew started an Indigogo campaign to raise funds to print the book. The campaign raised over \$100,000 in just four months.

There are two versions of the book: a holographic silver version available on andrewchristian.com, and a Gold Limited Edition which is reserved for people that come to a book signing event where we give a limited number out for free in a raffle.

QLife: We are strong advocates of crowdfunding. In fact, we just signed on for our 3rd year as sponsors of the Global Crowd Funding Conference here in Las Vegas. Tell us a little about your Indigogo campaign.

Andrew: We started the campaign in October. We had over 1,000 people contribute to the campaign. Even before we printed the book we had that many people believing in us and backing us. Everyone that contributed to our IndieGoGo campaign also received a copy of the Gold Limited Edition.

QLife: You are known as one of the most popular brands in underwear and swimwear for gay men. What inspired you to publish a book?

Andrew: There was a lot of messages on LGBT empowerment that I wanted to work into the book that had to deal with sex.

QLife: Mostly "G" empowerment looking at some of the pictures.

Andrew: Yeah. Right. [Laughs] After the election had happened, I had already sent the book off to the printer, and they were about to go to press, and I pulled it back after the election and re-wrote the book and gave it a definite voice. It was already going that direction. In some communities, especially San Francisco and Los Angeles, we lived in a bubble and started taking things for granted. I've done gay prides around the world and the weren't like they are here. They weren't celebrations, they were political movements. They were there asserting their rights to exist, to be open and accepted.

QLife: Why do you think you have such a strong brand appeal to the gay community?

Andrew: If I wasn't gay, I wouldn't be as successful as



I am. Being gay is what makes me so successful.

QLife: You're in Las Vegas tonight for your book signing at Piranha Nightclub. Where does your tour have you going?

Andrew: We're going all through the US, Israel, Mexico, Spain, UK, We're booked out now through July, but will keep adding locations. We just did Los Angeles last night, but we'll be back in May for DragCon. It's such a fun event.

QLife: We've made such great strides in equality over recent years. You said you pulled the book back from the printers after the election. Do you feel that our equality is still at risk?

I came across discrimination just trying to get the book printed. I was working with one printed in Hong Kong and everything was ready to go, and at the last minute they dropped the project, and they wouldn't give me a reason why. One of my best friends who lives in Hong Kong called them up to speak to them in Chinese, and basically, they were homophobic cowards that didn't want to be associated with the book. There's nothing in Hong Kong law that says it's illegal to print this.

QLife: Your models are known for representing your underwear and swimwear designs, but there are some nude photos in the book?

Andrew: Yes, some slight nudity.

QLife: One of the models, Arad, fled Iran. Tell us a little more about his story.

Andrew: He's here now and has his green card. He defected from the Iranian military and walked two days through the snow to escape from Turkey. He was thrown in prison for 6 months because he had a fake passport. He was able to get into the UN relocation

program because if he were sent back to Iran, he would have been killed for leaving the military. If he were found out to be gay, he would have been killed as well. He lived in Turkey for three years during the relocation process, then was relocated to Dallas with \$500. He even had to pay back his plane ticket to the UN. Now he's a model and traveling all over. Today he would have been turned away for being Muslim.

QLife: This could have just been an erotic coffee table book and done well. Yet you chose to take on more of an activist role with some of the messages.

Andrew: Not that I'm Nostradamus, but some of these things I wrote are coming true:

"People will try to limit your sexual freedom, civil liberties, and right to exist to increase their own power, and they may be your own friends and family."

I think a lot of LGBT people found out after this election that a lot of people in their family voted for an administration that is against them.

QLife: What's been your biggest surprise in writing the book?

Andrew: I didn't expect so many people to crowdfund it before a tangible thing was made. That felt really good.

QLife: This is your first book. How does this compare to when your first garment came out of the factory?

Andrew: This is more fulfilling because it's touching peoples lives in a different way. Giving them courage, Giving them ambition.

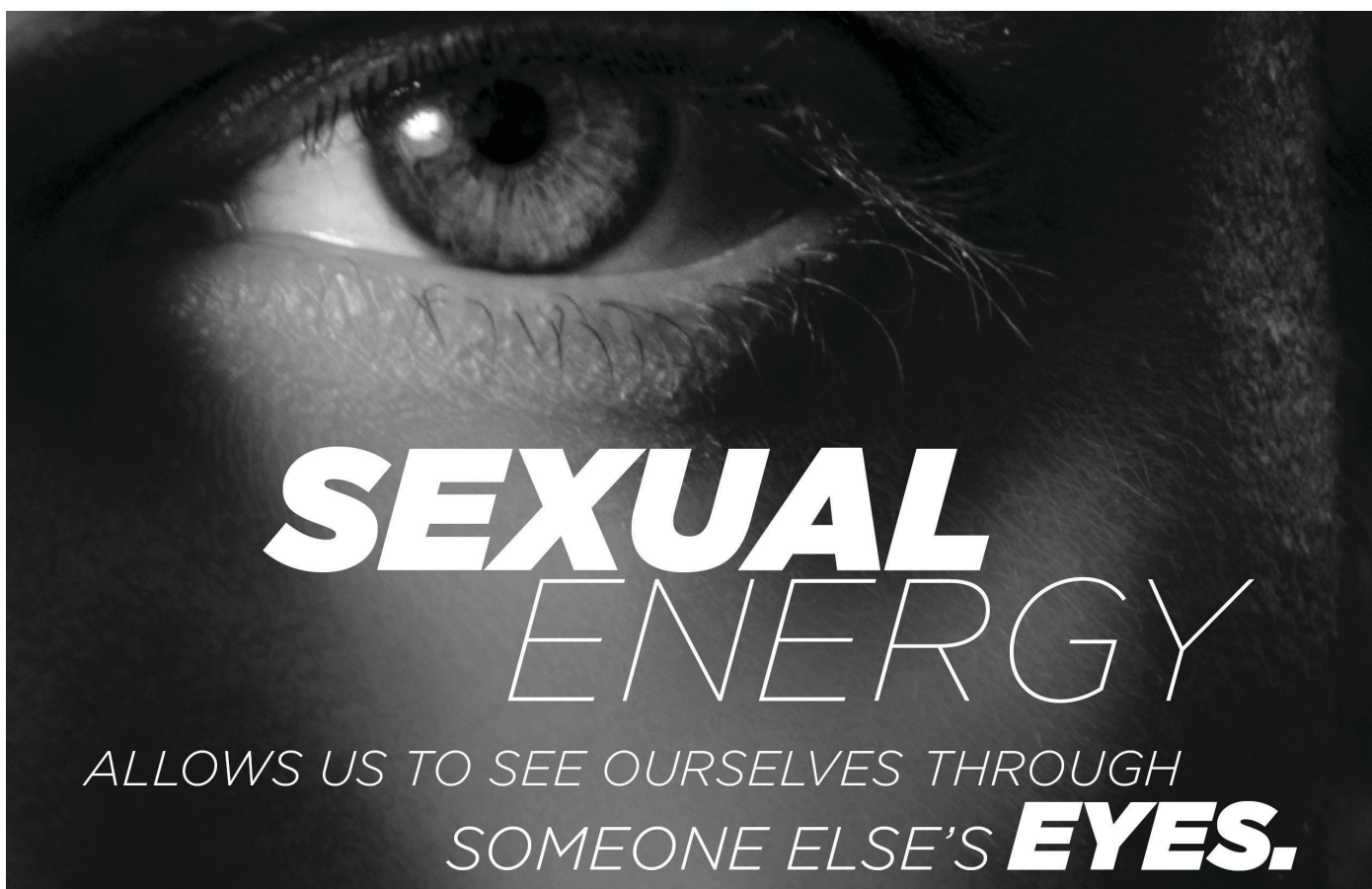
QLife: Do you see yourself moving into more of an activist role?

Andrew: I definitely do. I have a voice and part of having a voice and having reach is to use it for good for our community.

**PEOPLE WILL
TRY TO LIMIT YOUR
SEXUAL
FREEDOM,
CIVIL**

**LIBERTIES
AND RIGHT TO EXIST
TO INCREASE THEIR OWN
POWER
...AND THEY MAY
EVEN BE YOUR OWN
FRIENDS & FAMILY.**





SEXUAL ENERGY

ALLOWS US TO SEE OURSELVES THROUGH
SOMEONE ELSE'S **EYES.**



“It’s as if Major Lazer and Ace of Base had a love child,” says Bielefeld about “Dance Again,” his new high-energy club track with drag superstar Courtney Act.

Bielefeld is an American opera tenor with a five octave range. He was trained at Juilliard and has performed in productions with the New York City Opera and The Metropolitan Opera. “Growing up, I was always told that I could not be both a classical musician and a pop performer,” he continues. “I believed it, too, until I realized that music is all inclusive and non-divisive in nature. I want to show the world my versatility and to make the music I have always wanted to create.”

Written by Bielefeld and Courtney Act and produced by Bielefeld and Jhay C, “Dance Again” is a heart breaking yet sweat inducing song about getting over a lost love. Unlike Bielefeld’s previous tracks — “Boom and Bust,” “Kings and Queens” and “Frequency”: all of which leaned toward an 80’s mod vibe — “Dance Again” mixes modern electronic elements with retro sounds to create a unique club sound all its own.

“Courtney was the big inspiration for this song. I wanted to write a song specifically for her voice. Something special that brought out her vibrant spirit and girlish innocence.”

Bielefeld first met Courtney Act last year, backstage

at a music festival. “I immediately knew I needed to work with her,” he remembers. “A week or two later, we came face to face again, at a concert where she introduced me to the stage. After the show, I invited Courtney to a Mexican restaurant, got her wasted on margaritas, and I charmed her into joining me in the recording studio.

They got to work on something that would resonate on today’s pop radio. “We wanted a song that would stir emotions, not necessarily full on jumping ‘round the house craziness, but something to get people moving.”

“Where my classical career is a more traditional expression of art and society, pop is where I get to explore my personal life situations and intimate feelings.”

He admits his classical training sometimes sneaks into his pop production. Before recording “Dance Again,” Bielefeld had Courtney Act lay flat on the floor in the booth to do the vocal exercises he was taught at Juilliard. “Oh, the look she gave me,” he laughs.

Bielefeld’s “Dance Again” featuring Courtney Act is on iTunes now. For more information, visit bielfield.com.



Photos:



DIFFA LAS VEGAS HOSTS FASHION PREVIEW

DIFFA (Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS) Las Vegas, Las Vegas Fashion Council and Style Fashion Week have announced the local DIFFA chapter's inaugural fashion show, HOUSE OF DIFFA, to be held on Friday, Dec. 1.

DIFFA Las Vegas, a local chapter of the national DIFFA organization, hosted an exclusive preview of its December show, in partnership with Neiman Marcus, at Fashion Show Mall on Thursday, Feb. 9. The event included a fashion show of Neiman Marcus spring trends; a raffle fundraiser; signature drinks by Barefoot Wine and Gas Monkey Tequila; and a display of pieces by HOUSE OF DIFFA designer, Jim McCoy. Nearly \$7,000 was raised to support local HIV/AIDS organizations in Las Vegas, which included a \$5,000 donation from sponsor, Neiman Marcus.

McCoy showcased several pieces from his personal collection, including: "Red Carpet," created from the reclaimed fabric of event linens, vintage sequins, bead

appliqué and gold vintage butterflies; "Steam Punk," designed from recycled fur, a vintage theatrical hoop skirt and a handcrafted headpiece; and a two-piece design, "Couture," made from theatrical drape with an embellished bodice and headpiece. McCoy's designs will be included in the HOUSE OF DIFFA show in on Dec. 1.

A celebration of fashion, design and philanthropy, DIFFA is one of the largest and most successful service organizations in raising funds for the fight against HIV/AIDS. Since its formation in 1984, DIFFA has raised over \$41 million to support hundreds of HIV/AIDS organizations.



Themed "Eden," HOUSE OF DIFFA will bring together live performance, art and music for a high-fashion spectacular that tells the story of love, lust and temptation in Las Vegas. HOUSE OF DIFFA will feature pieces from local and regional designers, including: Stitched inside The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas; Las Vegas-based Vasari at Tivoli Village; Dee Berkley of Dee Berkley Jewelry; San Diego-based GRACEDBYGRIT; and Reyna Herrera, Mina Kahn, Paul Redman, Joseph Charles Poli, Crystal Ball, Jim McCoy, Jeffrey deBarathy and Brenton Coon.

Funds raised from HOUSE OF DIFFA will benefit local nonprofit organizations including: AIDS Healthcare Foundation, The Center, Golden Rainbow, Huntridge

Family Clinic, Community Counseling Center of Southern Nevada, St. Therese Center and The Sin City Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

DIFFA Las Vegas flaunts a prominent line-up of style council ambassadors, an accomplished group of community, business and civic leaders committed to raising funds and awareness of behalf of Las Vegas HIV/AIDS service organizations. Style council ambassadors include: Leslie Frisbee, editor-in-chief of Luxury Las Vegas; Lynn Weidner, chairman of the Miss America board of directors; Jerry Metellus, legendary photographer; and Amanda Kouretas, former Mrs. Nevada America.





Roberto Gonzalez may not be a household name, but maybe he should be. A celebrity florist, Roberto rose to fame by creating floral arrangements for Oprah Winfrey. For four years, he was the go-to floral designer at Harpo Studios before starting his own company, Robert James Events, where he has designed flowers for the likes of Jennifer Hudson, Barbara Walters, Shania Twain, and President Obama.

"As a kid, finding beauty in an impoverished Venezuelan community was not easy," remembers Roberto. "I knew from an early age that I could use my creative energy to escape some of the daily challenges my family faced.

"I would visit my neighbor's small floral shop as often as possible," he continues. "Initially, I went because it was the only place in the area that had air conditioning. Once I had the chance to play with all the pretty flowers, I was hooked."

At 14, he got a non-paying job at an event firm that specialized in kids' birthday parties. Then at 18, with help from his mother, he opened his own firm specializing in kids' events. "I wanted to take kids' parties to the next level. I knew once I had the freedom to express my creativity, my company would bloom, and it did. After years of elaborate kids' events, I was ready for bigger opportunities with grown-ups," he laughs.

When Roberto left Venezuela for the USA, he landed first in Orlando, then Manhattan, then finally, in Chicago. He realized the path to grander events meant building

on the passion he had developed at the shop behind his house in Venezuela. He obtained his accreditation in floral design at the American Institute of Floral Design, the highest designation rewarded only to the nation's premier florists.

Upon graduation, Roberto opened his first company, Roberto G. Chicago. Within the first year, his lush and luxuriant designs caught the eye of Ms. Winfrey who invited him to work at Harpo Studios. Oprah's stamp of approval led to more celebrity clients. Soon, Roberto was accruing an incredibly influential clientele including the most powerful man in the world.

"Designing the floral pieces for President Obama's birthday was probably the highlight of my career," he says. "On a personal level, working for Julia Roberts was also special. As a gay kid growing up in Venezuela, *Pretty Woman* was secretly one of my favorite movies."

His most recent project was creating all the floral for the movie *Joyful Noise* with Dolly Parton and Queen Latifa.

What are Roberto's keys to success? Whether designing florals for a movie or an event, Roberto starts



with the initial client consultation; his favorite part of the process. He has his clients close their eyes and dream up their wildest ideas for the party. He then uses the creative tricks he learned as a young entrepreneur at the kids event company to deliver a spectacle on budget. "You know how some women can make costume jewelry seem as if they are wearing the Hope Diamond? That's what I do. I turn simple flower designs into masterpieces!"

"The biggest mistake people make is getting hung up on Pinterest," he explains. "I love when my clients know what they want but are willing to remain flexible. That way, I can custom fit a design that both achieves their vision and takes advantage of the most beautiful options in bloom."

Roberto lives for the details and strives to make sure his clients receive their dream event. "We map out

the tables, linens, stemware, flatware, lighting, and flowers that will be used for the event. I have even helped clients pick out specific calligraphers to capture the penmanship for the place cards."

His passion is bringing events to life. "The best moment for me is when guests walk into an event with a 'I have never seen this before!' look on their face. It's an extraordinary feeling of accomplishment knowing I am able to create unforgettable events and experiences for people."

As if Roberto's floral skills weren't enough to impress, he is also an incredibly muscular fitness model. "I think I am giving new definition to the idea of flower power," he says with a grin.

Visit www.robertjamesevents.com. Follow on Twitter @robertFlorist

Photos:



KENYTH MOGAN REVEALS HIMSELF

[by John Stein]

Kenyth Mogan, the out singer who's debut music video *Unlock Your heart* recently passed **one million views on Youtube**, will release his next single this month, "Real Me".

Produced by Wild and included in Del Shore's upcoming film, *A Very Sordid Wedding*, the song about revealing his authentic self to his lover is a return to the bubble-gum, pop sound fans loved in "Unlock Your Heart". "I would describe the song as Katy Perry meets Mika," says Mogan. "It is fun, but also introspective. I played a big part in writing this track, which is very important to me. My goal as an artist is to continuously grow and get better with each new song."

"I have a hard time showing people my true self," admits Kenyth Mogan from his LA home. "I have to trust a person implicitly before I let them into my personal space. I'm one of those people who either trusts immediately or not at all."

Kenyth Mogan grew up in the northeastern corner

of Montana in a little town called Glasgow. His family is a tight-knit one. Though his parents divorced when he was young, he was always surrounded by cousins and grandparents. He was especially close with his grandmothers who both encouraged his pop star dreams.

"Some of my earliest memories are of dancing around to Tiffany's 'I Think We're Alone Now' on my little Rainbow Brite record player," he laughs. "I would play it over and over and over again ad nauseam."

Kenyth came out to his family in a handwritten letter at 15-years old. His father embraced the news right away. "He was more upset with how I told him than with what I told him. I was afraid to tell him in person."

His mother took a bit longer to accept that her son



KENYTH MOGAN

was gay, but eventually, she came around. "We all have a wonderful relationship today."

Today, Kenyth hopes to be an example to young gay children. "I've always been fueled by the desire to be that person that others can look up to," he continues. "If I can show one little gay kid that life does in fact get better, than I will feel like I've accomplished something."

That's why he strives to be an artist who is not afraid to take risks or try new things. "Real Me" is a complete 180 from Kenyth Mogan's last EP, *Love*, an acoustic record.

"I don't want to be 'the next' anyone. I want to be the first me," he explains.

It's not only his music that Kenyth takes risks with. He

recently changed his look, dying his hair purple and blue. "It's something I've wanted to do for a while now. It's a piece of the real me, for right now, anyway. I'm always changing, always evolving. Why shouldn't my hair do the same?"

Whatever the sound, the one goal that remains consistent in all of Kenyth Mogan's music is his desire for people to connect with his story. "I want people to hear my songs and smile, cry, and laugh," he says.

"And, on 'Real Me,' I also hope to make them dance!"

Kenyth Mogan's "Real Me" will be available on iTunes on Monday, March 6. Follow Kenyth on Facebook @ Kenythmusic

Photos:



DANGEROUS BEAUTY

[by John Stein]

In Steven L. Coard's latest film, Raymond "Raye" Buckley moves to New York City to pursue his dream of becoming a high fashion supermodel. One night, by chance encounter, he meets model agent Hardie Noon, played by Shawn Singleton. With help from Hardie, Raye becomes a modeling sensation, eclipsing his nemesis, America's former top male model, Vester V. To hold his crown, Raye must learn who he can trust in the dog-eat-dog industry of high fashion modeling.

"I originally came to NYC to become a model," reveals Coard, the film's director who also stars in the film as Vester V. "I was constantly told I wasn't attractive enough or fit enough or that I didn't have the right proportions. I would go on endless casting calls only to be left broken inside."

He eventually quit modeling. "I wasn't strong enough to make it in the industry," he admits.

Unfortunately, giving up on his dream would become his biggest life regret. It would also inspire him to make a film loosely based on his experience but with a happier outcome. "I wanted to make a film that was almost a male version of Diana Ross' Mahogany," he says.

He chose Gary Lavard, an actor he had worked with previously on the film, Heartbreaks and Soulmates, for the lead role, because, "He is such a talented actor

who is always eager to work and make art. Plus, Gary's easy to look at," he adds with a smile.

When it came to casting the other leads, Coard searched for ethnically diverse actors with real body types that would be relatable to viewers watching the

film. "I wanted to show that models are not clones and that any body type can be successful in modeling."

He saved the role of Vester V for himself because he saw playing a villain as a challenge. "I can play a nice guy all day

long but playing a scoundrel is something new for me," he explains. The hardest part was bringing a likability to the character. "I wanted viewers to love to hate him."

Raye is being distributed by Color of Love Production Studios, an award-winning production company Coard founded that specializes in creating stories about the LGBTQ community of color. Previous films include

"I wasn't strong enough to make it in the industry"



Heartbreaks and Soulmates and last fall's critically acclaimed romantic comedy, *Don't Marry Griff*.

Though very different from *Griff*, Raye continues some of its major themes. In both films, men of color are chasing their American dreams. "And without giving away endings for either, karma turns out to be a beeeotch in both," laughs Coard.

Coard wears several hats at Color of Love Production Studios. He is writer, director, producer, and often-times actor. "I love it all," he says. "I love directing and producing because I call the shots and if the project isn't a success, I can only blame myself. I love acting because I can be a part of the cast, making memorable characters like Vester V that may live on through time."

Steven L. Coard may have missed out on his supermodel dream but his new aspiration is to create a place where LGBTQ talent of varying disciplines can work together in a supportive environment to create exciting visual projects. "The Color of Love Production School for Film, Theatre, and Scriptwriting," he announces. "It sure would make it easier to have a stable of talented actors on hand when casting my next films."

Raye is available now at colorofloveproduction.com





WHY DINING OUT FOR LIFE MATTERS FOR EVERYONE

[by George Padilla]

As a member of the board of directors for APLA Health, I help make strategic decisions about the future of a nonprofit organization that provides health care and HIV support services to thousands of people from underserved communities in Los Angeles County. I know firsthand that it can be a challenge to rally people behind our mission—just as it's a challenge to ensure we continue to make strides toward ending the AIDS epidemic once and for all.

APLA Health has been on the frontlines of fighting the epidemic for 34 years, and that is part of the reason we are so proud to be partnering with Project Angel Food in bringing Dining Out for Life back to Los Angeles. Dining out for Life's tagline says it all: Dine Out. Fight AIDS. It's a simple act that has far-reaching effects. After all, who doesn't love sharing a meal with friends and/or loved ones? It speaks of warmth, camaraderie, and generosity, and allows everyone a moment to relax. On April 27, it also means that by dining out you will be giving back to your neighbors in a concrete way. By making a reservation at a participating restaurant, you help APLA Health and Project Angel Food continue to provide critically important services that literally help keep people alive.

I personally know so many people who have benefitted from the health care and social support services APLA Health provides. As a board member—

and as someone active in my own community—I want to make sure everyone who needs our help can continue to get it—especially as we face a very uncertain future.

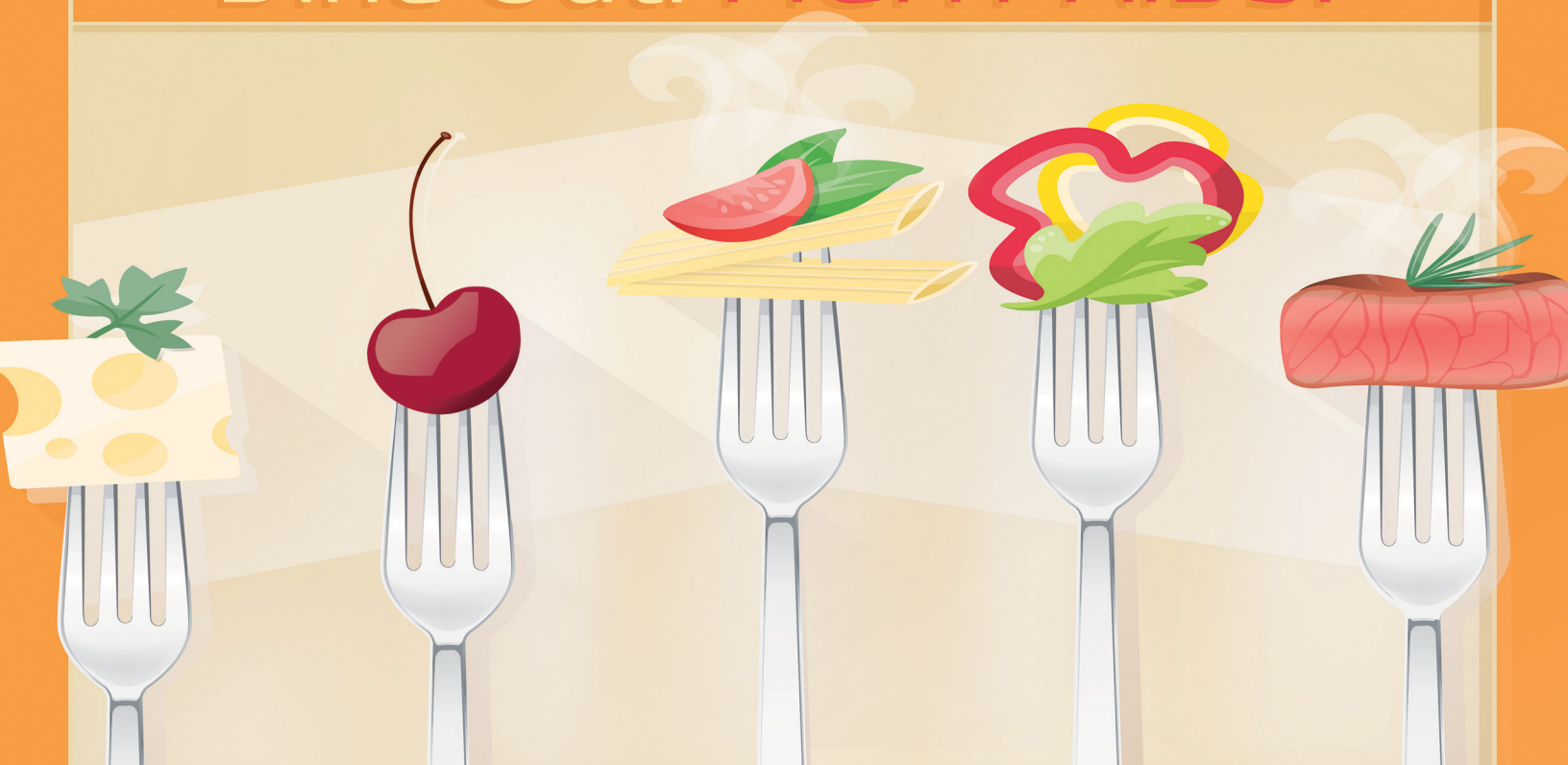
For those who have long supported us, this is a fun, new way to continue that tradition. For those who may be new to supporting us, what better way to get to know us while doing good for people in our city? Ending the AIDS epidemic and ensuring people have access to care to make that happen are ambitious goals. We are committed to seeing them happen. We invite you to be part of it by joining us for a meal on April 27. I'll see you there.

To learn more about APLA Health, please visit www.aplahealth.org. To make a reservation at an L.A. area restaurant for Dining Out for Life on April 27, please visit www.diningoutforlife.com/losangeles.

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I'm GOLFING! I can't believe it...I'm GOLFING!! Me! And what's more, I'm having a great time! This place hits a hole-in-one on every level - and I'm not just talking about the 4 levels of hitting bays! I'm referring to two swimming pools, five bars, staging areas for live music, a sports book, private VIP suites and more. Add to that the fabulous food by Executive Chef Chris Vaughan, and you've got another great Vegas experience!

This is Topgolf!

Light years beyond your ordinary driving range, Topgolf feels more like a futuristic nightclub/dayclub with a state-of-the-art driving range attached. The complex takes up over 105,000 square feet, and has a bit of a Jetsons look to it, with an entrance marked by geometric angles trimmed with purple-blue neon. To one side, are the 108 hitting bays which look over a large field of artificial turf, containing various targets and surrounded by safety netting. The bays can accommodate up to 6 people in a comfortable conversation pit-type setting. They're equipped with men's and women's golf clubs, TV screens, a touch screen for scoring, and a "green" from which to hit the micro-chipped balls that track each shot. To my mind, however, the best feature of the hitting bays is that you can order food and drink, which is brought to your bay by cute, friendly servers, helping to create a party atmosphere.

I had scheduled a meeting with two lovely young women, Alissa and Michelle, who promised to show me around Topgolf and join me for lunch. That's why I was here - to sample and review the food. I swore they'd

never get me to swing a club at a ball, no matter what! Food I can do! Golf? Sorry!

The tour was impressive! There are four floors to the Topgolf facility - the first two are family friendly, while levels 3 and 4 are for adults 21 and over. Our tour included The Yard - a large all-purpose space where one can watch the oversized multiple flat-screen TV display on the far wall, place a bet with the sports book, and even attend performances by local and well-known musical acts. Adjacent to The Yard, the Birdie Bar had a country club feel, plus a smaller stage for more intimate acts. The third floor included the main pool, complete with cabanas, which sat at the edge of the Pool Bar, where tiled benches in the water let guests enjoy swim-up cocktails! Perched above the main pool, is a smaller, glass-walled pool, allowing swimmers to be seen underwater! We saw the Chairman's Suite, a spacious VIP room with comfortable furniture, a dining area, and a retractable glass wall, so guests can tee off, and on the lower level there were meeting rooms, the Callaway Fitting Studio, where guests can be custom fitted for clubs, and the Riv Bar, with an old school Vegas look modeled after the now-gone Riviera Casino. Our tour ended with us



settling into our own hitting bay for lunch.

The menu was fairly extensive - craveable starters, salads, wings, flatbreads and more. More than mere bar food, these were sophisticated takes on American comfort food, but with Asian, Mexican, and Italian influences! We ordered quite a few dishes to share.

As we waited for the food, the girls asked me, of course, if I'd like to try a little golf. I protested, naturally - I was that kid in gym class who was mocked mercilessly for my lack of athletic ability. But they assured me this was a no judgement zone. Nobody cared what any of the other players were doing. Alissa and Michelle told me that 85% of Topgolf guests are non-golfers. So I plucked up my courage, selected a club and took a swing. To my surprise, I connected! I even hit one of the targets. I did it again. I was having fun. All in all, I took about 10 shots - my furthest going about 88 yards, and I didn't miss the ball once! I really enjoyed myself!

The food arrived all at once. We first sampled the Crispy Rock Shrimp - lightly battered and fried shrimp, with a citrusy glaze and a scattering of red chili flakes for heat, served with an Asian aioli, and a refreshing apple and celery slaw, which balanced out the spiciness. We also tried the Yellowtail Sashimi - raw slices of fresh amberjack, clean tasting and tender, served with crispy garlic, jalapeño, ponzu, and surprisingly, avocado ice cream, which added a smooth, cold, creamy element, and elevated the dish beyond the yellowtail you'd get in most sushi restaurants. Next came Topgolf's signature dish, the Mushi - delicious spiced chicken, drunken beans, cheddar, and cilantro rice, wrapped in a soft jalapeño tortilla, garnished with avocado crema and a dollop of sriracha. Savory, mildly spicy, with an herbal pop from the cilantro, the mushi was served in slices, resembling a Japanese maki roll. Definitely one of my favorites! Michelle had ordered the Roasted Garlic Flatbread,

with olive oil, spinach, roasted garlic, and ricotta. Light and crispy, the freshness of the spinach created balance, so the garlic had bite, but never overpowered the flatbread, and the shavings of Parmesan cheese added pleasant sharpness. From the selection of Sticks To Share, we chose the Pork Pibil skewers, with Oaxacan mole, cotija cheese, and a smoked corn aioli. The pork was full-flavored, with a lovely smokiness and subtle heat. We also had the House Marinated Steak skewers, which were juicy and tender. The ponzu added a lovely tanginess to the beef, and the shishito peppers, which are currently very popular, added a verdant quality that was mild and sweet, with an occasional dash of spiciness (about 1 in 10 of the peppers is spicy.) Another excellent choice was the Crispy Sea Bass Sliders - beautifully fried pieces of lean, flaky sea bass, on cottage dill rolls, topped with butter lettuce and a delicious sweet/tart tomato jam, and a spicy remoulade sauce on the side. These were a refreshing change from the typical mini-burgers that you expect when sliders are offered on a menu. Finally, to finish off the meal with something sweet, we chose the Injectable Donut Holes - 24 warm, airy donut holes, dusted with cinnamon sugar and served with three large syringes filled with chocolate sauce, Bavarian cream, or our personal favorite, raspberry jelly. A sort of DIY dessert, we just grabbed a donut and pierced it with the tip of the syringe, injecting it with whichever filling we desired - or combinations of fillings! Yum!!

Again, I'm not a sports enthusiast, but I am a fun enthusiast and above all else, Topgolf is just fun. And with spring and summertime weather soon approaching, I can see myself gathering up a bunch of friends - locals and visitors alike, to enjoy cocktails on the rooftop bar, swim in a transparent pool, share delicious small plates, and yes, even play a few rounds of golf...all while the lights of the Las Vegas Strip glow nearby.

Topgolf, I'll be back!



Meet AFAN's New Board President Scott Washburn

[by Garrett Pattiani]

AFAN recently elected a new board president, Scott Washburn, who's dedicated to make 2017 the biggest year for AFAN yet. Washburn's abundance of passion for and experience with AFAN makes him a great person to speak to on what's coming up for the non-profit and the amazing work they continue to do in the community.

He's been involved with AFAN for about 18 years and remembers attending one of the earlier Black & White Parties where guests had to bring in a bag of groceries to get a ticket! After witnessing the outstanding services the AFAN staff has provided for clients and their families throughout the years, Washburn knew he wanted to lend his time and energy to the charity. For several years, Washburn has been the top fundraiser at AFAN events and with his event company, Event Consultants Global, he has helped to provide venues and entertainment for some of AFAN's annual events.

Washburn is estatic to start his new role and head the fight to get rid of the stigma that is typically associated with a HIV positive diagnosis, or even the anxiety of getting tested. He's finds it important to educate people on the real AFAN outside of the fun events, as well as work hand in hand with other AIDS/HIV service agencies in Nevada to make a bigger impact.

QLife: Where are you from?

Scott: I was born and raised in a small town of 70 people in Nebraska.

QLife: When and why did you start getting involved with AFAN?

Scott: I first became aware of AFAN when moving to Vegas 18 years ago and attended a Black and White Party. That was back when you brought a bag of groceries for your ticket. The following years, the company I worked for started helping with the Black and White party by helping provide entertainment. I really was impressed by all of the things AFAN really did for so many. I became more and more involved over the years and served on the board previously until terming out a couple years ago.

QLife: What most excites you most about working with AFAN & the contribution you can make?

Scott: The outstanding service that the staff of AFAN provides for the clients and client's family excite me the most. Their devotion to their jobs and the passion for the clients is so impressive to me. When someone is diagnosed as positive, their life changes instantly. You feel alone, sad, angry, depressed, hopeless, helpless and more. Every possible feeling of emotion hits you like a freight train. It is like nothing else and you really don't know where to turn. The stigma that comes with being HIV positive makes it even harder. Even your friends and family take a step back and not sure what to say to you when you tell them or even trying



to decide how to tell them. So many people do not understand it.

AFAN makes this life changing event much easier to handle with the specially trained staff. Free, confidential, rapid testing is now offered on site at the AFAN offices. If the test results are positive, they immediately help guide you in the right direction by referring you to the right medical professional to start medical treatment. If you do not have the resources or insurance they will help you access financial assistance that is available. That along with nutritional guidance, counseling, education, emergency assistance with housing, utilities, food vouchers, medication and so much more, they are there to get you on the right path of a happy, healthy lifestyle. AFAN not only there to help people who are infected, but are there for the families that are affected by HIV. You are not alone thanks to them.

I want to help get rid of the stigma of an HIV Positive Diagnosis or even the anxiety of getting tested. I want to encourage everyone to get tested as many people are living with HIV, but do not know it, or are afraid of the possible outcome of the tests. This is not good for anyone. It's so much faster and easier to get tested now. I want people to know all of the great things that AFAN does beside a real fun Black and White Party and the AIDS Walk. Education on prevention is so important and our education specialists are amazing. The more people know, the better. I want to continue working hand in hand with the other AIDS/HIV Service Agencies in Nevada as we are much stronger working together.

Ideally, I look forward to the day when organizations

like AFAN are no longer needed and there is a cure out there. That is a day that cannot come soon enough in my opinion. Some great strides have been made, but until them, they are very much needed. The pending change in the Affordable Care Act is also a bit scary as no one is sure what that will do to insurance options and access to affordable care.

I will never forget the first Holiday Gift Giving event I attended where AFAN provided a party for the children of our clients. Holiday gift lists were fulfilled by AFAN Donors. A grandmother came up to me and gave me the biggest hug of my life and with tears in her eyes told me this will be the first holiday her grandchildren will get gifts as their mother is not able to work due to her health and all money goes to paying rent and buying food. That hug changed my life. I will never forget it.

QLife: Why you are excited to be the president of the AFAN board.

Scott: I am excited and honored to be the President of the AFAN Board of Trustees and continue seeing the great results of the service and guidance provided to so many in need by the AFAN Staff. I want everyone to know what AFAN is all about and to encourage people to get tested and know their status. Knowledge is so important in prevention of the spreading of HIV. But also let everyone know that they are not alone and have a place to turn to in the time of need. As the tag line says,

Together we can make a difference. I want to be a part of that.

Photos:



Outfest, the Los Angeles-based nonprofit organization dedicated to nurturing, showcasing and protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) media, will hold Outfest Fusion, the only multicultural LGBT film festival of its kind, March 1-7 at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood, Highland Park Cinema and various locations throughout Los Angeles.

Now in its 14th year, Outfest Fusion will include seven days of short and feature film screenings, filmmaker Q&As and networking events that celebrate the diversity of the LGBT community, followed by nine filmmaking workshops.

"It is fundamental to Outfest's mission to create spaces where a multiplicity of voices can be heard and our varied experiences can be seen," said Christopher Racster, Executive Director of Outfest. "Outfest Fusion does just that, sharing powerful stories, creating meaningful dialogue and affirming the voices that are usually at the margins. Outfest believes in the power of our stories to affirm our lives and create social change."

Outfest Fusion 2017 begins March 1, with the season 2 world premiere of the hit Bawn TV web series "Cheetah in August."

"We're thrilled to be back with this year's inclusive lineup of films and events that serve the mosaic of queer cultures that make up greater Los Angeles," said Lucy Mukerjee-Brown, Outfest's Director of Programming. "We're showcasing content from Uganda to the UK, from Mexico to the Philippines, as well as

launching new work from many local filmmakers. It's all about being able to see LGBT people of color on the big screen."

Outfest Fusion will also be hosting nine exciting workshops that will take place at various locations around Los Angeles. Led by queer filmmakers of color, topics that will be covered include virtual reality, finding your story, creating content and smartphone filmmaking. The interactive classes will be instructed by Suicide Kale star, Brittani Nichols, creators and executive producers of the TV series "The DL Chronicles," Deondray and Quincy Gossfield LeNear, Spa Night's Andrew Ahn, "Cheetah in August's" creator and director Anthony Newsome-Bawn, Outfest UCLA Legacy Project manager Taylor Morales, filmmakers and educators Marla Ulloa and Nidhim Patel, writer-actor-producer Ean Weslynn and writer-director Barney Cheng.

Outfest Fusion rounds out with Fusion Finale on March 7, at the California African-American Museum for the One Minute Movie Contest with the theme "I Hope. I Fear."



Outfest Los Angeles LGBT Film Festival

The premiere LGBT film festival in the world with 11 days of films, panels and parties



Outfest Fusion LGBT People of Color Film Festival

Spotlighting the diversity of the LGBT community through films and filmmaking workshops



Outfest Screenwriting Lab

Celebrating its 20 Anniversary, the Lab annually picks 5 scripts to mentor through a three day workshop



Outfest UCLA Legacy Project

The only program in the world dedicated to preserving and restoring LGBT moving images

To find out more about Outfest's programs, filmmaking services, and how to submit your film or screenplay, **visit outfest.org.**



The first African American transgender model Tracey Norman, celebrity makeup artist Sam Fine and Emmy-winning actress Loretta Devine are among the honoree at the third annual Truth Awards to be held on Saturday, March 11, 2017 at the Taglyan Cultural Complex in Los Angeles. The event will be hosted by actress Angela Robinson of Tyler Perry's "The Haves and Have Nots," which airs on OWN. The special musical guest is two-time Grammy winner Ann Nesby, former lead singer of the R & B and gospel group, Sounds of Blackness.

The black-tie affair will honor African-American, trailblazing men and women whose personal and professional accomplishments have positively impacted the perception and image of the Black LGBTQ community. The Truth Awards embody the belief that members of the Black LGBTQ community and its allies who embrace and live their truth should be recognized and honored. Actress, comedienne and daytime talker Sherri Shepherd ("The View," and "Trial and Error") will present the Media and Arts Award to executive producer Marcus Wilson Smith of KTLA-TV, who is a cousin of hers, and makes the evening a personal one for her. Other presenters include actors Renee Lawless ("Tyler Perry's "The Haves and Have Nots"), Gabrielle Dennis ("Rosewood"), Parnell Damone Marcano ("Greenleaf"), reality star and transgender model Isis King ("America Next Top Model" and "Strut"), Rodney Chester ("Noah's Arc"), Nic Few ("90 Days"), plus journalist Tre'Vell Anderson of the LA Times, and two-time Emmy-winning hairstylist Kiyah Wright as well as Emmy winner celebrity makeup artist Valente Frazier.

The DIVA Foundation and its founder Sheryl Lee Ralph are especially pleased to continue their partnership with Better Brothers Los Angeles (BBLA) on this effort. Both organizations believe a healthy Black community – one where individuals are allowed to live their truth, free of shame and stigma, and are recognized as equal and rightful members of the community – is a critical piece in the fight to also end HIV/AIDS. This year's honorees were picked from various fields, including entertainment, fashion, beauty, business, finance and media.

"Times are certainly changing!" says Ralph. "In this current political environment, it's important that we continue to support our brothers and sisters in the LGBTQ community, and make it possible for them to live out loud and openly for the world to see." "Our acceptance and understanding of the LGBTQ community will encourage, inspire and motivate others to live their truth, unapologetically."

Notable allies in Black Hollywood will join Ralph



and Shepherd in presenting the awards to the Truth Awards honorees. Past honorees include activist Jewel Thais-Williams, Bishop Dr. Yvette A. Flunder, playwright Stanley Bennett Clay, advertising exec Aaron Walton, reality star Wendell James, and award-winning producer/singer/songwriter B. Slade.

Ticket prices range from \$150 for general admission to \$250 for premier seating. Tickets can be purchased on www.truthawards3.eventbrite.com

The Truth Awards will benefit the DIVA Foundation and its partnership with BBLA, which has initiated several initiatives aimed at affirming and strengthening the African American LGBTQ community educationally, financially, physically and socially. For more information about the organization and its scholarship program, visit www.BetterBrothersLA.com

2017 TRUTH AWARDS HONOREES:

JAMES EARL HARDY – Lifetime Achievement Award – is the author of the bestselling B-Boy Blues series, including B-Boy Blues, which has been praised as the first gay hip hop love story. The novel was a 1995 Lambda Literary Award (Lammy) finalist for Best LGBT/ Small Press Title and was prominently featured in Spike Lee's film, "Get on the Bus." The book is required reading in contemporary African American fiction courses as well as gay and lesbian studies programs at colleges and universities. The eighth installment, Men of the House (aka Li'l Brotha Man's Story), will be released this summer. His first short story collection, Can You Feel What I'm Saying? was a 2013 Rainbow Award nominee for Best LGBT Erotica. He is also the author of biographies on award-winning director Spike Lee and Grammy-winning R & B boy band Boyz II Men. An honors graduate of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, Hardy is also an entertainment feature writer and cultural critic whose byline has been appeared in Entertainment Weekly, Essence, The New York Daily News, New York Newsday, Newsweek, Out,

The Source, Vibe, The Advocate, and the Washington Post – just to name a few. His work has earned him a GLAAD Media Award nomination; two Educational Press Association Awards; a Columbia University Press Association Feature Writing Prize; a Village Voice writing fellowship; grants from the E.Y. Harburg Arts Foundation and the American Association of Sunday & Feature Editors; scholarships from WNYW-TV (New York), the Paul Rapoport Memorial Foundation, and both the New York and national chapters of the Association of Black Journalists.

LORETTA DEVINE – Ally Award – is one of the hardest working actresses in Hollywood. After more than 30 years in the business, Devine nabbed an Emmy for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Dramatic Role for her work on ABC's "Grey's Anatomy" in 2011. She received an Independent Spirit Award nod for Best Supporting Female for her role in "Women Thou Art Loosed." And she has been nominated for a slew of NAACP Image Awards in television and film, grabbing two awards for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture for her roles in "Waiting to Exhale" and "The Preacher's Wife," respectively. She picked up three more NAACP Image Awards for her work on David E. Kelly's Fox series, "Boston Public." Currently, she stars as Cynthia Carmichael on NBC's "The Carmichael Show." Still, it was her breakout role on the stage that brought her to national attention. In the role of Lorrell, the Houston native was one of the three original "Dreamgirls" in Michael Bennett's classic, award-winning Broadway musical of the same name. She followed that performance with a fiery portrayal of Lillian in Bob Fosse's critically-acclaimed stage production, "Big Deal." Other performances, including George C. Wolfe's "Colored Museum" and "Lady Day at Emerson Bar and Grill," which cemented Devine's status as one of the most talented and versatile stage actresses. Soon, film roles followed, and she's appeared in some of audiences' most beloved movies, including "Jumping

Photos:



the Brown," "This Christmas," Tyler Perry's "For Colored Girls" and "Madea's Big Happy Family," and of course, "Waiting to Exhale." Other film credits include the Academy award-winning film, "Crash," "I Am Sam," "What Women Want" and "Stanley and Iris."

TRACEY "Africa" NORMAN – History Maker Award – is a true history maker in every sense of the word. Norman is a pioneer in the trans community as the first African American transgender woman to work successfully as a beauty and high fashion model in the 1970s and 1980s. She's also the first African-American trans woman to grace Clairol's "Born Beautiful" haircolor boxes (the bestselling dark auburn/box 512) in the 1970s. Norman worked undetected for years, until she was outed, and her modeling career came to an abrupt end. Fast forward 40 years later, and today, she's the face of Clairol's Nice 'n Easy "Color As Real As You Are" hair color campaign. Interestingly, her modeling career began when she accidentally walked into a casting for European designer Basile, and as they say: The rest is history. Along with top models of her era – that is, Peggy Dillard, Jennifer Price, Pita Greene and Romney Russo – she was featured in the Basile fashion layout for Italian Vogue, photographed by the late, internationally-renowned photographer Irving Penn. It was Penn, who discovered Norman, and was instrumental in her landing with Zoli, then one of New York's top modeling agencies. Norman worked with a plethora of household names, such as Avon, Clairol, and Ultra Sheen cosmetics. She been featured in various publications, including New York Magazine, Out Magazine, Essence, Italian Vogue, Harper's Bazaar India, Mair Claire South Africa, Us magazine, People.com, Madamenoire and Huffington Post – just to name a few. To hear Norman's truth, presented by Clairol, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdqbYjivr10>

SAM FINE – Beauty and Fashion Award – is the secret weapon behind the faces of some Hollywood's most beautiful women – that is, Queen Latifah, Kerry



Washington, Jennifer Hudson as well as supermodels Tyra Banks, Iman and Naomi Campbell. They've relied on the expert hand of makeup artist Sam Fine to look their most glamorous. That's because Fine knows that the key to make up goes beyond painting a pretty face. Long before he became a celebrity makeup artist, the Chicago native paid his dues by working behind the cosmetic counters of department stores, an experience he fondly refers to as "the real school of beauty." He made it his mission to show women from all walks of life on how to accentuate their unique beauty by using colors and shades that would best complement their complexions. Fine's talent and determination has taken him far from the department store makeup counter, making him one of today's most sought after makeup artists. His work has appeared on the covers and pages of Cosmopolitan, Harper's Bazaar, Essence, Vibe and Marie Claire. He was chosen as the first African-American spokesperson for Revlon and Covergirl cosmetics. Still, it was the experiences from his formative years selling makeup that inspired him to write his first how-to book, Fine Beauty: Beauty Basics and Beyond for African-American Women. As a follow-up to his best-selling book, he introduced his first instructional DVD, Fine: The Basics of Beauty as a continuation of his commitment to educate women of color on the "fine" art of makeup.

MALCOLM "MJ" HARRIS – Passing the Torch Award – is an internationally recognized financial services CEO and motivational success teacher who has consistently beaten the odds to achieve extraordinary success. Harris has built MJ Harris Enterprises, which started as an insurance agency at his dining room table, into a multi-national financial services and self-help content producer. Today, MJ Harris Enterprises oversees the operations of his various businesses, including the National Care Financial Group, which has become one of America's largest African-American-owned financial services firms. National Care is a premiere brokerage



platform for more than 400 insurance agencies nationwide, seeking to reach the African-American and Hispanic markets with "top tier" financial products. His firm's clients include everyone from middle-class families to high-net-worth individuals; senior executives; corporations; leaders in the entertainment and creative industries; and foundations and endowments. In addition to financial services, MJ Harris Enterprises manages the production and distribution of Harris's premium financial and empowerment products and services across multiple content delivery platforms, including publishing and live events with both mobile and Web-based access points. He shares his secrets of success and financial freedom with global live audiences through his Wealth Class™ seminar series, and his videos that are watched by more than 2 million people in 50 countries worldwide, weekly across multiple web-based platforms. He shared his truth with Oprah Winfrey during her "Life You Want" tour as well as featured in USA Today, Black Enterprise, Huffington Post, and Ebony magazine.

MARCUS WILSON-SMITH – Media Arts Award – is the Emmy award-winning dayside executive producer for KTLA-TV 5 News in Los Angeles, which is the #2 media market behind New York City. He currently oversees the KTLA 5 News at 1 p.m., 3 p.m., 6 p.m. and 6:30 p. m. He previously served as producer on KTLA 5 News at 10 p.m. and 11 p.m., which is rated #1 and recently honored with the Golden Mike for Best Newscast by the Radio Television News Director Association of Southern California. Smith has won two Emmys awards since joining KTLA in 2010, both for Breaking News coverage of the Newtown shooting and the UCLA water main break. In 2010, Smith was named one of Frontiers Magazine's "Hot 25," that is, people making a difference in Southern California's

LGBT community. He was also honored with an Image Award by the In The Meantime Men's group. Smith, a Chicago native, started his career in the television news industry at 12-years-old as an intern for a TV station in his hometown of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was also a correspondent for the hit, Emmy award-winning youth news magazine "Making the Grade." He has worked in various television markets in such cities as Fort Myers, Miami and now Los Angeles.

MYA DOBSON – Business Leadership Award – is a partner of the Greater Pasadena office at New York Life. A President's Council agent, Million Dollar Round Table® (MDRT) qualifier, and a Centurion award winner, Dobson was promoted to recruiter in December 2014, just three years after joining the company. A shining star at New York Life, Dobson earned several of the company's most prestigious management awards in 2015 — that is, Top New Life Recruiter; View from the Top; Gathering of Eagles; and the Pacific Zone New Partner of the Year. Her growing unit of 20 agents collectively serves the African American, Hispanic, Asian, Women and LGBT markets. Accomplishing a feat many recruiters only dream about, she was tapped by Greater Pasadena Managing Partner Tigran Basmadjyan, CLF to open, build and lead the Century City Sales Office near Beverly Hills. "Mya is a principled leader and performance coach who inspires everyone," reflected Basmadjyan. "The level of success that she has attained in 19 months can only be attributed to her strong belief in herself. ..." Dobson was a high school assistant principal before joining New York Life. She credits her love of teaching and learning as playing a crucial role in her success at New York Life.

For more information about the Truth Awards and its honorees, visit www.BetterBrothersLA.com/truthawards

Photos:



LGBTQ Volleyball Social at Sunset Park is a meet and mingle social where everyone in the community is invited to socialize and/or play volleyball. This is a free event for everyone, and everyone is encouraged to participate. We only play for fun – there is no pressure to play. Many people come to make new friends and reconnect with other friends. Founded in 2011 by Johnny Espinosa, the event organizers are Johnny Espinosa and Blake Leavitt. Everyone has worked together to contribute to the growth and success of this event.

Our event takes place two days a week – Tuesdays and Saturdays from 7:30 pm to 10:30 pm. The location is always at Sunset Park -2601 E Sunset Rd, Las Vegas, Nevada 89120. The volleyball courts are located off of the McLeod Drive entrance on Sunset Road/McLeod Drive. Our season starts every year in April, and ends in October. Tuesdays we reserve one of the sand courts, the court number varies each Tuesday. Saturdays we reserve Court 1 on the sand, which is the main middle court. We have rainbow pride flags that we display at the corner of the court we are on so you can easily find us.

Once a month we have a BBQ/potluck. We pay for the BBQ by using event funds or we partner with a sponsor. We even raffle off prizes we receive from

sponsors. We sell raffle tickets for \$1 each or 6 for \$5. All proceeds and donations go to pay for our court/light reservations and for the free BBQ's that we do for the community during the year. We are always looking for new sponsors who would like to support our organization. We give sponsors free marketing via our two Facebook pages that reach out to over 5,700 people.

Look for us on Facebook. Main Event Page: "LGBTQ Volleyball and BBQ Social 2017!" Social Pages: "LGBT Volleyball Gay Social at Sunset Park, Las Vegas" and "LGBTQ Volleyball BBQ Social".

At LGBTQ Volleyball, you'll make friends for life! Join us for a great time!





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NORMA'S PAGE

Misbehavin' in March with Norma

[by Norma Llyaman]

OK Sweeties...**BEWARE THE IDES OF MARCH and Horny Leprechauns....But let's get some business out of the way first!**

Take a step back in time as Norma and her friends recreate a vintage 1920' - 30's underground nightclub - where the booze is cheap and so is the talent! The SPECTACULAR SPECTACLE - MISBEHAVIN' is set to take the stage March 25, 2017 at The SPACE! This inaugural charity benefit for The Center is sure to be a very wild night full of original star- studded entertainment and a lot of surprises!

Bring your friends, neighbors, colleagues, lovers and complete strangers because you will not want to miss this truly SPECTACULAR SPECTACLE! Lavish Cocktails at 7PM Show at 8 PM. General admission seats \$20 and VIP \$40, tickets available on line at www.ThespaceLV.com . The Space is located at 3460 Cavaretta Ct Las Vegas NV 89103. Our goal is to sell over 300 tickets and raise close to \$10K!

Now onto other news....

New clubs open FLAIR! New clubs close Krush. I just can't keep track of these LGBTQ watering holes anymore. However, I do hear through the grapevine that FLAIR is the new place to be seen and have a lot of fun. There is a video on their FB page that shows a dancing pocket iguana! Auntie Norma just might have to go take a peek at that gyrating lizard!

Speaking of tropical animals and fruits, I wanted to send out a short PSA (public service announcement) about food allergies. Recently, yours truly, has discovered that she has become extremely susceptible

to food allergens, especially pineapple and shell fish. After enjoying a few hurricanes with fresh pineapple juice, my insides became my outsides and I felt a demonic possession for almost 4 hours as I held onto the porcelain baptismal! I expelled so fiercely that I broke blood vessels in my face and chest (I looked like I had been beaten by a bat for 12 hours) in addition to my throat hemorrhaging. It was serious shit! These are your warning signs -

- swelling of the face, tongue, throat, and lips
- difficulty breathing / intense itching or hives
- constipation / sinus congestion
- a metallic taste in the mouth
- dizziness / fainting
- anaphylactic shock

Please know the warning signs and symptoms and do not ignore them like I did! That last Hurricane cocktail could have been Auntie Norma's last! My husband now makes me carry the EPI PEN! It's not good for autographs but it may save your life!

Next month is going to be full of some sassy Spring Fever surprises! Look for Norma's Easter Sunday Revival at Charlie's, Golden Rainbow's production of JESUS CHRIST SUPER STAR and of course the annual AFAN AIDS WALK at the end of the month!

See you all out and about!

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Amy Schumer and Goldie Hawn star in the new comedy adventure *Snatched*, which also features Ike Barinholtz (*"Neighbors"*), Wanda Sykes (*"Bad Moms"*) and Joan Cusack (*"Working Girl"*).

After her boyfriend dumps her on the eve of their exotic vacation, impetuous dreamer Emily Middleton (Amy Schumer) persuades her ultra-cautious mother, Linda (Goldie Hawn) to travel with her to paradise. Polar opposites, Emily and Linda realize that working through their differences as mother and daughter - in unpredictable, hilarious fashion - is the only way to escape the wildly outrageous jungle adventure they have fallen into.

- Cast: Amy Schumer, Goldie Hawn, Joan Cusack, Ike Barinholtz, Wanda Sykes, Christopher Meloni
- Directed by: Jonathan Levine
- Written by: Katie Dippold
- Music by: Theodore Shapiro & Chris Bacon
- Produced by: Peter Chernin, Jenno Topping, Paul Feig, Jessie Henderson

foxmovies.com/movies/snatched





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LAMBDA ENDORSES INCREASED MINIMUM WAGE

[by Lambda Business Alliance]

It's not your metro chamber! In fact, in a direct confrontation to the Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce, the Lambda Business Association has done something unheard of. The Lambda Business Association has endorsed an increase in the state's minimum wage

"For us, it was a moral issue," explained Lambda board member Rob Schlegel. "If someone works a fulltime job, they should expect a wage to survive on. We hear from so many people who are working two, three or even four (part-time) jobs, just to survive. It shouldn't be that way.

"The sad thing," Schlegel said with a wry smile, "Is the same folks who falsely claim a minimum wage increase will cost jobs and destroy businesses, will turn around and complain that parents don't spend quality time with their children. That's hard to do when you're forced to work multiple jobs just to survive."

Nevada's minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour if the employer provides any type of health insurance coverage and \$8.25 if they don't. Two bills are before the Nevada Legislature to increase that wage, gradually over a few years. One bill, AB175 would increase the minimum wage by \$1.25 per hour until the wage reaches \$15 or \$14 if health insurance is offered. The Senate version SB106, would increase the minimum by \$.75 per year until the wage reaches \$11 with insurance or \$12 without.

"The Las Vegas Metro Chamber is opposed to a minimum wage increase," Schlegel said. "We felt, as

the LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce, it was important that the legislature heard from some more progressive business leaders."

Kathleen Bienenstein and Schlegel, were both present for the Senate Commerce Committee hearing on Sept. 20, and they made sure the legislature understood that the 240-member Chamber was in full support of AB175, SB106 or a compromise between the two bills.

Bienenstein told the Senate committee, "that Lambda Business Association is a member of the Las Vegas Metro Chamber, as are many of our members. While we don't speak for the Metro Chamber, neither do they speak for us. We think opposition to a living wage is short-sighted. In fact, we believe an increase in the minimum wage would benefit our businesses and economy, not to mention the lives of our citizens.

"As a Chamber of Commerce that has done its research, we know an increase will not cost our state jobs, nor will it wreck the economy. Most of our members already pay substantially higher than the current minimum wage. We urge the Senate and the Assembly to put all businesses on a more equal footing and to stabilize our economy by passing SB-106 or



the more preferred AB-175. We urge the Governor to support whatever compromise bill the legislature comes us with."

Lambda is known for its provocative speakers at their monthly lunches. The March 8 lunch will include a presentation and performance by Deena Kay Rose, a singer and songwriter discussing beings trans in the music industry. She will be accompanied by a trans panel presentation from The Center.

Deena Kay Rose is a Las Vegas resident and before transitioning, was known as Dick Feller, a famous Nashville singer/songwriter. Besides being a solo recording artist, she has written hit songs for Johnny Cash, Jerry Reed and John Denver, including "Some Days Are Diamonds (Some Days Are Stone)", which was John Denver's last #1 hit. She and country star Jerry Reed collaborated on material for the hit film Smokey and the Bandit, co-writing the soundtrack, including its theme song, "East Bound and Down", which Jerry Reed recorded, and which reached #2 on the country charts.

The lunch meeting, where the public is welcome, will be held Wednesday, March 8 at The Center. The Bronze Café-catered event, costs \$25 and begins at 11:30 a.m. Members and guests are urged to pay online at LambdaLV.com/lunchpay

Lambda, a 501c6 corporation, promotes and supports LGBTQ and allied businesses with networking opportunities and educational support. The Chamber welcomes elected officials, charitable organizations, and community partners. Lambda also has a print directory, known as the Lambda Smart Pages. Sponsorships and ads for the next Smart Pages are being sold now with publication during March.

For more information, contact Paul Ershler at the Lambda Business Association, 702-893-2028.





LOTUS OF SIAM

[by Michael Barbieri]

You must go to Lotus of Siam. That's all there is to it! For the best Thai food in Las Vegas, and possibly the country, you must go to Lotus of Siam!

Lotus of Siam is a simple establishment. It's not on the Vegas Strip. It's not connected to a big casino. It's in a nondescript strip mall a couple miles East of the Strip. The decor isn't fancy, and the food is very reasonably priced. But it's a foodie's dream - excellent, authentic Thai recipes that haven't been gussied up for tourists.

Owned and run by a lovely woman named Saipin Chutima, Lotus of Siam has been called "the single best Thai restaurant in North America" by Gourmet Magazine. Chutima, who learned to cook starting at age five, is known for her Northern Thai recipes, yet her Bangkok style cuisine, a more familiar style for most folks, is equally good. With nearly 150 dishes on the menu, serious Thai food fans will find it difficult to choose just one or two.

There hasn't been one dish I haven't loved here. Of the appetizers, I've enjoyed the Koong Sarong (Prawns in a Blanket) - marinated prawns wrapped in bacon and a rice paper crepe, deep fried and served with a mildly spicy sweet and sour sauce. The prawns were light and perfectly fried, with the golden rice crepe wrapper giving them a nice crunch. I've also tried the Nua Dad Deaw (Issan Style Beef Jerky) - marinated beef, deep fried and served with a homemade spicy sauce. The dried beef was already tough, but after deep frying, it took on the texture of shoe leather...but the most delicious shoe leather, ever! Just bring a strong set of teeth and you'll be fine. The beef itself was so tasty it could've been served on it's own, but the sauce just enhanced the flavor!

Some of Saipin's most subtle artistry was evident in her beautifully well-balanced soups. I'm a fan of Tom Yum soups, and the two variations I've tried were stunningly good. The Tom Yum Kung was a clear broth hot and sour soup with shrimp, lime juice, lemon grass, straw mushrooms, and just enough spice to wake up your mouth. Better yet was the Tom Kah Kai - a creamy, spicy mixture of sliced chicken, coconut milk, mushrooms, galangal, lemon grass and lime juice, with a slick of chili oil to provide delicious heat.

When it comes to Green Papaya Salad, I'm an addict. Their classic mix of green papaya, green Thai chili, dried shrimp, tomatoes, crushed peanuts, lime juice, sugar and fish sauce, have spoiled me for any other! The interplay of tart, sweet, and spicy make this a dish you must try!

I've tried entrees from different categories on this vast menu: From the Lotus of Siam Specials, I ordered what has become my new favorite Thai dish, Koi Soy; the Issan Thai version of Steak Tartare - minced raw beef with herbs, fresh and dried chilies, rice powder, a highly seasoned sauce and of course, lime juice. Like a beef ceviche of sorts, the acid from the lime juice "cooks" the raw beef. The flavors were bright and strong, yet layered. You choose a level of spiciness, but be careful! I love extremely spicy food, so I chose a level of 7 out of 10. The heat was tongue-searing, yet still one of the most exciting, intensely flavored dishes I've ever tried!

From the Noodles section, I tried one of the most popular stir fried dishes on any Thai menu; the Pad Thai. Made with chicken, egg, green onion, bean sprouts and chopped peanuts, this was subtle and delicious, with a smoky, tangy undertaste.

Having heard of Saipin's expertise with Northern recipes, I sampled the Kang-ka-Noon (Spicy Young Jackfruit Curry). The chunks of jackfruit have a taste and texture similar to artichoke hearts, and swim in a delicious red curry broth made with fresh and dried spices, as well as your choice of pork, chicken or fish. You'll be tempted to order more rice to soak up the extra broth.

Of the desserts, my suggestion is the Sticky Rice With Mango. Fresh, ripe mango slices and subtly sweet sticky rice with a touch of coconut milk, will help cool you down after the palate tingling spiciness of the meal.

When you consider that few tourists know of it, Lotus of Siam seems always to be crowded. My tip: Call early in the day when making reservations! As a walk-in party of one, I thought I'd be able to snag a table fairly quickly. But each time I've dined there, I've had to wait about a half hour before being seated. If you have to wait, however, it's worth it! Once you're seated, the staff will take great care of you, and I've never had to wait long for the food. And if you're staying on the Strip and take a cab to the restaurant, the friendly hostess will call you a taxi for your return trip.

After my first visit to Lotus of Siam, I told friends that my mouth was burning, but in the best way possible. I look forward to many return trips to this gem of a restaurant to try more of their amazing dishes. Let's see...there's the Green Chili Dip...the Issan Sour Pork Sausage...the Seafood With Chili and Mint Leaves...the....

Yeah...You've GOT to go!



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Lambda Business Association, known as the "Gay Chamber of Commerce" (circa 1996), also the "Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce" (circa 2002) and in an effort to be more inclusive, known as "The LGBT or LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce" since 2006. Lambda, founded in 1991, includes LGBT-owned, managed and friendly businesses, organizations and elected officials. Membership is approximately 250 individuals and businesses. Lambda Business Association is a 501 (c)6 non-profit.





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2-FOR-1 DAILY 11a-7p



THE WARREN

[by Michael Barbieri]

In 1741, Admiral Sir Peter Warren, a distinguished British naval officer, built Warren House, a mansion overlooking the Hudson River, on his property in New York's Greenwich Village. His land stretched from what is now 21st street, to what is currently Christopher Street.

At 131 Christopher Street, in the area once occupied by Warren's mansion, you'll now find The Warren, an intimate eatery, serving up simple, yet sophisticated New American cuisine.

Christopher Street was once the heart of New York's gay life; the original "gay-borhood," and the landscape was dotted with popular gay bars, gay businesses, and even gay restaurants. A few venerable touchstones remain: The Stonewall Inn is a landmark, happy revelers still belt out show tunes at piano bars like Marie's Crisis or The Duplex, and The Leatherman still serves up... well...leather!

These days, however, Christopher Street isn't as exclusively gay. The crowds populating Greenwich Village bars and restaurants now are much more mixed, and such is the case with The Warren.

Having heard of the place from my partner, we made a reservation and headed downtown for dinner. When we arrived, the place was bustling and noisy. The crowd at The Warren skews very young - straight business types knocking about with neighborhood locals, and a few tables of friendly gay diners, so there seemed to be a nice diversity to the clientele, and everyone was having a great time. We were met by the

hostess and seated at a little table for two, just across from the semi-open kitchen.

We started with a couple of cocktails: the Warren's Mule for my partner - vodka, ginger beer, rosemary syrup, and fresh lemon. Refreshing, with an herbal undertone, the lemon gave the drink a nice balance. I ordered the Madriguera, made with Illegal Mezcal Joven, charred pineapple, chipotle, and lime. The flavor of the mezcal was a bit floral, with a smokey finish, supported nicely by the pineapple, which had been charred on the grill and then puréed. The sweet smokiness was given a kick of heat by the salted rim, which contained dried, ground chipotle pepper. A unique concoction!

As usual, we ordered several appetizers to share. We decided on two of the Small Plates; the Gulf Shrimp, prepared in garlic butter and served with crostini. The shrimp themselves were nicely cooked, tender and sweet. They were lusciously buttery, with a nice garlicky bite that never overpowered. Next we tried the Steak Tartare - minced raw beef mixed with onions, capers and whole grain mustard. The frisee lettuce on the side was dressed simply, with a touch of oil and lemon juice, giving the dish a contrasting hit of acid to cut the richness of the beef. From the Plates,



we selected the Truffle Mac & Cheese. Creamy and gooey, made with chives, aged pecorino Romano and ricotta cheeses, and topped with crunchy garlic bread crumbs, the strength of the dish came from its base; a deliciously pungent truffle bechamel, perfumed and flavored with white truffle oil. Next time I hit The Warren, I might just see if I can get an entree portion of that mac & cheese! Perfection!

As we waited for our main courses, one of the servers walked by with one of The Warren's signature Warren Burgers - a tempting creation, topped with onion jam, frisee lettuce, and a choice of Roquefort, Cheddar or Gruyere cheese. It looked so good, we almost changed our orders, but I knew that wouldn't make for a very interesting review. Right?

Our entrées arrived. Vincent had chosen the PEI Mussels. Swimming in a smokey tomato broth with garlic and dill, the mussels were tender, with a sweet, briny, understated flavor. The tomato broth was also quite subtle, and made a nice change from the usual preparation of white wine, garlic and butter that one finds elsewhere. Unsure of what to order, I asked Salvador, our friendly server, what his choice would be. He recommended the Niman Ranch Pork Loin, served with heirloom grains, delicata squash, and a juniper jus. Now, while the pork had a good, strong, naturally porky flavor, we both found the loin to be maybe just a tad overcooked - a bit chewy rather than tender. Also, to my palate, the whole dish ate a bit too salty, possibly due to the jus. But these were minor issues, and didn't prevent me from finishing my meal.

When we asked to see a dessert menu, Salvador told us there were only two offerings. That was actually perfect, so we each ordered one. I chose the Chocolate Cake - an individual flourless chocolate cake, that was moist, spongy, deeply chocolatey, and

came topped with a silky chocolate sauce, on a plate dusted with cocoa and powdered sugar. I'm not a big fan of flourless chocolate cakes, but this one was moister than most and not overly sweet or too dense - I enjoyed it very much. Vincent had the Sticky Toffee Pudding, their take on a traditional British dessert, consisting of a sweet, moist, and yes, sticky sponge cake made with finely chopped dates. The pudding came served with a scoop of vanilla ice cream, which helped balance out the sweetness. Both desserts were house made, rich, and yummy.

Our meal at The Warren was terrific, and despite how busy it was that evening, the service throughout the restaurant was excellent. Orders came out quickly and efficiently, nobody ever appeared to be kept waiting, and we felt well taken care of. Dimitri, the manager, who was doing double duty as bartender, even managed to come out from behind the bar to greet us and some of the other diners. One thing I found remarkable was that so much good food came out of a kitchen the size of a walk-in closet. I asked Salvador if the kitchen was as small as it appeared, and he told us that although there was a cold prep area on the lower level, all of the hot dishes were, in fact, prepared in that tiny space!

The logo for The Warren features a rabbit, and indeed, a warren is a rabbit hole - its home. And The Warren is very homey - the decor features warm wood accents everywhere, as well as shelves full of books, vases filled with dried flowers, and as a nod to Admiral Warren, models of old naval vessels. Add to that the hearty food, unique cocktails, and energetic crowd, and 131 Christopher Street comes to life in a way the Admiral could never have imagined!

Now to go back and grab one of those burgers!!



Who run the world?! GIRLS!!! That certainly seemed the be the case on Saturday, January 21st, 2017, the day that hundreds of thousands of women marched on cities all over the world, demanding the protection of women's rights, in light of a new administration that seems determined to strip them of such.

By sheer coincidence, this was the very night I happened to see Ménage a Trois, a trio of powerful, talented women, who took to the stage at The Laurie Beechman Theatre, singing anthemic songs - some of love gone wrong, some of the longing for love, and some about taking control of their own lives, emotions, and sexuality.

Ménage a Trois are Lacey Angerosa, Nyseli Vega, and Bianca Madison, and let me tell you, these women have some chops! Lacey has performed regionally, on cruise ships, and in New York theater. Her roles include 'Patti' in *Smokey Joe's Cafe* and 'Mimi' in *Rent*. Nyseli has appeared in the all female improv show *Pillow Fight*, Off-Broadway in *iLLa: A Hip Hop Musical*, and in *Orange is the New Black*. Bianca has studied with Heidi Marshall, Julio Agustin, and Jen Waldman, and has performed professionally throughout the U.S. She was recently seen as 'Nora' in *Vinyl* on HBO, and has appeared in *The Life*, and *In The Heights*.

The three forged a friendship while working as part of the singing waitstaff at a popular eatery in the Times Square area. Not only were they proud feminists, but they also had strong ties to the LGBTQ community. Soon, Ménage a Trois was born.

The show opened with a gorgeous tableau, in which the girls were discovered onstage in a haze of magenta-hued lighting, backs to the audience, fists in the air. In the opening medley of Beyonce's "Get Me Bodied/Freakum Dress," they took their power immediately, with lyrics like 'Can you get me bodied, I wanna be myself tonight, Wanna party, wanna dance, wanna be myself tonight' and 'Ain't no shame, 'coz I gotta get mine.' The medley became a celebration of female strength and sexuality - a fun, hot way to start the show! That was followed by Lauryn Hill's megahit, "Doo Wop (That Thing)" - a plea for self respect, and the two numbers combined as if to say "Be strong and have fun, but don't allow yourself to be taken advantage of!"

Patter was kept to a minimum in this show and fairly soon, after an appropriately gospel tinged "Take Me To Church," featuring gorgeous vocal riffs, we came to the quiet simplicity of John Lennon's "Imagine." Done with all three ladies seated, the song was delivered in a simple but lovely three-part harmony.

Nyseli took the evening's first solo moment, with Rag N Bone Man's "Human," which showcased her powerful belt, particularly on the refrain. That was followed by



another group number; "Damaged," by Danity Kane, where the girls' vocals brought to mind two of my favorite singers: Kate Pierson and Cindy Wilson from the B52's.

The next solo was Rhianna's "Love On The Brain" - a sweaty, bluesy shouter, with Bianca begging for love, even if she's 'being played like a violin.' She got down and dirty, singing 'No matter what I do, I'm no good without you, and I can't get enough. Must be love on the brain.'

A driving 90's medley featured each young lady taking on an iconic song of the era, and culminated in delicious counterpoint, with all three of them singing their numbers in tandem.

Finally, Lacey's solo spot was the decidedly upbeat "Expensive," in which she expressed her self-worth to the object of her affection: 'Cause you kiss me like I'm dreaming, like I'm one in a million... 'cause I know I got that somethin' and it won't cost you nothin', I already feel expensive enough.'

As a matter of fact, the final leg of the show was all about self-worth and self respect - Lesley Gore's timeless "You Don't Own Me," in gorgeous harmony, and the energetic "Wings" by Little Mix, done in a sort of modern swing time/military tempo. After downing shots from the bar, they launched into Beyoncé's "Run the World (Girls)", prompting one of the audience members to pull out a sign she had brandished at the march that afternoon, which read 'ROLL UP YER SLEEVES, LADIES!!!!' When they closed out the evening with "Survivor" by Destiny's Child, the crowd was up and dancing, waving their arms in the air and cheering!

Now, I'm not a fan of rap or hip-hop, so I thought I'd be on the fence about their encore, "My Shot," from Lin-Manuel Miranda's Broadway smash, *Hamilton*. However, the inclusion of tight, staccato harmonies helped win me over...to a degree. But the crowd loved it, and that's what really counts!

One tiny bit of negative criticism: there were scattered moments, mostly when the girls were singing more softly or in their lower registers, that I found myself straining to decipher lyrics or hear the vocals over the music. The sound was a bit muddy, at times - perhaps there may not have been enough high end in the sound system, perhaps the singers were a bit too close to their mics, or perhaps the band could have toned down their dynamics just a touch, but again, this was a minor quibble, and easily fixable.

The band - Jon Conver on guitar, Nick West on bass, Cyrill Bavier on keyboards, and Misia Vessio on drums, were tight and funky, playing hot arrangements created by the group as a whole. The set was current and exciting, and I often found myself tapping my foot or bobbing my head in time with the songs.

This was only Lacey, Bianca and Nyseli's third performance as *Ménage a Trois*, yet they already seem to have an ardent following. I think it's safe to say we'll be hearing a lot more from them. I can see them as activists, working up the crowd at a future Women's March, winning them over at Pride Parades, and of course, performing their act at clubs and theaters across the country. With talent like this, these girls WILL run the world!



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VALENTINA



#BroadwayBackwards

A show where gender doesn't matter,
but love does.

Created and Directed by
Robert Bartley

Music Supervision by
Mary-Mitchell Campbell

Music Direction by
Laura Bergquist

3.13.17 | 8 pm

Al Hirschfeld Theatre, NYC

broadwaycares.org

Benefiting



**THE
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THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL &
TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY CENTER



This month, Broadway comes together once again for a fun spirited fundraiser “Broadway Backwards”, a role reversal of show tunes where the men sing the traditional female roles and the ladies take on the male roles. QLife caught up with Robert Bartley, the creator and director of the show for some history on Broadway Backwards and what fans can expect in this year’s production.

This 12th annual evening is produced by Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and benefits Broadway Cares and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center in New York City. Last year’s inspiring performance raised a record \$480,287. It featured a 67-person cast of Broadway and television’s best, backed by a live onstage orchestra.

QLife: Hi Robert, thanks for taking time with us today. Can you give our readers a little history on how Broadway Cares got started?

Robert: I’ve been involved with Broadway Cares since I was an actor 20 years ago in Miss Saigon. It was early on in the AIDS crisis. All the Broadway shows decided they were going to raise money for people in the community living with AIDS. At the end of the shows, we hold red buckets, and one of the leads would do a pitch from the stage. If everybody gave a dollar, a show could easily raise \$2,000 a night.

QLife: Broadway Cares does other fundraising events, too, correct?

Robert: The collections periods would run in the spring and the fall. Then Broadway Cares started doing

its own shows and events. After the fall collection period they started doing the Gypsy of the Year where all the ensemble members of shows would compete for fundraising, but they would also compete in a talent show. In the spring they would do the Easter Bonnet competition in the basement at the Palace. That’s moved to the stage after the spring collection period. More events like Broadway Bares have been added on. Now Broadway Cares raises money for over 450 AIDS and Family Service organizations around the country.

QLife: You’re getting ready for Broadway Backwards this month. That’s a separate production. How did it get its start?

There was nothing the Broadway community and the gay community was doing hand-in-hand. My husband and I said we should do something, so we created our first event at the LGBT community center twelve years ago.

Originally I thought we should do an all-male version of Hello Dolly. Then we branched out even further and opened up to all Broadway songs and do reverse-gender songs.

Photos: Monica Simoes



Something really magical happened that first year. We were packed. There was one moment in the show where Cheyenne Jackson and Matt Cavanaugh sang "We Kiss in the Shadow" from "The King and I" and it took on a whole new subtext of meaning—two leading men who couldn't come out of the closet and the just wanted to be together.

Ticket sales were so good, the next year we moved to a small off-broadway theater. Terrence McNally and his partner Thomas Kirdahy came to see the show and said, "Man this needs to be in a Broadway theater." We thought sure. But sure enough they got us into a Broadway theater the 3rd year, and we've been in a Broadway theater ever since.

By year five, the even had grown—I don't want to say "bigly" (chuckles)—that we had to have help. Broadway Cares and the LGBT Community Center partnered on the event, now Broadway Cares produces the event, we rehearse at the center, and it's a joint effort of both organization.

QLife: What are your plans for this year?

Robert: When we started Broadway Backwards there weren't a lot of LGBT events, so we were more political.

As the years progressed, we could be ourselves. Now we seem to be going backwards politically, but this year my goal is to be a celebration of us and go to the theater. We're celebrating love this year.

Broadway Backwards performs one night only on Monday, March 13, 8 pm at the Al Hirschfeld Theatre.

This exhilarating evening will include one-of-a-kind, unforgettable performances from celebrated stars of stage and screen including Sierra Boggess, Tony winner Len Cariou, Tony nominee Carolee Carmello, Robert Creighton, Ariana DeBose, Tony Award winner Cynthia Erivo, Tony nominee Santino Fontana, Lora Lee Gayer, Tony winner John Glover, four-time Grammy Award nominee Josh Groban, Tony winner Cady Huffman, Jay Armstrong Johnson, Rachel Bay Jones, Andrew Keenan-Bolger, Tony winner Levi Kreis, Eric Petersen, Tony nominee Andrew Rannells, Megan Sikora, Elizabeth Stanley, Bobby Conte Thornton, two-time Golden Globe winner, Tony nominee and Oscar nominee Kathleen Turner, six-time Emmy Award winner Bruce Vilanch, Rachel York and Jersey Boys original cast members Dominic Nolfi, Michael Longoria and Daniel Reichard.



Photos: Danny Roberts, Monica Simoes, Jonathan-Tichler



ALL ABOUT SUSAN

[by Chris Azzopardi]

Maybe gay people are customarily compelled to thank Susan Sarandon for her longstanding advocacy, because that's how I begin my frank, anything-goes conversation with the 70-year-old multi-hyphenate. After all, no matter where you stand on Sarandon's divisive decision to vote for Green Party candidate Jill Stein in the recent presidential election, we can all agree that the Oscar-winning actress has used her massive screen-icon prestige to aid in the advancement of LGBT rights. She's been a staunch supporter through the AIDS crisis and the fight for marriage equality – even in times when vocal Hollywood allies were scarce.

Reinforcing Sarandon's pro-queer stance is a breadth of bold, iconic and uninhibited film roles dating back to 1970: Sarandon had sex with her co-star, Catherine Deneuve, in a lesbian-favored scene that steamed up 1983's vamp flick *The Hunger*; as Janet, she got her freak on in the cult classic *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*; and then, in 1987, teamed up with Cher for *The Witches of Eastwick* to, presumably, offer fresh fodder to every late-'80s drag queen. Later, in 1995, Sarandon appeared with many of her industry peers in the acclaimed documentary inspired by gay activist Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet*, which examined depictions of LGBT characters in Hollywood.

The next step in being a gay icon, apparently, is playing one: Starring alongside fellow acting dynamo Jessica Lange as Joan Crawford, Sarandon portrays beloved Hollywood legend and *All About Eve* leading lady Bette Davis in Ryan Murphy's *Feud: Bette and Joan*. Sarandon was fresh off the set of the FX series when

she dished on *Feud*, and numerous other aspects of her storied life and career.

"I'm just getting back and acclimated," she told me, dramatizing her experience shooting Murphy's latest creation. "I've been gone for a very long time. Once I joined this cult, I didn't get out."

Free from *Feud* and any canned-answer pretense, Sarandon refreshingly freewheeled through revelatory discussions about her "up for grabs" sexual orientation, the gay actor she once romanced, and her impassioned response to critics ("to blame me is not productive") who challenge her political convictions.

Between *Feud*, your film career and your LGBT activism, I'd say you have more than earned your queer cred.

(Laughs) Well, I hope so! I mean, I feel like an outsider myself. My people, my family for all these years have always been my allies and have always been very,



very important to me, very dear to me through the AIDS crisis and everything. It's just a natural, very easy extended family for me.

You grew up Catholic in Jackson Heights, a neighborhood in the northwestern end of the borough of Queens in New York City. Would you say LGBT people felt like family then too

Well, not in my high school; I had 500 in my class. This was ages ago. But sure, in college, of course if you're in a theater department or in any of the arts, that's just part of the landscape, so there wasn't any delineation as I became an adult. It was just natural. And, honestly, the people who I made friends with in my early day in New York in the '70s are still my friends.

I find the guys who don't stick with you are the guys that you've had affairs with or marriages... or whatever! (Laughs) It's very rare that those guys – once you're not involved in a relationship, it's hard to maintain those ties. So, really, my friends I've had forever and ever and ever are gay men and women.

That makes sense, unless you're having affairs with gay men.

Well, I did at one point have a very successful and very loving and wonderful affair with a man who then wasn't with another woman after me, and that worked out fine! I don't think you had to declare yourself as rigidly as you do now in terms of having to declare yourself almost politically about your sexual preference.

Just to clarify – you were in a romantic relationship with another actor who was gay?

Yeah. Philip Sayer (who also starred in *The Hunger*) – he was a wonderful actor. He passed away, but yes, he was gay, and we had a great relationship in every way.

Is your sexuality more or less rigid these days? Basically, should we be welcoming you to the family?

(Laughs) Well, I'm a serial monogamist, so I haven't really had a large dating career. I married Chris Sarandon when I was 20, and that went on for quite a while – each of my relationships have. I haven't exactly been in the midst of a lot of offers of any kind. I'm still not! I don't know what's going on! (Laughs) But I think back in the '60s it just was much more open.

Are you open regarding your sexuality?

Yeah, I'm open. My sexual orientation is up for grabs, I guess you could say. (Laughs)

The great thing about *Feud* is having you, a gay icon, play a gay icon. I can't think of many things gayer than that.

(Laughs) Well, I hope the appeal seems to be broader! I'm hoping we reach out across the aisles to heterosexuals also, because what I think the story is about is a really interesting examination of all kinds of things: power and roles and misogyny and aging. Have you seen it?

Not yet – episodes weren't available before our interview. But because it's my due diligence as a gay man, I've seen *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* countless times.

Oh, you're gonna love it then! Although it's not all about that. We do move on, so at least you don't think I'm wearing gobs of makeup (the whole time). There are some younger folks who haven't seen *Baby Jane* who are like, "What is up with that? Does she do that through the whole thing? I don't get it." But we had a lot of fun recreating gesture for gesture, voice pattern for voice pattern. And some of the little snippets of the scenes were very tough.

What's the closest you've come to a Bette/Joan-type feud?

I think I'm just a little too young to see women as my adversary. I think that changed. I really haven't experienced that. I think women just a little bit older



than I am tried to align themselves with power, which were the men, and saw every woman as a threat. With my generation and slightly younger, you might be jealous that someone is getting all the good parts, but it's just a different time – you don't see them as your enemy. So, women are producing more projects, are finding things on their own. I feel very comfortable with all the women that are my competition.

There was someone that came (to *Feud*) for two seconds who was not particularly collaborative, and I didn't get rid of her, but that was just not the tone. She kind of announced herself, and she was gone in two days. Because Ryan is responsible for having a wonderful environment with a very collaborative atmosphere, and it starts at the top. He just doesn't tolerate anybody who isn't part of that family, and looks at the bigger picture. And that was it. She was gone.

But it wasn't about women against women – it was just about somebody who came in, sat down and announced that she was going to be difficult. I'm sure that came from a place of fear, in all fairness to her, but there wasn't time or interest in developing a relationship with someone who isn't a team player. Everybody was a team player on this. And I've seen men go at it on films, but I've never had an

experience myself. It doesn't work for me to work in an environment where there's tension. I go out of my way to make sure there's not.

Can you imagine throwing your guts out there and you have to be brave and you're in a hostile environment? It's just impossible. You open up your heart and all your energy, and you can't do that if you're in a protective mode. There's a line that I found in one of Bette's books where she said, "I would rather have a go at something I feel, and be hurt, than always be protecting myself – that way, one does not really live." And she did that in romance, and I think she did that in her work.

That's definitely where our philosophies align. You can't live your life according to just what looks good on paper. I think the most interesting things happen when you're out of your comfort zone, and this was way out of my comfort zone. It took me a good five weeks working with Ryan and working with Tim Monich, my dialect coach, to really get the fear/fun ratio to a place where it was in my favor (laughs). I was just terrified! I said to Ryan, "This really, really scares me. I just don't know." And he said, "Well, I'm scared too. We'll find it together." And that made me jump at it.

How do you explain the gay fascination with Bette Davis and Joan Crawford?

Well, I can't speak for Joan – I can only speak for Bette. But, first of all, being some kind of outsider – she was an intruder at the time, when she was trying to get good parts, because she wasn't your classic Hollywood beauty. So, she started off as an outsider, and I think that she had a secret, and in the early days of being gay – and still in some places – that has to be a secret. I think she had a lot of secrets, and you sense that she was trying to do things that were not easily done as a woman and as an artist, and she was a very straight shooter. When we were working on it, our biggest challenge was trying to make it grounded in reality because they're so big. Her gestures, everything – I felt like, "Here goes another meme!" (Laughs) The question was, are we able to make this into something that people are actually moved by? It's very funny, obviously, and interesting.

Do you think audiences might come away with more empathy for Bette as we watch this?

I hope so. In watching all of her interviews and TV appearances, and in reading all the books she wrote and that her daughter wrote and other people wrote, she was pretty special in her focus to find good work that (gave her) some control over her choices at a time when you were given the protection of the studio in exchange for your freedom. Now, of course, if you do episodic TV, you're right back in the same kind of contractual bind. Films have been liberated, but not



these seasonal TV shows, because you really don't know what they're going to do with you. You sign away for years at a time, which was exactly what she was fighting against.

Shifting to politics, some LGBT people were disappointed in your decision to cast your vote for someone other than the predicted winner, Hillary Clinton. If you would've known that Trump would be elected, and that we'd currently be experiencing such a threat to human rights, which I know are so important to you, would you have voted differently?

This is the thing: To have the conversations about "woulda, shoulda, coulda" opens up everything about the primaries and all kinds of things. The important thing right now is that we stop harping on blame because blame, if you really want me to talk about this election – you know, I was not the person who brought Trump into power. The DNC has a lot of... there are already suits all over the country about how that was rigged, the primary.

So, to talk about this, for me, is a waste of energy. I think right now we're about to appoint Scott Pruitt, which is the end of the EPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency), and we've got this gal, (Betsy) DeVos. People have to get over what happened, take some personal responsibility for being in a bubble and not paying attention to what was going on in the country, and start applying their anger and their energy to rectifying what's going on.

We're at a moment in history where a revolution is taking place. We have a guy in there who is so obvious that he gives you very clear targets – this didn't happen overnight. In the last eight years, the Democrats have

lost thousands of seats. In the last eight years, we've put fracking and Monsanto and everybody in place. In the last eight years, there were tons of people deported. This guy is horrible. But this didn't happen overnight.

So what are we gonna do now? This is a moment where we have to start using our energy and the time that we have and the media to divest from our banks that are building these pipelines all over the place, not just in Dakota, which are going to bring down this country. Fracking is going to go full speed ahead. We have to stop that. And we have to protect those who are vulnerable under this administration, and that's not gonna happen until we let go of what happened before and really dedicate ourselves to making phone calls, putting our bodies in the street and, most of all, taking our money out of organizations, banks and networks that are supporting the actions of this guy.

Now that everybody is awake, we have to take that and that fear, and we have to not indulge our depression – not indulge on pointing fingers – and get out there and work with some of the people who are going to be betrayed by Trump who voted for him and use that as a force for real change, because now it can happen. And we're in a moment in history where you're gonna either be on one side or the other, and to be quiet or to be depressed or to blame me is not productive, so that's what I would say about that.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).

A portrait of actress Rachel Griffiths with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a black top, looking directly at the camera against a light background.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

[by Chris Azzopardi]

Early in her career, she stole our queer hearts as Toni Collette's freewheeling yang in 1994's buddy comedy *Muriel's Wedding*, but before long, Rachel Griffiths became one of our most passionate allies both on- and off-screen.

In 2001, the 48-year-old Aussie actress starred as Brenda Chenoweth, the enigmatic, gender-subverting girlfriend-turned-wife of prodigal son Nate Fisher (Peter Krause) in HBO's Emmy-winning landmark series, *Six Feet Under*, out creator Alan Ball's gay-inclusive, darkly comic rumination on life and death. One of TV's finest hours, the show was heralded for its character David (Michael C. Hall), who was praised for portraying the first authentic gay character on TV. A year after *Six Feet Under* concluded, in 2006, Griffiths made the leap from the Fishers to the Walkers, the family at the center of ABC's *Brothers & Sisters*, also celebrated for its LGBT representation.

Now, Griffiths is taking her longtime queer advocacy to the next level with *When We Rise*, Dustin Lance Black's moving and timely portrayal of the progressive post-Stonewall movement. The seven-part miniseries seeks to connect with the heart – not the politics – of Americans through real family stories, something Griffiths' gay-affirming résumé certainly reflects.

In *When We Rise*, you play Diane, who's raising a daughter with women's rights activist Roma Guy, portrayed by Mary-Louise Parker. What are your thoughts on bringing the lesbian-led blended family dynamic to audiences on a mainstream network like

ABC?

Brothers & Sisters was on ABC at the same time as *Modern Family*, and we had *Will & Grace*, so I didn't have any kind of surprise it was on a network (like ABC), because ultimately it is about family – it's about the "we" of gay, lesbian, transgender lives, not the "they" or the "others." So, for me, to move these people's lives away from the premium cable niche – I love that by not being on a niche network, there wasn't a pressure to be noisy in a more sexual way. We've kind of moved past having to explore that.

That's there in other shows if you want it, particularly with women's lives. We've had *The L Word*, where the women are identified first off in the show by being lesbians. But Roma and Diane's trouble was, first, (being) women – 51 percent of the population – then the gay/lesbian, then it was understanding the power of how those two movements can come together.

Your roles on both TV and in film suggest that you appreciate portrayals of social and political issues that are reflected through a personal lens.

I absolutely love that. I think if people aren't living in a wider sociological space, they're in a bubble. Growing up, my favorite movies actually were World



War II movies – get motor bikes and outdo the Nazis. I was just really primed by seeing political moments intersecting with personal and moral choices, and the drama of that.

That certainly explains your career trajectory.

(Laughs) With a few exceptions!

How do you feel knowing that a half century after the liberation movement of the late '60s and '70s we're still, to some extent, fighting the same fights that are being fought in *When We Rise*?

The last few years have definitely been a wakeup call of thinking that progression is always forward moving. I think we really thought progression was a simple, straightforward thing, so it's definitely a shock that things go backward and forward. Millennials and the younger generation are very comfortable in the gay, lesbian and transgender space, and their comfort level is very high, so it's a shock to see an older generation insist on moving back. I think for many within that younger generation, when they hear certain slogans about how great America used to be, we know that was true for white men, but not necessarily true for all other people.

Which is the crux of the Trump administration. But you're right: The pendulum swings back and forth, and now we've entered a time when progressives are once again stepping up to the plate, and I think younger generations feel compelled to become activists and stand up against this pushback.

I think there are also periods where you have young presidents who are really representing a moment in time, and then we get an old president who is a status quo president. So, I think people are afraid of too much change too fast, and he's the tipping point.

There's been a lot to be afraid of these last 16 years, and if you just read the news or tune into the news cycle, you're conditioned to think we live in the most

vulnerable time in human history, which of course you and I know we don't. And I will say, I've got two little American girls and they have their little anxious moments, and I still tell them that there's never been a greater time to be born as an American female than now. Never has she had more opportunities. Never has she had a stronger voice. And never has she had more reasons to be confident. Gay or straight. I'd still say now is a better time to be gay anywhere in the world.

Growing up in Melbourne, Australia, what was your introduction to the LGBT community?

There were huge rumors at school that George Michael was gay. I was like, "No, no, really?!" (Laughs) And Freddie Mercury had AIDS. "No, he's not gay, too!" It was kind of a mix of probably negative and controversial, I would say, in a Catholic backwater.

I remember there was a gorgeous, contemporary boy and the rumors in the parish: He wasn't well, he was a drug addict and he died of a heroin overdose, and he was from a big Catholic family. I had only recently learned that he died of HIV/AIDS. So, the family would have rather said he was an addict and died, when he was actually living a very loved life with his partner and died very young. Died at 24, I think.

In 2012, you performed in the Australian production of Dustin Lance Black's play *8*, centered on California's controversial Proposition 8. Was that your introduction to Dustin?

Apparently, we met in the Valley for a project. I was the hugest fan of *Milk*. As a history lover, what I loved about *Milk*, which I kind of sat down somewhat dutifully to be educated with, and I think the same holds true for this piece: how committed he is to elevating these heroes that are gay, lesbian and straight. And perhaps my first introduction to that topic and feeling the outrageous injustice of how they were treated in their own time was seeing the Alan Turing play (1986's *Breaking the Code*) at the West End (in London). I was



19 – very young – and that was my introduction to probably the key hero of World War II, who was a gay man and died tortured and broken for his own sexuality. I recall the wrongfulness, and I think had that not been made (into a movie), Lance would've made that story as well.

In *When We Rise*, you say, "Gay dads – I wonder if that will ever be a thing." It's kind of hysterical, but also true.

Not very long ago I really remember thinking, "Gay marriage – that'll never be a thing." Even being gay and lesbian supportive, the actual idea... there were just enormous strides being made very quickly. And in my country, Australia, gay and lesbians still cannot marry and are denied fundamental rights to celebrate their unions.

But it's a wonderful thing, the Bill of Rights. It can be used in other countries very much as a political football, and it's just the most inspiring document that human beings have ever come up with as a model and ideal to which we should move forward. And I still believe that that document is going at its strongest and most triumphant when all "men" includes all people: men and women, gay and straight, white and colored, Christian and non-Christians.

How did you end up playing Diane?

I knew the project was on, and I read the material and just fell in love with it. I was in LA and got to meet with (Dustin)... and I just got really lucky, I think! (Laughs) With Diane, just holding the heads of dying men, having no answers, and then going home feeling helpless and yet finding the mettle to get up and return and do it all again and handle all the bodily fluids in a plague that had no known source was just heroic bravery. I love that balance – it takes many different styles of work to fight these battles. Hers is through duty and service, not the megaphone.

In addition to *When We Rise*, you've been a part of many landmark moments in LGBT programming over the last 15-plus years. Is there a project that stands out to you as being particularly groundbreaking?

I think they all have been in their own way. Of course *Six Feet Under* was massively groundbreaking in that that was the first time I recall there being a gay member of a family not defined by his otherness or his trouble in reconciling it all. And I think this is groundbreaking in its lesbian characters. (Laughs) I love the article somebody wrote "Why Is TV Killing Its Queer Women?" It was really interesting. So, I think there are fewer lesbian characters than gay characters probably because they're not as fabulous with fashion and cute, funny quips.



I think this is groundbreaking for its representation of gay women on network TV and really exploring the day-to-day life of many lesbians, which is not looking hot, or picking up girls in bars, or talking about sex. It's talking about picking up the kids and, "Oh my god, how can I possibly pay for my family and get better gender equity and pay?"

Six Feet Under is still my favorite show to have ever aired on TV.

I think it's mine too, next to *M*A*S*H*. My "straight" show is *M*A*S*H* (laughs), which really defined me and half of Brenda Chenoweth. I was always like, "Why can't a woman be a guy on screen?" Just that kind of badly behaved and morally righteous person, but absolutely incorrigible.

What kind of mark did *Six Feet Under* leave on you?

I think it definitely has left a career mark, not just because it was an enormous success, but pushing the boundaries of women in television and unpredictable modules of likability. I think (Alan) really explored a depth and a breadth of key archetypes. I was really on that show as the girlfriend – then there was the mom, the bratty teen daughter, the Latino wife. He blew the

female stereotypes out, and the legacy of that is for all women in television to enjoy on that level.

I was also so proud to be a part of a show that could speak to death and dying and serious themes of human struggle at a time when no other show was doing that. That was a big draw for me, and that (pilot) script that I read, to this day is possibly the best script that's ever been sent to me with my name actually on it. And the feedback we had from people in the wake of September 11 about how that show nurtured and comforted and enabled them to have conversations they didn't know how to have – that was really incredible.

(Alan) just kind of found a common space, and said the American family is all these things. It is gay. It is straight. It is lesbian. It is unsure. It is an artist. It is a mother whose personal dreams are not being met. It is a young woman trying to find her identity in a postmodern world. It *can* be all these things.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).

Photos: ABC



MAKING AMERICA HOPEFUL AGAIN

[by Chris Azzopardi]

With an emotionally resonant acceptance speech, Dustin Lance Black accepted the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay in 2009 for *Milk*, a powerful tribute to gay political hero Harvey Milk. Could an Emmy be next?

It's possible, even if the 42-year-old Sacramento native is too modest to admit that his latest screen ambition, *When We Rise*, the accomplished filmmaker's tremendous seven-part undertaking chronicling the progressive uprising of the '60s and '70s, is certainly golden statue-worthy. Partly inspired by LGBT rights activist Cleve Jones' memoir, *When We Rise: My Life in the Movement*, the miniseries sheds light on our foremothers and -fathers who raised hell – working to combat misogyny, homophobia and racism—to create a changed world for future generations of, as the show declares, “others.”

“With this show, I measure success by whether I get a phone call from one of my Southern family members who have never talked about being gay,” Black says. “When that happens, and that conversation is started, it will have succeeded.”

And should that conversation stretch beyond Black's own parochial loved ones, its influence could be life-changing for those in the queer population who now find themselves trying to resist the oppression of Trump's America.

For that reason, *When We Rise* is shockingly relevant, especially considering its half-century-old history isn't

just history – it's our current reality.

During this intimate conversation with Black, the filmmaker gets candid about the beginning of his activism at age 7, the importance of “we” in any resistance movement, and how sharing a story is the first step in changing a mind.

Tell me how this miniseries ended up on a commercial network like ABC.

This project started for me four years ago, when I heard a rumor that ABC was looking at optioning LGBT history properties, and I called my agent and was like, “Is that true?” Just four years before, I had to charge the development cost of *Milk* on my credit card because no one wanted to pay for it—no one was interested! So, I had made my agent book a meeting with the powers that be at ABC, to look them in the eye and see if it was true—and it was. The funny thing is, they said, “We can't afford you, but who do you think would be good to write and create something like this?” and I just laughed (laughs). Like, come on!

So, I thought, “Boy, this is an incredible opportunity to tell our LGBT story, or a part of our LGBT story, and not be preaching directly to the choir.” I had other networks that had been interested for a long time in



something of this nature, and I thought, "They're gonna spend more money, they're gonna give me all the time in the world, it'll be a great experience and we'll get it absolutely right... and we're gonna turn around and preach directly to the choir and we might not change a single mind." Here, I had a chance to tell our stories on the network that I watched as a kid, because as a kid, I grew up in the South, I grew up in the military, I grew up in a conservative home, in a Christian home, and we trusted ABC because ABC told family stories. I thought, "Well, here's a chance to finally be able to tell the story of my LGBT family to my actual family," and that's what I set out to do. That's why I think it's remarkable that it's on ABC. We've come to a place where we can perhaps talk the same language of family between these two Americas, and perhaps change hearts and minds in a time when that seems absolutely, critically necessary.

Did you go to the recent Women's March? And having shot a similar march for *When We Rise*, did it feel like history repeating itself?

I'm living in London, and we certainly walked through Trafalgar Square, which was jammed with thousands of people. I have to say, I've heard the rallying cry at many marches that says, "Gay, straight, black, white, same struggle, same fight." But usually it's either mostly black and a little white, or mostly gay and maybe a few straight, even though we chant that chant. This is the first time it truly seemed gay, straight, black, white. It was diverse. And that was, frankly, heartening.

The reason I designed this show the way I designed it was because four years ago, I was concerned that social justice movements were becoming incredibly myopic and self-interested, forgetting that we need to work together if we're gonna get anywhere. Not understanding the intersections of our movements, losing sight of where those intersections are, and certainly forgetting the great power that we can gain by working together. So, I was worried. We were becoming

divided, and it's why I insisted when designing the show that I find real people who came from other movements, not just the LGBT movement – people who came from the women's movement, the black civil rights movement, the peace movement, and the series eventually touches on immigration and healthcare.

The most important word in the struggle for equality is "we." It's why I told ABC right from the beginning when we designed the title: "We" has to be the biggest word in it. It's a word we've forgotten, and it's the answer to beating back a backlash. The key is that we have to struggle together. So, I was heartened, frankly, by the diversity I saw, not just in the march that I was physically present for here in London, but the ones I paid careful attention to on TV and online. It gives me a little bit of hope.

When We Rise touches on this glancingly, but I want to remind gay men that the Gay Liberation Front (of 1969) started as a group of men who were feminists because feminism says loud and clear that "gender ought not determine destiny," and that means one thing to women, but it certainly means that gay men ought to be able to love who they love regardless of gender. So, gay men need to examine why we haven't been more vocally feminist.

How was the idea for *When We Rise* first conceived?

I toyed with the idea for a long time. After *Milk* was over, I started to think about other stories that need to be told, and I'm doing other LGBT-themed history projects, but I always wondered, "Was there something bigger, and how would I go about doing that?" As I met people – activists – along the way, I would sort of catalog their names in my head in case I ever got the chance to do something like this, and it was ABC saying they would actually pay for a year of research to really figure out who to depict that set it in motion.

So, it was always something I wanted to do, and I thought ABC was the right home for it. So then, at great



personal expense, I set out on a journey. Let me just say nobody made any money off this thing. If anything, my poor agent and business manager were sweating it as we got it to year four.

You have Rachel Griffiths, Mary-Louise Parker and Guy Pearce, and then a terrific cast playing them in their youth. How did the casting process work for this? Did you have any of these actors in mind while researching the real-life person they're playing?

I never think about who will play the parts while I'm writing if it's based on a true story because I'm working so hard to get the real people right. Certainly, by the time I was writing the finale, I started brainstorming, and I had one dream for (lesbian women's rights activist) Roma Guy and that was Mary-Louise Parker, and I had one dream for Cleve Jones and that was Guy Pearce.

Then, I got this very emotional, beautiful phone call from Michael K. Williams (who plays Ken Jones, African-American community organizer) while I was at the airport scouting locations in San Francisco. He told me how personally meaningful the scripts were to him, and he talked about the people he lost – his friends and fellow artists in New York – when he was growing up, and I could just tell it was coming from a very personal place, so you can't beat that personal connection.

The young cast – we went out searching, and we just wanted to cast the very best people. (Transgender civil rights leader) Cecilia Chung was a really interesting one to me. I had said to my casting director that I only wanted to cast trans actors and actresses in the show to play the trans roles, and they brought up Ivory (Aquino) to play Cecilia Chung. I got a little upset with him and said, "You know, I told you it's important we make an effort and cast trans actors and actresses for these roles," and he said, "We think you need to get on the phone with Ivory," and Ivory came out to me as trans on the phone call. She's now come out to the world.

Why was it important for you to include actual trans actors in the trans roles?

First and foremost, when I'm casting any role, I'm gonna look for somebody who can bring a part of their experience to the role. They still have to be a great actor, so if I can't find anyone in the world who shares some experience that they're about to portray in this character, who's also a good actor, then I'll happily go for someone else. And the big surprise is, it was _not_ hard to find amazing trans actors and actresses to play these parts. What was difficult was deciding who to cast because so many great tapes came in. So, I call bullshit on Hollywood if they say it's difficult. And if they think it's difficult, then they should call our casting

directors because they found unbelievable trans actors and actresses, and it was actually tough to decide *who* to cast.

I think people have the impression it is difficult based on what they've heard from directors and casting agents, so this is refreshing to hear.

It's not true. I'll tell you what was difficult: Years ago, it was difficult to find openly gay actors to play openly gay roles –*that* was difficult. When we were doing *Milk*, that's what we said we wanted to do, and the studio gave us full permission to do that. So, we called agents and manager friends and they all said they didn't have any gay actors or actresses, which is funny since I knew some of their clients *were* gay! (Laughs)

It was very frustrating, but thankfully that's begun to change as well, particularly in this young generation of actors and actresses who, in one way or another, have come out on social media when they were kids and there's no putting them back in the closet in today's social-media age.

An interesting tidbit to share is, they also worked incredibly hard with the real people when that was possible. For both the young cast and the old cast, on my own dime, I flew up the real people to wherever we were shooting so they could be there to work with the costume department, the set design department and the actors, just to make sure we were as close to truthful as possible.

Do you remember the first time you stood up for something you believed in?

(Ponders) My mom was paralyzed from polio since she was 7 years old. She had the use of her arms, but that was about it. So, I grew up with a severely disabled mom, and I didn't quite know that or realize that until I was probably 7 years old, somewhere in the early years of elementary school when we started having to be out in public with strangers. The way they looked at her and the way they treated her, it ate at me.

I was an incredibly shy kid. I rarely said a word in school. But there was this student named Anthony who was severely mentally disabled, and he would get bullied constantly. I remember the time I finally stood up for him. I was very afraid, because I was a tiny little thing (laughs). And I remember trembling, but the bullies backed down. I told that story to my mom, and

my mom looked me in the eyes and said, "You have a strong sense of justice – where does that come from?" And the answer is pretty obvious: I was hiding a pretty big difference of my own, and I knew at that point that I had crushes on my guy friends and not the girls in school. Certainly, having watched my mom being treated so differently because of her difference, those sorts of moments of witness instilled a sense of justice in me.

And now you are one of our most recognized activists.

Well, your job's incredibly important right now. I can't overstate how much we depend on journalists right now to stand up for the truth, so good on you.

We both tell stories about LGBT people, and I imagine, like me, you hope that non-queers see your work and come away with a sense of just... humanity.

That's the key, isn't it? Listen, this show is for ABC. As a kid who grew up watching ABC in the South in a Christian, military home I knew I could show up at the dinner table with all the laws and facts and science I wanted and I wouldn't change a single mind. You want to change a mind in that other America? You gotta lead from the heart, and you do that by telling stories, not by arguing facts or the Constitution.

So, that's what I came armed with for *When We Rise*. I went out and did my best to find true stories – in particular, stories of families, because the family story transcends these two Americas. There's not a lot we think we have in common right now, but both Americas have family stories, and we can both be moved by each other's family stories. That's why I mine family stories: the families we lost when so many of us were outed or came out, the makeshift families we had to build to survive, and eventually the families we were able to build and raise.

So, by that design, you tell an emotional story, you can change a heart; if you can change a heart, you can change a mind; you change a mind, you can change the law. But it goes in that order, and so this is the first step of that. Let's try and change some hearts.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).



A PATRIOT ACT

[by Russ White]

She could have made it political. ***She was a patriot.***

She could have played it safe. ***She jumped off the freaking building.***

She could have lip-synced to a track. ***She sang live. All of it.***

At a time when this country is deeply divided, Lady Gaga delivered the performance of her life at Super Bowl 51. Never one to fear controversy or the spotlight, Gaga's intentions were clear—she was here to be herself and bring fans the spectacular exhibition they wanted to see. She went above and beyond, starting with a jaw-dropping entrance, leaping off the top of the stadium in Houston, Texas, flying to her performance platform high above the 50-yard line.

Taking another aerial leap—synchronized with the pyrotechnics around her, and drone guided lights above her, Gaga descended to her monsters below, who quickly surrounded her like bees to their queen, as billows of smoke distract the audience from the unharnessing that is happening before their eyes.

Lady Gaga built a personal brand that elevates her to practically any sponsorship she would choose to pitch. This year she didn't choose sugar water or sports drinks. She didn't choose alcohol. She didn't choose social media. She chose Tiffany & Co. The music superstar that breaks barriers with grand entrances that

have included outrageous shoes, styles, sunglasses, meat dresses partnered with Tiffany's to produce a halftime commercial reminiscent of Audrey Hepburn sophistication (*the Vince Lombardi Trophy has designed and produced by Tiffany for every Super Bowl since 1967*).

Gaga performed the Super Bowl 51 halftime show as the only headliner, the first time since The Who in 2010 and the only solo artist since Prince in 2007. She performed the 7-song, 15-minute show for free, a brilliant marketing ploy to announce her Joanne World tour, and to the delight of drag queens everywhere, a Season 9 guest judge spot on RuPaul's Drag Race.

A performer that pushes conventional and conservative boundaries with songs like "Born this Way" and "Bad Romance" paired with scant costuming performed at the largest testosterone-infused commercial sporting event in the world during one of the most politically heated times in modern history. The social climate was prime for divisiveness and soapboxing, yet there was no headline-grabbing opposition.

She literally dove onto the stage, gave one of the most memorable SuperBowl halftime shows in history, one of the most fulfilling performances of her life, and exited into history with grace and dignity.

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