

There's something inherently magical about the new year—a clean slate not yet written upon, the impetus to create a better life or finally compose that song, drop 40 pounds or perhaps visit Borneo.

If you're considering making changes this year, or if you're just curious about what could be in store for you, why not consult someone skilled in the ancient art of divination? Ready to peer into your future—or just offer insight into your personality and what motivates you—are numerologists, palmists, psychics, astrologers and tarot readers. *Just Out* profiles here some of those seers who are members of our community.

Or if you're the do-it-yourself type, you'll find other resources to help you do your own prognosticating.

"What's your sign?" isn't a pickup line for astrologer Barney Stein. Learning your sun sign is only the beginning of a natal chart, on which he plots the position of the planets, plus the sun and our moon at the moment of your birth.

If all you've ever done is read your horoscope in the newspaper, you haven't really experienced astrology. Knowing "your sign" simply means knowing which of the 12 signs of the zodiac the sun was in at the time of your birth—Taurus, for example. There is so much other information available that a skilled astrologer could speak for days on the fascinating subject of you!

As an astrology buff, I talk with Stein about transits and applying aspects, but fear not the lingo. "One important gift I have is to translate astrological information into actual English, into real meaning and something you can use," he says.

Astrology has been researched for millennia and dates back as far as recorded history. The original astrologers were priests and scholars, active in the ancient cultures of Babylonia, Egypt, Greece, China and the pre-Columbian Americas, to name a few.

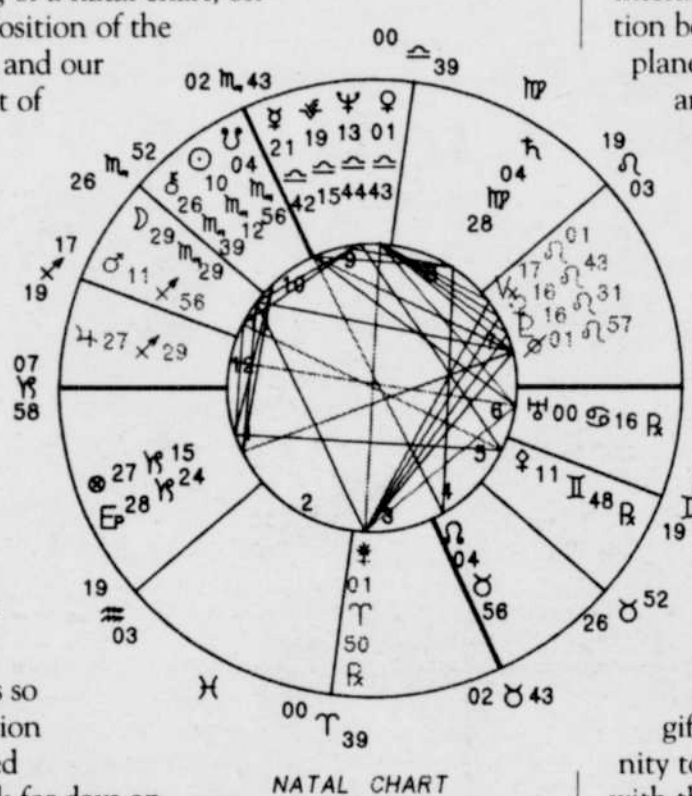
Stein has been studying the stars since the late '80s. "I can see the challenges a person has faced and will face," he explains. "Often they're coming to me at a time when they're not so inspired about themselves."

Which is why Stein says astrology is a great tool to use for depression. "I can say it will end in so many months because it's based on these particular issues."

He also does what he calls life path readings.

"I look at a natal chart and find themes in one's life, for whatever time frame needed."

For that type of reading Stein always records where the planets will be in the coming months (transits) and what mathematical relationships they will have to planetary positions in your natal chart (aspects). The qualities associated with each planet, zodiac sign and each of the 12 divisions of your chart (houses) inform the nature of the aspects. Basically, astrology is about the



NATAL CHART

interaction between planets and their placement in signs and houses.

Your birth chart is simply a blueprint of possibilities for your life; what you do with that information is up to you. As Stein says, "I believe astrology is a route to intuition."

Square aspects are ones that are sometimes labeled hard or difficult. Stein sees those challenges "as a gift...it's the client's opportunity to see how he wants to deal with them."

He also stresses: "The planets don't cause anything, astrologically speaking. They just correspond to situations, events and energies in our lives." To use a well-known example, "Mercury being retrograde only describes or corresponds to a regular cycle in human experience where the principle of communication turns in on itself or is somehow askew...it doesn't cause it."

As a pop quiz, I hand Stein my natal chart and the day's transits

for his review. He speaks first about a long-lasting transiting aspect that affects us all, a Saturn-Pluto opposition that began last July and continues until May 2002.

"The first thing I do is look at where it falls in a person's natal chart. The general meaning of this opposition is truth telling and responsible communication," he says, then goes on to detail what it means for me.

He also focuses on my nodal axis, which reveals where I've been and where I'm going, karmically speaking. Another feature of his work ventures beyond astrology into more spiritual territory, as he suggests a simple rit-

What's in your stars?

Meet some wizards (and one saint)

who could tell you
by Oriana Green

ual of intention I could do at the next new moon.

Stein impresses me as a gentle, serious soul, and he seems well equipped for that sort of advice as well. He's been a reiki master for 13 years, does transformational breath work, has done an "intense Buddhist practice" and describes his own spirituality as eclectic.

"At this time people want to know: How do I fit in the world? I have a perspective on how the world works, and I'm interested in empowering people to find their own paths," he avows.

Stein also brings an array of life experiences to his practice. He was for many years a professional modern dancer in San Francisco and New York, he is an accomplished pianist who still performs and accompanies singers and dancers, and he's a software developer and java programmer.

Which leads me to ask whether his natal chart shows a splay pattern, meaning his planets are spread out around the circle, not concentrated in one section. This can signify someone with a wide variety of interests. He indicates that's true. Bingo!

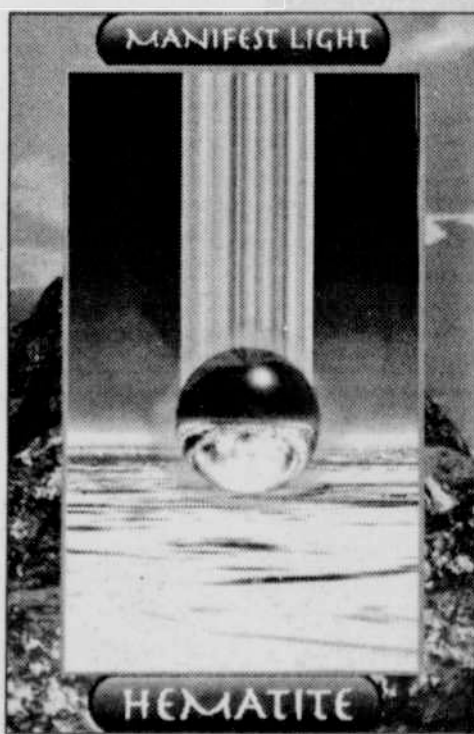
So does a gay astrologer find anything in a chart indicating queerness? "No. I've heard theories about...indicators of gayness, but really that presupposes that being gay/lesbian/bisexual is 'abnormal.' I really don't think that sexual orientation per se is represented in the birth chart, any more than hair, eye or skin color is," he asserts.

"I think a more interesting issue is that of transgendered experience in the birth chart," Stein notes. "While gender isn't indicated in one's chart, gender dysphoria can be. My sample of this phenomenon is quite small...but the message from astrology to transgendered people is this: It's normal for you to be transgendered. It's not an indicator of something wrong with you. It's an expression of who you are."

Besides exploring all the indicators suggesting you might become a pop star—or a dog groomer—Stein can offer a wealth of insight into relationships by comparing your chart with someone else's. "That tells you how people will get together, and the composite chart tells you what they'll do once they get there."

Although many books predict how various sun signs will relate (see sidebar), it's really much more complicated and requires a professional to interpret. "These readings can be tremendously helpful for people—and sometimes more important for business partners than romantic partners, since communication is often less comprehensive in a business context than in a personal one," Stein notes.

A 90-minute reading, which costs \$100 on a sliding scale, includes casting your natal chart and a tape of the session. Stein also does phone consultations for clients throughout the country. Find him at 503-349-4292 or barney.stein@att.net.



The divination cards on these two pages are from six different decks and reveal the wide range of wisdom available for the shuffling



Barney Stein can chart your future