

Dollywood vs. Bollywood

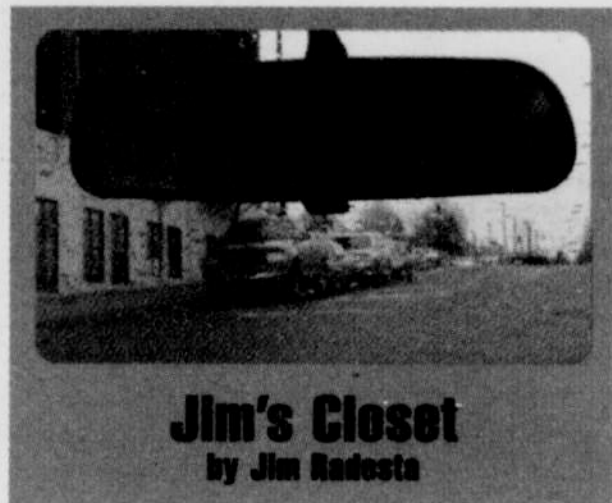
How I spent my winter vacation

11:15 p.m. Dec. 24: Digging through old family photos on Christmas Eve, I came across my parents' 1974 holiday card: a pic of their gay son striking his first pose on a red carpet.

9:23 p.m. Dec. 17: "She's like a Muppet!" I whispered to a friend while watching Dolly Parton croon "Baby, It's Cold Outside" from our back-row seats at the Rose Garden. The Busty One was perched atop a grand piano, holding an oversize martini glass and cigarette holder—always in character and proudly self-aware that she never takes life seriously. At 58, the legendary entertainer realizes all that matters is the music, which was mesmerizing at times and goofy at others (particularly when she sang "I Will Always Love You" to an Elvis impersonator).

2:32 a.m. Dec. 19: Speaking of Muppets, Kermit the Frog made a cameo on *Saturday Night Live* for a tender Christmas duet with Robert De Niro. But he croaked when the host puckered up for a kiss: "I have to warn you—I am a boy frog." Unfazed, Bobby replied, "Yeah, I knew that," and smooched Kermie's forehead. Aww.

And this was just the beginning of the show's most subversive episode ever, which featured several segments about same-sex nups, including the gay marriage of Star Jones and Al Reynolds (meow!); a commercial for Woomba ("new from the makers of Roomba—the first fully automated, completely robotic feminine hygiene product"); and a twisted



Sissyboy co-founder Sol writhed in agony on stage. These guys deserve a pat on the butt for pulling the rug out from under their audience with an important message that everyone needs to hear.

7:49 p.m. Jan. 1: Departing Dollywood for Bollywood, I watched two bandits bond while singing, whistling and playing harmonica together on a musical motorcycle ride in *Sholay*—which was screened for a special installment of Atlas, Holocene's twice-monthly Bhangra night. The main characters were a pair of sexy, stylish straight men who displayed more affection for each other in an Indian film from 1975 than you'll likely find in any American film from 2005.

7:30 p.m. Dec. 23: The subcontinent was three days away from devastation when I arrived in Salem to continue a 15-year tradition: getting together with old high school buddies for a pleasant potluck and a ruthless gift exchange. A dozen folks showed up this year—one-quarter of whom came out as queer after graduating in 1990.

Among the no-shows was the dude whose campaign speech for senior class president ended with the infamous words, "If you don't vote for Mike Matsel, you're probably an..." Pals planted in the auditorium then yelled, "Ass-hole!" This stunt led to instant infamy as well as victory at the ballot box (how could he go wrong with such a steadfast slogan?), but Principal Patterson disqualified his candidacy. Now he works at Microsoft.

Mike couldn't make it to the party because he was visiting a friend in India. Panic set in when the tsunami struck, but it was replaced by relief when this headline ran Dec. 29 in my hometown rag, *The Statesman Urinal*: "Salem Man Survives Tsunami in India."

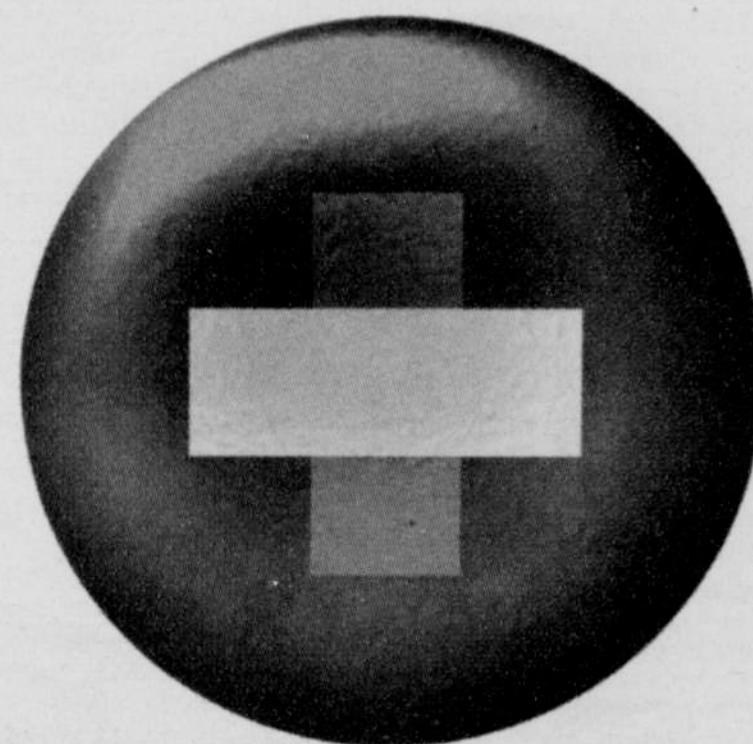
It's the closest I've come to a Christmas miracle. 

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to jim@justout.com.

THE TOP SHELF

"It's just makeup."
—Miss Gay Seattle XL Aleksa Manila, calming the fears of gasping yuppies when Pink Martini's Thomas Lauderdale invited the Filipino drag queen to serenade the crowd Dec. 28 at Crystal Ballroom. The strange yet sublime show also featured gay director David Weissman (*The Cockettes*) playing "Oh Susanna" on the harmonica... using his nostril.

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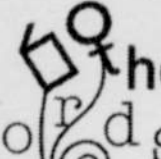
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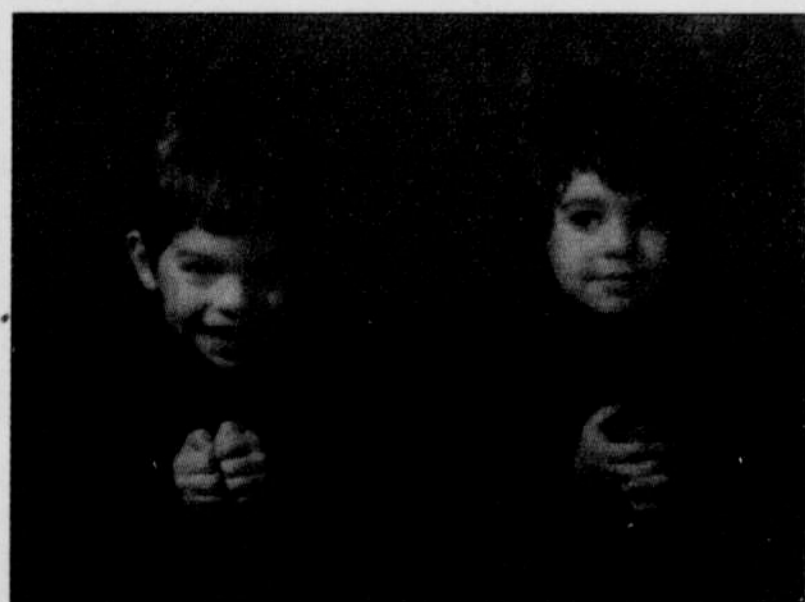
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Jim Radosta, 2, throws a glance at his 4-year-old brother, Charles, circa Christmas 1974

cartoon from Robert Smigel in which Santa Claus bypassed red states (his map referred to them as "Dumbf***istan") because "they won't let Moby marry a guy!" ("Actually, Santa, I'm not gay," the techno musician told Kris Kringle, who exclaimed: "Ho, ho, ho! Puh-lease! I see you when you're 'sleeping!'")

12:22 a.m. Dec. 30: Dolly*made an encore appearance—sorta—during "Sissyboy Goes to the Trailer Park." I went in prepared for the radical drag punks to deliver another unpredictable performance skewering everything sacred, and I wasn't disappointed. The show focused on Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie's tranny twins taking out the trash—complete with a Twinkie food fight, a pregnant woman giving birth to a six-pack of PBR and a live rendition of "Jolene" by Fannie Mae (easily the troupe's most unhinged member), who launched into Dolly's gentle ballad after catching her cheating husband in the act—punctuating the chorus with, "You fucking bitch!"

What I didn't see coming amid all this satire was a hard-hitting number about the dangers of crystal meth. Scary before-and-after photos of gang addicts flashed across a screen while