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BAY WINDOWS
Serving New England's LGBTQ Communities

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ManRay Returns

Photo via ManRayNightclub.com.

By Billy Masters

Back in the 80s, members of the Boston-area gay community (we didn't have any letters or symbols) had quite a selection of nightlife choices. And I'm not talking about the occasional one-night-a-week gay nights. I'm talking about a dozen 7-night-a-week gay dance clubs within walking distance. One of the most notable was Cambridge's legendary ManRay. The Brookline Street venue actually housed two distinctive clubs under one roof. I came of age in Campus — which catered to the college

see **MANRAY,** *page 5*

Boston Gay Men's Chorus Showcases Music's Power to Surmount Homophobia in New Documentary

Music Triumphs Homophobia' available now on Amazon Prime Video

Submitted by BGMC

Boston Gay Men's Chorus (BGMC) is proud to announce the release of a new documentary film, "Music Triumphs Homophobia." The film chronicles the impact of BGMC's mission-driven music on audiences and BGMC members alike as they perform for audiences in New England and around the world. Written and directed by filmmakers Michael Willer and Craig Coogan, BGMC's former executive director, "Music Triumphs Homophobia" is available on Amazon Prime Video.

As states across the U.S. move to ban LGBTQ-themed books, classroom discussions of LGBTQ issues, and access to affirming health care for transgender youth, "Music Triumphs Homophobia" is a timely demonstration of music's power as both a healing balm and an effective tool in the fight against persistent anti-LGBTQ hatred and violence.

"With right-wing religious and political forces working to roll back LGBTQ rights here and abroad, 'Music Triumphs Homophobia,' is a much-needed reminder that the LGBTQ community is powerful, resilient, and has allies willing to stand and fight for dignity and equality," said BGMC

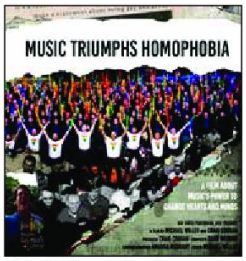

Photo via blog.outtakeonline.com.

Executive Director Sarah Shoffner. "As Matthews Motsoeneng of South Africa's Mzansi Gay Choir says in the

see **BGMC,** *page 3*

The GOP's dark comedy

Let's not die laughing at the radical right

by Richard J. Rosendall | rrosendall@starpower.net
contributing writer

LGBTQ Nation wrote a droll headline last week: "George Santos denies that he was a pageant queen named Kitara Ravache." The denial revealed political inexperience. Santos should either have made no comment or said, "What happens in Rio stays in Rio."

So the congressman loves lying and doing drag (yes, there's video). Is he trying to supplant Rudy Giuliani? He also echoes the discredited claim that gay parents are harmful to children. Old smears die hard.

On the presidential front, commentator Bakari Sellers tweeted regarding the leading GOP alternatives, "If Trump is Pepsi, DeSantis is Crystal Pepsi." May I humbly suggest that these queens get better drag names?

A scarier headline grabber last week was Solomon Peña, the failed Republican candidate accused of paying gunmen to shoot up the houses of four Democratic officials in New Mexico. Peña attended Donald Trump's Stop the Steal rally on January 6, 2021. After losing his own race, he insisted he had been cheated despite trailing his opponent by 48 percentage points.

At least the New Mexican Repub-

see **ROSENDALL,** *page 4*

Two New Must-Read LGBTQ-Inclusive Middle Grade Novels

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

Even as LGBTQ-inclusive kids' books are facing attempted bans across the U.S., such books are increasing in number—and as two recent middle-grade novels show, the quality of many is second to none. Both are coming-of-age stories; one is set during the height of the U.S. AIDS epidemic, with a background of anti-LGBTQ injustice; the other is not "about" LGBTQ issues per se, but includes several LGBTQ characters whose experiences strengthen the book's theme of choosing one's own fate and family.

In Ami Polonsky's World Made of Glass (Little, Brown), seventh-grader Iris Cohen's dad is dying from complications of AIDS. He came out as gay a year ago and her parents divorced, but they are amicably co-parenting. Iris and her dad are close, and share their feelings via acrostic poems, a literary device that Polonsky uses to moving effect. Iris hates his boyfriend J.R., though, the person who (unwittingly) gave him the virus.

Iris has kept her dad's illness a secret from people at school—being teased when classmates learned he was gay was bad enough—but word soon leaks out. When her dad dies, Iris grapples with

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 4*

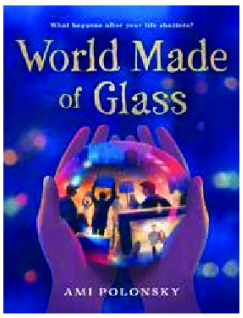

Photo courtesy of Dana Rudolph.

"If you're an enemy of drag, you're an enemy of mine."

— George Lopez criticizes Ron DeSantis' "War on Drag Queens".

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

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Equal Housing Opportunity

BGMC

Continued from page 1

film, 'Homophobia makes you or breaks you. Don't choose the breaking part, choose the making part.' We hope this film inspires others to continue the work of making a more accepting world."

Using archival material, contemporary tour and news footage, interviews with past and present chorus members and BGMC staff, as well as commentary from activists, audience members, arts advocates and political leaders, "Music Triumphs Homophobia," documents how a small, Boston-based chorus became global cultural ambassadors educating people about LGBTQ lives and encouraging acceptance and respect for the LGBTQ community. The film is scored with original compositions by Chad Weirick, BGMC's Principal Accompanist and Assistant Music Director, and features choral cover performances of songs by Katy Perry, Janet Jackson, Andrea Day, Richard Rogers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Stephen Schwartz, and Benji Pasek.

"I can't wait for audiences to see this film," said Craig Coogan, producer of "Music Triumphs Homophobia" and BGMC's former Executive Director. "Legislation and law enforcement are critically important in responding to anti-LGBTQ hatred and discrimination, but neither the law nor the law enforcer is capable of changing hearts and minds. But music is. We experienced it in South Africa. We experienced it in Israel and Turkey. We experienced it in Germany and Poland. Music builds bridges across groups of people that otherwise have nothing in common. It breaks down stereotypes and gives humanity to people who are routinely dehumanized."

Since 1982, BGMC has created musical experiences to inspire change, build community and celebrate difference. It's a mission that has brought BGMC to some unlikely venues, including a Congregational Church in rural Vermont, Worcester's College of Holy Cross, Berlin's iconic Brandenburg Gate, conservative Catholic-dominated Poland; a kibbutz by the Dead Sea, a university parking lot in Istanbul, and the shores of South Africa. As chorus member Alex Kapitan says in the film "BGMC goes to places where we know our voices will make an impact."

"This has been the story of BGMC since its inception. We use the power of music to build empathy and expand people's understanding of one another," said BGMC Music Director Reuben Reynolds. "We've done it in Poland, Turkey, and South Africa, and we do it year in and year out in Boston. Regardless of where we reside, we can all use a little more kindness and understanding, and I'm so proud of this film, which shows how BGMC uses the power of music to spread joy."

"Music Triumphs Homophobia" depicts the protests and public criticism from anti-LGBTQ religious groups or political officials that follow the chorus just about wherever they go. In Turkey, anti-LGBTQ President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan saw to it that the host venue for BGMC's performance—the first by an LGBTQ chorus in the country—lost its permit for the event unless BGMC agreed to drop the word "Gay" from its name. The performance—the country's first by an LGBTQ chorus—was saved when students at a local university organized for the use of outdoor space on campus for the concert, even though credible threats of violence had been made against BGMC. It took place with extra security measures in place and under the watchful eyes of Charles F. Hunter, the then U.S. Consul General in Turkey, who not only attended the concert with his husband, but joined BGMC on stage for its encore.

In South Africa, the city of George welcomed BGMC for a free community concert as part of its inaugural Pride celebration. The invitation by George's city council was marred when George Mayor Melvin Naik took to the airwaves to lambaste BGMC and the city's support for its LGBTQ residents. The mayor's remarks received widespread coverage throughout the country. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa responded by inviting BGMC to join him for the country's annual Youth Day march, where he personally greeted each member of the chorus and publicly welcomed them to South Africa.

"My goal as a filmmaker is to create art and tell stories that will reach through walls and broaden understanding. I was thrilled to tell the story of BGMC, an organization whose mission is so similar to my own," said Michael Willer, co-writer and co-director of the film. "I can't wait for people to be inspired by the story of BGMC and their culture-changing music."

Watch a trailer for "Music Triumphs Homophobia" here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzxhNE1MyJc

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The following is a copy of the letter sent by Boston City President Ed Flynn, to Segun Idowu, Chief of Economic Opportunity & Inclusion

Dear Chief Idowu:

I'm writing in regards to the importance of our LGBTQ+ businesses. LGBTQ+ gathering spaces such as Cathedral Station in the South End are important establishments in our city, as they provide a safe space for our LGBTQ+ residents to connect with one another, and they are also a part of the business community that make our city vibrant and welcoming.

As we witness LGBTQ+ rights being under attack around the country in recent years, and see a number of LGBTQ+ businesses close in Boston, it is critical that there still remain LGBTQ+ spaces for residents to gather and feel a sense of community in. I will continue to support our LGBTQ+ community, and work to ensure that our LGBTQ+ businesses are able to thrive in our city. It is therefore important for the South End to have a restaurant or bar that the LGBTQ+ community feel safe and welcomed in.

I hope that the city will continue to support our LGBTQ+ businesses as well, and thank you for your attention to this matter. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 617-635-3203 and ed.flynn@boston.gov.

Sincerely,
Ed Flynn, Boston City President, District 2

Mombian

Continued from page 1

grief and rage as well as a deepening awareness of the bias and fear surrounding the disease.

Gradually, though, her feelings towards J.R. change, and through him, she learns of her dad's activism in the burgeoning ACT UP group that is pushing for stronger action against the disease. Supported by several close friends, including one boy who becomes a first crush, Iris becomes involved in the group as well, which helps her process and channel her grief in a way that lets her move forward.

Polonsky skillfully weaves in historical moments and figures (notably Dr. Anthony Fauci, whose relationship with AIDS activists was sometimes contentious). Polonsky also thoughtfully shows ACT UP members in the process of figuring out what their organization should do and how to do it—a nuanced look at the birth pangs of any social justice movement. The focus, however, is on one girl's response to a family tragedy, not a history of AIDS activism, even as it reminds us of the very personal reasons for such activism. (An Author's Note adds more historical details for those who want them.)

The book shines a light on an era of LGBTQ history while reminding us that out queer people have been raising children for decades, and that anti-LGBTQ actions harm them as well. Polonsky conveys this via a heart-wrenching story of loss and personal growth—a tale also remarkably imbued with a sense of hope and a belief in the power to create change.

Mix an Agatha Christie manor-house mystery with the wordplay of Norton Juster's classic "The Phantom Tollbooth," stir in the sisterly adventures of "Little Women," a heap of Lemony Snicket gothic creepiness, and season with a queer sprinkle, and you might come up with something like "The Swifts: A Dictionary of Scoundrels," by Beth Lincoln (Dutton). Lincoln evokes all of these but weaves a totally original tale of mystery and mayhem centered on an eccentric family living in a sprawling, ancient manor house.

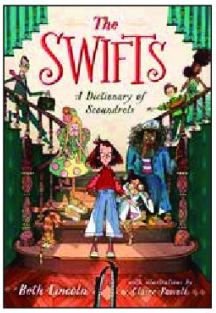

Photo courtesy of Dana Rudolph.

Every member of the Swift family is given a name randomly chosen from the sacred Family Dictionary, a name understood to determine their personality and interests. Shenanigan Swift, the protagonist, is indeed a troublemaker. She and older sisters Phenomena and Felicity live with their Arch-Aunt Schadenfreude, the family matriarch, while their parents are overseas doing linguistic research. Shenanigan spends her time trying to map their house's many rooms, with their hidden (and sometimes dangerous) traps, hoping to find Grand-Uncle Vile's long-lost treasure.

When Schadenfreude calls a Family Reunion, however, she is murdered just after relatives convene from near and far. Shenanigan and her squabbling sisters must hunt for the killer, aided by Cousin Erf (who is nonbinary and has rejected their Dictionary name), even as other relatives fall prey. Shenanigan's mishaps lead her sisters to doubt her helpfulness, however, and Shenanigan wonders if her name really determines her personality.

An oddball series of secondary characters and a twisty plot make the book a delight, but Lincoln's love of language is what makes it shine. There are eye-rolling puns, captivating archaisms, and dazzling descriptions—but under the fun of all this is an unexpectedly poignant and powerful message about finding who we are and how we fit into our families, both born and chosen.

Cousin Erf's nonbinary identity is not a primary focus, although we do see them struggle to tell some family members about changing their given name, a particular challenge in this family where Dictionary names carry such weight. Another major character is a transgender woman, although we do not learn this until more than halfway through the book. It's not a big "reveal," however, as in too many stories of trans people—it simply wasn't relevant until the character wants to reassure Erf that identities aren't inevitable, and mentions the incorrect assumption of her gender at birth. (Her parents, she notes, were "terribly embarrassed by their mistake" of not realizing she was a girl.) Additionally, one male character has a husband, which is happily unremarkable.

While the ending of this clever, funny, and surprisingly insightful tale is fully satisfying, there are also hooks for a sequel—and that, we might say in Swift-family fashion, would be splendiferous.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, with a searchable database of 1000+ LGBTQ family books and more.

Rosendall

Continued from page 1

lican Party reacted responsibly, saying, "We are thankful that nobody was injured by his actions. If Peña is found guilty, he must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law." Wait, don't they have that backwards? I recall a line from the trial over who stole the tarts in *Alice in Wonderland*: "Sentence first, verdict afterwards."

Setting aside the finer points of courtroom procedure, it is dispiriting that the fair city of Albuquerque was a target of domestic terrorism. But silly me: The concept of domestic terror is absent from our laws. Terrorism is something we pretend only dark-skinned foreigners do, evidence be damned.

Actor Kevin Sorbo, a MAGA type, tweeted, "If you think the AR in 'AR-15' stands for assault rifle, you can't comment about guns." Really? What matters is what a thing does. AR-15s are tools of mass slaughter, for which the Second Amendment grants no conceivable right. If the avowed originalists at the Supreme Court were true to their principles, they would restrict us to 18th-century muskets. Ah, but for displays of manhood, a musket could never match a semiautomatic with a 50-round clip.

Pardon my irreverence. Sometimes we laugh to avoid screaming—or we do both in quick succession. "I can handle a sick old woman," says actress Vera Miles in Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 thriller *Psycho*, referring to the character Mrs. Bates. The audience laughs because they have seen that Mrs. Bates is no harmless old lady.

The GOP's collapse into madness and mayhem risks reducing us to a screaming, laughing movie audience. After chuckling, say, at the know-nothing fanatics who have taken over the lower house of Congress, we need to confront the fact that know-nothing fanatics have taken over the lower house of Congress.

The unrelenting winger wackiness is exemplified by the marketing of a "JR-15" assault rifle to children. When "owning the libs" trumps protecting one's own children, it is clear that the insurrection is metastasizing. At the same time, the forces of civil sanity and accountability have also had successes. Nearly 1,000 insurrectionists have been charged. The Electoral Count Act has been revised to guard against another January 6.

White supremacists dispute the assertion that diversity is a strength. For centuries they stole the wealth of others while insisting they pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps. Now their only hope of retaining power is to disenfranchise as many people unlike themselves as possible. They think they make themselves more secure by shielding children from the more unsavory aspects of our history.

But greatness is not an entitlement, notwithstanding America's endless self-flattery. Despite having the most bloated military in world history, we are increasingly challenged economically in the global marketplace. We discredit ourselves by embracing wild conspiracy theories, rejecting science for medieval quackery, and exalting selfishness in the name of freedom.

After World War II, America led international efforts to advance democratic systems. Now we see a surge of fascism and autocracy.

Those who stoke endless grievance and rage are arsonists, not firefighters. We must come together to resist them. As organizer Oren Jacobson tweeted about the debt ceiling fight, "Donald Trump added $7.8 trillion dollars to the debt. And now the GOP doesn't want to pay the bill."

The truth will out. With the peril posed by the Republican Party's crackup, the time is coming for Americans, as it were, to meet Mrs. Bates.

PS: Don't go into the cellar.

Richard J. Rosendall is a writer and activist at rrosendall@me.com.

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ManRay

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gays (the proximity to both Harvard and MIT helped). Thursdays nights featured local personality Freddie Jordan hosting male strippers who cavorted on top of the bar! In short order, I joined the staff and found my tribe.

Campus was quickly overshadowed by ManRay — billed as an "art bar" and named after the Dada and Surrealist artist and photographer of the same name (born Emmanuel Radnitzky). The décor was retro kitsch with a nod towards the darker subculture. The club was subtitled "The Art of Nightlife" and catered to the fetish crowd, the goth crowd, and the alternative crowd — all lumped together and affectionately called the "Boston Underground". Picture a casting call for "Interview with a Vampire" — with a splash of The CW thrown in. Soon, the entire complex became known as ManRay and attracted national attention. It became a destination, to say nothing of a valuable venue for live performers wanting to connect with their audience in an intimate setting. The concert by Nirvana is still talked about.

In 2005, the building was leveled to make way for condos. The club's owner, Don Holland, vowed to relocate, but his efforts were thwarted by conservative Cambridge councilors. Now, almost 20 years later, ManRay is back...literally a handful of blocks from its original Central Square location. The 40 Prospect Street venue is still run by Holland, and he's joined by resident DJ Chris Ewen and legendary mixologist Terri Niedzwiecki. The sneak peek I attended did not disappoint. An eclectic assortment of LGBTQI+ denizens populated the place in various forms of dress...and undress. Gender, age, and sexuality seemed as fluid as Ewen's pulsing beat which engulfed every inch of the dance floor and stage.

The question everyone is asking — can lightning strike twice? Holland is counting on it, and the people I spoke with are anxious to see what comes next. The schedule — like the staff — is a clever mix of old and new. Wednesdays are anchored by the ever-popular goth party Crypt. Campus, naturally, is back for the gayest Thursdays around with a rotating crop of community DJs (including Maryalice and Brian Halligan). Fridays roar back with the fetish industrial party Chrome. And Saturdays shine a spotlight on the new wave and electro themed Heroes, which Ewen previously hosted elsewhere.

With the recent demise of the Ramrod, Machine, and Eagle, the area has a huge gap of clubs catering to this audience. ManRay might very well be the perfect venue at the perfect time.

www.ManRayNightclub.com

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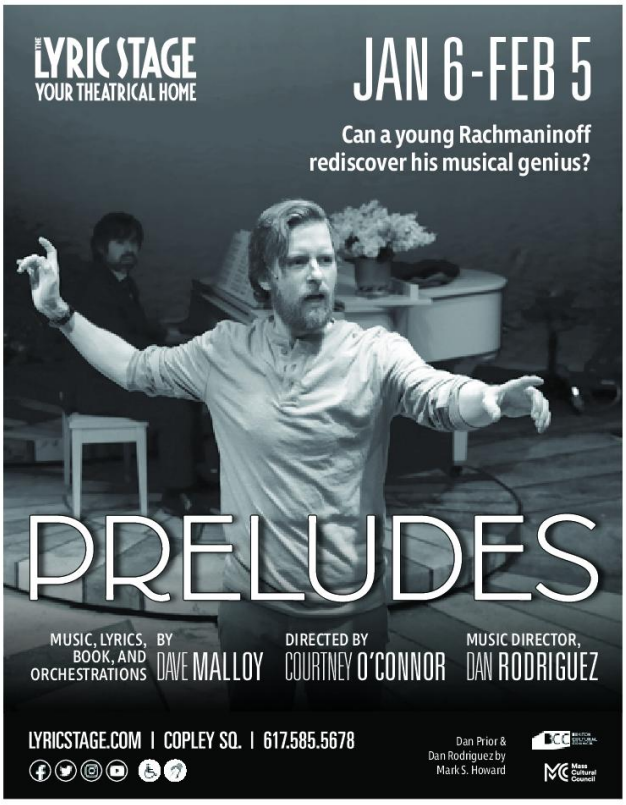

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billy masters

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There are some stories I try to stay away from, and that includes **George Santos** — if I may call him that. But we've also seen a video where he introduces himself as **Anthony Devolder**. So, who really knows? He's previously claimed to be Jewish, only to clarify he meant that he's "Jew—ish" — well, aren't we all a bit "Jew—ish"? That's just the tip of the iceberg — virtually everything about him is in question. George has justified these questions with a curious statement: "A lot of people overstate on their resumes. I'm not saying I'm not guilty of that." He is, however, guilty of trying to dance around the subject with a double negative — and, for the record, I hate that!

One thing that doesn't seem to be in question is that he is gay. Well, now he is. He was married to a woman in 2012. They got divorced in 2019. "I'm very much gay. I'm OK with my sexuality. People change. I'm one of those people who change." But is he one of those people who changes into female clothing? A grainy photo and an old Wikipedia post say he worked as a drag performer in Brazil (his parents were Brazilian immigrants). Of course, Wikipedia also says I'm still wearing size 30 jeans! While Santos hasn't defended most allegations, he felt compelled to comment on this one. "The most recent obsession from the media claiming that I am a drag Queen or 'performed' as a drag Queen is categorically false." Then someone leaked a video. Could it be? Yes, it could. You can check it out on BillyMasters.com, where you'll see George is quite...well, the polite term is "buxom".

Ana Navarro has gone after Santos, although she says his having a drag past would be a redeeming quality. She posted a photo of Santos next to the alleged drag photo with the following caption: "I have no problem with drag—queens in Congress. I have a real problem with bald—faced liars and shameless hypocrites in Congress." Navarro's love of drag queens is legendary — she is a frequent patron at The Palace and R House in South Beach. In fact, we'll post a video of her and "View" co-host **Sara Haines** from their most recent visit.

Ever since **Leslie Jordan's** fatal car crash, the Internet has been rife with rumors about the cause of death. The speculation at the time was that he either had a stroke or heart incident while driving to work, which caused the accident. But it was odd that the official cause of death has been "deferred" since October. For those of you still looking for answers, I can clear up the mystery. The official cause of death has been updated to "sudden cardiac dysfunction" — which basically means his heart stopped. Secondary cause of death was "arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease". That is when plaque develops in the arteries close to your heart, which would cause chest pain and angina — in other words, the symptoms Leslie was complaining about shortly before his passing. And, for those of you who have heard the whispers, I can clear that up, too. The toxicology was negative for illicit drugs, including marijuana, as well as commonly abused prescription drugs.

You probably wouldn't expect to read about the death of **David Crosby** in this column. But didya know he was the biological father of **Melissa Etheridge and Julie Cypher's** two children? Well, now you do.

Alec Baldwin has joined an elite group — celebrities with a body count! Lots of people die in terrible accidents, and I am certainly not implying that any of these "incidents" were intentional. **Matthew Broderick, Caitlyn Jenner, Brandy, Ted Kennedy, Venus Williams, even Laura Bush** — they've all been there. And, if I'm not mistaken, none of them did any jail time. Whether Alec is correct and this was one of those freak times when a gun went off without anyone going near a trigger...well, I'll leave that to the experts. But there was a gun, it was in his hand, it went off, and someone is dead. To me, that's manslaughter, at the very least.

Everyone's been wondering when we'll start the new season of "Billy Masters LIVE". You've been clamoring — it's been a quiet, almost silent clamor, but I've heard you. And I'm happy to say season 4 will kick off on Wednesday, January 25th — in primetime! At 8PM Eastern, I'll be sitting down with singer, model, and gay icon **Paul Lekakis**. You'd think I'd have already had Paul as a guest, but I haven't. I asked him to be on our first season, but he declined — he didn't have anything to promote and was living a relatively private life. Now he's got a new single — "Rainbow" — and he's open to talking. You can tune in live or anytime thereafter on our YouTube channel, Billy Masters TV, or on BillyMasters.com/TV.

Another gay star had a bad interview experience — and happily, it wasn't with me. **Danny Pintauro** from "Who's The Boss?" recalled an appearance on "The View" back in 2015. He was there to talk about his HIV status and to educate people on the dangers of AIDS and crystal meth. Only two co-hosts interviewed him — fellow former child stars **Candace Cameron Bure and Raven-Symoné**. He recently discussed that interview and took issue with Bure. "She basically said, 'Do you take responsibility for getting HIV because you were living a promiscuous lifestyle?' And turned on the spot to my husband and said, 'Do you have unprotected sex with your husband?'"

Since I'm a stickler for accuracy, I reviewed the footage, and that's not exactly how it happened. Before Bure asked her question, Danny had already gone into great detail about his promiscuity, pushing his sexual limits, and how crystal meth fueled this. His wake—up call was finding out he was HIV—positive while working as a manager at P.F. Chang's — oh, the humanity! In that light, Bure's follow—up seems natural. As to the question to Pintauro's husband about unprotected sex, that was actually asked by Raven-Symoné. She prefaced the question by saying (twice), "Please tell me if this is too personal". And the question was this: "You guys have been together for three and a half years. Do you guys have protected or unprotected sex?" Although the camera panned to Pintauro's husband, Danny jumped in to answer — as you'll see on BillyMasters.com.

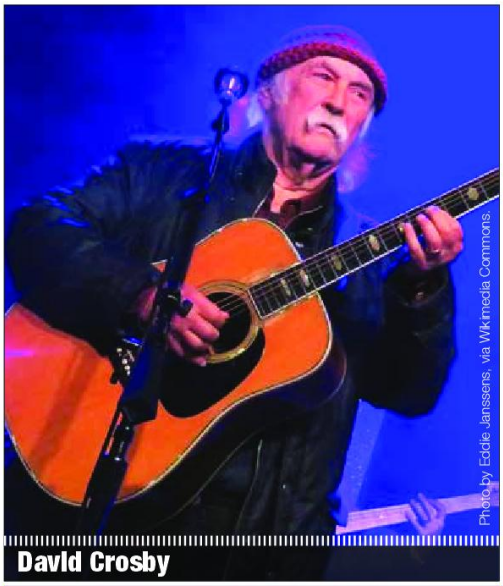
Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Tom in Studio City, who writes, *"A friend of mine saw a video of a very young **Colin Farrell** modeling a thong. Where did that come from? Do you have it?"*

Picture it. Dublin. 1994. An 18-year-old lanky lad with the complexion not unlike that of a young **Cate Blanchett** is hired to model intimate wear on a midday chat show, "12-2-1". The hosts, **Marty Whelan and Ciana Campbell**, handle the introductions. "First on we have Colin, who's wearing very little." Out strolls the future superstar in a red thong and satin robe — which is quickly doffed. He walks, he cocks his hip, and he pivots in a manner familiar to so many models. One guest says, "It's like a jock strap." Trust me when I say it is nothing like a jock strap — as you will see on BillyMasters.com.

When we're presenting Farrell in any clothing, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. I say that because we were once threatened with legal action by Colin. Oh, yes, it's true. This was back when his sex tape leaked. Well, not so much leaked as exploded on www.BillyMasters.com — the site that is definitely a shower. Colin and I resolved the matter satisfactorily in ways I'm not at liberty to discuss publicly. But you can write to me at Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I satisfy an elected official (again). So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

George Santos

Photo via georgefarmy.com



David Crosby

Photo by Eddie Janssens, via Wikimedia Commons

Colin Farrell

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