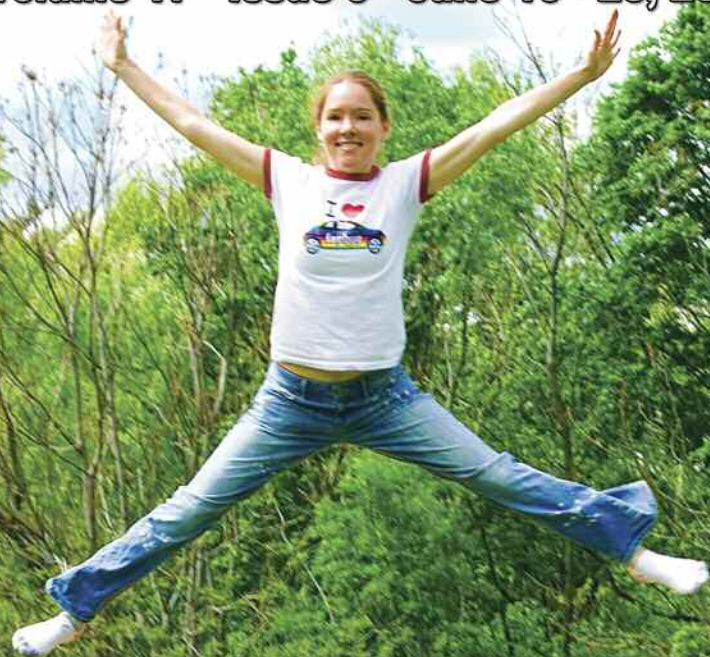


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QUEST

Volume 17 Issue 9 June 10 - 23, 2010



Milwaukee Pride Parade

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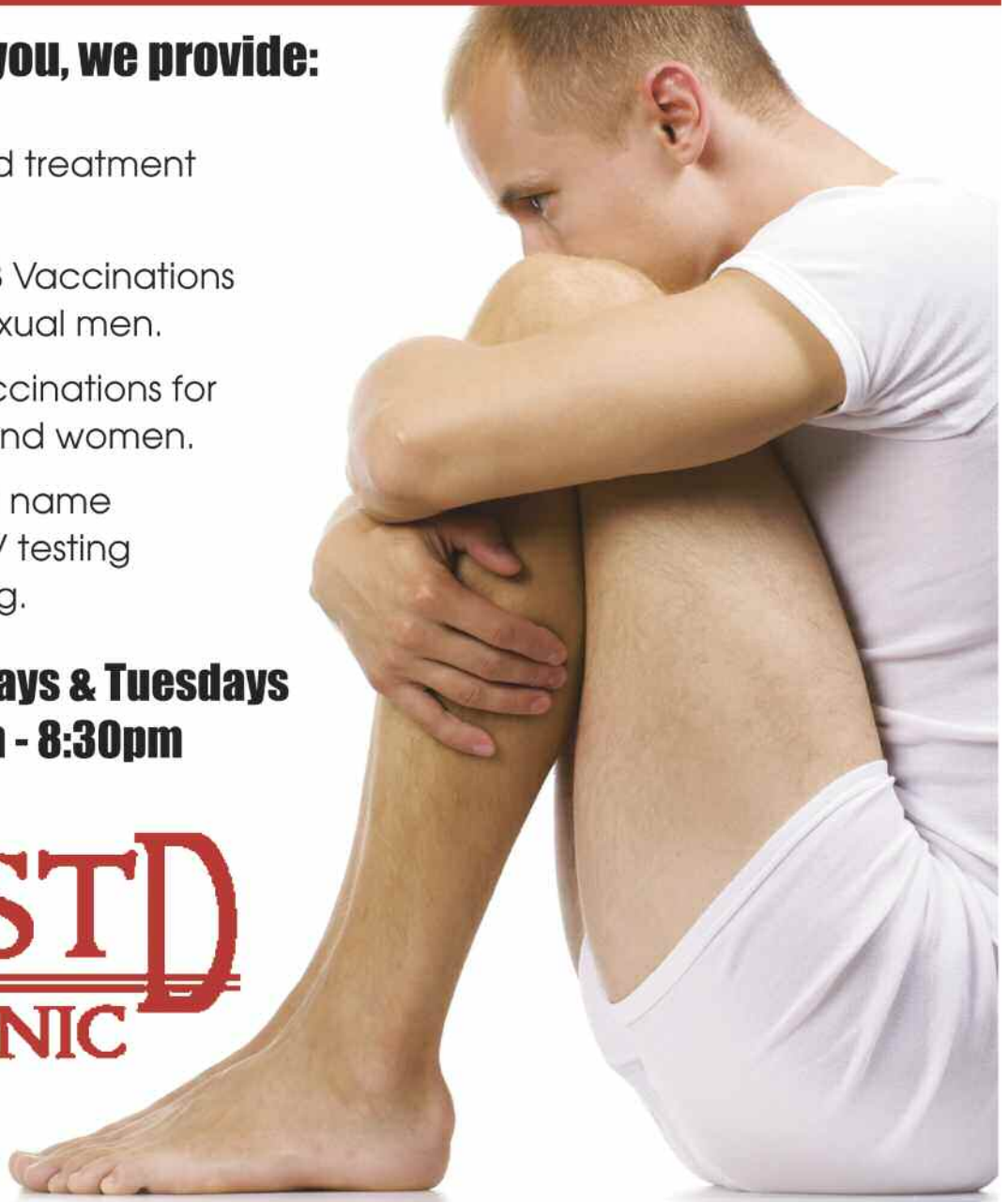
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THE AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT ON DISPLAY AT MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM

MILWAUKEE – Sections of The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt will be on display at the Milwaukee Art Museum. Starting June 8 and running through June 20 in the Schroeder Galleria. The exhibition is coinciding with the 25th anniversary of ARCW who is one of the sponsors.

Nine specially selected quilts showing the contributions of fashion designers Dolce & Gabbana, Versace, Ralph Lauren and Isaac Mizrahi and others will be on display. Also included in this show is the original quilt designed in 1987 by ARCW. The exhibition is free to the public.

"The Quilt emerged from an era of the AIDS epidemic marked by fear, stigma, discrimination and death," said Doug Nelson, ARCW President and CEO. "The Quilt quickly became a galvanizing symbol of fighting back against AIDS by honoring those we lost, defeating the stigma and building solidarity throughout the country."

The genesis of The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt goes back to 1987 when a small group of people gathered in San Francisco to document the

lives lost to AIDS - lives they feared history would overlook. The goal was to create a memorial for those lost to the epidemic and help people understand the devastation and the impact of AIDS in their community.

The result of their work is the AIDS Memorial Quilt which triggered an enormous response with contributions of quilt panels coming in from communities all across the United States and several foreign countries. The AIDS Memorial Quilt had its first showing on October 11, 1987 on the National Mall in Washington, DC. It covered a space larger than a football field and included 1,920 panels. Today more than 44,000 panels have been contributed to the AIDS Memorial Quilt. The nine specially selected panels on display will be 12 feet long by 12 feet wide.

"These quilts are very special because they catalyzed our nation's response to policy by moving the topic of HIV/AIDS into mainstream society," Nelson said. "We are proud to be a part of this exhibit because it serves as a celebration of how far we have come in the fight against AIDS and reminds us of how

far we have yet to go to stop this epidemic on its destructive course through Wisconsin."

Daniel T. Keegan, Director of the Milwaukee Art Museum said, "The AIDS Memorial Quilt is the largest community folk art project in the world and the museum is honored to host this exhibition, especially in conjunction with American Quilts: Selections from the Winterthur Collection. Both of these exhibitions chronicle important moments in American history in very personal ways."

The AIDS Memorial Quilt exhibition is made possible through support from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation Johnson and Pabst LGBT Humanity Fund and from ARCW. The exhibition is free to the public.

Joseph Pabst, advisor to the Johnson and Pabst LGBT Humanity Fund was recently honored by ARCW as its philanthropist of the year. "Fashion designers joined the earliest ranks of leaders in the fight against AIDS and they used their creativity to compel others to be bold and join them in building a dialogue on AIDS," said Pabst. "I hope this exhibit will motivate people to continue the fight against AIDS."

WISCONSIN PUBLIC TELEVISION RECOGNIZES GAY PRIDE MONTH WITH SEVERAL PROGRAMS

Madison - Wisconsin Public Television's (WPT) June schedule includes several programs that honor Gay Pride Month.

At 9 p.m. Tuesday, June 8, *Anyone and Everyone* follows the stories of families from various religions and nationalities all connected by a common thread — a gay child. Parents of homosexual teens and young adults eloquently recall their initial reactions to their child's coming-out and their journeys to acceptance.

At 9 p.m. Friday, June 11, P.O.V. "Wrestling With Angels" Playwright Tony Kushner celebrates one of the country's leading playwrights and one of its fiercest moral critics as it delves into the passions that keep him reaching for the great American play.

At 9 p.m. Friday, June 18, *In the Life* looks at the "Intersections of Church and State." The separation of Church and State is a fundamental tenet of the U.S. Constitution. Increasingly policies that funnel taxpayer dollars into faith-based organizations challenge this important principle. This month's program follows the money to expose some faith-based initiatives that sanction homophobia here and abroad. WPT will encore the program at 12:30 a.m. Wednesday, June 30.

At 9:30 p.m. Friday, June 18, *Out & Proud* in Chicago profiles famous and unsung LGBT Chicagoans. Through their voices the documentary tells the story of citizens who helped shape the face of a city.

SKYLIGHT OPERA THEATRE RENT PRIVATE PERFORMANCE NETS BIG WIN FOR ARCW

Milwaukee - AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW) reported the May 23rd private performance of *RENT* at the Skylight Opera Theatre was attended by 300 guests and raised \$7185 to help provide safe and affordable housing for people living with HIV/AIDS.

"The show displayed an amazing wealth of talent and music, along with some very meaningful and powerful moments," stated a press release from ARCW. "The night didn't end when the stage lights dimmed and the house lights came up! Many of our guests joined the cast of *RENT* at MOCT for an exuberant party hosted by our media partner 4PM magazine that lasted well into the night."

RENT performances at the Skylight Opera Theatre and reviewed in this issue of *Quest* will continue to run through June 20. Mention ARCW and receive a 10% discount off the ticket price.

MILWAUKEE LGBT PRIDE PARADE ANNOUNCES GRAND MARSHAL AND JUDGES FOR PARADE

Milwaukee - The Milwaukee Pride Parade is happy to announce William "Bill" Serpe as the Grand marshal for the 2010 Milwaukee Pride Parade. Bill Serpe is the Executive Director of SAGE/Milwaukee, Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders. As a self identified gay male he came to this position in January of 2004 with 40 years of life experience and a nonprofit management background. His involvement with the issues of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender elders over the past 6 years has given him in-depth knowledge of the aging issues that are endemic to this specific population. Bill is on the Board of Governors for the Family Care program at the Milwaukee County Department on Aging. He is also a member of the National LGBT Aging Roundtable.

Three judges for the 2010 parade were also announced: **David Boyer** - currently the Promotions manager at numerous taverns located in Chicago, IL, as well works with the Historic Bijou Theater in Chicago, IL. He works every year to put together some of the best event(s) for the GLBT leather community in Chicago including the Mr. Chicago Leather contest, bus trips to Great America's Gay Days, and

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bus trips Milwaukee's very own Pridefest and the Pride Parade. **Marilynn Mee** - from 96.5 WKLH Classic Rock, a staple of the Radio Industry in Milwaukee for many years. She hosts the Mid-day radio show on WKLH on a daily basis and is an active supporter of the Wisconsin Humane Society. **Dino Maniaci** - owner of WOOF's Bar, Madison is the third judge.

The Milwaukee Pride Parade would also like to thank everyone for their gracious support of our fundraisers over the past few months. The Parade is also looking for volunteers. After all if it were not for the volunteers who help every year there would be no Pride Parade at all! Applications for the 2010 Parade are also out and available for download. There is still plenty of space to fit in every unit who would like to be in the parade. Download an application today from www.prideparademke.org.

The Milwaukee Pride Parade is a GLBT family entertainment oriented event. It is currently in its 5th consecutive year of operation. The Parade will take place on Sunday June 13th, 2010 on 2nd street from Greenfield Ave to Seeboth Ave. with step off taking place at 2:00pm sharp.

NEW BARS SPICE UP MILWAUKEE NIGHTLIFE THIS SUMMER

Milwaukee - In the wake of City Lights Chill closing in May, a slate of bar opening brings the hope of new excitement to the club scene in the Cream City.

Already open and growing in popularity, **Hybrid Lounge** adds a much needed bar in the Brady Street neighborhood. Hybrid told Quest food service with a full menu is coming. In the meantime, you can check out this friendly neighborhood watering hole featuring some of the best looking bartenders in town at 707 East Brady Street. This friendly bar has great drink specials and a daily happy hour. Although it is located far from the festival grounds, there is a daily shuttle with hourly stops at participating bars including Hybrid during Pridefest. Look for their daily specials at www.hybridlounge.net.

As Quest went to press two more bars had an opening, one in Downtown Milwaukee and the other in the heart of the gay bar district. **TEMPT** enjoyed an opening night Thursday, June 3rd. The bar is located on Mason Street downtown in what used to be known as The Velvet Hour. Steve Sova, the bar man-

ager has planned a cocktail bar with DJ and dancing in a different style than the typical dancebar. Advertising states they are "combining the intimacy of a lounge with the heated energy of a nightclub." Steve has stacked the deck with a slew of drink specials for each night of the week. Quest photographer Will Sharkey caught snaps of the opening night. Some are posted in this issue with more online at www.quest-online.com (click the photo gallery link)

A third bar had a "soft opening" this past weekend and plans a grand opening over PrideFest Weekend. **D.I.X.** takes over a classic Victorian bar that used to house **Generals** recently. There are two large rooms and will feature video screens with a feel like SideTracks says co-owner Cory Bartel who moved up from New Orleans to open the bar with Liz. Located at 739 S. First Street, this is the first new bar in the main section of LGBT bars in quite a while. There are some pretty famous DJ's planned to spin the tunes over the grand opening weekend including DJ Terri Bristol with DJ Psycho Bitch Saturday night.

There are other changes that are not new bars, but new events. Wherehouse which has tried LGBT themed nights in the past is launching Shevents aimed at a mixed crowd that includes the Lesbian community. Look for Turkish Oil wrestling bubble party & go go girls on Friday June 11, and Carnival Of Sin on Sunday June 13. The crowd will be mixed and sounds like a fun time. Sunday is their "industry night" for those who work in the hospitality industry.

Harbor Room has undergone a remodel and if I guess right, somewhat of a clientele change too. Look for Milwaukee's own Jerry Grillo Historical Mystery Band to play on several Thursdays this summer, including for the bars 10th anniversary on July 23.

Let's not forget to mention Montage on the second floor (third level) of LaCage. This new showlounge is a great place to catch all the glamour of pageantry and impersonator shows in a classy setting. Opened this past October, Montage has brought a new level of class to the "Impersonator" shows which are scheduled weekly on several days. Pride Weekend will feature an extra show when international recording star Kaci Battaglia performs her hit single during an "after party" in Montage at 11pm.

Our only sad note is that City Lights Chill was sold recently and closed on May 27. Pat Sweeney the for-

mer owner celebrated a 5th year with a final party for his customers. In a statement to Quest (and others) Pat said, "Our mission was to create a clean, comfortable, and fun atmosphere without pretense in a neighborhood setting. We hope someone else will someday pick up the torch and follow our path."

SEATTLE ARTIST ANOMIE BELLE AT PRIDEFEST

Milwaukee - Seattle artist Anomie Belle performs on the main stage at Milwaukee Pridefest at 5:15pm on Sunday, June 13th.

Anomie Belle's introspective, electronic music has garnered international acclaim, and she has been lauded for her skills as a composer, producer, audio programmer, vocalist, and multi-instrumentalist. Originally a classical violinist and also an active film composer, Anomie Belle combines experimental elements with sensual down-tempo grooves, smoky vocals, electronic programming and layered strings.

Belle has been lauded for her socially conscious lyrics, as her material grapples with social issues ranging from American political apathy to suburban alienation, passive media spectatorship, sexism, social injustice, and consumerism. She is active in encouraging young female musicians through women's music nonprofits such as Girls Rock! Seattle, Reel Grrls, and The Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls in Portland.

Anomie Belle's debut album, *Sleeping Patterns*, has received widespread media attention and radio play, and her host of collaborators is always growing. Her upcoming sophomore release will feature Jon Auer (The Posies) and Mr. Lif (The Perceptionists).

She has also recently shared the stage with Tricky, The Album Leaf, Kid Koala, Bonobo, Bajofondo, The Heavy, and Little Dragon. At Pridefest, she will be playing several tracks off her forthcoming sophomore release, performing on guitar, violin, keys, vocals, and electronic programming while backed by live strings, bass, and drums.



Statement of U.S. Senator Russ Feingold On Celebrating LGBT Pride Month

"In keeping with Wisconsin's great progressive tradition, I am proud to stand alongside so many Americans as we celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride month. This month, we celebrate the progress we have made while recommitting to the work that still remains to guarantee equal rights for all Americans regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. We have finally seen progress in repealing the law that wrongly discriminates against gay Americans serving in the military. The Senate Armed Services Committee and the House of Representatives held crucial votes recently and now the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' is closer than ever. Discrimination has no place in American society and I will continue to support an end to this harmful policy.

"I have also worked to ensure that LGBT rights and freedoms remain a priority in our foreign policy, by passing a bipartisan Senate resolution condemning an anti-homosexuality bill under consideration in Uganda and other similar laws worldwide, and by passing an amendment to ensure the State Department reports and addresses human rights violations against gay communities around the world. I am dedicated to ensuring all Americans have equal opportunities and equal protection under the law, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation."

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QUEST COVER FEATURE

DRIVING AWAY INTOLERANCE *Fagbug drives into Milwaukee's PrideFest*



"I'm not famous but my car is on some level" – Erin Davies, fagbug.com

We've heard about the celebrated and often criticized fagbug for several years. Now, after years on the road, documenting her journey with photos, videos, and stories, Davies and the fagbug will roll into Milwaukee for PrideFest this June 11, 12, and 13. Quest heard the good news, and managed to get owner, and activist Erin Davies to pull over long enough to answer our questions.

QUEST: What made you finally choose Milwaukee PrideFest?

DAVIES: I've heard it's one of the best prides in the Midwest. I travel a lot and have done several talks at colleges in the area and kept hearing great things so I decided to make the trek this year as part of my summer tour promoting the DVD release of my film, "Fagbug."

QUEST: You've done a lot of driving! How much mileage is on car?

DAVIES: I just broke the 150,000 mark this week. When my car was vandalized, it had about 45,000 miles on it. So I've been driving around with fag on my car for over 100,000 miles now.

In 2007, the VW Beetle owned by Davies had been targeted due to a small rainbow sticker on the car. Vandals used spray paint to show their intolerance by writing "fag" and "u r gay" on the driver's side window and hood, creating, unbeknownst to them, the birth of the fagbug. "From where I was standing, I couldn't read what it said so I kept walking," says Davies, about discovering the graffiti. "When I got close enough to read it, I realized what is said. I stopped dead in my tracks in total shock."

Choosing not to be a 'victim' of a hate crime, Davies saw the vandalism on her vehicle as an opportunity to help spread awareness about gay rights, and hate crimes towards the LGBT community. Davies and her vandalized VW, complete with hateful graffiti embarked on an on a 58-day video documented trip around the United States and Canada. The trip provided her the opportunity to discover other, more serious hate crimes and to interact with supporters, as well as those threatened and confused by the message. One year later, the fagbug got a makeover and became the colorful car you can see to day at any given Pride celebration.

QUEST: Are you still driving the same car, or have you had to trade in yet for a newer model?

DAVIES: Yes, I still drive the same car that was vandalized. It's my actual car. I tell audiences all the time, "If anyone wants to buy me another car I'd gladly accept it." It'd be great to have a car I drive in to get groceries or run errands, and another for fagbug talks or movie showings. That's the intriguing part of the story or what people are so compelled to is that it is my everyday car, and there's been no separation between myself and my car. It's like we're married.

I'm not famous but my car is on some level so because I drive the car, I sort of give up all anonymity and privacy, take on the risks that come along with it, and make myself vulnerable to what the general public thinks about gay people or the colors and words on my car wherever the car and I happen to be.

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QUEST: How did the wrapping of the fagbug come about?

DAVIES: What started out as a 1-week experiment, turned into me committing myself to drive with the words that were spray painted on my car (*fag and u r gay*) for an entire year. I knew I was making the movie, planned a 58-day trip by myself across the country and decided I would document all the responses I got for a year.

At first, I didn't think I could make it a year, but the more obstacles I had to go through, the more determined I was to complete what I set out to do. When the year mark came, I was ready at that point to remove the word fag from my window.

Imagine every single time you go to turn left in your vehicle for a year, having to look through "F A G" plastered all over your window to do so. It's an ugly reminder of what had happened. Although my actions of leaving the words on my car took the power from whoever wrote them, the words and the car still looked hurt, wounded. I created my own rainbow sticker campaign after this happened. Rather than take the sticker I had off my car out of fear, I made my own fagbug stickers and put them on my car and encouraged others to do so. I took my sticker to a company in Hoosick Falls, NY and asked them to turn my car into my sticker and that's what they did. I wanted to celebrate the accomplishment I made by making it to the one-year point with the graffiti on my car by turning it into something beautiful that could continue to tell the story of the fagbug.

The distributor of my film (Garden Thieves Pictures) and I are putting out a 4-inch toy rainbow bug to promote the movie. You can pre-order the toy rainbow bug at www.fagbug.com. Next, we are working on creating a line of real size rainbow Volkswagen Beetles. That's in the works!

QUEST: Have you ever heard from the perp(s)?

DAVIES: No. To this day no one has come forward. My movie is dedicated to whoever vandalized my car. I've utilized the media, made a film, am working on a children's book called The Rainbow Bug, have spoke at over 100 high schools and colleges around the US and Canada, have won awards for being in pride parades and film festivals, etc.

People often misconstrue all those things for me wanting attention. It's really about doing enough, getting enough people to talk about it, making it visible enough, so I can know whoever did this has not only heard about my response to the graffiti, they've been changed, maybe even changed as much as I have. It would be one thing to tell the person how many people have been influenced, it would be another thing to show him or her. That's why I take photographs with all the groups I speak to after every event I do and post them on my website.

Millions of people at this point have been touched by the story. I wonder sometimes what's motivating me to do all of this, and that answer may have changed over time but I think at the core, I think the probability of meeting this person increases with time. If I give up tomorrow it's a given it will never happen, if I continue to work on this project another

20 years, I just might get an email from someone telling me who they were 23 years ago and how much they've changed. People often ask me what I'd say to this person, I'd most likely develop a

"Imagine every single time you go to turn left in your vehicle for a year, having to look through F A G plastered all over your window to do so"

friendship with them because this person has single handedly changed my life for better and worse much more than another other person has.

We often want others to understand and accept us when we rarely display the courage to under-

stand and accept the people we stereotype. On my road trip I had to look at the labels I gave people and the fear I had of certain groups (homophobes, red-necks, strangers), and I had to see people who fit into those categories as more than a stereotype. I had to invest myself into getting to know them, into finding common ground and trust. And that is what we all have to give if we expect to receive it.

QUEST: You're planning a fagbug museum and brewery. How did that come about?

DAVIES: My girlfriend Sonya and I did a 24-page proposal to be able to turn 412 Oswego Street into the Fagbug Museum & Brewery. The building was for sale for \$1 with the condition it gets renovating in an 18-month period. We close on the building



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For more info or to get a contestant packet contact Mabel Kane at darrellontour@msn.com or stop in at PJS in Oshkosh

July 2nd and will begin renovations this summer. The car will be on a platform display outside the building, the walls in the building will all be used to tell the story of the Fagbug with original artifacts, there will be a storefront with merchandise and memorabilia, cafe with all gay names, and a tasting area for the next phase of the Fagbug project, "Fagbrew."

Fagbrew will be America's first ever gay beer line! Like my car stands out on the highway, Fagbrew will evoke dialogues with the general public around homosexuality with names like homosexuALE, Queen B, 2 Beer Queer, Cub & Bear, Gaylicious, Flamer and Heffer. "Fagbrew" (currently in production) follows the inception of the museum/beer line to the grand opening/distribution.

QUEST: What can we expect to see at PrideFest?

DAVIES: I'll be selling copies of the Fagbug DVD which is officially coming out July 13th on Netflix, at Blockbuster, Amazon, Best Buy, Barnes and Noble. This version of the film has 14 DVD extras. Along with the film, I will be selling fagbug stickers and the very first t-shirt along with 3 hot new fagbug products that coincide with the movie coming out.

I have a new poster which is a great visual to help teachers introduce the story of the fagbug in their classrooms, I have 2 new t-shirts, one has "fag" written on it and the other has "u r gay" written on it, the same way the graffiti was on my car.

The shirts are meant to evoke a dialogue the same way my driving the car did. I also will be taking pre-orders for my newest product, the 4-inch toy rain-

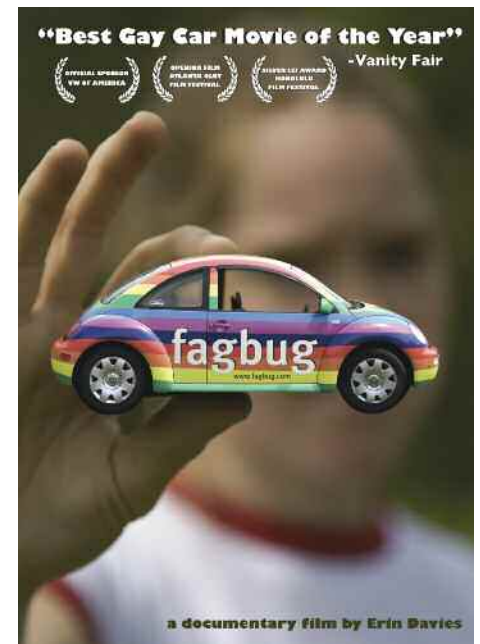


"Fagbrew will evoke dialogues with the general public around homosexuality"

bow bug. It's great for any true fagbug fan or Volkswagen lover!

I'm looking for some investors or donors for the fagbug museum and brewery so if anyone out there wants to help see a gay-themed museum and beer come to life, I'd love to connect.

I'm free and available to talk to anyone at the festival so please come stop by and say hello or get a picture of yourself with the fagbug!



Catch Erin Davies and the Fagbug up close and in person during PrideFest on Friday & Saturday. The Fagbug will also be featured in the Milwaukee LGBT Pride Parade on Sunday, sponsored by PrideFest.

For information on ordering the DVD, stickers or other items FagBug related, please check out the website:

www.fagbug.com

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PrideFest Artist Profile

Todd Alsup debuts his self-titled studio album with the joint release of two singles: the upbeat, summer jam "Let's Have a Party" and the lush pop ballad "You Are." **Local fans will be among the first to have the opportunity to hear Alsup live when he performs Milwaukee PrideFest at Dance Pavilion on June 13.**

For his album, Alsup enlisted New York producers Steve Greenwell (Joss Stone, Diane Birch) and James Walsh and Jeremy Sklarsky of Major Who Media to create a timeless album that would pay homage to the artists and styles of music he grew up listening to. A native of Pontiac, Michigan (a suburb of Detroit), Alsup took inspiration from artists like Stevie Wonder, Billy Joel, The Supremes, Elton John, and Marvin Gaye when writing the material for the record. "Some records are completed in a few weeks. Mine took much longer. We made a conscious choice to take things slowly and spent 9 months allowing things to take shape organically." The result is a collection of lovingly-crafted hook-driven songs that seamlessly blend pop, soul, Motown, and rock.

Lead single "Let's Have a Party" promises to be the song of the summer. It's a celebratory shout-out, a deliciously funky track with an old-school Stevie Wonder vibe. The song features a soaring lead vocal, reggae-infused piano, Wonder-esque synths, doo-wop harmonies and horn-lines for days.

"You Are" is a classic piano love ballad in the style of Elton John's "Your Song" and features an intimate and heartfelt lyric, intricate piano lines, and soaring strings.

"The song is something I wrote for my partner," says Alsup, "to let him know that I couldn't do anything I do without him. He's my strongest support system. God knows, as a musician, it's a bumpy road, but he has always been the one to say 'Do what you love, that's all that matters.'"

Todd Alsup and his partner Matt have been together for seven years. They hope to one day marry, however, New York is among the 45 states in the country that does not legally recognize same-sex unions. "The passing of Proposition 8 in California was a real eye-opener for me. It went beyond denying the gay community our rights. Proposition 8 was all about actively taking them away." Todd cites his frustration with the lack of unification within the gay community.

"There are far too many of us who are willing to accept that change will come when it comes. Where's the sense of urgency? Where's the outrage?" he wonders.

On the surface, "You Are" is not politically charged. It is a love song, plain and simple. "But I wrote it for my partner and our relationship

Todd Alsup Releases New CD By Jorge Treviano



isn't recognized legally. That's pretty political," he adds.

Alsup made a name for himself with the release of his 2007 debut EP "Facts and Figures." Just after the release of his first single "The Good Fight," he was featured in Billboard Magazine as an up-and-coming artist to watch. He later filmed a video performance of the song that aired on Billboard's website. "To be highlighted in the music industry's bible meant everything to me. It was incredible exposure that opened a lot of doors."

It also yielded the attention of major labels. Todd Alsup was approached by several, but he ultimately made a conscious choice to remain an independent artist and to release the album on his own. "A label would have to present a seriously amazing offer to make me consider signing with them now," he explains. "The beauty of today's music world is that if you're intelligent, driven, and surround yourself with a strong team, it is possible to make an impact without major label support. Indie artists like Ingrid Michaelson who've made it on their own terms inspire me and remind me that it can be done."

He conceded it is a lot of work with an endless checklist of things to be responsible for. "Sometimes I feel like I'm living five peoples' lives," he continues. "But when the product you are selling is you, who else is going represent you as authentically?"

For more information on Todd Alsup, please visit www.toddalsup.com or follow him on Twitter @ToddAlsup.

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RENT, Skylight Opera Theatre



When all is said and done, **"Rent,"** Jonathan Larson's Pulitzer Prize-winning musical, truly is the stuff of Broadway legend. No overnight success, Larson would work for over seven years on updating Giacomo Puccini's opera *"La Bohème,"* bringing it to New York's Lower East Side during the thriving days of the drug- and AIDS-plagued Bohemian Alphabet City.

Then, on the eve of its Off-Broadway Opening, just as success was within his reach, Jonathan Larson died of an aortic aneurysm, possibly as a result of Marfan Syndrome. He would not hear the critics, a nearly unanimous group, singing the show's praises any more than he would see the packed houses of a new (and younger) generation of theatergoers.

When the final curtain came down at the Nederlander Theatre on September 7 2008, **"Rent"** had clocked in 5,124 performances, making it the eighth-longest-running Broadway show. Along the way **"Rent"** would win a Pulitzer, the Tony in 1996 for Best New Musical in addition to countless other awards not to mention a legion of devoted fans.

Although many in Glenn's acquaintance can be counted amongst this show's most devoted legion, Glenn has remained doubtful. Too often productions simply cranked up the volume as if hoping the show's inherent youthful exuberance would mask how shamefully Larson seemed to marginalize his LGBT characters as well as his characters of color.

Almost 15 years since its Broadway Opening Night and it would be an apprehensive Glenn approaching the Cabot Theatre for the Skylight Opera Theatre's **"Rent."** How would Larson's vision have held up?

Glenn has often wished to have been one of those lucky theatergoers, one of those select few seeing **"Rent"** on its pre-Broadway run at the New York Theatre Workshop. In the intimate confines of this off-Broadway house, Glenn imagines

that production to have much in common with Director Donna Drake's revival for the Skylight than the usual eardrum-battering road shows that continue to find their way to Milwaukee.

The emphasis on Drake's production is on revealing all of the distinct characters who comprise this urban community. Within scenic designer Lisa Schlenker's tight, urban backdrop, Drake's excellent cast manages to forge far more of a sense of community than on offer in previous productions.

Although Larson has undoubtedly drawn from Puccini for inspiration, surely it is not much of a leap to see the central duo of Mark (Rick Pendzich) and Roger (Tommy Hahn) as different elements of Larson himself. In Mark we see Larson the storyteller, the outsider always looking in. In the struggling songwriter Roger (think: *"One Song Glory"*), there's Larson again, this time struggling composer. No surprise then that their friends, the rather more authentic denizens of this small corner of New York's Lower East Side, prove far more compelling.

Standout performance by Parrish Collier (Tom Collins) and especially Juan-Torres-Falcon (Angel Schunard) bring their love story center stage. Their haunting duet, *"I'll Cover You,"* shines brightly; the second act reprise guaranteed to bring a tear from even the most hardened theatergoer. *"Light My Candle"* which should jumpstart the romance of Roger and Mimi (Lili Thomas), all but pales in comparison.

Turning Maureen into a real force of nature is the dynamic Kate Margaret McCann; her *"Over The Moon"* proving to be both vocally dazzling and very, very funny. Without exception, Drake's cast brings a real freshness to the host of familiar Larson songs without, blessedly, resorting to naff *"American Idol"* vocal theatrics.

Glenn has a few quibbles but minor quibbles, to be sure. The production's third performance found the cast still looking for their comfort zone on Schlenker's (too?) cluttered stage, perhaps con-



tributing to the occasional lapses in pacing. And although he has thought productions of **"Rent"** have relied too heavily upon generating a façade of youthful exuberance, here Glenn might have wished for a more youthful cast.

And finally, there's no getting around the fact that **"Rent"** is dated; AIDS is no longer the death sentence it was back in the early 1990s. As **"Rent"** becomes increasingly less topical, if not in fact less relevant, directors must, as Donna Drake has done here on the Cabot stage, find in Larson's vision new ways to connect to theatergoers.

"Rent" continues through June 20 at the Cabot Theatre, 158 N. Broadway. For tickets, call (414) 291-7800 or go online at skylightopera.com.





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DIVERSION OF THE DAY Community Events Calendar

The AIDS Memorial Quilt on display at the Milwaukee Art Museum June 8-20

Supported by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation Johnson and Pabst LGBT Humanity Fund and AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin

Thursday, June 10

Fluid (Milwaukee) Pre-Pride Post Office Party

Harbor Room (Milwaukee) Jerry Grillo with Historical Mystery Band



P r i d e F e s t

~ M I L W A U K E E ~

PRIDEFEST WEEKEND JUNE 11, 12, 13

Friday, June 11

D.I.X. (Milwaukee) Grand Opening Party 739 South 1st St feat DJ Carla Starla & AJ Dubbz

LaCage (Milwaukee) PrideFest Kick-off Party 10pm Show in Montage at 11

Wherehouse (Milwaukee) Shevents & Wherehouse present Turkish Oil wrestling & go-go girls bubble party.

Saturday, June 12

LaCage (Milwaukee) The Biggest After Party starts 10pm, Special show in Montage at 11

D.I.X. (Milw) Grand Opening Party 739 South 1st with DJ Terri Bristol & DJ Psycho Bitch

Oriental Theatre (Milwaukee) The Rocky Horror Picture Show! Original Uncut Movie! Live Cast Of Sensual Daydreams! ...and it's our ROBOT SHOW! Prize for best robot costume!

Sunday, June 13

**Milwaukee Pride Parade
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Milwaukee Pride Parade

LaCage (Milwaukee) The After Pride Party with National recording star Kaci Battaglia performing her hit single "Crazy Possessive" at 11 pm

Wherehouse (Milw) Service Industry Night "Carnival of Sin" plus Shevents Female dancers

Friday, June 18

Boom (Milwaukee) MVM Karaoke Fundraiser 9pm Karaoke Roulette contest at 11:30pm

LaCage (Milwaukee) Pink Flamingo/Summer Solstice Weekend (also on Saturday night)

La Crosse Pride Event (LaCrosse) Night On The Town @ The Root Note (115 4th St. S), 7-10 PM, Beer and Wine Tasting, hors d'oeuvres, Local Music, \$20 proceeds benefit Pride. Make plans to attend La Crosse Pride: Saturday, August 28th NOON-11PM @ La Crosse's South Side Oktoberfest Grounds, Ronnie Nyles, Sick Of Sarah, Kids Area with inflatables, Vendors, & a show of hometown Pride with the cast of Illusions, LaX Girls, & Savanna & Co.

Saturday, June 19

Kruz (Milwaukee) M.A.U.L. Bear Night 9pm-close

Madoson Gay Video Club "Horror In The Wind" (Ariztical Ent., dir. Max Mitchell, 2008) "Tales of the Arabian Nights - Part 2" (Raging Stallion, dir. Ben Leon & Chris Ward, 2010) 8:00 PM, <http://www.mgvc.org>, 608-244-8690 (evenings)

PJ's (Oshkosh) Mr. Gay Wisconsin Unlimited \$3 cover 10:30 pm

Thursday, June 24

Harbor Room (Milwaukee) Jerry Grillo with Historical Mystery Band

Sunday, June 27

Fluid (Milwaukee) "Broadway" Bingo hosted by Karen Valentine & Maple

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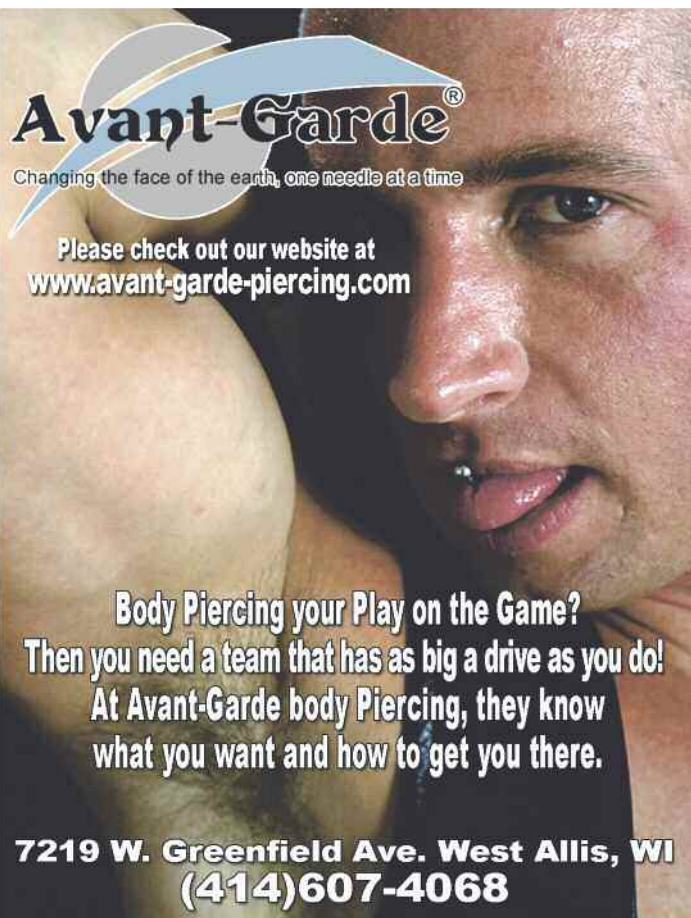


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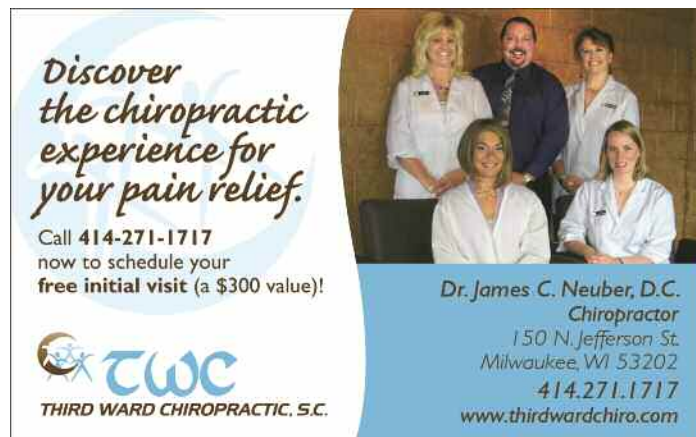


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(An effervescently gay advice columnist) Disclaimer: Although the author of this column holds a doctorate in clinical psychology, the tongue-in-cheek advice given is for entertainment only and is not a substitute for therapy. Barbie responds to all emails...whether you deserve it or not. Send questions to askunclebarbie@aol.com

YOU MATTER

Dear Uncle Barbie,

I have been fighting depression for as long as I can remember. My life is useless, and I feel that there is no hope for me. Therapy has not helped much. I feel a little better when I am sitting with my therapist, but the depression returns almost immediately upon leaving her office. I cannot live in the counseling center. What can I do?

Signed, Janet L.

Hello Janet,

Perhaps, I could serve you best by sharing a true story with you. A while back, I was enjoying a meal in a Chinese restaurant. I was approached by the waiter who placed a fortune cookie on my table along with the check. As I read the fortune, it posed an interesting thought. It read, "You could change the world!" At first, I just laughed. Then, as I pondered the idea, I began to seriously consider the possibilities.

The statement was actually correct from a certain point of view. Indeed, when I thought about it, we are all going to change the world. In fact, we already have. Maybe, we do not have a noticeable impact on society; nonetheless, we do have an influence on the people in our lives. What I mean is

every little thing we do has an effect on others, and, thus causes changes. This cause-and-effect can be a positive or negative thing depending on what we do.

For instance, if a child is raised in a healthy and loving environment, that child will be more likely to have a positive influence on the community. Of course, if the child was raised in an unhealthy and emotionally impoverished environment, then that child may turn out to be a problem for society for many years. So, what you do does have an impact on those around you. Just the simple fact that you were born changed the world because your birth increased the world population by one. No one's life is useless.

Now that you understand that each of us makes a difference in the world, you are faced with the question regarding what kind of a change or impact you wish to have on the community. Only you can answer this question. People create societies in the first place, so it stands to reason that if the world is to be a more enriched place to live, it is the people who need to improve. I think that the best way to have a positive effect on the world is to be more loving. This does not mean that all your problems will suddenly go away.



In every heart there is a void that only Uncle Barbie can fill.

However, I do believe it means you will be able to handle problems much more constructively.

You do matter. The first step in alleviating your depression is to change your thoughts, attitude, and perspective on your life. Your experience of life is based upon your attitude. Speaking of attitude, try adopting an attitude of gratitude. Here is your assignment to improve your mood: each morning, name 10 things for which you are thankful. (I do this; it works.) Remember, happiness is an attitudinal choice.

Attitude of Gratitude, Uncle Barbie

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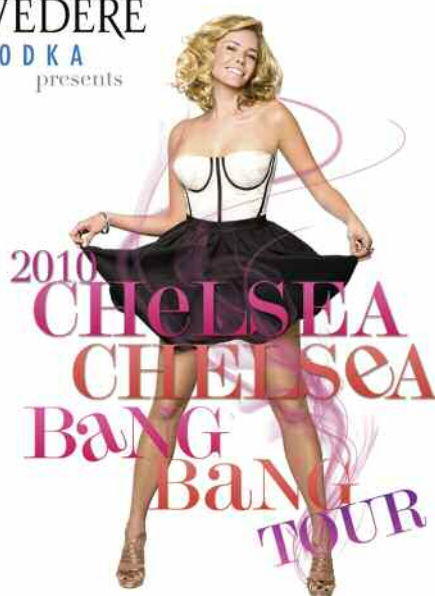
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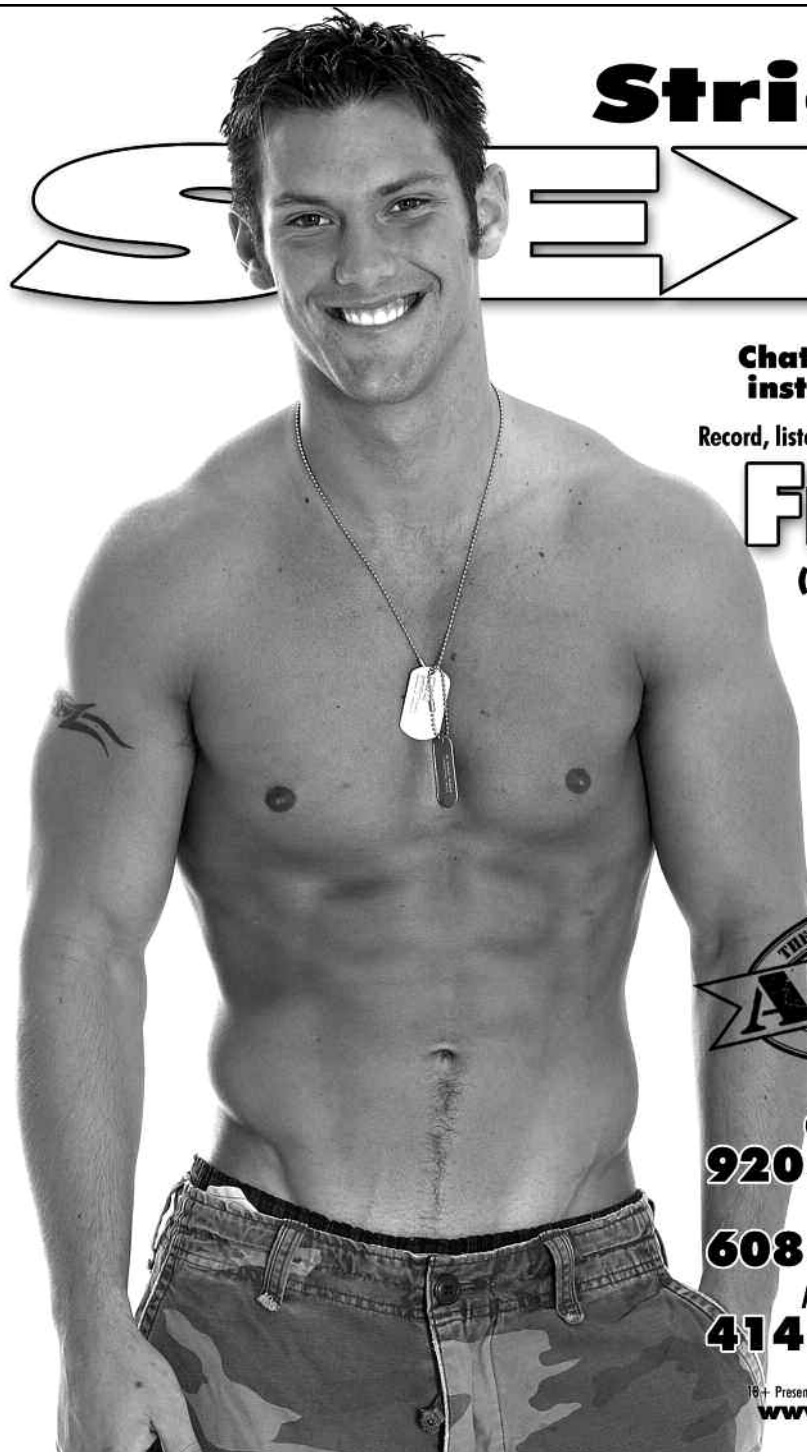
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email: editor@quest-online.com www.quest-online.com

Publisher: Mark Mariucci (ZA)

Contributors: Paul Masterson, Glenn Bishop, Uncle Barbie, Anthony Paul, Terri Schlichenmeyer, Mike Fitzpatrick, Michael Johnston, Kate Sherry

Printing/Bindery: Port Printers Port Washington

Photography: Milwaukee: William Sharkey Madison: Tony Ritschards

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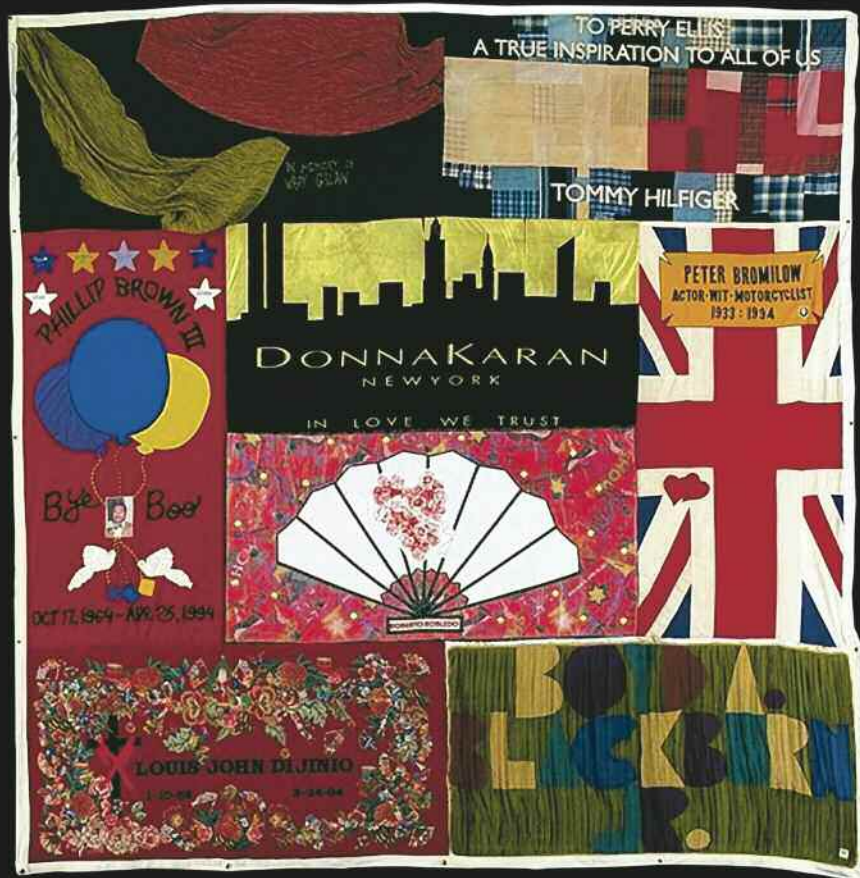


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