

WORLD news

passionately Feb. 8 on the hospital series *Casualty*.

An inside source told *The Sun* it was among the largest number of complaints the network ever has received. Many viewers were upset that the kiss aired before 9 p.m., after which British broadcasters are allowed to screen sexier programs.

COLOMBIA

Grammy-winning Colombian singer Juanes has come out in support of the nation's gay civil unions bill in an interview with *Tentaciones* magazine. The legislation has passed a Senate committee and is expected to be considered by the full Senate this month.

The interviewer said to Juanes: "I need to ask you a hard question. What would happen if gay and lesbian organizations in Colombia ask Juanes to support the civil unions petition publicly? Would you do this?"

Juanes replied: "I would support them. Why wouldn't I? The same way I support other communities, including mine, I would do the same thing with the gay and lesbian community.... I think that every single person can decide what to do with his or her life. I think it's great, as long as there is love and respect between the couple."

The interview appeared in the February issue. Juanes' hits include "Fijate Bien" and "A Dios Le Pido."

ZIMBABWE

Gay and human rights activists repeatedly zapped vociferously anti-gay Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe on Feb. 19 and 20, calling him a murderer and demanding he be arrested for torture.

As the Franco-African summit opened in Paris, the protesters blasted fog horns and threw paint at the Zimbabwean Embassy. They also staged demonstrations outside Mugabe's hotel and at the Ministry of Justice and the Palace of Justice.

The protesters came from ACT UP, the Pink Panthers and the Movement for Democratic Change. Several people were arrested, including well-known British gay activist Peter Tatchell.

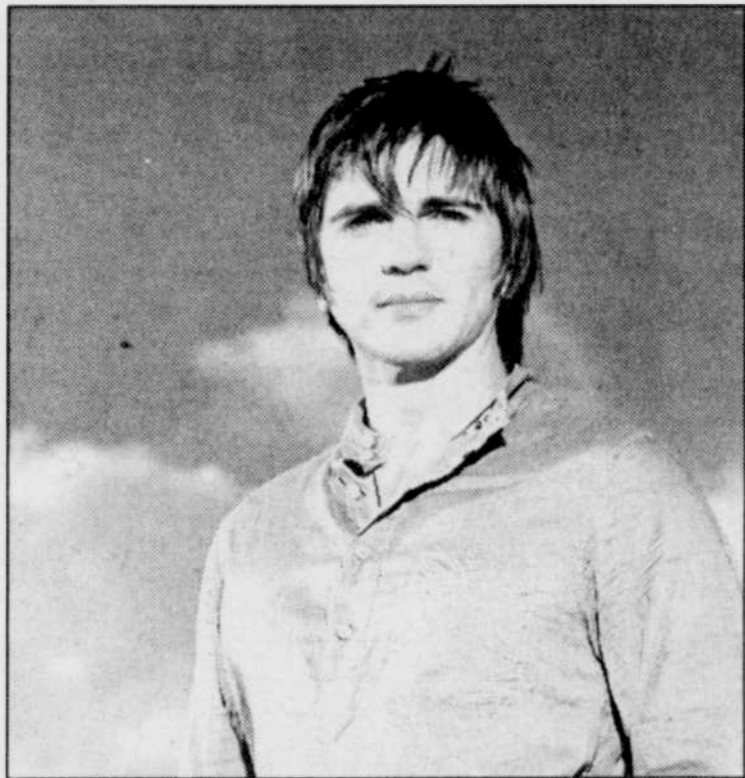
Tatchell, who has had several high-profile run-ins with Mugabe through the years, was grabbed by police Feb. 20 outside a Metro station en route to the protesters' fifth action, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"We were bundled into a police van and taken into 'preventive detention' at a nearby police station," he said. "I was told by the senior arresting officer that the interior minister had ordered the arrest of all protesters. We were held by the police for nearly two hours, until Mugabe left the Foreign Ministry. On our release, we were trailed by police cars and plainclothes officers. We were hunted like rats through the streets of Paris. It seems that the whole apparatus of the French state is organized to protect a human rights abuser such as Mugabe and quash peaceful protesters like ourselves."

Mugabe has said of gays: "What an abomination, a rottenness of culture, real decadence of culture. [Homosexuals are] repugnant to my human conscience...immoral and repulsive.... Animals in the jungle are better than these people because at least they know that this is a man or a woman.... I don't believe they have any rights at all."

SOUTH AFRICA

A South African man who contracted HIV while imprisoned from 1993 to 1994 received \$132,500 Feb. 12 in an out-of-court settlement with the Department of Correctional Services. The former inmate said he caught HIV by having sex with other prisoners, which



Grammy winner Juanes supports Colombia's gay civil unions bill

he said he would not have done if prison officials had warned him of the danger.

South African prisons did not provide inmates with condoms until 1996. One in five South African adults is HIV-positive.

Police in Cape Town arrested two men Feb. 13 for the murders of nine men at the Sizzlers gay massage parlor. Investigators said both have confessed.

News reports had linked the Jan. 20 massacre to gangs and drug deals, but police said they now believe the motive was robbery. The victims were tied up, were shot and had their throats slit.

Six died on the spot, and three died later in hospitals. The sole survivor has been released from the hospital, after having two bullets removed from his head, and is staying at a safe house.

CANADA

Police in Vancouver made an arrest Feb. 12 in the case of a gay man who was brutally murdered in a cruising area of Stanley Park, which abuts the city's gayest neighborhood.



Aaron Webster

Aaron Webster was beaten to death with a baseball bat or pool cue in late 2001. Police believe it was a gay-bashing.

The 19-year-old man who was arrested cannot be named because he was only 17 at the time of the crime. Police do not believe he acted alone and said they will make more arrests shortly.

Canada's National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association has disbanded, Toronto's *Xtra!* reported Feb. 6.

The paper said the 8-year-old organization "had run out of steam the last couple of years." The group's remaining funds were donated to the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

In the United States, the association is thriving with more than 1,100 members in 19 chapters. The group's next national convention is Sept. 11 to 14 in Los Angeles. [E]

Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.

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