

Out



Clear out those skeletons

So who caught Cher's April 8 Farewell Tour television special? Wow. What with the drag costumes, the leather and the "me, me and me some more" big-screen film clips, I think she managed to secure first place in the Queen of the Gay Divas contest. I loved it, and I love her.

I don't mean I'm a fan of her music, I mean I love her. How can you not?

Seeing her on TV reminded me of the last interview I read with her, which was a year ago in *Out* magazine. She asked the interviewer, Judy Wieder, if she thought gays were obligated to come out, and Wieder responded that people not coming out is generally based on fear and that being closeted perpetuates itself so that change never occurs.

And Cher came back with "I know a gay man who's an actor, and he plays husbands, he plays boyfriends.... If he came out, his career would be over—he would not be given the parts that he's given right now. So does he want to be an artist more than he wants to be honest? I think he does. And I can't blame him."

Which is a pretty compelling argument, too. But it's not good enough.

Gay novelist Armistead Maupin is probably the most noted voice on this celebrity coming-out thing. His lovely quote "Change occurs in direct proportion to the number of people willing to live their lives authentically" is mellow compared to his comments published in Chicago's *Outlines* in 1990: "I regard the greatest villains today to be those famous closet cases who are not being open about their lives. These people could make an enormous difference in enlightening the general public about the nature of homosexuality. And I'm tired of hearing their feeble excuses for why this isn't possible. It almost always boils down to money."

He was especially angry at Lily Tomlin, who he said had "been pulling this shit for years," when she fought and won the opportunity to narrate the celebrated documentary *The Celluloid Closet*, a narration that Maupin penned on the agreement that she would publicly come out. She never really did, later claiming she was never in.

There's a difference between coming out and just not mentioning you're not straight. If celebs don't start admitting their bi and homo identities, how do they expect the situation to ever improve? I know not everyone wants to be a pioneer, but in large droves they wouldn't be pioneers, would they? They'd just be one in a long list.

Cher isn't wrong when she says her actor friend's career could take a sharp downturn if he comes out. But shouldn't acting be part of your life, rather than the other way around? What kind of downturn does his life take filled with lies designed to get work? What's more important, good roles or large-scale cultural change?

And, speaking of Cher, do you think she'd be in the closet if she were a big ol' dyke? One time back when she was dating some guy half her age, I saw a talk show about older women dating younger men, and she called in to give what-for to one of the guests who was critical of it. I remember it distinctly—she said, "Who died and made you king?" to the delighted roar of the audience. She could say she's been courting chicks for years, and she'd still have a career 'cause she's a tough broad who lives by her own rules.

Change occurs in direct proportion to the number of people willing to live their lives authentically. I'm sick of people's excuses, too. Celebrities need to get some balls (or ovaries) and come out of the closet. Like Maupin, I'm getting too old to put up with this shit. ☐

Hoot 'n' holler for In Other Words

In Other Words Women's Books and Resources says it's time to break out those chaps, dust off that 10-gallon hat, polish those spurs and lasso the whole family in for the Laydeez Hoedown from 7 to 10 p.m. April 20 at the Alberta Street Public House to benefit the Southeast Portland landmark bookstore.

Musicians, artists, writers, book fiends and friends are gathering with local bluegrass greats The Flat Mountain Girls and queer musicians Myshkin, Pirate Jane and Tamara J. Brown. You'll also get a chance at raffle prizes donated by local businesses.

In Other Words is one of only two women's bookstores in Oregon. The nonprofit offers two book clubs, monthly open mike and music nights, free community event space and a kid-sized reading area.

The Alberta Street Public House is at 1036 N.E. Alberta St., and \$5 gets you in the door. (Give more if you can.) See y'all down there, y'hear!

May day! May day!

Good old May Day. Workers' rights marches, Beltane Spring celebrations...oh, and the May Day Celebration of Feminist Words and Music at Nocturnal, where you'll get a little activism, a little spring and a whole lot of fine female performance.

Starting at 8 p.m. May 1 is one big dyke extravaganza: Boston musician Pamela Means, Rose City resident Tamara J. Brown and New York slam poet extraordinaire Alix Olson, who is celebrating the release of her new CD, *Independence Meal*.

Olson is also looking forward to returning to our little town. "Portland is a warm, galvanized, rowdy crew. I love that! ...I love going jogging around the all-brightly painted little houses, tripping over all of the cats. There are so many cats in Portland! It's like a maze."

Whether you leave your pussy friend at home or bring her to the club, this is a show you won't want to miss. Nocturnal is at 1800 E. Burnside St. All ages are welcome. Tickets are \$10 in advance from In Other Words.

Middlesex wins Pulitzer

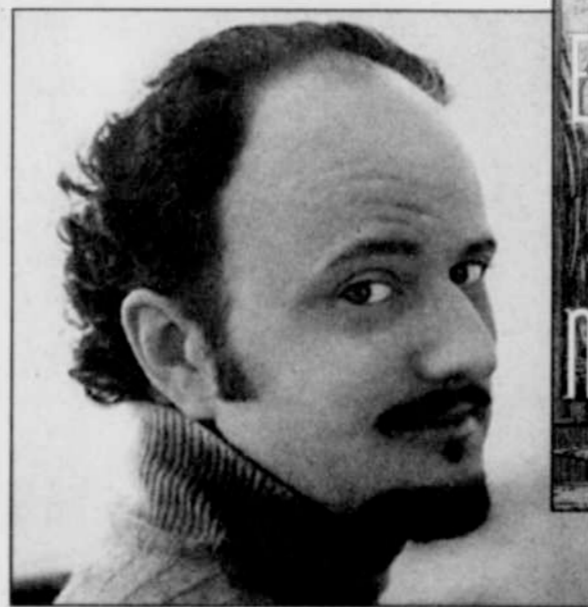
On April 8, the Pulitzer board awarded its annual prize for fiction to Jeffrey Eugenides for his novel *Middlesex*, the first-person autobiographical narrative of one Calliope Stephanides, a third-generation Greek American hermaphrodite (or, in the post-millennial vernacular, intersex person).

Eugenides (whose previous claim to fame is 1993's *The Virgin Suicides*) begins his much-acclaimed epic of family, gender and sex thus: "I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974."

The heterosexual author has said that *Middlesex* was directly inspired by the memoir of a 19th century intersex person included by the controversial 20th century queer French philosopher Michel Foucault in his *History of Sexuality*.

Emi Koyama of Intersex Initiative Portland confronted Eugenides during his appearance last October at Powell's to discuss his use of the word "hermaphrodite" throughout the book. Regardless, she is pleased that *Middlesex* has educated many readers.

"While we find some of the things the author has said in interviews



Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* wins the Pulitzer



It's a Laydeez Hoedown on April 20 with The Flat Mountain Girls

and at book readings problematic," Koyama says, "we do nonetheless feel that the book raises public awareness of intersex issues in a way that hasn't been possible in the past."

Queen of pop hop

Boxxes and Red Cap Garage celebrate 20 years of Madonna during the *American Life* CD Release Party at 9 p.m. April 21. Both bars will be jumping with the Material Girl's music and image, and you can win CDs, DVDs, posters and more.

Your host is the uproarious DJ Alex, a big Madonna fan. "She's an icon," he says, "she pushes buttons, she does what she wants and doesn't conform to any set of rules...she's by far one of the best video entertainers...she's the Queen of Pop."

Oh, and it's free, so what's your excuse? Don't like Madonna? Then please leave the gay community at once.

Happy anniversaries!

Two favorite gay-owned eateries are celebrating anniversaries this month. On April 21 the lovely, intimate Wild Abandon & Red Velvet Lounge at 2411 S.E. Belmont St. is throwing an eighth anniversary party, at which 50 percent of what you spend on dinner goes to Our House of Portland, a residential care facility for people living with and dying from HIV/AIDS. Order the ziti ziti—you won't be sorry.

Meanwhile over in the Burnside Triangle, Scandals celebrates 23 long and prosperous years of serving the gay community with anniversary Retro Dance Parties on April 25 and 26. Dancin' boys help you get into the groove of '70s, '80s and '90s tunes, and they'll be shelling out prizes all weekend long. From 6 to 7 p.m. April 27 is "Customer Appreciation" in the form of free drinks. Dang, try not to hurt each other getting in the door. ☐

Compiled by LISA BRADSHAW, MARIE FLEISCHMANN, CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN, JIM RADOSTA and KATHY BELGE



Celebrate 20 years of Madonna on April 21 with Boxxes and Red Cap Garage