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Mistresses of Illusion

Ashantee Black DeFox
and Ivana Tramp
put 'a Vegas twist' on drag
by Tammye Nash, Page 10

What is DESCOVY?

DESCOVY is a prescription medicine that is used together with other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years and older. DESCOVY is not for use to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. DESCOVY combines 2 medicines into 1 pill taken once a day. Because DESCOVY by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1, it must be used together with other HIV-1 medicines.

DESCOVY does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS.

To control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses, you must keep taking DESCOVY. Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to reduce the risk of passing HIV-1 to others. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about DESCOVY?

DESCOVY may cause serious side effects:

- **Buildup of an acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Serious liver problems.** The liver may become large and fatty. Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turning yellow (jaundice); dark "tea-colored" urine; light-colored bowel movements (stools); loss of appetite; nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking DESCOVY for a long time. In some cases, lactic acidosis and serious liver problems have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** DESCOVY is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV and stop taking DESCOVY, your HBV may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking DESCOVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health.

What are the other possible side effects of DESCOVY?

Serious side effects of DESCOVY may also include:

- **Changes in body fat**, which can happen in people taking HIV-1 medicines.
- **Changes in your immune system.** Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new symptoms after you start taking DESCOVY.
- **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys. Your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking DESCOVY if you develop new or worse kidney problems.
- **Bone problems**, such as bone pain, softening, or thinning, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.

The most common side effect of DESCOVY is nausea. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or don't go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking DESCOVY?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- **All the medicines you take**, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Other medicines may affect how DESCOVY works. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist. Ask your healthcare provider if it is safe to take DESCOVY with all of your other medicines.
- **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if DESCOVY can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking DESCOVY.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about DESCOVY, including important warnings, on the following page.

Ask your healthcare provider if an HIV-1 treatment that contains DESCOVY® is right for you.



LOVE

WHAT'S
INSIDE

(des-KOH-vee)

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT DESCOVY

DESCOVY may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Buildup of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Severe liver problems**, which in some cases can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark “tea-colored” urine; loss of appetite; light-colored bowel movements (stools); nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** DESCOVY is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking DESCOVY. Do not stop taking DESCOVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking DESCOVY or a similar medicine for a long time.

ABOUT DESCOVY

- DESCOVY is a prescription medicine that is used together with other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years of age and older. DESCOVY is **not** for use to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- **DESCOVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** Ask your healthcare provider about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

HOW TO TAKE DESCOVY

- DESCOVY is a one pill, once a day HIV-1 medicine that is taken with other HIV-1 medicines.
- Take DESCOVY with or without food.

IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about DESCOVY® and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and your treatment.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF DESCOVY

DESCOVY can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the “Most Important Information About DESCOVY” section.
- Changes in body fat.
- Changes in your immune system.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Bone problems.

The most common side effect of DESCOVY is nausea.

These are not all the possible side effects of DESCOVY. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking DESCOVY.

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with DESCOVY.

BEFORE TAKING DESCOVY

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical condition.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with DESCOVY.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about DESCOVY. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
- Go to DESCOVY.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit DESCOVY.com for program information.



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Ashantee Black DeFox and Ivana Tramp. Photo by Tammye Nash.
Design by Kevin Thomas

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DallasVoice.com/Category/Instant-Tea

First cracks appear in SB6

Anti-transgender forces may be starting to cave in their fight to regulate where transgender people pee.

An amendment to SB6, better known as the Texas bathroom bill, would exempt stadiums and convention centers from the regulation. In addition to the cost of inspecting everyone's vagina before entering a restroom at places like AT&T Stadium or the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas, the NCAA and NFL have threatened boycotts of states with bathroom bills. The Final Four has already been moved from Charlotte to San Antonio next year because of a bathroom bill in North Carolina, costing that state tens of millions in revenue.

Sports boycotts, however, are not dependent on allowing transgender fans to pee in their arenas. They're prompted by opposition to state-sponsored discrimination.

"It exposes how bullshit this bill is," said transgender activist Leslie McMurray. "The bill is supposed to be about 'safety.' Are they saying women are inherently safer in stadium bathrooms and not in need of protection?"

She also pointed out that with this exemption, children who weren't allowed to use the restroom in their schools could just run over to the American Airlines Center and pee.

— David Taffet



Gonzalez files sex ed bill; Johnson files immigrant protections

On Valentines Day, state Rep. Mary Gonzalez, D-El Paso, filed HB1547 a bill to expand sex education in the state of Texas. Currently, all sex

education is abstinence-based. Her bill would require evidence-based, age-appropriate information on birth control be taught.

"We say we don't want abortion, but we're also not providing sex education that will limit teen pregnancy," Gonzalez told KVUE in Austin.

Texas regularly is in the top five states for teen pregnancy and six out of 10 high school seniors admit to having sex. Abstinence-only sex educa-

tion that includes teaching teens that condoms don't work isn't preventing teen pregnancy. Gonzalez bill would require accurate teaching of birth control.

State Rep. Eric Johnson, D-Dallas, filed HB1855 to protect immigrant communities by prohibiting Texas law enforcement officers from asking witnesses or crime victims about their immigration status. Data shows that immigrant communities underreport crime because they fear being questioned about their immigration status. Underreporting makes immigrant populations especially vulnerable, as they are often targeted by criminals.

"The well-being and safety of our communities should be the first priority of Texas' public safety agenda. All too often immigrants fear that their 9-1-1 call will result in them being separated from their families," Johnson said. "There is a clear need for consistent policies regarding this issue — policies that put public safety first."

— David Taffet



DMA expands this season's Arts & Letters live with Chelsea Clinton

For more than two decades, the Dallas Museum of Art's Arts & Letters Live program has brought in many

authors, activists and artists to talk about their work in a seminar-like session. This season's lineup was just expanded, however, to add two more writers: Christina Baker Kline, author of *Orphan Train*, will discuss her latest, *A Piece of the World*, on April 3. But even more exciting is the "get" of Chelsea Clinton, who will appear on April 23 to discuss her book *It's Your World*.

Tickets are currently on sale to the general public (\$40). VIP tickets are available for the evening event with Chelsea Clinton and include reserved front-section seating, a paperback copy of *It's Your World* and a "fast track" pass for the book signing following the event; VIP tickets are \$55 with discounts for students and DMA members. Order online at DMA.org/tickets or call 214-922-1818.

— Arnold Wayne Jones



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THE GAY AGENDA

OBITUARY



Michele Anne Cox, 56, passed away peacefully on Sunday, Jan. 29, after a courageous battle with cancer. She was born Feb 17, 1960.

Michele was a Dallas-area Realtor and a longtime and prominent community leader. She will be greatly missed by friends and family. She worked extensively with the Old Oak Cliff Conservation League, chairing the Oak Cliff Home Tour for four years. Her colleagues at OOCCL praised her invaluable service to the Oak Cliff community.

She is survived by her mother, two brothers and a sister, all of Dallas, as well as a multitude of friends from Dallas and Galveston.

A mass of Christian burial was held on Friday, Feb. 3, at Christ the King Catholic Church, 8017 Preston Road in Dallas.

Rest in peace, dear friend. You were truly loved and we will never forget you.

Have an event coming up? Email your information to Managing Editor Tammye Nash at nash@dallasvoice.com or Senior Staff Writer David Taffet at taffet@dallasvoice.com by Wednesday at 5 p.m. for that week's issue.

• **Weekly: Lambda Weekly every Sunday at 1 p.m. on 89.3 KNON-FM.** This week's

guests are transgender activists **Katie Sprinkle** and **Leslie McMurray**; **United Black Ellument** hosts discussion on HIV / AIDS in the black community (UBE Connected) at 7 p.m. every fourth Tuesday of the month at 3116 Commerce St., Suite C; **Core Group Meeting** every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month at

pet of the week / LUCIANO

Meet **Luciano**, a 2-year-old, 58-pound pit bull mix who is a real sweetheart. He's still learning how to live in the "people world" and although some people find him intimidating because of his size, he's actually a gentle giant. He moves slowly and likes hanging out with other laid back dogs. He's pretty shy and needs a warm-up period when getting to know new people. So he would like a calm, quiet home with a family who understands that he likes to move at a turtle's pace. Luciano has been neutered, microchipped and is up to date on his age-appropriate vaccinations. #151423

Luciano is waiting for you at the SPCA of Texas' Jan Rees-Jones Animal Care Center in Dallas, 2400 Lone Star Drive near I-30 and Hampton Road. Hours are noon-6 p.m., seven days a week. Regular adoption fees are \$250 for puppies, \$125 for adult dogs 6 months or older and kittens 0-6 months, \$75 for adult cats 6 months or older and \$50 for senior dogs or cats 7 years or older and VIP dogs and cats (available for adoption for 30 days or more.) Fee includes spay/neuter surgery, age-appropriate vaccinations, a heartworm test for dogs six months and older and a FIV/FelV test for cats 4 months and older, initial flea/tick preventative and heartworm preventative, a microchip, 30 days of PetHealth Insurance provided by PetPlan, a free 14-day wellness exam with VCA Animal Hospitals, a rabies tag and a free leash. Call 214-742-SPCA (7722) or visit today.



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7 p.m.; **Fuse game night** every Monday evening except the last of the month at 8 p.m. at the Fuse space in the Treymore Building, 4038 Lemmon Ave, Suite 101; **FuseConnect** every Wednesday from 7 p.m. For more information call or e-mail Jalenzski at 214-760-9718 ext 3 or Janenzski@myresourcecenter.org. LGBT square dancing group **Pegasus Squares** meets every Sunday from 3-5 p.m. at Dallas School of Burlesque, 2924 Main St. #103; **Dallas Frontrunners** meet for a walk or run on the Katy trail at the Robert E. Lee statue in Lee park every Wednesday at 7:15 p.m. and every Saturday at 9 a.m.

FEBRUARY

• Feb. 17: High Tech Happy Hour

Hosted by SMU Cox School of Business LGBTQ and Allies organization from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Meadows Museum, 5900 Bishop Blvd.

• Feb. 17: Mustache Envy & Queerlesque

A transmultigendernautical adventure through queerdome beginning at 10 p.m. at Sue Ellen's. 3014 Throckmorton St. For information visit Facebook.com/MustacheEnvyDallas.

• Feb. 18: Studi O69 Gaybingo

Monthly fundraiser for Resource Center takes place from 6-9 p.m. at the Rose Room at S4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. 214-540-4458. MyResourceCenter.org/gaybingo.

• Feb. 18: Boys Do Babs

The Turtle Creek Chorale, Camarata and Jodi Crawford Wright celebrate Barbra Streisand in a cabaret performance at 8 p.m. at 7 for Parties, 150 Turtle Creek Blvd. \$40-95. TurtleCreekChorale.com.

• Feb. 18: Pride@Work

Pride@Work Texas chapter meeting from 2-4 p.m. at Becky Moeller Auditorium, Texas AFL-CIO Building, 1106 Lavaca St., Austin.

• Feb. 18: BTIPS TX Crowning Debut

Crowning debut of the first Mr Black Trans Dallas, Trenton Johnson from, 3-5 p.m. at Black Transmen Inc, 3530 Forest Lane.

• Feb. 20: Gray Pride

Monday meet up for folks 50 and up to share your story, watch a movie, make a new friend or play a game from 1-5 p.m. at Resource Center 5750 Cedar Springs Road.

• Feb. 21: Awareness About the Care

Needs of LGBTQ Older Adults
1.5 CEUs available for social work and nursing home administrators offered by Ed-U-Care. Networking begins at 6 p.m. and programs at 6:30 p.m. at The Senior Source, 3910 Harry Hines Blvd. RSVP to Educaredallas@gmail.com.

• Feb. 21: Log Cabin Republicans

Dallas County D.A. Faith Johnson speaks at 6:30 p.m. at Coal Vines Pizza, 2404 Cedar Springs Road #500.

• Feb. 21: Stonewall Democrats

Monthly meeting from 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Sue Ellen's, 3014 Throckmorton St.

• Feb. 22: LGBT-friendly west coast swing class.

Dallas Pride Dance presents instructor Lori Hayner teaching the coolest dance in the universe for beginners, advanced, couples and singles. 8-10 pm at You Can Dance Dallas studio, 14833 Inwood Road, Addison. \$15 suggested donation per person. Everyone welcome. kapustinfan@yahoo.com; 940-297-7943.

• Feb. 23: Leah Lax speaks

Author Leah Lax talks about leaving the Chasidic world and coming out at 7 p.m. at Temple Emanu-el, 8500 Hillcrest Road.

• Feb. 24: Spring Fling

Mr. and Miss Charity America present Spring Fling benefiting the Texas Red Ribbon Wish Network, Rhonda Mae's Wall of Food and Tucker's Gift at 7:30 p.m. at Urban Cowboy, 2620 E. Lancaster Ave., Fort Worth.

• Feb. 25: Dash for the Beads

5K and 10K run, 1K walk and festival at Kidd Springs Park, 711 W. Canty St.

• Feb. 28: Last Night in Black History

Michael D'Andre Childs from Artist Unplugged emcees a showcase of fashion designs from students at The Art Institute of Dallas, tribal dance and music, storytelling, poetry speaks and honors influential black leaders in history benefiting Artitude, a new non-profit to unite LGBT and diverse community artists from 6:30-9:30 p.m. at J. Erik Jonsson Central Library, 1515 Young St.



Dallas County's new district attorney, Faith Johnson, talks to Log Cabin Republicans on Tuesday. See listing for details.

MARCH

• March 2: Cirque du Soleil Promise House benefit

Kurios at 8 p.m. at Lone Star Park, 1000 Lone Star Parkway, Grand Prairie. Tickets \$85-100 at PromiseHouse.org.

• March 3-5: Scoot Back to Big D

Pegasus Squares LGBT square dancing club hosts its inaugural Fly-In with more than 15 hours of dancing in two concurrent halls. Sons of Hermann Hall, 3414 Elm St. The host hotel is LaQuinta, 10001 N. Central Expressway.

• March 4: Toast to Life

Lady Bunny returns to host the Resource Center fundraiser from 7-11 p.m. at Empire Room, 1225 N. Riverfront Blvd.

• March 8: Planned Parenthood Awards Luncheon

Marcia Clark is the speaker. Tickets are \$150. Reservations at 214-302-8382.

• March 17: Mustache Envy & Queerlesque

A transmultigendernautical adventure through queerdome beginning at 10 p.m. at Sue Ellen's. 3014 Throckmorton St. For information visit Facebook.com/MustacheEnvyDallas.

• March 18: Pot O' Gold Gaybingo

Monthly fundraiser for Resource Center takes place from 6-9 p.m. at the Rose Room at S4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. 214-540-4458. MyResourceCenter.org/gaybingo.

• March 20: Advocacy Day in Austin

Speak to your legislators. GALA North Texas will sponsor buses to Austin. Texas State Capitol, 1100 Congress Ave., Austin.

• March 23-25: Topsy Turvy

The Turtle Creek Chorale presents Topsy Turvy: Songs You Thought You Knew at 7:30 p.m. at City Performance Hall, 2520 Flora St. \$25-65. TurtleCreekChorale.com.

• March 25: AIDS Walk South Dallas

From 8 a.m.-1 p.m. at Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center, 2922 MLK Jr. Blvd.

• March 31-April 2: Texas Traditions Rodeo

Texas Gay Rodeo Association presents Texas Traditions Rodeo. Gates open at 11 a.m. at Diamond T Arena, 6900 E. Sherman Drive, Denton.

APRIL

• April 8: No Tie Dinner

This year's theme is An Artful Life, inspired by the pop artists. From 7-10 p.m. at Frontiers of Flight Museum, 6911 Lemmon Ave. \$75. Tickets at NoTieDinner.org

• April 15: Purple Gaybingo

Monthly fundraiser for Resource Center takes place from 6-9 p.m. at the Rose Room at S4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. 214-540-4458. MyResourceCenter.org/gaybingo.

illusion

Mistresses of

Ashantee Black DeFox and Ivana Tramp bring Grace Jones and Tina Turner to life each Saturday night at Rainbow Lounge

TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor
nash@dallasvoice.com

"It's drag ... but with a twist."

That's how Ashantee Black DeFox explains the Illusions show that she and Ivana Tramp host each Saturday night at Rainbow Lounge in Fort Worth.

Both Ashantee and Ivana are veterans in the North Texas drag scene. Both have been performing in clubs — locally and elsewhere — for several years, and both have pageant titles to their credit.

Their names and faces sure to be familiar to fans.

But then again, it's not really their faces you'll see onstage each Saturday at Rainbow Lounge.

"We're hired to do

specific characters, to give the illusion of specific performers, and we bring in special guests each week not just to do drag, but to do specific performers," Ashantee continued. "It's drag, with a twist of Las Vegas."

Ashantee is known for her illusion of Grace Jones, and Ivana for her illusion of Tina Turner. In recent weeks, they have welcomed to the Rainbow Lounge stage stars like Tommie Ross performing as Diana Ross, Sweet Savage performing as Cher and Candy Cane performing as Mariah Carey. They brought in an entertainer from Memphis to perform as Reba McEntire, and one from Houston presenting the illusion of Selena.

You never know, the two show hosts agreed, who you will see on the stage. And their Illusions show at Rainbow Lounge has a reach that extends beyond the LGBT community, Ashantee said: "We cater to the hetero community, too. We have a lot of people who come in for private parties, wedding showers and things like that."

Neither Ashantee nor Ivana is new to the drag scene, nor are they new to the art of illusion. "We work nationally," Ashantee said. "We do cruises, events, private parties. I went to the Grace Jones concert [dressed as] Grace Jones, and people just freaked out. I went on *America's Got Talent* and performed as Grace Jones."

Ivana described one job where a client "booked me [as Tina Turner] and the B-52s — the actual band — to do a show for his wife, who was dying of cancer."

Another time, she said, she went out in New Orleans during Mardi Gras, again dressed as Tina. When she stepped out of the car, the crowd around her went wild, grabbing at her and taking photos.

"I had someone fly me to California to perform as Tina Turner in a double-wide trailer. I performed at the side of a pool, at expensive hotels, even at children's parties," Ivana said.

"Illusion and drag are differ-

ent," she added, "and there's good things and bad things about doing mostly illusion. On the bad side, I've gotten stuck doing Tina Turner; I don't have the chance to do a lot of other stuff. But on the good side, I've had a lot of opportunities and gotten to meet a lot of people because of performing as Tina Turner."

"We live these characters," Ashantee said. "Anybody can say that they are [performing as] a certain singer, but can you really look like that person? Illusion is more than just lip-syncing somebody's song."

Ivana added, "That's true. We get really upset with some of these queens who think they can just throw on anything and be a character. That's not illusion."

Ashantee said that she and Ivana have known each other for about 25 years. But since they started the Illusions show at Rainbow Lounge, they have become family as well as coworkers.

"If I am having a bad day — like I forgot a wig or some shoes — she'll have something for me to use. We pick up for each other, and help each other out," Ashantee said.

But their connection goes beyond the stage; they are there for each other in their personal lives, too. Ashantee explained that when her mother died recently, Ivana was there to keep her going.

"It's always been my dream to be Miss Texas USofA, but when my mother died, I was ready to give up. This lady right here," she said, reaching over to wrap an arm around Ivana's shoulder, "this lady told me not to give up. She knew I wanted to just give up, but she told me to keep going, that my mother would want to see me happy."

Ashantee said she is also taking care of her special needs sister and her little brother, and that she knows Ivana is there to support her in those efforts, too.

"I've never lost my own mother, so I couldn't say, 'Oh, I know how you feel,'" Ivana said. "But I know what it's like to love your family and to worry about them."

In fact, Ivana moved back to her parents' home in Arlington to help them after her father was injured in a fall. And, she said, she had given up life onstage.

"I wasn't having any fun, so I had stopped performing for about five



Ashantee Black DeFox

years," Ivana said. She said she had moved back to her parents, and eating her mama's cooking had added a few pounds. Then a friend opened a restaurant in Dallas called Tallywackers and asked her to come out of her early retirement to stage a show there.

"He made me an offer, and I told him give me six months to lose some weight," she said. "But then the restaurant closed. Still, Ivana decided that she did want to perform again, and the Illusions show at Rainbow Lounge was the perfect opportunity."

"Coming back to performing made me come to life again," she said.

Ashantee and Ivana both say they know they are getting older, and they started at a time when all drag was more like illusion — "Everybody was trying to be their hero," Ivana said — but they both also know that they have something special to offer their audiences.

"We're still kicking it!" Ashantee declared.

"Sometimes," Ivana added, "you're just tired. You just don't want to get dressed up and go out on that stage. But then, we start putting on that makeup and — boom! We are ready to go."

"We feed off each other," she continued. "There's just that little click — you put on that last bit of lipstick or spray on your perfume, and there it is. You feel that click and you know, it's show time!"

"We do love it," Ashantee said. "That's the most important thing, the thing that makes us the best. We have that passion, a passion to make people smile and give them a show that leaves them feeling good."



Ivana Tramp

From liberal to ultra-orthodox and back again

Leah Lax's memoir tells how she left the Chasidic world and found herself again

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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It's the tale of how a child of 1960s liberals, who grew up at classically Reform Temple Emanu-el on Hillcrest Road in Dallas, spent years in an arranged marriage where birth control was not allowed, and lived with a covered body. And it is told in Leah Lax's memoir, *Uncovered: How I Left Chasidic Life and Finally Came Home*.

She will tell her story at Temple Emanu-el at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 23.

Lax called her move to the world of the ultra-Orthodox an act of rebellion against her parents and her upbringing. But, as she now admits, she soon learned, "That's no place for a baby lesbian."

Still, her attraction to Chasidism was more than rebellion. She said she embraced



the beautiful teachings and, as a cellist, lost herself in the melodic minor-key music the movement produced. She studied the religion and thought of herself as a Yeshiva boy — you know, as in *Yentl*.

But Lax's marriage was stifling. Her cello went into the closet. And, of course, this wasn't *Yentl* and she wasn't permitted to study.

"I lost myself as I matured," Lax said.

Her husband proposed the night they met on a date she described as taking place in a Sears parking lot. Over the next 10 years, she had seven children and a miscarriage, then found herself pregnant again.

"In the Chasidic world, they define man-

hood and womanhood for you," she said. "This is how a woman walks. This is how a woman talks. This is how a woman behaves."

She called her husband distant — even described him as having Asperger's symptoms — but brilliant, with degrees in physics and math and a doctorate in biophysics.

But her final pregnancy was a breaking point.

"I was either going to have an abortion or I was going to die," she said.

For that, Lax knew, she needed the permission of the rabbi. In Judaism, abortion is required if it is a situation of choosing between the life of the fetus and the life of the mother. Their rabbi, reluctantly, agreed not to stop her because he knew her mental health was at stake.

"That's when I woke up," Lax said. "I own my body."

That was also the end of her marriage and when she came out as lesbian. Living in Houston, her attorney advised her she had no chance of gaining custody of her children. Most of them were no longer living at home, because they were shipped off to boarding Yeshivas — religious schools — at age 14, so she agreed.

She left the marriage and her home with little more than her cello. Coming out was natural for her.

"I've never been attracted to anyone oth-

er than a woman," she said.

What she had to learn was how to do everyday tasks. She didn't know how to order off a menu, read a lease or use a remote control.

"I thought the Internet was irrelevant," she said. "I felt like a refugee in my own country."

That concept sparked the idea of collecting immigrant stories for a new book — something, she said, that suddenly became even more relevant in the age of Trump.

For years, Lax struggled to tell her own story and worked for years to write it. When she was accepted in a women's month-long writing retreat, Gloria Steinem took her under her wing and even provided the title to her book. Lax said she had been trying to write a feminist memoir, but didn't have the language until her friendship with Steinem developed.

The book has brought her very close with two of her children. Four of the seven have left the Chasidic world, but she had no relationship with those still living in that world.

Lax said she counts her abortion as the most important thing she did in her life.

"Until I owned my body, I couldn't make any decisions," she said.

And how's her life today?

"I fell in love," she said. "We're together 12 years." And her book is being turned into an opera. ■

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Countdown to a Gay Games decision

Dallas is among 8 cities bidding to host the 2022 Gay Games, and aiming to make the final 3 cut on Feb. 28

TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor
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In just 11 days, the Federation of Gay Games will narrow down the field of eight cities vying to host the 2022 Gay Games. And the Dallas Sports Commission is pulling for Big D to be one of the final three contenders announced on Feb. 28.

DSC revealed its intent to bid on the 2022 Gay Games last October, with openly gay Olympic gold medalist Greg Louganis making the announcement during the 2016 Black Tie Dinner. Video of that announcement was part of the Dallas committee's presentation to the FGG a few weeks later in Sydney, Australia.

With anywhere from 10,000 to 15,000 competitors expected to attend the 2022 Gay Games, bringing with them about 25,000 partners, family members and friends, DSC Executive Director Monica Paul said the games would have an economic impact of about \$60 million on Dallas and the Metroplex.

In addition, she continued, hosting the games would give Dallas international exposure as a destination for tourists from around the world. "We are already a destination city, but this could really change the perception of Dallas in terms of being a city with a very strong LGBT population. We are very proud of that and we want to be known as an inclusive city," she said. "People might not automatically think of 'open-minded' and 'inclusive' when they think of Texas. But we want them to know Dallas is open-minded and inclusive."

The other cities that have submitted bids to host the games in five years are San Francisco (the city where the games were founded and where the federation is now based), Salt Lake City, Denver, Austin, Washington D.C., Hong Kong and Guadalajara. Paul said recently she thinks Dallas has a very good chance at making the final three.

"Everybody has their strengths and weaknesses," Paul said of the eight contending cities. "You look at San Francisco, for example. That's where the Gay Games originated. They have history there, so that might give them an advantage. But at the

same time, San Francisco is a very expensive city.

The truth is, we haven't really been comparing ourselves to the other cities. We have been focused on what we have to offer and making sure the committee sees those things," she said. "Now, if we make it to the short list, then comes the analysis of the other cities' bids and focus on highlighting our strengths as compared to the other two."

Dallas, Paul continued, definitely has some advantages. For one, the Gay Games draw competitors and spectators from around the world, and Dallas has the advantage of having DFW International Airport handy, making travel easier for international athletes to get here.

Plus, Paul said, there's also Dallas Love Field, located just minutes from the heart of the city and giving U.S. participants more options for travel.

"We have a lot of things on our side," she said. "Look at the sports culture here in Dallas. Just speaking from that perspective, we have everything you need to host the games. And the Gay Games aren't just about sports; there's a very strong cultural aspect to them. And Dallas has that covered, too. We have one of the largest urban arts districts anywhere."

There is no competition associated with the cultural component of the games, Paul said. "Instead, it is more exhibit based," she explained. "We will have a film festival. The Turtle Creek Chorale and the Women's Chorus of Dallas would play a big role in that part. The people in the Arts District and the city's cultural groups will take a role in planning that side of the events."

DART is another big component of Dallas' Gay Games bid, offering participants "ease of transportation from the airports to the athletes' village, and ease of travel to the sports venues and the cultural venues," Paul said.

FGG committee members have asked about accessibility of the venues in relation to the athletes' village — which, Paul said, would be constructed using money from sponsorships and from fundraising efforts — and about the venues in general.

"I'm very confident in the venues that we have put forth, and I know they will be great partners for us," she said. "And we have had overwhelmingly positive response from Mayor Mike Rawl-



DSC Executive Director Monica Paul



ings and the majority of the Dallas City Council members have signed a letter supporting the bid."

Dallas County Treasurer Pauline Medrano is supporting the effort, Sheriff Lupe Valdez, the Dallas County Commissioners, state Sen. Royce West and former U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson. The Dallas bid also has "a very solid financial model in place going into the process," which gives Big D another advantage.

Noting that Texas' western heritage "always pops up" when visitors think of coming to Dallas, so the local committee chose to include rodeo among the sports that would be included in the 2022 games if Dallas wins the bid to host.

"I think we're the only U.S. city offering rodeo. Not including it would have been a huge missed opportunity," Paul said. "We have a very passionate and very strong LGBT rodeo organization here in TGRA. In fact, we have a number of great LGBT sports organizations — softball, volleyball, bowling, rodeo — that would be integral to our success. That is a definite strength for us."

"One unique component we would be adding is cheerleading. It's always been on the cultural side of the games before, but in Dallas, cheerleading is part of our DNA. It just fit for us to include it in the competition," Paul said.

Paul acknowledged that the conservative bent of the Texas Legislature's current session does cast a bit of a shadow over Dallas' bid for the 2022 games. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick's "bathroom bill" has prompted questions from the FGG committee making

the decision, for example. But Paul pointed out that the measure is unpopular with many Texans, and that there is a big push — led by Dallas' own convention and visitors bureau, now called Visit Dallas, and others in the state's business community.

"The state's political climate, the country's political climate could change drastically between now and 2022," she said.

She continued, "When you put it all together — two airports, a hub for American Airlines, the cultural aspects, the cost per participant — I think we have it all."

"I think we have a great opportunity here. We want to further understand the long-term vision of what the FGG wants, and we want to help them get there by hosting the games in 2022. The FGG's mission is about inclusion and diversity, and it is hard to have an inclusive model when your city is too expensive. You want everybody to feel they have access."

The motto for Visit Dallas is "Big things happen here," Paul noted. And she wants to the Federation of Gay Games to know the city will go all out to welcome participants and make the 2022 games the best yet.

"We want to host the Gay Games, and we want it to be the best executed and best produced Gay Games they've ever seen," she said. "That's our theme: Go Big." ■

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A transformative weekend

TLI2 offered ideas, inspiration and hope

This past weekend, transgender people from all over Texas — along with parents of transgender kids — met in Dallas for TLI2 (Transgender Leadership Institute 2). It was the second such weekend-long seminar on activism organized by Equality Texas and Freedom For All Americans. The first was held in Houston late last year.

In addition to the two organizing groups, there were presentations from Rebecca Kling from the National Center for Transgender Equality and representatives from the ACLU, Transgender Law Center, TransGriot and several other organizations.

There was a “get to know you” reception on Friday night, then on Saturday after an early breakfast, the intensive work began. The workshop challenged us to examine our beliefs and why we do what we do. It offered suggestions on how to do it better and be more effective advocates and leaders in our communities.

Topics ranged from transgender issues to racial justice and immigration, a topic that has been in the news and maybe even on your street.

Rebecca Kling from NCTE spent a good amount of time on helping us craft our stories. It’s not as easy as you might think: Writing just to make yourself feel better is different than writing to make a specific point or to advance a cause. Understanding who you are addressing and what you want them to do are key elements in shaping your story.

The conversation on intersectionality was a spirited discussion. Our group was quite diverse and everyone had a voice.

I was familiar with the word, but not the origin of “intersectionality.” It was coined in 1989 by Kimberle’ Williams Crenshaw, and stemmed from a discrimination lawsuit was filed on behalf of an African-American woman who claimed that African-American women were not being promoted based on their status.



Leslie McMurray
Accidental Activist

The law said that race and sex could not be combined, so there were two trials. But because the company could show that women were being promoted and that African-American men were being promoted, both cases were

defeated.

The fact remained that African-American women were not being promoted but thanks to a technicality, the law at the time provided no recourse.

The value of contact with local, state and federal representatives was emphasized throughout TLI2. Personal contact through office visits, lobbying and testimony is the most powerful, followed by phone calls, letters and finally, e-mail, everyone agreed.

A phrase came up that I hadn’t heard before: “Oppression Olympics” (I hope the IOC doesn’t sue!). This is the idea that we seem to be running a long race against each other to determine who is the most oppressed when it’s really not a contest at all.

The weekend’s discussion also include a really good description of “privilege,” describing it as all of us playing the exact same video game, except each of us is given different tools or weapons within the game that we didn’t earn; they’re just randomly handed out.

If you have an armored tank, the game gets pretty easy. If all you have is a stick, things are much harder. So some people have an advantage not due to differences in skill, but because of unearned resources.

For me, what made this whole experience magical was the presence and participation of parents — partly because it wasn’t expected. My preconceived notion was that it would just be transgender

people there. Each of us learned a few new things.

See, the parents who come to events like this wouldn’t be there if they weren’t loving and supportive of their kids. There were a lot of tears as some of the adult trans people described being thrown out of the house or abused by their parents. More than one mom shouted “I’ll adopt you!” Or “I have a guest room.”

I feel like each of us came away with a large adopted family.

I was deeply affected by a mom who worries about her football player son. She is not worried that he can’t handle himself or that he will be injured on the playing field, She worries that in a locker room setting, four or five other players may gang up on him and he won’t be able to fight back effectively.

She worries that he may be sexually assaulted. How many moms of football players have that concern?

Legislators pushing SB6 — the Texas “bathroom bill” — have it backwards: trans kids aren’t the ones the other kids need protection from, trans kids are the ones who need protection.

Now more than ever, action is needed. Facebook posts are fine, but unless the Texas Legislature is on your “friends list,” your message isn’t reaching the right ears.

You have to vote. You have to speak out, and you have to make sure the right people hear you.

You can track bills in the Texas Legislature online at Capitol.State.tx.us. Pay attention to what’s happening in Austin, and show up for committee hearings. Wear purple when you go.

Write letters. Make phone calls. Recruit your friends. Make your voice heard.

Sometimes, it can feel like the whole world is against us. It was so nice to be in a huge room full of people this weekend and feel so much love. ■

Leslie McMurray, a transgender woman, is a former radio DJ who lives and works in Dallas. Read more of her blogs at lesliemichelle44.wordpress.com.

LIFE+STYLE

circus

Cabinet level position

We chat with Nathan Dennis,
one of the out artists with
Cirque du Soleil's newest show,
'Kurios — Cabinet of Curiosities'



It's a cliché that at some point, all young boys dream of running away to join the circus. A circus. Any circus. You'd think it hasn't actually happened since the Great Depression. But for Nathan Dennis, not only is it literally true, it is exactly the future he imagined.

"I saw a Cirque du Soleil show when I was about 13," recalls the native of Brisbane in Queensland, Australia. The show was one of Cirque's earliest touring productions: *Saltimbanco*. "I said to my mother that I would really like to do that. My mom thought I was a little crazy but I wanted run away with the circus."

But what exactly was the "that" they were doing, and how does a tween prepare for a career in the circus? Dennis was pretty savvy about it.

"I made the link between what I saw [under the big top], and gymnastics," he says. "When I was younger, I was always hand-standing and was a little bit acrobatic." But he immediately began taking formal gymnastics classes, perfecting his tumbles and jumps and stretches — all with one goal: To join Cirque du Soleil.

"My main background was trampoline, so [I felt comfortable applying that to] all the acts in Cirque that involve an aerial element. That's how I made the link. If I had

good aerial awareness, I could do a double somersault from a swing or a trapeze."

Ummm... Aerial awareness? Explain for us couch potatoes, please. Dennis laughs.

"It's pretty much just have a good ability to know where you are when in the air," he explains. "To [execute] which trick you are doing, you need to be a little fearless, as well. It all comes naturally to me."

After years of practice, once he finished high school, he auditioned.

And he was hired.

For *Saltimbanco* — the very show that triggered his fascination in the first place.

Talk about lightning in a bottle.

That was, remarkably, about a decade ago. In the intervening time, Dennis has moved into one of Cirque's newest productions: *Kurios* — *Cabinet of Curiosities*, which is now in its more than month-long run under the distinctive colorful tent at Lone Star Park in Grand Prairie. And while Dennis has been with the show for nearly three years, the run-up to it has been a lengthy and daunting undertaking.

Ever wonder how the creative folks at Cirque du Soleil put together a new show from soup to nuts? Dennis has lived it.

Cirque management had begun to hear feedback that, after 30 years of performances, their shows were becoming a little predictable. To address that, the director and writer of the show, Michel Laprise, declared a mandate: Get rid of what they were doing out of habit versus what they did out of necessity (safety, for instance). The result is *Kurios*.

One thing that sets apart the act Dennis is a part of, called AcroNet, is that just a few years ago, much of what you see would not have been possible. Advances

in technology made the trampoline rigging a reality. What arrives on stage looks like a music box, and out of it, the characters come

to life (Dennis is one of six performers in the act). They then dazzle us with a human-powered display of physicality.

"When we practiced in our high school gym it was never on this scale," Dennis says, still slightly amazed at what they are able to do. "I was definitely excited when they said we have this new project. I didn't envision the net whatsoever."

All of that required not just tons of training, but the ability to design a unique and entertaining act.

Dennis was plucked from *Saltimbanco*

to join five other artists — none of whom he knew personally, only by reputation on their work in other Cirque productions — to develop the act together.

First, they had to learn how to use the net itself, and to develop their leg strength and control the net with their feet. Then they needed to turn those skills into something.

"For the first two months, we paired with a choreographer and acrobatics coach, and they put together a rough draft of the act. Then we presented it to the artistic director. We'd go back and forth until he liked what he saw. The full creation period was nine months — a week before we premiered, we were still changing things. And we're still developing stuff now," he says. "I still don't know how [we] pulled it off."

AcroNet has proven popular with audiences of all ages — the costumes (a distinctive aspect of all Cirque shows) conjure up fishes either in a net or buoyantly swimming through the "water," behaving with goofy abandon. All of which seems very "Cirque du Soleil" to Dennis.

"I just think that there's an attention to detail and it's the small details that make the shows stand out," says. There's even

■ CIRCUS Page 19

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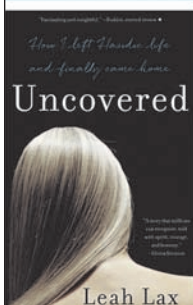
Leah lived as a Hasidic wife and mother of seven for 30 years
before coming out as a lesbian.

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Her memoir, *Uncovered*, has been a finalist for five literary prizes and
is the winner of the Texas Writers' League Discover Award.



LIFE+STYLE

comedy



For Ian Harvie, it's not about earning the title of "first trans person in the world with a one-hour standup special," though that's a tag the FTM comedian can now claim. For him, he's hopeful more trans comedians will walk through the door he swung open with *May the Best Cock Win*, airing on the streaming service Seeso.

"I'm so excited that a digital network like Seeso, an NBC-based company, has said 'yes' to the first trans comic special, which will provide a pathway for others to come through," says the native New Englander.

Harvie, who made his acting debut as Dale during the premiere season of Amazon's Emmy-winning *Transparent*, recently opened up about how Margaret Cho was instrumental in helping him discover his standup voice, being a "butch dyke who was only visible because I looked like a man with huge tits," and the unifying power of comedy.

— Chris Azzopardi

pack in your underwear to make it look like you have a penis, but, really, I'm too lazy to even remember to do that. Small, medium, large. Vibrating ones. Balls, no balls. Different colors. Ones that look kind of alien that don't have a penis head. All kinds of different dicks. I'm old enough to have a collection.

Oh, you've been collecting for that long?

Yes, and I've had girlfriends be like, "No, we're getting a new one." It's very lesbian to be like, "Listen, those other dicks you bought with other girlfriends — they're not going in me. We're getting a new one." [Laughs] It's very interesting. I mean, I can't say, "Listen, you gotta get a new vagina." And if you're a dude with a dick, you can't get rid of it and get a new one just because you fucked someone else with it. That's the dick you have. It's a very loose queer/lesbian/dyke rule that if you have a collection of dicks and you have a new partner, you're getting a new dick.

For some trans people, discussing genitalia and gender-reassignment surgery can be touchy subjects. How do trans people react to those topics when you talk about them?

I don't get negative feedback from trans people because I'm only talking about my story, and I think most people understand when they're watching comedy, especially my comedy, it's narrative. So, I'm not sharing someone else's story. I don't think that you can go, "Well, that's not true about trans people," because, well, I'm a trans person and it's true for me. It's rare, but I think the

Dallas Voice: I have a feeling people will be questioning their own penis adequacy after seeing your comedy special. Ian Harvie: Because you get what you get? Don't overthink it! I make jokes, but people think I must have it bad because I'm a guy without a dick, but really I have many. I have tons of dicks. I have a range: softies that you can



"Many choreographers
can create interesting
movement; few can
make it mean so much."
— *Chicago Tribune*

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Transforming minds one truth at a time

Trans comedian Ian Harvie on his vast penis collection and comedy as a tool for change

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

negative stuff that I get has been when I maybe come across as ageist, like wanting old, conservative people to die.

Because you're a public figure, many trans people may see their story reflected in yours. Listen, you can identify with feelings — you don't have to identify with a person's exact story. I want to make a distinction because it's so funny when people come out — if you like what they have to say, people call them a role model; if you don't like what they have to say, they're a public figure. That's the difference. [Laughs] So, I may be a public figure, but being a comic, just by the nature of the art, people aren't always going to agree with me, and that's OK.

I don't mind being a public figure. I hope that some of the things that I have to say actually resonate with people. I had a [straight, cisgender male] come up to me after a show who was tortured in junior high because his nipples were raised. He started to play sports and people tortured the shit out of him. He was labeled as feminine because of his raised nipples, which today would be worshipped in gay culture! But he said he had surgery to correct this thing that he had been tortured by. He wanted to do it for himself to feel better in his body, and he came up to me after a show and was like, "Listen, I never, ever thought of it that way, and I never thought anybody would speak to me like you did."

What I realized by doing these shows: At first I thought this was gonna be great for the trans

community. We'd have this shared experience, and I can speak and they can have things that resonate with them. Now, I just feel I'm speaking to everybody. We're all the same. This is so stupid. We're all trans. All the same. We're all struggling with this. It's not unique to trans people. And I don't want trans people to think they're not unique or beautiful and special — I don't mean it that way. But this is a shared experience. If you don't feel weird, you're the weirdo.

Do you see your comedy as a bridge to trans acceptance? Yeah, I do. I think it's one of the most powerful ways to help people access something that they haven't been able to access before. I marched with ACT UP and Queer Nation back in the late '80s, early '90s. Started waving signs. I actually had blank foam core and markers in the trunk of my car ready to go anytime, and I remember going to marches and getting in people's faces. That resistance is effective. But I also found this other medium in comedy, where you walk into a comedy club and the audience is so incredibly diverse. People just want to laugh, and it doesn't matter what you're talking about. If you can make them laugh, you can access them and give them information about something that they had no idea about before. So, I think comedy is a really amazing tool to change people on old ideas they had.

And this is part of the privilege of being a dude. I get there, I look like a dude, I sound like a

■ TRANSFORMING Page 19

Hollywood Feed



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L+S stage

Ladies sing the blues

The return of 'Her Song' is catchy cabaret ... with a feminist message



Adelaide (Whitney Coulter) decides to 'come out' ... as the author of hit songs in the romantic revue 'Her Song.' (Photo courtesy Rebecca Brooks)

It's the Jazz Age, a time when men dress in tuxedos and women wear long strings of pearls and hats with feathers. The champagne flows as freely as the music at the Echo Room, a speakeasy-style nightclub run by three siblings — Babe (Angela Davis), Edith (Terri Ferguson) and Montague (Greg Hullett) — who juggle the acts along with their own personal lives and those of the performers in their orbit.

One singer, Adelaide (Whitney Coulter), has an especially intriguing secret: She's the actual author of many of the songs that Montague takes credit for. After all, she's an African-American woman at a time when people aren't ready for "race" music ... or even a prominent female songwriter.

Except that's what they are already getting — they just don't know it.

In the four years that Dallas-based Echo Theatre — a company devoted to stories by and about women — has produced *Her Song*, the experience has always been different ... but the message is always the same. Women have made substantial and

lasting impacts on all facets of society, even if they don't get the recognition they deserve.

The show — part musical revue, part play, part cabaret (you can even get tickets that seat you at café tables on the stage, with the actors moving in and out and performing their scenes among you) — recreates the energy and glamour of a 1930-ish

jazz club, down to serving audience members cocktails and food (you pay extra for that, of course) And while there's a script (revised this

year by music director Scott A. Eckert, who also tweaked the lineup of songs), there's also spontaneity and a sense of improv. Audience members are even recruited to be part of the action (some even turn up dressed in cosplay-like period outfits).

The performers do a great job — changing costumes repeatedly, flirting and enchanting us with close harmonies on ballads, novelty songs and standards from the Great American Songbook — all written, in whole or in part, by women. It's all so romantic and fun.

— Arnold Wayne Jones

HER SONG
Bath House Cultural Center,
521 Lawther Drive. Through Feb. 25.
EchoTheatre.org. TicketDFW.com.

dude, and, grossly, people listen to dudes more. I think what happens is people walk away without realizing it, having this new frame of reference for who trans people are. We're not weirdos. We're not freaks. We're not all the stereotypes that people have put out there in the media in the past. And there's not a fucking foam core sign in their face. That has value too, absolutely. But it's a totally different way of accessing them. I'm not wagging my finger at them. I'm making them laugh.

You say that an audience is more apt to listen to a man rather than a woman. Is that based on any personal experience of your own? It's this weird shift for me to go from this butch dyke who was only visible because I looked like a man with huge tits. I mean, I was visible for that, but I wasn't sexually visible to people. I definitely wasn't anything near a sort of female standard that culturally we have, so I was largely invisible until they figured out that I was female. Then, I was just weird. Now, there's a shift in how people look at me and listen to me.

How does it make you feel to know that people sexualize you in a way they didn't before you transitioned? I'm gonna say something that will piss people off, but generally speaking, if people find true value in compliments about their appearance, then there's probably some void that needs to be filled that will never be filled with compliments. [Compliments] have never, ever done anything for me. After my chest surgery, I started taking hormones, and I started to love myself in a different way and people [were] seeing what I was feeling about myself. But comments on my appearance? Those are empty to me.

What kind of place did comedy have in your life as a kid? When you were a kid did you get together with siblings or cousins and put on shows for your family? My thing was, I would come out in the intermission and do a comedy set, and I wrote my own jokes and they were horrible. They made no sense whatsoever. I didn't understand joke structure — I was 6. But I used to watch *The Carol Burnett Show* and all the Dean Martin roasts. I used to watch Flip Wilson and Rich Little. Oh god, when I was a kid, we had Bill Cosby's album of storytelling, which I kind of cringe at now. But at the time, while he was, you know, drugging women, we had his vinyl on our record player, and I remember

listening to that. So, I was the comic relief in the theatrical shows we performed. I would always come out during the break while they were changing behind the curtain sheet on a clothesline, and they would be behind me, and I would be telling jokes to my aunts and uncles. That was my early sort of exposure. It's so weird that after being a kid it never even dawned on me — never registered — that I could ever be an artist like that and entertain people and have it be a career. I talk about this frequently, but it really was life changing: This guy was writing jokes for *The Daily Show* and he was looking for something creative to do locally. He started offering comedy-writing workshops at our local comedy club, and he sent me a postcard. I owned a web development company, and I'm like, "What the hell is this?" It's so weird because it was really kind of kitschy, with this cartoony black, old-timey microphone in the spotlight. I left it on my desk at my office for a couple of weeks, and I stared at it many times. I was like, "I'm interested, but I'm really scared." Finally, I picked up the phone at the end of the week before the class started the following Monday and said, "Hey, I saw your postcard," and he was like, "I got one spot left." I said, "I'll take it! I'll take it!" I did the workshop and fell in love, and that was 15 years ago this January.

At first I started by writing poop and fart jokes, and I'm like, "OK, that's not me," but I was too scared to tell the truth in the beginning of who I was. About two years into it, I wrote my material but didn't really understand who I was on stage until a couple of years later. It takes a while to figure out who you are.

How did getting to know and touring with Margaret Cho in 2006 help you find your voice? I consider Margaret one of those people who's an absolute truth-teller on stage. She's very raw and open about who she is, what she's done, what's she's seen, how she deals with things. Traveling with her absolutely cracked me open and helped me be more brave about exactly who I was. I remember saying to her that I was scared to tell LGBT audiences that I was trans, and she's like "Why? These are your people!" But I'm like, "I know, but they're the ones I want to love me the most." She's like, "We need representation from the trans community. We really need that. They need to hear your story." It really changed my perspective because I was like, "I can actually be of service here. I can tell my story."

an LGBT moment in the show, inserted by Laprise (who, like Dennis, is openly gay) where he puts a rainbow in the show — a wink to the big queer following Cirque has always enjoyed.

Just before the Dallas production opened, Dennis and the rest of the cast were on a break, which allowed him to return to his family in Australia. Now that he's 30, he realizes that his dream job

comes at a cost.

"I was dating someone in Australia, but I do not [have a partner] now. It's hard to meet people and maintain a relationship — especially when you are leaving and going to a city far away, it's kind of draining to manage," he says.

Ah, life in a circus. It's not all clowns and rainbows. ■

— Arnold Wayne Jones

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Sexual roundelay

Post-Valentine's, an illustrated history of celebrities sleeping around

The Art of the Affair by Catherine Lacey and Forsyth Harmon (Bloomsbury 2017) \$20; 88 pp.

It's all about who you know — or, as in the *The Art of the Affair*, who you've dallied with.

Somehow, in some way, the people you meet leave fingerprints on your life. A laugh you'll never forget, a bon mot you'll quote, or even an attitude can be a memorable springboard for an idea.

That goes doubly for creative types, for whom romantic (or platonic) relationships, their "carnage of affairs" could lead to "countless works of art." These unions, whether legal or otherwise, also left a tangle of threads between many artists and writers.

Essayist and editor Edmund Wilson, for instance, helped launch the career of

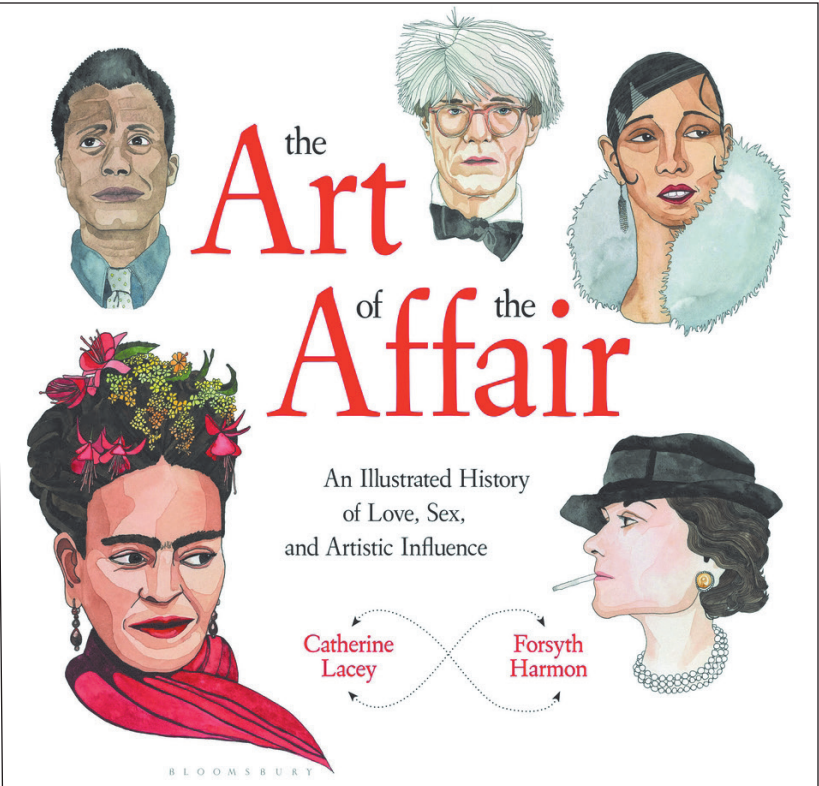
Anaïs Nin, who later wrote erotica. Nin was "unapologetic about her... affairs," of which there were many, including a banker, "probably a homosexual," and novelist & playwright Gore Vidal, who himself had "a short affair" with writer James Baldwin, who called another man "the love of his life."

Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington both collaborated professionally with Ella Fitzgerald, but it was Marilyn Monroe who helped boost Fitzgerald's career. Monroe talked the owner of an L.A. nightclub into booking the singer, and she attended each of Fitzgerald's performances there. Monroe, of course, had her share of affairs, too, as well as a friendship with Truman Capote, who was repeatedly insulted by none other than Tennessee Williams.

Williams was no fan of Tallulah Bankhead, and the two publicly snarked at one another for years. Bankhead was an exhibitionist and didn't care who saw her naked — which, presumably, included her lover, Billie Holiday. Oh, and Williams? He was a friend of Gore Vidal, who also knew Truman Capote and Anaïs Nin...

Did you ever go somewhere with someone who seems to know everybody? That's what it's like to read *The Art of the*

Affair.
 Author Catherine Lacey and illustrator Forsyth Harmon play a sort of Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon here, except Bacon isn't among the folks they dish about. Instead, readers are taken back many decades to look at the dalliances and relationships of artists and stars of the early 20th century, and because very few contemporary artists grace these pages, there may be many times when you won't recognize the people among the threads. That can be remedied through inference, but a better explanation (at least for some artists) might have been nice, as would an index.



Still, I liked the tidbits in this book, the mini-factlets between ties, and the obvious delight that author and artist lend to the love affairs they so diligently discovered. Light, gossipy, and a little scandalous, *The Art of the Affair* shows that it's who you know that's important ... and I know you'll like it.

— Terri Schlichenmeyer

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Saturday 2.18

Chorale takes on La Streisand with Boys Sing Babs cabaret concert

Barbra Streisand is the gay diva of all gay divas (OK, maybe Cher has her beat by a whisker). We love her music, her style, her strength. And to prove just how much, the Turtle Creek Chorale is holding a one-night-only cabaret performance, celebrating La Streisand. Boys Sing Babs features the TCC's take on some of her most iconic songs as select members of the chorale, as well as the Camerata ensemble and special guest Jodi Crawford Wright (so, technically not a boy, but who cares?) sing while you mingle and enjoy a beverage or two.

DEETS: 7 for Parties, 150 Turtle Creek Blvd. VIP reception starts at 6:30 p.m. (\$95); concert at 8 p.m. General admission \$40. TurtleCreekChorale.com.

Sunday 2.19

Honey Pot snuggles up with Bear Hearts

Valentine's Day may be over, but we know some bears who have a heart on for you. The occasional mixer-dance-party Honey Pot is back for the first time in 2017, and the bear community, their fans and, frankly, everyone else is invited to stop by for a chilly T-dance. DJ Brandon Wilder will be spinning at the Round-Up, and you can browse gear from Twisted Pup Leather Co. or get your own Honey Pot T-shirt. It's free to enter, though a \$5 charitable donation is encouraged.

DEETS: The Round-Up Saloon, 3912 Cedar Springs Road. 2–6 p.m. For more information, search Honey Pot on Facebook.

Photo of Charlie Himmler courtesy osofunphotos.com

**Some angels
choose fur
instead of wings.
RIP Joey.**



ARTSWEEK

THEATER

An American in Paris. The elegant stage adaptation of the Gershwin movie musical. Bass Performance Hall, 535 Commerce St., Fort Worth. *Through Sunday.* BassHall.com.

The Christians. A popular minister at a mega-church has a personal awakening that he shares with his congregation from the pulpit, to the outrage of its conservative members. Stars Chamblee Ferguson. *Final weekend.* Kalita Humphreys Theater, 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd. DallasTheaterCenter.org.

Disenchanted. A fractured fairy tale take on Snow White and company, as your favorite princesses set the record straight about Prince Charming, poisoned apples and the like. Eisemann Center, 2351 Performance Drive, Richardson. *Through Sunday.* EisemannCenter.com.

Galileo. Bertolt Brecht's play about the famed, controversial astronomer, with Bruce DuBose in the title role. Undermain Theatre, 3200 Main St. *Through March 5.* Undermain.org.

The Echo Room Presents: Her Song. A retooled version of Echo Theatre's annual cabaret style play and revue. *Reviewed this week.* Bath House Cultural Center, 521 Lawther Drive. *Through Feb. 25.* EchoTheatre.org. TicketDFW.com.

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change. Theatre 3's annual musical comedy revue returns, but in a newly-imagined production. Theatre Too inside Theatre 3, 2900 Routh St. in the Quadrangle. *Through Feb. 26 (extended).* Theatre3Dallas.com.

Lovers, Lust & Lies. A world premiere play by Alejandro de la Costa, about two college friends who reunite and revisit their past relationship. Intended for mature audiences. Presented by MBS Productions. Stone Cottage Theatre, 15650 Addison Road. *Through Feb. 26.* MBSProductions.net.

Paper Flowers. A regional premiere of a rarely-performed play about a man, a woman and the disruption of social order. Presented by Kitchen Dog Theater in their new space. Trinity River Arts Center, 2600 N. Stemmons Freeway, ste. 180. *Feb. 17-March 11.* KitchenDogTheater.org.

Stomp. An encore performance from the music-making act that turns everyday objects into an unlikely orchestra. Music Hall at Fair Park, 901 First Ave. *Through Sunday.* DallasSummerMusicals.org.

Stupid Fucking Bird. Stage West kicks off 2017 with Aaron Posner's comic modernization of Chekhov's *The Seagull*. Directed by Emily Scott Banks. *Final weekend.* Stage West, 821 W.



Fairy tale princesses dish the real dirt in the whimsical comedy 'Disenchanted,' this weekend at the Eisemann Center.

Vickery Blvd., Fort Worth. StageWest.org.

Thurgood. Jubilee Theatre kicks off Black History Month with this show about the groundbreaking lawyer and jurist Thurgood Marshall. Jubilee Theatre, 506 Main St., Fort Worth. *Through Feb. 26.* JubileeTheatre.org.

Will You Still Love Me in the Morning? The first show of Theatre Britain's final, five-show season, a farce about several couples sharing a house with comic consequences. Cox Playhouse, 1517 H Ave., Plano. *Through March 5.* Theatre-Britain.com.

FINE ART

Distant Relatives. The South Dallas Cultural Center opens its 2017 season with a new exhibition of photography from Nigerian-Americans Hakeem Adewumi and Moyo Oyelola. The exhibit includes photos, video installations, storytelling and more to convey to African diaspora. South Dallas Cultural Center, 3400 S. Fitzhugh Ave. *Through Feb. 25.* DallasCulture.org/SDCulturalCenter.

Art and Nature in the Middle Ages. Evolving representations of the natural world in the Romanesque period, from England to Iran. Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 Harwood St. *Through March 19.* DMA.org.

SATURDAY 02.18

BOOK RELEASE PARTY

Best Beards of Dallas 2017. No, not Katie Holmes — men with facial hair! Local photographer Brent Baxter releases his second annual photobook of hirsute locals (including, as it so happens, Dallas Voice's Arnold Wayne Jones) at a party. The Rustic. 2656 Howell St. 6 p.m. doors, 8 p.m. show. Free. Search Prekindle.com for tickets.

DANCE

Doug Varone and Dancers. The acclaimed choreographer returns with his troupe. Presented by TITAS. Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. 8 p.m. ATPAC.org.

CONCERTS

Cabaret: Boys Do Babs. The Turtle Creek Chorale presents this one-night-only tribute to the music of Barbra Streisand. 7 for Parties, 150 Turtle Creek Blvd. 8 p.m. TurtleCreekChorale.com.

SUNDAY 02.19

CABARET

Honey Pot: Bear Hearts. Another mixer and party for the bear community, but everyone is welcome. DJ Benson Wilder will spin. The Round-Up Saloon, 3912 Cedar Springs Road. 2-6 p.m. No cover, but \$5 charitable donation encouraged. For more information, search Facebook.

MONDAY 02.20

FILM

Oscar Preview Panel. The Magnolia Theatre once again presents its annual panel of Oscar experts, offering up their predictions for the coming awards show. Dallas Voice's Arnold Wayne Jones is on the panel. Landmark's Magnolia Theatre in the West Village, 3699 McKinney Ave. 7 p.m. Free.

TUESDAY 02.21

FILM

The Unsinkable Molly Brown. The late, great Debbie Reynolds, in one of her signature roles, as the wealthy rube who survived the Titanic. Screens as part of the Tuesday Big Movie New Classic Series at Landmark's Magnolia Theatre in the West Village, 3699 McKinney Ave. Screens at 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m.

THURSDAY 02.23

CABARET

Judy Chamberlain Jazz. The jazz vocalist's weekly cabaret performance in the back room of Zippers Hideaway, 3333 N. Fitzhugh St. 9 p.m.

Glitterbomb Denton. Weekly queer variety show with a new lineup every Thursday. Mable Peabody's Beauty Parlor and Chain Saw Repair, 1125 E. University Drive, Denton. 9:30 p.m.

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Cassie Nova

Drag rules to live by

Good day to you all. I hope you are having a splendid day. Sorry, I just had a frittata for lunch and am feeling fancy. The moment has passed. So what's up? I have been a little under the weather this week. The past few days have been so beautiful outside but all I have wanted to do is stay in bed. I have literally been so worthless and unproductive this week that I should work for Congress.

Speaking of politics, I had to unfriend someone on Facebook this week. She is a Trump supporter, hated Obama and constantly posted things that annoyed me. I kept her as my friend because at one time we were close. Then she said something so ridiculous and stupid that I could take no more. This bitch had the nerve to say Lady Gaga was horrible during the Super Bowl halftime show! Dafuk you say! I have listened to a lot of her hate-filled bullshit and ignored it because you just can't argue with stupid, but you will not speak ill of Mother Monster. She said she was a horrible singer — I nearly lost my shit! Love her or hate her, you cannot deny her talent. Unfriended and blocked!

I have met Lady Gaga twice, and she was such a positive, awesome, nice person. There was not a hint of bitchiness or diva syndrome to her. Name one other artist that shows up and performs for free at venues that helped her before she was a superstar. The week that "Born This Way" hit No. 1 on the charts, she performed in the Rose Room and at the Round-Up. Her concert was already sold out so it was just a thank-you. She will forever have a place in my heart, not just because I live for her music, but because of how much she has done for the gay community. I adore that crazy woman, and for those of you that said she wasn't

political enough during the halftime show: she sang "Born This Way" in front of Mike Pence. Her lyrics are political enough. You don't have to rip up a picture of the pope on live TV to make your point.

Now I would like to give you all a few rules to make sure that when you come out to a drag show you have a good time and don't piss anybody off.

Rule 1: Stay out of the way. We appreciate your enthusiasm but standing in the aisles can be troublesome. Some of the girls (not me) dance and have choreography. Walking in front of them or going around them might accidentally get you punched or elbowed by a death drop or a foot to the face from a high kick. Just be aware of where the entertainers are and wait for them to pass by before you go get your 12th drink.

Rule 2: (and this is a big one for me personally): If you are going to tip, don't put the money in your mouth and expect us to take it with ours. That's just gross. Yes, I have put my mouth on much worse, but mouth-money is nasty. I will still take it and spend it gladly but Purell, Purell, Purell.

Rule 3: If you arrive late and stand near the stage, look behind you. If you see someone sitting in a chair or stool, that means they got there early to get a good seat. You just gonna walk in late and stand in the damn way...No! Move, bitch, get outta tha way, get outta tha way bitch, get outta tha way!

Rule 4: If you are with a bachelorette party, please be respectful. We understand that this is a special night for your friend, but this is also the only night many of you will ever be in a gay bar so you get an attitude if we don't make the entire show about the bride to be. Truth is, we might give you a little shout-out, but our entertainers are getting paid to perform so we don't need you and your woo-hoo girls to entertain us. Sit back, relax and enjoy the show ... hopefully without a scowl on your face. P.S. This does not apply to gay and lesbian

bachelor/bachelorette parties. We will always make a big deal out of yours. (Honestly, calling out a bachelor or bachelorette party is totally up to the emcee. Don't demand it and it will be more fun for everyone.)

Rule 5: Selfie etiquette. In this day of selfies, if you didn't get a selfie with it, it didn't happen. Not true. You can actually point the phone or camera towards the object or person you want a picture of, and take a pic without you in it. It's called "photography." I know, I know — you wanna be in the pic, too. It's just the way things are. First off, don't expect us to stop our number for a selfie if you ain't tippin'. Secondly, have your shit ready. We do not have time for you to figure out your phone while standing, saying cheese or duck-lipped forever. You get one click then we gotta go. If you messed it up with your fat thumbs or because you have a crappy flip phone, that's on you, boo.

Rule 6: If you are not having fun, leave. One of my pet peeves is when someone is sitting at our show looking like they are smelling shit (aka stank face). Stank face usually occurs when straight people are forced to be in a gay club where they are clearly uncomfortable. Now, don't think the gays are immune to stank face. We have been known to have it in groups. We get it, drag is not for everybody. There is a dance floor downstairs; go dance. There is a hot dog vendor on the corner, go eat a dick... sorry, a wiener. There is plenty to do on the block if drag is not your thing.

Rule 7: Be respectful. It takes a lot of courage — and dare I say, balls — to get up on any stage. This goes especially for the Thursday night Rising Star amateur show. Those girls are up-and-coming and may not be as polished as some of the other girls, but I still ask that you respect them. We all start somewhere. So applaud their bravery, applaud their determi-

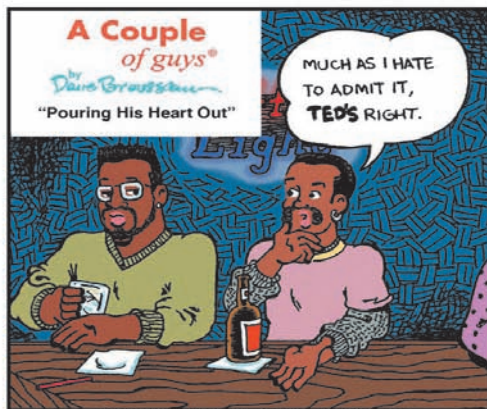


nation. Come back each week and hopefully applaud their growth. Karma is a bitch and so am I. You disrespect one of us, you disrespect us all. Drag is a sisterhood — a dysfunctional and messy family but for some it is everything. Respect my family and I will try to overlook your stank face.

Rule 8 (Which actually should have been Rule 1, but I don't like to rewrite anything: Have fun. That's the great thing about a drag show. As a performer, there is no better feeling than seeing the crowd smiling, laughing, singing along and dancing in their seats. If you are having a blast, show it. We feed off it. Sometimes the cheering and applause of an audience can change our mood. We know the show must go on even if we have had a bad day or we are in a bad mood; a great crowd can change everything. It can reverse a bad mood and provide balance to a horrible day. Yes, the tips also help — a heavy purse is always a great thing. But sometimes a great crowd can energize and heal like nothing else. It is easy to get addicted to the endorphins that are released when a crowd cheers for you. So if you are having a good time, let us know it. Life is too short not to enjoy yourself so support your local drag show!

Remember to love more, bitch less and be fabulous! XOXO, Cassie Nova.

If you have a question or comment, email it to AskCassieNova@gmail.com.



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this week's solution

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browse

For a more complete Community Calendar online, visit Tinyurl.com/dvevents.

submit

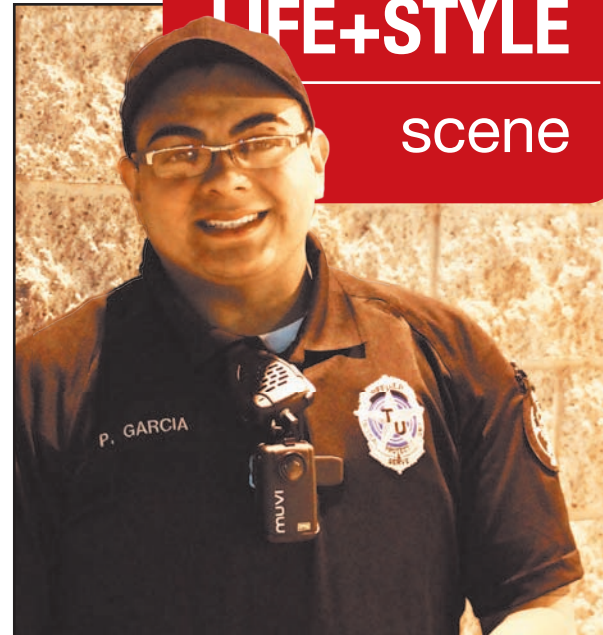
To submit an item for inclusion in the Community Calendar, visit Tinyurl.com/dvevents.



Out on the town and all smiles



Looking fabulous on The Strip



Officer Garcia keeping things safe on The Strip



Too fierce on The Strip



Relaxing at Pub Pegasus



Friends making the scene at Pub Pegasus



Keeping the drinks flowing at Zippers



Striking a pose at Sue Ellen's



On stage at S4



Out and about with Luis

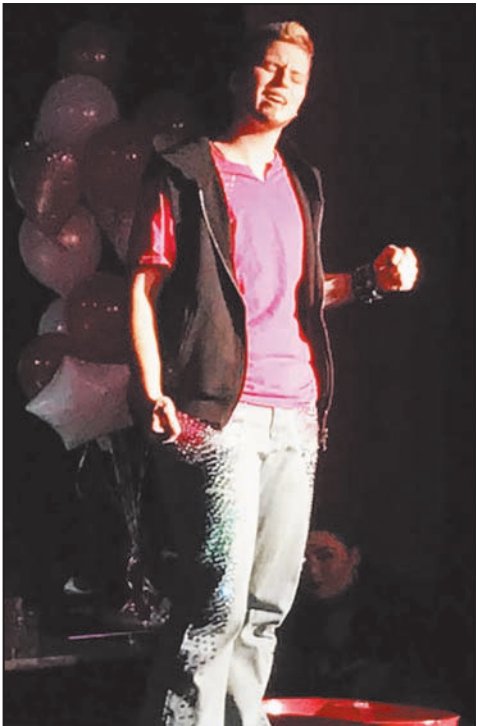
Making the **SCENE** the week of Feb. 17–23:

- **Alexandre's:** **Mi Diva Loca** on Friday. **Chris Chism and the Band** on Saturday and Thursday. **K-Marie** on Tuesday. **Anna Fredericka Popova** on Wednesday.
- **BJ's NXSt:** The original **Trashy Tuesday** with the hottest dancers.
- **Club Reflection:** **Cowtown Leathermen** cookout at 4 p.m. on Sunday.
- **Dallas Eagle:** **Onyx: Central Southwest Chapter** club night on Saturday.
- **JR.'s Bar & Grill:** **Cassie's Freak Show** with **Your Highness, Stefani, Xana Frost** and **Athena** on Monday.
- **Marty's Live:** **Tuesdays with Blake.**
- **Rainbow Lounge:** **Bianca Davenport Starr** welcomes **Beverly Bogue, Iroc O. Goodness** and **Kiana Lee** with a closing production tribute to **Whitney Paige** at 10 p.m. on Sunday.

- **Round-Up Saloon:** **Bear Happy Hour** on Friday. Dance lessons at 8:30 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.
- **Sue Ellen's:** **Mustache Envy** on the main floor on Friday. **Chix** on Saturday. **Kathy & Bella** at 3:30 p.m. and **Tyla Taylor** at 6 p.m. on Sunday.
- **The Rose Room:** **Cassie, Asia, Krystal, Jasmine Masters, Chanel LaMasters** and **Alyssa Edwards** on Sunday.
- **Two Corks and a Bottle:** Psychic night with **Cheryl Andrea** on Friday. **NM Jazztet** on Saturday. **Denise Lee** on Tuesday. Show Tunes with **Kim Oliver** on Wednesday. **Don and Steve Show** on Thursday.
- **Urban Cowboy Saloon:** Monthly drag brunch hosted by **Miss Gay Lone Star Tara St. Stone** with **Eva Royale, Mulan** and **May May Graves**. Brunch catered by **Chef Blythe's Southern Bistro** at 2 p.m. Showtime 3 p.m. on Sunday.

Scene Photographers: **Kay Haygood** and **Chad Mantooth**

The stars turned out in force recently for the Miss C.E.B.A. Sweetheart pageant recently at S4. The event raises funds for the Caven Employees Benevolence Association.



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Joey



Our Dallas Voice mascot Joey with Ulises, one of the waiters at the new Cafe Brazil on Cedar Springs. Tragically, we lost Joey last week, and we miss him terribly. He will always be our Dallas Voice mascot.

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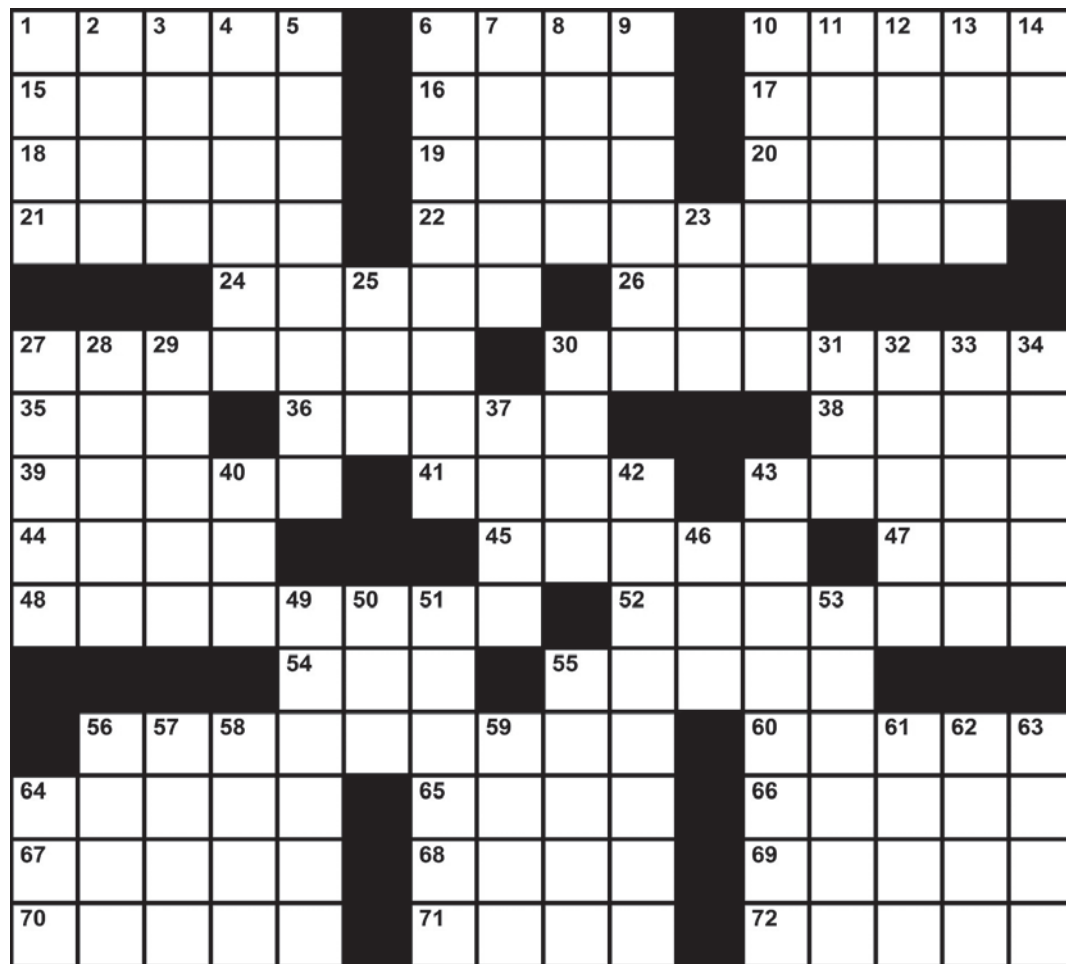
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L+S year in review



Feud: Bette and Joan

Solution on Page 24

Across

- 1 R.E.M. follower?
- 6 In the pink
- 10 Roehm's sausage
- 15 Cocoon creator
- 16 "Uh-oh!" to Shelley
- 17 Cole Porter's "___ Men"
- 18 Part of a daisy chain?
- 19 Left to pirates
- 20 Out
- 21 Bette said she had the most fun with Joan _____. (See 22-, 41-, and -56-Across)
- 22 See 21-Across
- 24 You, to Frida
- 26 Bowie collaborator
- 27 Volga's outlet
- 30 Joan, who feuded with Bette
- 35 *Bill* written by Alice Paul
- 36 Playground retort
- 38 Sons of, at Beth Chayim Chadashim
- 39 Lindsay of *Liz & Dick*
- 41 See 21-Across
- 43 Michelangelo sculpture
- 44 Former Vibe editor Wilbekin
- 45 Andes animal
- 47 Refusal in Rouen
- 48 *Whatever Happened to* ____?
- 52 George once of San Francisco

Down

- 54 Moist ending
- 55 Piece of a pansy
- 56 See 21-Across
- 60 Bette, who feuded with Joan James Dean
- 65 Singer La ___ Jackson
- 66 Be a ham in *Hamlet*?
- 67 Joe of *JFK*
- 68 Moon of Endor inhabitant
- 69 Streisand's *Prince of Tides* costar
- 70 White as a ghost
- 71 Hard to come by
- 72 A flamer does it

Across

- 14 Caesar's X
- 23 Bambi character
- 25 Feathers adhesive
- 27 *Advocate* cover, often
- 28 It arouses two body openings
- 29 Madras title
- 30 Part of Batman's costume
- 31 J. Edgar Hoover's org.
- 32 Bridge call, informally
- 33 Boca ____
- 34 *Frasier*'s lover in Boston
- 37 Shoe bottom
- 40 Son of Aga Khan
- 42 *The Windy City*, to Judy Chicago
- 43 Rose Bowl city
- 46 A word from Verlaine
- 49 Timberlake once of 'N Sync
- 50 Kahlo's output
- 51 Less messy
- 53 Much ado about nothing, perhaps
- 55 Richard of *The Wiz*
- 56 Executive bondage tools
- 57 Illegal Amsterdam export
- 58 Suffix with differ
- 59 *The Music Man* setting
- 61 Knoxville team, to fans
- 62 "Tell ___ the judge"
- 63 James Baldwin's *The Evidence of Things Not* ____
- 64 1.0, for one

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