



UNDER THE GAYDAR

by Tony Leggio

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Photo by: Larry Graham, GrahamStudioOne.COM

11th Acclaim Awards Gala Presents *A Night of Divas*

On September 26, the Forum for Equality held the 11th annual Acclaim Awards at Harrah's Casino Theatre. The Acclaim Award is given to individuals or organizations who are recognized for their service to Louisiana's LGBT community. And what an evening this turned out to be, with the theme *A Night of Divas* how could you go wrong.

The night began with cocktails and a wonderful silent auction, then onto dinner. Harrah's did a wonderful job on all fronts from the food to the service and their support to the gay community in the city is always appreciated. But the event was all about the award winners and their contributions to making life better in Louisiana for the LGBT community.

I was honored to be asked to be a guest at one of my friend's tables, who just happened to be an award recipient this year. Heidi Nagele Chapman, who is Director of Development for the NO/AIDS Task Force for the last nine years, received the Community Health Award. Surrounded by friends and colleagues, Heidi gave a moving tribute about her work in the gay community and the NO/AIDS Task Force's constant effort to combat this disease. There were very few dry eyes in the house as she recounted how she dealt with the

recent loss of a client of the Task Force. Knowing how important the Task Force was to this person and many others like him, made me appreciate even more all the hard work the men and women of this organization do for our community.

Another friend of mine, Ricky Graham, received the Arts and Entertainment Award. Ricky has been a fixture in the New Orleans theatre community for many years. He was the artist who right after Katrina brought us the show *I'm Still Here, Me*, a moving tribute to our wonderful city. This show proved to be a huge success and not to mention great therapy for all the locals who attended. I cannot think of anyone who is more deserving of this "prize."

Rounding out the award winners was Michael G. Bagneris for Political Leader, James Wiggins for Political Activism and ACLU of Louisiana for the Chair's Awards. But the highlight of the evening was the expertly delivered keynote address by Acclaim Award Winner for Media Leonard Pitts Jr. Mr. Pitts' credentials are too long to list, but I will try to do it justice and hit the highlights. Pitts joined *The Miami Herald* in 1991 as its pop music critic. Since 1994, he has penned a syndicated column of commentary on pop culture, social issues and family life. His book, *Becoming Dad: Black Men and the Journey to Fatherhood*, was released in May, 1999 and

was reissued in paperback in 2006. In March of 2009, he published his first novel, *Before I Forget*, the story of Mo Johnson, one of the most popular R&B stars of the 1970s who among other things is battling the early onset of Alzheimer's disease.

Pitts was awarded the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for commentary. He was also a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1992. In 2002, GLAAD Media awarded Pitts the Outstanding Newspaper Columnist award. And twice each week, millions of newspaper readers around the country are treated to his column. His speech was one of the best keynote addresses I had experienced in a long time. It was an eloquent, thought provoking address on the plight of the gay community today and how we can correlate it to the predicaments of many other oppressed groups in the past.

The evening was truly *A Night of Divas* with amazing entertainment provided by Anais St. John, Barbara Shorts, Troi Bechet, Charmaine Neville, Dorian Rush and Idella Johnson. If you are not a member of the Forum for Equality, join right away, they are working hard for the LGBT community as our voice in our political system. For more information on joining, go to www.ForumForEquality.COM.

Happy Birthday Harry Mayronne, Jr.

Iwould like to also say happy birthday to a dear friend and another staple in the theatrical and cabaret communities in New Orleans, Harry Mayronne Jr. Harry celebrated his birthday on September 28 with a wonderful party at his house on Dauphine Street in the French Quarter. The party was a veritable who's who of New Orleans' theatre and music communities. Becky Allen, Mandy Zirkenbach, Troi Bechet, Chris Wecklein, Anais St. John and the Pfister Sisters were just some of the people present to help Harry blow out the candles on his three cakes, talk about a sweet tooth.

After all the cake cutting was done, guests were treated to an impromptu cabaret show with Harry at piano and his friends singing. Thank you Harry for inviting me to your birthday party and giving all your guests the ultimate present, the opportunity to experience this wonderfully eclectic mix of singers' performance in the comfort of your living room. This is truly a night I will never forget.

Oktoberfest

It is October, so for those with German heritage know that this is your celebratory month. Oktoberfest events are observed around the globe and New Orleans was no exception. The Krewe of Petronius hosted their Oktoberfest extravaganza on Friday, October 2. I was asked to be a celebrity judge in the Stuffed Lederhosen Contest. Now this is definitely a first for me. King and Queen Petronius Arthur Alarcon and Freddy Guess rounded out the judges panel. If Freddy would have been in drag, we could have been the new Simon, Paula and Randy.

The show was co-emceed by Krewe Captain Bill as the beautiful Bootsie DeVille and Princesse Stephaney. The Fraulein Cabaret was hilarious with the three male contestants having to not only show how they can stuff a wild lederhosen, but also do their best chicken dance. Who knew the Germans started their own version of

line dancing all those years ago with this dance. Winning contestant Ray held up his coveted beer stein for all to see. The night's entertainment was provided by many special guests from other krewes such as Miss Louisiana Leatherette Cathy Fox and King Cake Queen Tami Tarmac.

The best part of the evening was when Petronius' diva, the Crown Princess Natasha was informed that Princesse Stephaney was wearing her same outfit. A tussle on the red carpet ensued, with jewelry and wigs flying, but the melee was over before the *Ambush* paparazzi arrived. For more information on more upcoming Petronius events, call 504.484.6045.

Art For Arts Sake

Another big event in the city's art community happened on October 3 with Art For Arts Sake. This event happens the first Saturday in October as simultaneous art openings happen around the city's arts districts, Royal, Julia and Magazine Streets. Art lovers from around the city meander up and down these streets enjoying wine, music and of course, great art.

My appreciation of the art weekend actually started on Friday night when my fiends and I went to an exhibit hosted by KK Projects in the middle of the hood between Music and Arts Streets on North Villere. After a night of art, we went down to see the sights on Bourbon Street and ended up at the Oz for their Band of Gold Party. Now the boys dancing at Oz are a different art form.

On Saturday, I went with my friends Laura Tennyson and Nick Nevares for all the art we could handle. We began our night at Three Ring Circus at 1638 Clio Street. If you have never been to this gallery before, check them out. They are more than a gallery. They host bands, comedy improvisational groups, theatrical experiences and even do British comedy television night. But on this Saturday, they showed a wonderful artist by the name of Matthew Kirscht, whose work is mesmerizing to say the least. And this exhibit is perfect for the month of October, since his works evoke his favorite holiday, Halloween.

After that exhibit, we were off to Magazine Street to see the sights. And the first few blocks of Magazine was where all the action was at. There was a DJ spinning great tunes for the entire block to enjoy. He was located center of the street near Winky's and House of Lounge. House of Lounge also delighted guests to burlesque dancers in their windows and shows throughout the night. The Magazine Street Merchants Association provided a free shuttle that night to ferry people up and down the block to different art galleries further down.

Also, did any of you know there is an Alligator Museum on Magazine Street. It was open that night and kind of campy fun to look around in.

This is one of my preferred events to attend in the city, not only because it is a great people watching experience, but for all those in the gay community who are interested in meeting people outside the

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tion, (with Oprah on the cover), on pages 8 and 9, you will see all the things that I had told you about and more. Some of the highlights were: "Create the illusion of slimmer legs with shaping tights, they're made from stretchy, tightly woven material that gently compresses and sculpts your legs." And as I said in the last column, pantyhose and tights were made to make your legs have that silky look that can't be achieved without them. They're made specifically for women, what more do you want? That should be a hint!

And while you happen to be browsing in the *Woman's World*, you might want to check out the "Make-up" section also, it has more good info for you on what is "hip" today, and gives easy instructions on how to apply make-up. It's the *BIBLE*, and all of you should take advantage of this golden book, it's only \$1.79, and it could make the difference of being a "true diva" or being just "duhhhhh". Be true to yourself and look in the mirror, and take that extra 10 minutes to *FINISH* out that look that will make you the real "woman" you are trying to achieve. Nothing is ever done well, if you rush into it, and it takes: patience, time, and a true effort. Thankfully, I have had help all through the centuries, Cleopatra, Marie Antoinette, Mae West, and of course my dear sister, Dame Edna Everage, that cute little possum! Everybody needs a "Fairy Godmother" along the way.

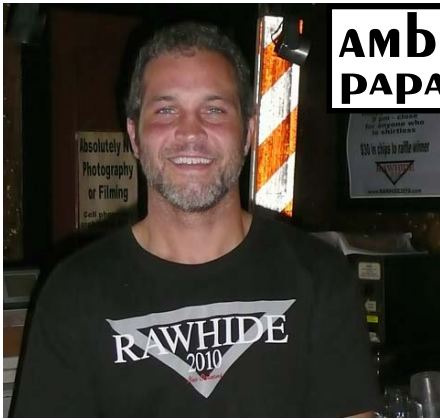
Halloween is on the way, and coming very fast, so I hope you all have an idea

what you are going to do for a costume. Hopefully, it will be nice weather and we will be able to see lots of scantily clad ghosts and goblins. After all the work I have had to have done, even though I'm not a young thing, I can at least show *something*, of course I should probably just stick to doing the *old witch* thing. I like Halloween as it's the one time that you can really become something you're not, and God knows that sums up my life, I am a *man made woman*, you know!?!

It's the one time that you can just throw on something old out of the closet and still look good. Not to mention, just go to the drugstore and pick up some *cheap make-up*, and just have fun doing it all wrong. Just go wild! It's OK, just for this one time, then it's back to learning how to be glamorous, after all *freaky* is a Halloween thing, and not for all year round. Are you listening? But then there are some that don't know that it isn't Halloween every day.

There are so many places here to get some of the best costumes, wigs, and make-up, no one should have a problem being able to create a total look for whatever they want to be. I'm just shaking thinking about it, maybe if I start now I'll be able to create the best witch ever! Everybody go shopping now so you won't be left out at the last minute.

I expect to see some of the best *looks* ever, there is no excuse !!! Because you know what would happen if I saw someone all wrong? ...*Ida Slappter*



Nate behind the bar at Rawhide

AMBUSH PAPARAZZI



Skipper on the bar at The Corner Pocket



Persana Shoulders, Bonnie Bitch, GM Tommy Elias & Mr. Pix, the puppeteer at the fab Bonnie Bitch Show hosted at Oz



CW's Bon Voyage Show & Party was a fab send off at Starlight By The Park



Carol slingin' cocktails at Le Roundup



Dancer Rhythm showing his stuff on the bar at The Corner Pocket



Oz Drag Survivor winner Shan'ya Ellis Narcisse, runner-up Sable Nicole Starr & MC Blanche Debris at the Survivor Finale



Le Roundup's Lady Hope showing her assets at the Madam Elysian Fields pageant



Trevor workin' the Happy Hour crowd at The Double Play



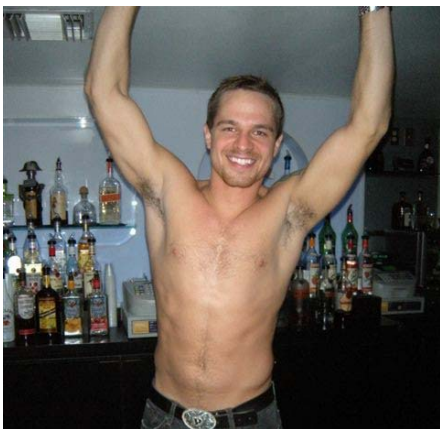
Calendar Boy Host Barry Bareass & DJ Joey Lopez at The Corner Pocket



Drag Survivor Finale Judges Neil, Ashley & Tonya at Dance Bar of the Year Oz



Tittie Toulouse bids farewell at her retirement from drag performance during FourPlay at JohnPaul's



Amazingly beautiful Philip at Napoleon's Itch



Dancer Mikey is a real cutie on the bar at the Pocket



Mr. USofA contestant Nathan Brooks & new Mr. USofA At Large Seymour Chilton at the Mr. USofA contest



Rusty LaRoux hits the stage at Big Daddy's for The Zoo Revue



Brian welcomes you to the Phoenix



Oz Club Kids Brendon, party host Persana Shoulders & TJ for Oz's Band of Gold blowout



Mr. Southwest USofA GQ & Tommie Ross at the Mr. USofA contest



Sisters, Sisters, who's the pretty one, Opal Masters or Gizelle Bouvier

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trodding the boards ...from 34

wise, and it was refreshing to see him play a character who was by turns raffish, slyly wise, and moderately inebriated; fine as he's been at interpreting Wilson's holy fools, I was ready to see him take on a different challenge.

The revelatory performance, though, was Stephfon Guidry's Boy Willie. Last seen as a drag queen in **Unplugged**, Guidry has come a very long way since his mannered shtik in **The Papaya Man** two and half years ago. Having evolved a very natural stage presence, Guidry embodied Wilson's life force with fervor and conviction. I look forward to seeing what fences this gem of an actor shall scale in the future.

Bourbon at the Border at the Marigny Theater

In **Bourbon at the Border**, Pearl Cleage provides her heroine with an absolutely devastating monolog about man's inhumanity to man during the Freedom Summer of 1965 that Adella Gautier did full justice to.

The problem was it took six scenes of exposition, occasionally repetitive, often unnecessary, to get there.

Cleage writes pungent, lifelike dialog (more so for her female characters than her male ones), including a great passage about the role of blacks in a Woody Allen film, and is unafraid to paint a not very flattering portrait of a certain portion of Detroit's black community circa 1995. You can feel Cleage, however, manipulating her *dramatis personae* and, ultimately, the whole lacks a requisite cogency.

Ed Bishop is to be admired for giving **Bourbon at the Border** its local premiere, and if I wasn't entirely convinced that the

effort was worth it, his fluid direction went a long way to overcome the script's shortcomings. And though he could've given better shape to the various scenes' endings, his final *coup de théâtre* was powerful.

It would be hard to imagine more natural actresses than Gautier and Latricia Huston, as her best friend, in **Bourbon**; their excellent performances, Gautier's steadiness playing off of Huston's piquancy, were a joy to watch. In the less well-defined role of Huston's boyfriend, Roscoe C. Reddix, Jr. was very good. As much as it was a pleasure to hear the sonorous voice of Rick Jay as Gautier's husband and a battle-scarred veteran of the Civil Rights era, this theater novice is not quite as comfortable on stage, yet, as his colleagues.

David Raphael's sleek contemporary set with its stunning view of the bridge that crosses over to Canada may be the best yet seen at the Marigny Theater. I wish I could've said the same about the play itself.

Camelot at Rivertown Repertory Theatre

In 1993, Alan Jay Lerner's son Michael rewrote the book of **Camelot** so that there'd be young and old versions of Arthur and Guenevere, portrayed by two different performers. Director Dane Rhodes decided to go with this version and power to him. One only wishes the results had been better.

On the plus side was Lerner & Loewe's classic score; Richard Hutton as the older Arthur with his commanding presence and rich baritone especially fine in *If Ever I Would Leave You*; Chris Ward/ Eric Porter's impressive unit set with its arching ramps that provided various play-

ing areas and levels; Travis Acosta's snippy Mordred who milked **The Seven Deadly Virtues** for all its nasty cynicism; Veronica Russell's beautiful costumes; Earl Lennie's atmospheric lighting; Daniel deShazo's accomplished conducting/ musical directing; Veronica Belletto, all campy fun as the evil sorceress Morgana; the powerful soprano of Nancy Assaf as the older Guenevere; and a genuinely affecting ending.

On the minus side was Lerner's talky book that doesn't give actors much to work with; Andrea Watson who turned the young Guenevere into a fishwife with a small voice; Travis Acosta's well-intentioned but bland young Arthur; the over-miked sound; Hutton's occasional flubbing of his lines; confusing choreography in **The Tournament** (why didn't Lancelot take part in it?) and a strange, period-inappropriate dance for *If Ever I Would Leave You*; klutzy dancers; Marshall Harris, who has appeared to good effect in such comic outings as **Naked Boys Singing & The Rocky Horror Show**, completely miscast as the romantic Lancelot; the zero sexual chemistry between Lancelot and the young Guenevere; and a generally lifeless first act.

At least the buffet by Pigeon Catering with its oyster Rockefeller soup, Cajun brisket, chicken pasta al fresco, garlic mashed potatoes, gourmet cookies, and "Death by Chocolate" brownies was yummy.

Taking a Chance on Love at Le Chat Noir

In her recent fast-paced cabaret show, **Taking a Chance on Love**, Amy Alvarez told us, repeatedly, how she loves love songs. And when she offered a new interpretation of a classic or

went outside of the great American songbook to present a new or little known work, she was mesmerizing.

She and musical director Jefferson Turner brought something worthy and different to *I've Got You Under My Skin* by slowing down the tempo to a crawl; there was no doubt that Alvarez meant every word that she said. She likewise deeply connected with *They Say It's Wonderful* from **Annie Get Your Gun** and *Make The Man Love Me* from **A Tree Grows in Brooklyn**.

In *New Words* she created a true dialog with her newborn child while she nailed the comic cuteness in *You Should Have Told Me*. The medley of song titles from **So Long 174th Street** was a manic delight. And she made *The Way You Look Tonight* touching in its simplicity.

But otherwise, one senses Alvarez goes on autopilot, content to let her lovely, crystal clear soprano and perfect diction carry her along. There's nothing wrong with spending an hour or so with Alvarez—she's one of the nicest people in this town and her lovely, down-to-earth personality shines through. But an emotional/narrative sameness pervaded too much of **Taking a Chance on Love**.

Turner and Director Banu Gibson certainly must share some of the blame for this. While a significant improvement over her last outing, Alvarez needs stronger direction and better, wittier dialog in order to fulfill her bounteous potential.

Amy Alvarez has every right to sing classic songs beautifully. We have every right to expect more from her talents.

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bar scene, this event is perfect for you.

Sweet ...Lesbian Travel

If you have been reading my columns, many of you should have figured out by now that I love to travel. It is one of my greatest passions. And I am always looking for a great trip that I will remember for the rest of my life. Well, I have found an amazing trip for all the lesbians in the **Ambush** readership.

Sweet is the name of a company that specializes in lesbian travel. But to say it is just a travel company would not be doing this company justice. Sweet is not just the company name but also their mission.

According to the Sweet, more and more, women are looking to find meaning in the things they do and the things they spend their money on. They want to help magnify that meaning for their guests and find ways to have fun doing it. Sweet is about celebrating the accomplishments of our current and future guests year round. They want to create a Sweet community fueled by their inspiring stories. From career changes to special anniversaries, from fitness successes to family additions, Sweet encourages and celebrates their guests in everything they do. While it's incredible to be in a community of women for a week on vacation, we want to keep that feeling and that energy alive between departures.

That being said, get ready because the Crescent City is about to get Sweet. They will be hosting a seven day fun-filled cruise in the Western Caribbean, November 8-15, 2009, as Sweet takes over the entire Norwegian Spirit. Their journey starts here in our own beloved New Orleans, where they will light up Bourbon Street with a huge party to launch their first cruise. You heard it right, this international company has chosen our wonderful city to launch their first cruise and for that, I would like to take a moment to thank the owners and founders of Sweet, Shannon Wentworth and Jen Rainin. Check out their website, their company and events are incredible.

Additionally to the cruise, they are offering a three-day pre-package allowing guests the opportunity to pitch in with the Katrina relief effort by day and enjoy New Orleans' legendary clubs by night. Local ladies, Rubyfruit Jungle is the place to be this weekend. Once they board from New Orleans, the cruise will chart a course for the sunny, sleepy (until they get there) fishing village of Costa Maya, Mexico. Designed for cruise travelers bent on relaxation, Costa Maya has a hammock with your name on it as well as a gigantic saltwater pool with a swim-up bar. Next will be Mayan ruins, colonial buildings and wildlife sanctuaries in bustling Belize City, Belize.

After Belize City, they will travel to Roatan, Honduras, where the beach is plentiful, the water is clear and the coral

reefs are full of amazing creatures. Roatan is one of the best places in the world to scuba dive and snorkel. If you are not a big fan of getting wet, explore the depths in a submersible boat. Then they return back to Mexico as they dock in Cozumel, where the jungle hides ancient ruins and mystical cave formations draw travelers to Chac Tun Cavern. Whether you want to relax on the white sand beaches, enjoy a catamaran party cruise or peer at the brightly colored fishes from on top of the water or underwater, you're sure to have a blast.

But the excursions are not the only thing that will heat up this boat. With four of the hottest DJs, parties by the legendary Club Skirts (makers of The Dinah Shore Weekend) and fantastic theme parties, it's going to be an unbelievable week of music and dancing. And the entertainers on board for this event includes Suzanne Westenhoefer, Erin Foley, Jen Foster, Edie Carey, Kate McKinnon (**The Big Gay Sketch Show**), Gloria Bigelow, Sandra Valls, Natalia Zukerman, and Adrienne.

And if those entertainers are not enough, they have some special guests lined up which consist of actress and comedian Carlease, Natalie Garcia and Meghan Hall from AfterEllen's **Nat & Meg's Sweet Adventures**, Cathy DeBuono & Jill Bennett from **We Have to Stop Now**, Comedian Amy Tee, CherryBomb from AfterEllen, Lipstick & Dipstick from Curve, Comedian Chantal Carrere and Reality TV Personality Dani Campbell. Ladies, this has to be one of the most impressive

line-up of celebrities in the lesbian community that I have seen in a long time.

But in addition to the entertainment and the ports of call, this cruise offers much more. They have networking and empowerment seminars, sweet sweat boot camps with celebrity fitness guru Shawnee Harkins from **Dr. Phil's Weight Loss Race**, and wedding packages for those who want to get hitched at sea. The Norwegian Spirit cruise ship is literally a floating island with first-class amenities. She offers Freestyle Cruising with the flexibility of eleven restaurants, seven bars and lounges, multiple entertainment venues, two pools, a sports deck, casino, spa and a variety of spacious public rooms.

With NCL's Freestyle Cruising, your choices are endless. Take a dip in the pool, pamper yourself in the spa with a mani-pedi, roll some dice in the casino, shoot some hoops, relax with a hot stone massage or try your luck at bingo. Norwegian Spirit's accommodations give you what you need to vacation your way. There's something for everyone including spacious suites and nearly 600 ocean view staterooms (most with private balconies).

For more information on this amazing cruise, go to <http://discoversweet.com> or call 877.793.3830.

Have an event or have something of interest to the LGBT community, feel free to send press releases or information to tonymgp@hotmail.com.



Monday, October 19th

**Young
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