

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

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FEATURE

2001 IN REVIEW: A look back at the faces, races and cases that kicked off the 21st century
p 26

NEWS

NORTHWEST • Gay priest fights for farmworkers; sexual minority Republicans come out of the closet; dine with Wild Abandon; trans campus figure promotes multiculturalism
pp 7-19

NATIONAL • Gay teachers vindicated
pp 21-23

WORLD • Quebec gets civil unions
pp 24-25

CULTURE

ART • Sierra Lonepine Briano paints modern goddesses, butch madonnas, witches and crones
p 37

CULTURE • Helping combat your ho-ho-hums
pp 38-39

PEOPLE • Who knew the jolly guy was gay?
p 41

CULTURE • The year in entertainment
p 43

DIVERSIONS • Don't miss *Vagina Monologues*; Queen Edie visits her kingdom; the birth of Venus
p 44

CULTURE • Some marvelous suggestions to get you outta the house this New Year's Eve
p 47

FILM • 2001: A Queer Odyssey
p 49

COLUMNS

MS. BEHAVIOR • A sexual harassment case waiting to happen
p 35

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARC • Obsessing over fictional housekeepers
p 50

SPECIAL

NIGHTSPOTS • Gay-friendly hangouts
p 42

EATING OUT • Let someone else cook tonight
pp 45-46

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COMMENTARY

BY MARTY DAVIS

Joy to the world

Spirit of the season can be found in community events

As the holiday season kicks into high gear and the year winds down to its battered conclusion, many if not most of us will find ourselves pausing to reflect upon the past and anticipate the future.

2001 is a year that will not soon be forgotten. Although the national crisis will continue to dominate the news, people who live in the Pacific Northwest face problems uniquely our own. 2001 ends with Oregon laying claim to the dismal distinction of not only posting the highest unemployment rate in the United States but also the highest documented rate of hunger.

It is sadly and understandably easy to be pulled down by the weight of burdensome news and the situations in which we find ourselves. However, for a moment, albeit perhaps a brief one, let's focus on the bright and positive holiday events our community has presented to the world. This past week alone, the dance floors and concert halls were filled with the fun and frivolity of the season.

Granted, along with these light moments came the highly unsurprising announcement that, yes, the Human Rights Campaign is endorsing Republican U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith for re-election. Is this a coal in our stocking, or is it more like getting underwear for Christmas—a gift not really wanted but begrudgingly accepted as practical and useful? The new year will find Just Out presenting all of the information necessary to help you decide whether to keep the practical gift or exchange it for something that ultimately will be of better value.

If you never have spent a holiday season with the Portland Gay Men's Chorus, you must make immediate plans to do so next year. With each passing presentation they become better and better.

The men are more handsome, the tuxes more stylish, and Bob Mensel becomes more and more adorable. And although adorable is certainly important, let it be also noted that Ray Elliott has the cutest butt.

The sight of this assembly, in all their seasonal finery, solemnly performing the Macarena is not to be missed. I hereby make a motion that the chorus bylaws be revised to mandate that this choreographic masterpiece be included in all future holiday concerts. Second, anyone? This could become Portland's own version of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

Bobs, butts and Macarenas aside, trust me, any concert that includes a performance by Portland's own treasure Diane Cyrle is not to be missed. This woman is absolutely extraordinary, and oh, yes, she sings nicely, too.

Another activity that is fortunately ongoing throughout the year but becomes more festive at this time are the country dances sponsored by the Rosetown Ramblers and DJ Crystal. They are held Saturday nights and usually are noted in our calendar.

Now I myself will be taking to the dance floor at about the same time as I'm awarded my first Pulitzer Prize for writing, but even those of us whose feet don't function in public can appreciate the music, friendliness and good energy prevalent at these events. You really ought to check them out.

Because it's been bugging me for several days, I now feel compelled to share with you my thoughts about the recent Portland appearance of Margaret Cho. I'll be curious to see who agrees with me.

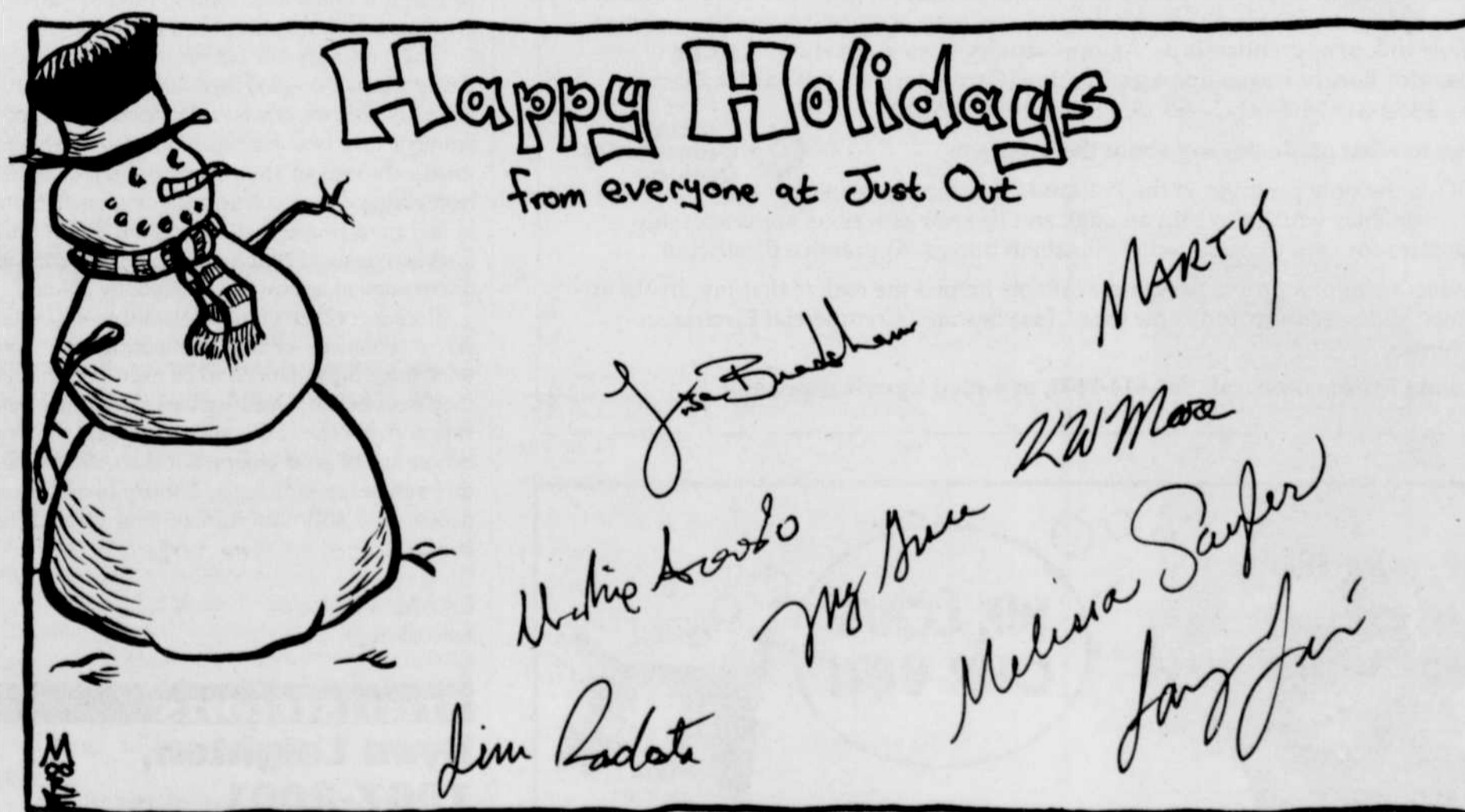
I'd seen her last show and enjoyed it very much; I recall being touched by the way she wove personal pain and intimate memories together to create a masterpiece of comedy. This most recent show, however, lacked the brilliance of the early work and instead played to the lowest common denominator of tawdry raunch.

Now I know that for political commentary you go see Kate Clinton, for social satire there's Suzanne Westenhoefer, and clearly now for mindless sexual drivel we have Margaret Cho. It's frustrating because she obviously is playing to a largely gay and lesbian audience, and if her dumbed-down act featuring colonics, fisting, menstruation and overly scripted, slick, oddly timed patriotism is her expectation of what we'll consider entertainment, then I think we've been underestimated. Cho can do better than that, and we should expect better.

And as the season nears its finale, the staff of Just Out wishes each of you finds some harmony and happiness as this year ends and the next one starts. 2002 will be another year of challenges and changes. In Oregon we'll elect a governor and a U.S. senator and possibly face yet another odious Oregon Citizens Alliance-sponsored ballot measure. Nationally, work will continue in maintaining and building civil rights for all.

Individually, don't forget to take time to evaluate your own personal goals and expectations. Make them reasonable; make them count. Me, I'm going to take time for a hobby and in 2002 start collecting something besides parking tickets.

Best wishes to you all, and a very happy new year. ☐



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