

DIVERSIONS

Out With It!

by Lisa Bradshaw



It if it ain't broke, don't fix it

It's hard not to break into a smile at a club night phenomenon. That sudden rush of energy for some random night that becomes, through word of mouth, a veritable sensation—that's just plain endearing.

Hence my following praise of—and ultimate concern for—Quarters Night at C.C. Slaughters and Tart at Holocene.

Gay bar Slaughters, always popular on the weekends, now (originally no doubt in response to certain specials the Oregon Liquor Control Commission won't let us write about) is packed to the rafters every Thursday with queers—all kinds of 'em.

Recently when I went, nearly half the crowd was female, and ages ranged from barely legal indie kids to good ol' C.C. regulars. There's also a straight contingent (gay is the new hip, after all), but not in a bad, frat-boy way, more in a "can't we just all get along?" way. All in all, quite an impressively diverse display of merriment.

But, uh-oh. A cover charge appeared for the first time this month. And a line seems to be forming outside by 10:30 p.m. even though the place clearly isn't full. The villagers are starting to grumble.

Partners Bruce Rice and John Houston bought the bar about six months ago and made improvements right away—a new lighting and sound system and light remodeling, which, Rice says, has helped make Thursdays even more popular. The admission charge covers the cost of the added staff, and the line, he insists, isn't self-imposed, except "by the fire marshal." He admits other clubs squeeze patrons in tighter, but Slaughters won't. "It's a health issue," he says. "If we have a fire, I don't need people jam-packed in there."

Speaking of jam-packed, let's talk about Tart. Tart, Tart, how do I love thee? I love thee to the depth and breadth of my queer girl soul. The second Sunday at Holocene routinely reaches maximum capacity. That means about 250 are inside—by 7:30 p.m.

This thing is big, and, with its chic hip-hop and world DJs and its ability to bring women out of the woodwork (believe me, I go out a lot. I have never seen most of these women. Where have they been?), the fever surrounding it is high, high, high. It has potential to stick around a good long while.

Which is why the postcards at February's Tart terrify me. "Diva," they announce, "A Sophisticated Queer Girl Extravaganza!" It's another gay girl night at Holocene.

Two women created Tart—one of them will continue it, while the other, Katharine Sprecher, will head up Diva. "I had so many women coming up to me and asking for more," explains Sprecher. In January "we were 150 people over capacity, and we had to turn people away from the door."

This second night, premiering Feb. 29 and then continuing every fourth Sunday, will ease that crowd. And that's what scares me—a good thing pushed beyond its capacity. Turning away 150 people is unfortunate, but it keeps them on the edge, waiting, hoping they'll get in. It keeps them showing up for the hottest ticket in town. Tart is a full-blown scene, and it now may have found a way to dull its own edge.

Sprecher, who plans different kinds of fun live performances during Diva and who indeed has experience in these kinds of clubs in San Francisco, says there's room for both.

Please, please, great gay God, let that be true. There is a fine line between protecting and serving your customers and pushing them just far enough to bring the whole thing crashing down. No doubt the number of dykes in the Portland metro area can support two nights at Holocene. No doubt we can afford \$2 to get into Slaughters. The question is, will we? ☐



Connect the Dots Theatre Company cast more than 50 Southern Oregon actors in *The Laramie Project*

Making connections in Southern Oregon

Since Grants Pass' Connect the Dots Theatre Company opened its doors in January 2003, executive directors James Pate and Shane Skinner have wanted to produce *The Laramie Project*. Now, just over a year later, Southern Oregon will experience the docudrama through Feb. 25.

An eclectic cast of more than 50 local actors will tell the story of the aftermath of Matthew Shepard's murder. Bobbi Kidder, theater instructor at Rogue Community College, is directing. She calls the play "brilliant," saying it's "about a brutal murder. It's about a community becoming aware. It's about the courage to forgive."

Pate and Skinner's goal for Connect the Dots is to deal with social issues through community theater. They designed a three-part prelude to the play called "For All That We Are," focusing on the history of hate crimes and acceptance in Southern Oregon. **Judy Shepard** was a featured keynote speaker in January.

Connect the Dots has six projects slated for 2004, including *The Vagina Monologues* in March. *The Laramie Project* runs Feb. 20 to 22 at Rogue Community College in Grants Pass. Tickets are \$10-\$12 from Service Drugs or Connect the Dots. The show then plays Feb. 25 at the Craterian Ginger Rogers Theater in Medford. Tickets are \$8-\$16 from the box office or 541-779-3000.

We'd like to thank the academy

This year's diverse crop of Academy Award nominees actually reminds us why we get excited about these annual accolades in the first place.

The 2004 nods include unexpected unknowns from as far away as New Zealand (*Whale Rider's* Keisha Castle-Hughes), Iran (*House of Sand and Fog's* Shohreh Aghdashloo), Benin (*In America's* Djimon Hounsou) and Japan (*The Last Samurai's* Ken Watanabe).

Queers have lots to look forward to, as well. Here's who we think deserves to take home trophies:

- **Best Actor/Supporting Actor:** It would be great to see *Lost in Translation's* Bill Murray (hee!) and *The Cooler's* Alec Baldwin (woof!) at the podium, but drama queens should root for *Mystic River's* Sean Penn and Tim Robbins. Sure, their acting was stellar, but c'mon: This is a pivotal election year, and we need some juicy political speeches from these outspoken liberals.

- **Best Actress:** Charlize Theron channeled lesbian serial killer Aileen Wuornos in *Monster*, delivering the year's best performance in any category.

- **Best Supporting Actress:** Although



Charlize Theron should run away with the Oscar for Best Actress, while Gus Van Sant may well amble off with the Independent Spirit Award for Best Director



Cold Mountain was overrated, Renée Zellweger stole every scene from Nicole Kidman—with some Sapphic subtext to boot.

- **Best Documentary:** Give the gold to *Capturing the Friedmans*, an exposé about a pedophilia scandal that shattered a family (including gay Oregonian Howard Friedman).

The Oscars air 5 p.m. Feb. 29 on ABC. The really cool kids, however, will tune in the day before for the infinitely edgier Independent Spirit Awards hosted by queer trashmeister John Waters. Our fingers are crossed for gay Portlander Gus Van Sant, tapped for directing *Elephant*. Check it out 9 p.m. Feb. 28 on Bravo. ☐

Revisiting Sodom

Often-overlooked tale: After God burned up all the Sodomites and Lot's wife turned to salt, Lot's naughty daughters got Dad drunk and used him to become pregnant with sons who would be sworn enemies of Israel. How's that for moral purity?

And how'd you like to see a picture? Celebrated New Mexico artist Gerry Snyder invites viewers to his series of paintings and drawings that turn violence, incest and conquest into a bucolic cartoon. *Far from Here* is on display through March 14 at Lewis & Clark College's Hoffman Gallery, 0615 S.W. Palatine Hill Road.

Bulbous and colorful intersex characters float against Eden-like backgrounds, enacting biblical and other myths. "Within an animated world, all things are possible," says Snyder. Using cartoonish figures, he challenges viewers to consider the uncomfortable aspects of common myths. Morality is in the eye of the beholder, his paintings suggest—or, rather, on the tongue of the storyteller.

"Our lives are built on a set of self-constructed narratives that basically suit our needs," he explains. "Everyone's creating themselves and the world constantly."

Enter Pepper LaBeija, a Harlem drag queen featured in the film *Paris Is Burning*. Snyder also raises to mythic stature people like La-

Beija who he sees as "distinguished by their humanity" and whom he wants "to be part of our history."

The paintings are beautiful and eerie and cool and worth the trip.

Two years and counting

Deaf & Hearing OUT Reach marks an auspicious two years Feb. 28 with a Second Anniversary Gala at the Red Lion Hotel's Windows Lounge, 1021 N.E. Grand Ave.

The nonprofit organization offers queer American Sign Language classes and social events, including a unique comedy night that has become increasingly popular with both the deaf and hearing communities. "What started as a fund-raiser for us has turned into a community education tool," notes member Jeska Duckworth. "We reach out to as much of the community as possible by creating a space that welcomes everyone in everything we do."

The gala includes a sampling of deaf comedy skits, a silent and live auction, African-inspired dance and DJ Harmony. Entry is \$8 or \$10 for two, and all proceeds go toward office space. Contact DHOR at 503-235-0840 (voice) or dhor@deafvision.net.

triangle comes full Circle

Triangle productions! offers up a bit of circular, sexual fun in its new show *Circle* through March 6

Based on Austrian playwright Arthur Schnitzler's 1897 play in which a character from each scene interacts with a new character in the next scene until a full-circle connection is made, triangle has queered up the normally straight relationships, bringing an additional element of emotional and sexual questioning to the popular story, which has also been adapted by filmmakers and novelists.

"People are searching for love through sexual contact," says triangle's Sherry Okamura, "with mixed results."

Circle is at Theater! Theatre!, 3430 S.E. Belmont St. Tickets are \$17-\$23 from 503-239-5919 or TicketsWest. ☐

Compiled by LISA BRADSHAW, MEG DALY, CHELSEA FINE and JIM RADOSTA