



THE PHOENIX
New Orleans
& BEAR BONES
books
presents
Bear Bards
Read
HIBERNATION
and Other Poems by Bear Bards edited by Ron J. Suresha
in honor of
SAINTS AND SINNERS
11TH ANNUAL • MAY 15-18, 2014 • NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA
A fun- and fur-filled evening in pursuit of the hirsute muse as award-winning poets from around the country gather during the Saints + Sinners literary festival .
Bear bards will read from signed copies of the new collection of poetry celebrating bear life.



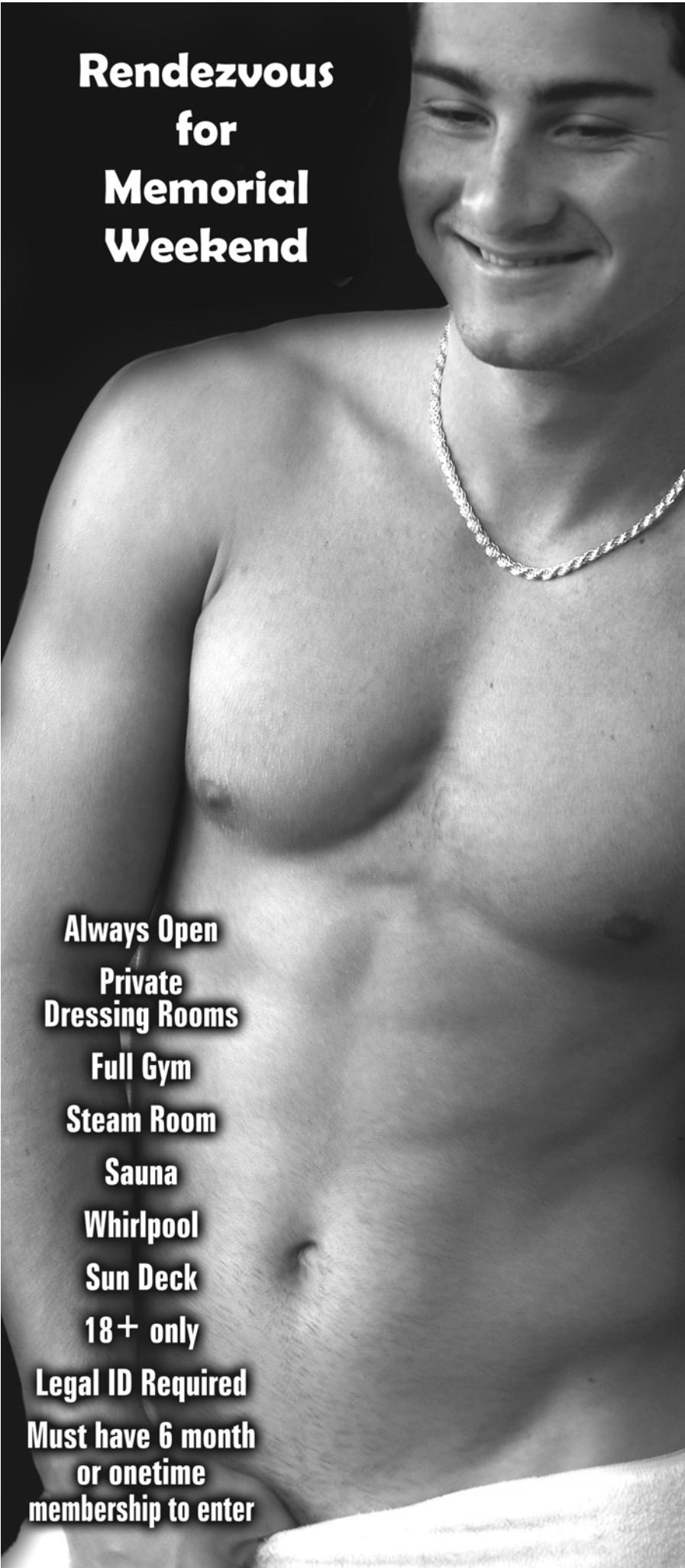
Featuring authors
Nathan Burgoine
Wayne Courtois-Seligman
Jeff Mann
Felice Picano
Ralph Seligman-Courtois
Shawn Syms
Jerry L. Wheeler
Emanuel Xavier

hosted by editor
Ron J. Suresha


Time allowing, we will open the mic briefly to anyone who wants to share his bear-themed verse. This is a free event, 21+.

Saturday, May 17th, 2014,
8:00-9:30 pm
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under the gaydar ...from 10

prepare by taking an extended master class with the celebrated writer himself. Academy Award Nominee John Malkovich, who co-starred with ***Sands in The Killing Fields*** and is a founding member of the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, directed this celebrated solo for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2011.

British actor Julian Sands is frequently seen world-wide in films, on stage, and on television. He trained in London at The Central School of Speech and Drama and has appeared in over 100 films including ***The Killing Fields, A Room With A View, Impromptu, Leaving Las Vegas, Arachnophobia, Oceans 13***, and ***The Girl With A Dragon Tattoo***. On television, he is best known for his role on **24** but has also been seen on ***Smallville, Ghost Whisperer, Dexter***, and ***Banshee***.

This is an evening of Homeric theater with an extraordinary actor, great words, and an audience. Devoid of pretension or glittery trappings, ***A Celebration of Harold Pinter*** gets to the soul of the man—poet, playwright, husband, political activist, Nobel winner, mortal. ***A Celebration of Harold Pinter*** was nominated for a 2013 Drama Desk Award.

If you want an opportunity to meet and mingle with world renowned actor Julian Sands, you can buy a ticket for a special reception following his Friday, May 9. There will be champagne and light bites in the beautiful ballroom above Martine Chaisson Gallery. Only a limited amount of tickets will be sold to this exclusive engagement. The reception begins at 9:30pm. Tickets are \$50. For more information or to buy tickets, call 504.528.3800 or visit the CAC Box Office.

Party Down

Easter has hopped pass and now as we near summer, the city prepares for an array of parties, events and festivals. It was a busy two weeks so let's not waste any time. On Thursday of Easter week, I attended a reception for Richard Perque at Vacherie Restaurant. Richard is seeking election as Civil Court Judge. This elegant event held in the private dining room and courtyard of Vacherie was a superior way to kick off his campaign. Lots of supporters turned out to listen to his plans. I have known Richard for over a year now and find he would be a welcome breath of fresh air in the courts. If you want to find out more about Richard, go to www.perqueforjudge.com.

The gay scene in New Orleans has its fair share of holidays it celebrates with glittering excess: Halloween, Southern Decadence and Mardi Gras. But Easter weekend has crept up in the ranks and now draws huge crowds of both locals and visitors alike. Beginning on Friday, there are many fun-filled events themed for the holiday that leads all the way up to the largest Gay Easter Parade in the United States.

Good Friday kicked off the festivities with Bunnies in the Big Easy. Now in its fifth year, this soiree was held at the Bourbon Vieux, a luxurious and elegant venue located at 501 Bourbon Street. It touts the largest balcony on the famed thoroughfare among other attributes like award-winning cuisine, a hospitable staff and New Orleans décor. Bunnies In the Big Easy is the last of five fundraisers during the Lenten season to raise funds for the Gay Easter Pa-

rade and its charity Food For Friends, a division of the NO/AIDS Task Force.

This year guests were greeted at the door by numerous Bunny Boys each with his own unique theme like the Fetish Bunny and the Prince Charming Bunny. The event is styled like an evening at the Playboy Mansion except instead of the Playboy Bunny Girls, we have hot Bunny Boys. The night also included an open bar, an incredible drag show and a live auction that raised several thousand dollars for the cause. Entertaining this evening was Barbara Ella, Elizabeth Bouvier, Opal Masters and Safonda Peters.

The event was hosted by Gay Easter Parade Board Members Rona Connors and Tony Leggio (yours truly) along with Opal Masters. The Grand Marshals for the parade Stuart Nettles and Todd Blauvelt were also on hand. It was a fun-filled evening of festive Easter cheer, as guests threw beads from the balcony to the revelers below, dined on delectable culinary treats and had fabulous libations. Jello shots and daiquiris were also provided to the attendees to add to the merriment. Culminating this unique party was an over-the-top Easter Egg Hunt that brought lots of prizes to all those who found the lucky eggs.

Afterwards, Oz New Orleans, one of the largest gay bars in the city, hosted The White Party. The bar is draped entirely in white as well as all the bartenders making patrons feel like they are floating in the clouds to the music of some amazing DJ's. The hostess of the evening was the witty and talented Persana Shoulders who kept things moving throughout the evening.

The following day was the Marigny Bunny Hop which started at 2pm. The weather was gorgeous as participants strolled this historic neighborhood on this enjoyable bar crawl. People are urged to wear their most creative handmade bonnets with each of the eight locations awarding a different trophy. Some of the awards are Sissiest, Butchest, Best Group, Tallest and Widest Bonnets. Having grown in size since its humble beginnings eleven years ago, this event is now one of the premier happenings over the Easter Weekend. Each year, the parade is led by a different Bunny Marshal, with this year being a social group called the Betties. The Betties have been a part of this second line for so long (and won in this category so many times also), they even names one of the wards after them called the Betties Best Group Award. The places on the route were Mags 940, The Phoenix, Kajun's Pub, The Friendly Bar, Who Dat Café, Cutter's, Mimi's and Big Daddy's.

I believe Easter Sunday in New Orleans is a perfect melting of the traditional with the revelry. Going to early morning mass at St. Louis Cathedral in all its grandeur was followed by my annual Easter Sunday pre-parade brunch. Friends from all over the United States (from New York to Texas) stopped by along with many locals as we dined on traditional brunch fare along with unlimited champagne, mimosas and bloody mary's. I even had a bunny boy or two left over from the previous night bartend the event. After, we packed up all our throws and headed down to the parade start which is located on Rampart Street directly across from Armstrong Park. There was a pre and post parade party held at GrandPre's on that street.

The parade itself consisted of carriages of all sizes from four passenger to eighteen, many cars and marching bands.

I had carriage that looked like a trolley car which was large and spacious for my group, our throws and the bartender (yes we brought him along). We had a memorable time tossing beads and trinkets to the people who lined the streets. So many friends came out to see us; it was fantastic to see the local following. Specialty throws such as seed packets and faux Faberge Eggs were handed out to record breaking crowds making it one of the most successful of recent. After the Gay Easter Parade, which is one of three that day, the French Quarter was teeming with people continuing the party well into the night. Between the Gay Easter Parade, the Chris Owens Parade and the historic Germaine Wells Parade, Easter Sunday in the French Quarter is a location to observe the holiday.

On Monday the following week besides recovering from the crazy weekend, I went out with some friends of mine who came into town for Easter from New Jersey. After a quick dinner at New Orleans iconic Mandina's restaurant, we went and enjoyed an evening at the Tulane Avenue Bar for ***RuPaul's Drag Race***. It is getting down to the finals where everything is on the line, good luck Bianca.

Thursday evening was quite the night of parties and with the excitement of Jazz Fest in the air, the French Quarter was abuzz. My friend Laura and I went to our first stop at Angela King's Gallery on Royal Street for Steven Forster's photo exhibit. The place was packed with well-wishers as guests enjoyed 35 years of Steven's photographic career. His talent in capturing musicians so candidly makes his photographs appealing and unique. He shows true happiness in each one. After, we moseyed on to Canal Place for the opening of the new Armani Store. Now this was different kind of party, very elegant and appointed from the male model bartenders to the gorgeous clothes. Even the passed appetizers were designer. It is wonderful to see NOLA finally getting these caliber stores in our city.

Saturday was all about the Jazz Fest. Beaux and I hit it early and stayed late. I love everything about the festival, the music, the food and people watching. It is probably one of the best places just to sit and watch the humanity parade go by. Whether it is a Mardi Gras Indian or a hot shirtless hunk, there is so much to catch your eye. One of my other favorite things to do is bounce from tent to tent visiting with friends. The Miller and Sheraton tents were my two favorite areas. Top acts that day I enjoyed were Kim Carsons, Big Freedia, Robin Thicke and Robert Plant. And for the record, Robin Thicke is as hot in person as he is on television. Miley isn't the only one who wants to twerk on him. The other great thing about the Fest is shopping; there are some great artisans with their wares on sale. Cathy Rose is a local who shows every year and my house is filled with her artwork. The fun also comes after you leave the festival when you stop at all the parties happening right outside the gates at people's houses. I especially enjoy hanging out at Liuzza's by the track for a little more dancing and cocktailing.

After my all day Jazz Fest marathon, Sunday was slightly more laid back. I spent my day going to fiends' houses, one for a brunch and later a dinner. Frank Pizzoloto had a lovely brunch at his Elysian Fields home for some friends. He is not only a fabulous cook and gracious host, but keeps you enthralled with interesting anecdotes

about the city and some of its more famous denizens. After lots of champagne and a quick disco rest, I went to Albert Carey's condominium in the Warehouse District to watch the sun set on the rooftop and have several delicious martinis. He also put on quite a nice spread for the his guests. There is no better way to spend a Sunday Funday than with good food and even better friends. Until next time, keep it sassy.

Tony's Tidbits of Wisdom

Life seems to be going at breakneck speed sometimes. We are more connected than ever before. Between our family obligations, professional world and life in general, there never seems enough time for ourselves. I recently started meditating and found it a great benefit to me both personally and professionally. I have to admit, it was hard to get into the habit of sitting silent for even five minutes.

For me that is a feat unto itself, but with practice I began mastering this very simple art. It is amazing how happy I am in perfect silence. This is not an exact science and meditation is not the same for everyone. It is very personal. Sometimes it can be a struggle, while at other times it feels effortless.

I find there are many upsides to meditation such as improved concentration. When I clear my mind, I find myself more productive in many areas of my life. I become less bothered by little things. People do not upset me as much; we are our own worst enemy by magnifying small things into serious problems. Meditation is a way of detachment where we can learn to live in the present, rather than the past or future. The bigger picture starts to become clearer.

There have been numerous studies pointing to the health benefits of meditation. The reason is that meditation reduces stress levels and alleviates anxiety. If we can reduce stress, many health benefits follow. It has also helped me find things such as lost keys, jewelry, etc. I go to a quiet place and focus and walk myself through the last time I touched the item until I remember. It has worked most of the time.

But most of all, meditation has also enabled me to have a deeper understanding of myself. What are my dreams, what do I want in life and what can I do to make a better world for myself and those around me. There are many books and articles written about meditation, I recommend you take the time to look into it. Your life should be filled with happiness, and there is no better person to start with than yourself.

To Quote A Queen

Still following on a musical theme, here are some great quotes from another great gay musician, Melissa Ethridge. Throughout her rise to musical icon and her very public battle with cancer, Ethridge has always remained a positive role model for the gay community. Here are just a few of her many great quips.

"I definitely feel we're moving forward, There's a lot more understanding...there's less fear and we're working on there being less hatred."

"The songs are inspired by my experiences. Sometimes they are more than my real-life and, conversely, my life is more than just my songs."

"Don't let anyone tell you that you have to be a certain way. Be unique. Be what you feel."

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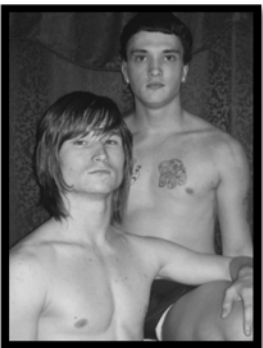
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