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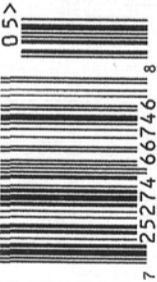
KATHLEEN QUINLAN
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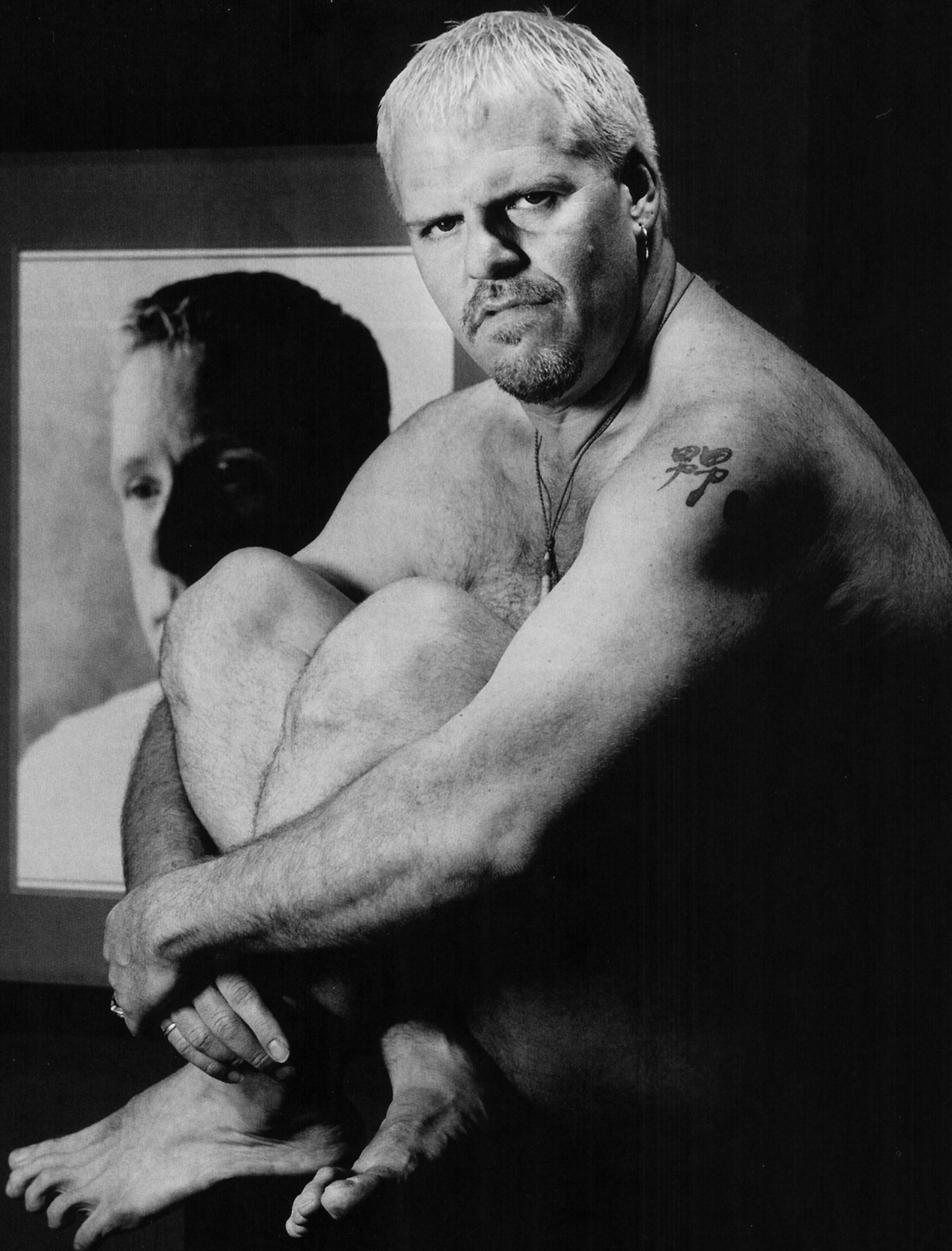
LOCAL NEWS
where did it go?

MEGA
moms

plus
master calendar
OF CHARITABLE
EVENTS



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by Sharon Tetrault

Photography by Tony Sanders



n the radio

It started off as the perfect night. At 8 p.m. on May 20, 2001, radio personalities Karel Bouley and his partner of nearly 12 years, Andrew Howard, joined some friends for a night on the town to mark the end of the Long Beach Lesbian and Gay Pride Festival. At 2:30 a.m., they all returned to the couple's house, with a stop along the way for some Krispy Kreme doughnuts. They spent the next hour listening to ABBA and dancing around their living room.

At 3:30 a.m., Karel bid goodnight to his guests and went to bed. Andrew wasn't ready to retire, though, and decided to stay up. An hour later, he woke Karel to say he'd been vomiting and was experiencing severe chest pains. "I told him not to worry about it, that the pain was probably just from throwing up and drinking too much," Karel recalls.

But Andrew's pain soon became too intense to ignore. Karel rushed him to the emergency room at Long Beach Memorial Hospital, where Andrew had a grand mal seizure as he was checked in. They found out later that a blood clot near his heart triggered the seizure. At 6:17 a.m., Andrew, 34, was pronounced dead.

"My life ended that day. It was so surreal to walk into the hospital with him and then walk out without him," says Karel, who calls Andrew his "husband, best friend and the only true love I've ever had in my life."

Something else ended that day. It marked the demise of the *Andrew and Karel Show Live*, their top-rated talk show on KFI-AM (640) that they'd launched on March 22, 1999.

In the world of talk radio, Karel and Andrew were an anomaly. They didn't claw their way to the top of the circuit by paying their dues at remote stations in rural areas or droning on during midnight to 3 a.m. shifts. To the contrary, they had less than two years of radio experience when KFI hired them to fill in for the station's regular hosts. And they had less than six months' experience as stand-ins when they landed their own show during the prime drive-time hours of 4 to 7 p.m. It was the equivalent of hitting a home run their first time at bat in the major leagues.

But it was more than just beginners' luck. In the cutthroat world of radio, where standing apart from the competition is crucial, Karel and Andrew had a shtick that was all their own. They were an openly gay couple with a gift for opinionated discourse.

"I'm sure the shock value of having two gay guys on the radio had something to do with our getting the job but, the fact was, our

show wasn't a gay show. We talked about things that were topical and relevant. In fact, our biggest audience was in conservative Orange County," Karel says.

The two became part of a daily line-up that included conservative luminaries Rush Limbaugh, Dr. Laura and Bill Handel. Unsurprisingly, they created a clamor. Dozens of magazines, newspapers and TV stations across the country did stories on them.

The increased publicity attracted more listeners, which sent their ratings soaring. It also attracted some unwelcome attention. "Every day, we were getting death threats and hate mail. There were people out there who couldn't stand the fact that we were two gays who were very open with our affection for each other and we were on the air," says Karel, 39, who prefers to go by this one-word moniker that's Czech for Charles, his real name.

But the couple took it all in stride. "At first, the vitriol crushed us. But we got over that with time because for every hateful e-mail or letter we received, there were 10 from people saying how much they loved and admired us. One listener even told us she wished her husband loved her as much as I loved Andrew."

Nearly one year after Andrew's death, Karel is still struggling with his loss. "Nothing since that day has felt like it matters. I feel like I was supposed to die but have been given an extra year."

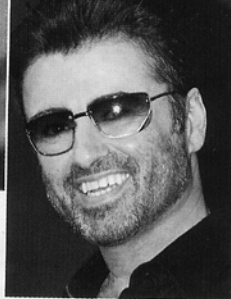
He was back on the air at KFI seven days after Andrew's death with his new show, *Karel*, which is now heard on weekends from 4 to 7 p.m. There's nobody to share the microphone with, something that he says can be scary at times. But despite his fears of having to fill three hours of airtime by himself, work has been his saving grace. "I would have withered away if not for the show."

And just recently, he's started to rediscover his zest for life. "My paralysis is lifting and I've begun taking steps toward my future. I'm now shopping around a TV talk show." Even at home—a place that Andrew took particular pride in renovating and decorating—small changes are going on. "Nothing major, just some light remodeling and moving of furniture. I'm still keeping the color scheme that Andrew chose."

Karel has found a way to immortalize his late partner. In his dining room hangs an imposing, 6-foot oil canvas of Andrew in his beloved garden, a gift from an artist friend. "There's something very permanent about it. This painting will survive me."

Sharon Tetrault is a freelance writer based in Balboa Island.

GEORGE MICHAEL SAVES HIS BEST FOR LAST



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JUNE 8, 2004



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music review

Patience is a virtue

At peace with his sexuality, George Michael produces his best and gayest record ever

By Charles Karel Bouley II



Patience ■ George Michael ■ Sony

George Michael has certainly tried the patience of even his most ardent fans. They've had to suffer through his decision at the peak of his fame not to appear in his videos, an arrest for lewd conduct, his coming-out after the fact, and a series of mediocre CD releases on a variety of labels. American fans saw him vanish into the obscurity of European life, and it was looking like his career was just this side of over.

Well, looks can be deceiving.

George Michael's latest—and he insists his last—major label outing is worth the wait. Though just released in the United States, the album, properly titled *Patience*, debuted internationally in March. Indeed, the first single, “Amazing,” topped the U.K. charts, debuting at number 4, and the album followed suit, going right to number 1 in many countries.

George Michael has grown up over the past five years—as a person and musically—and with *Patience* he has chronicled that journey. He's come a long way from that public park bathroom in Beverly Hills and even further from the hair and white shorts of Wham! What's more, careless whispers and cries of “I want your sex” have been replaced with substantive, emotionally riveting lyrics. In an era when most songs have only 14 words, none of which is more meaningful than telling the listener to move this or that body part, it is refreshing to actually hear songs that make the listener think about what the artist—the songwriter, the singer—is saying.

Just listen to a track like the haunting “My Mother Had a Brother,” a true story about his uncle who committed suicide:

“My mother had a brother
Oversensitive and kind
Seems it all became
Too much for him
It seems he took his own life
Mom, I can't imagine
The joy and pain in equal measure
Tears in the dirt
And all over your newborn treasure
I guess he had to wait
Until my mama had me
I guess he couldn't wait
Another moment to be free
In endless sky...
But Mama will you tell him

MAIN IMAGE: JAMES DIMMOCK

From your boy
 The times, they changed
 I guess the world
 Was getting warmer
 And we got stronger
 Mother, will you tell him
 About my joy
 I live each day for him
 The sun came out, yeah
 And I'm just breathing it in."

What a full-fledged validation of gay sensibilities, including Michael's. Oh, my God, when was the last time I heard a pop star say something so rich and wonderful in a song about being gay?

OK, so he's grown up beautifully as a gay man, or at least he's on his way. But it doesn't stop there. Just listen to the title track or to Michael's statement on the culture of the televised information age, "Precious Box"—each is musically lush and beautiful, and vocally each shows that Michael can, in fact, sing better than most male pop vocalists at any given time and certainly better than these whiny-voiced disposable *American Idol* types whom we now glorify with record sales.

The fact is, Michael has captured a series of very true and very honest emotions on this album—and surprisingly, it's extremely relevant and wise. From his tribute to his Texas-born boyfriend, "American Angel," to "Flawless (Go to the City)," with which he will again rule the dance floors, Michael has created a swan song worthy of a farewell tour.

An added bonus for gay and lesbian listeners is that Michael makes each one of us think of our place as a gay person and demonstrates the obvious joy created by the acceptance of his life and commitment to his love. Musically, it can make one realize that being gay is a joy to sing about, not an affliction that needs to be cured via revival meetings or suppressed via constitutional amendments.

If what he has said is true and Michael will no longer release major-label records, we can rest assured that he saved the best, or something very close to it, for last. ■

Billboard contributor Bouley is a San Francisco radio talk-show host. His book of essays, *You Can't Say That*, is due out in July from Alyson Publications.

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Local rockers at Lava Lounge

Radio/TV personality Jim "Poorman" Trenton will host a show that will feature local rockers Infest, Killing Field and H.T.T.H. as well as ska/reggae group Nobody Cares Sunday at the Lava Lounge, 3800 E. Pacific Coast Highway, Long Beach. Doors open at 8 p.m. The first band performs at 8:30 p.m. Cover charge is \$5. (562) 597-6171 or (562) 494-2071.

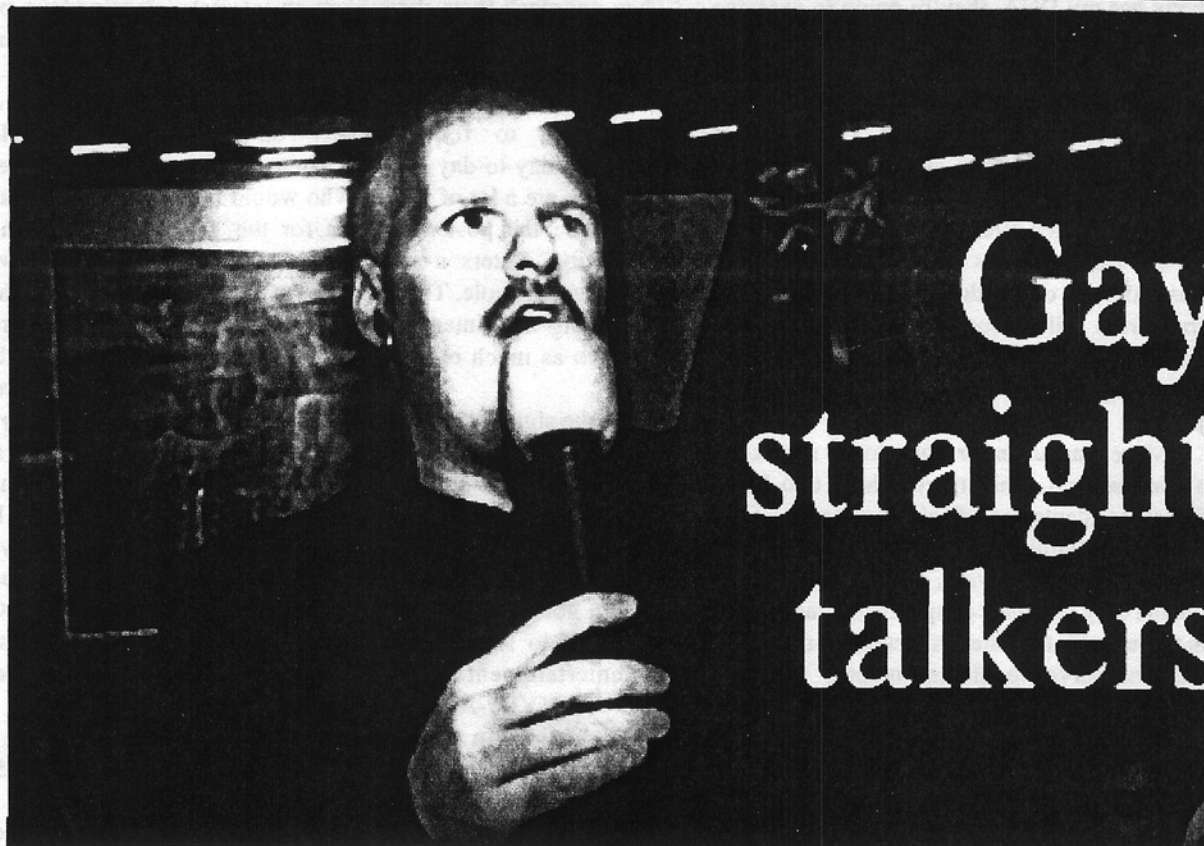
Tickets



Ozma

Tickets to The Black Crowes and Ozma's May 14-15 concerts at the Greek Theatre will go up for grabs Saturday and may be obtained by calling Ticketmaster at (213) 490-5232. The tour was sarcastically named "Year of Brothierly Love" because both groups have brothers who just can't seem to get along.

Theater



Gay straight talkers

KFI-AM's 'Karel & Andrew' cover a wide range of issues and surprise many first-time listeners.

By Phillip Zonkel

Staff Writer

"D riving you home. Driving you crazy. Driving you crazy at home."

This is the catch phrase for KFI-AM's (640) "Karel & Andrew Live!,"



but at the moment, Karel Bouley, 38, is about to go bonkers.

While Andrew Howard, 34, relaxes in a corner booth at Clancy's pub in Long Beach, where the twosome have set up camp for a live, remote broadcast for St. Patrick's Day,

Bouley, with microphone in hand, feverishly paces outside. They've opened the phone line to listener comments on the topic of screening and logging everyone's DNA by the government to help fight crime.

Bouley and Howard fa

Please See Page

Calendar

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT



GRAHAM BARCLAY / For The Times

Already performing at Verizon Wireless Amphitheater in Irvine on Aug. 16, Pete Townshend and his W mates have added an Aug. 14 date at the Hollywood Bowl. Tick go on sale Sunday.

They Like Things to Be Out in the Open

KFI hosts Karel Bouley and Andrew Howard are partners in news commentary and in life.

Around the Dial

By WILLIAM KECK
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Last summer, KFI-AM (640) radio hosts Karel Bouley and Andrew Howard faced the wrath of *über* producer George Lucas by broadcasting live—via Howard's concealed cellular phone—from a movie theater rolling an early press screening of "Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace." After a few minutes, two burly security guards told Howard to disconnect ASAP or take a hike.

Earlier this month, the naughty boys were at it again—beckoning a young Richmond, Va., girl, who'd magically received an early edition of "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," to read the opening pages of the meticulously shrouded novel live on air.

Are they even the slightest bit worried about landing in hot water? Hardly. For Bouley and Howard, stirring up controversy is all in a day's work on the 7-9 p.m. shift at L.A.'s top-rated talk station, where they host "Karel & Andrew."

"We just show up and get in people's faces," explains Bouley. Howard calls it "kamikaze journalism."

Partners in life for 11 years, Bouley and Howard met at a club in Garden Grove. At the time, Bouley was a writer-photographer for a music publication while Howard was waiting tables at a Reuben's Steak House. Howard briefly managed Bouley's fleeting career as a singer/stand-up comic before the two collaborated as an on-air team.

"I went from waiter to housewife to radio



LAWRENCE K. HO / Los Angeles Times

"We just show up and get in people's faces," Karel Bouley, front, says of job with Andrew Howard.

personality," chimes Howard, whose innocent, boy-next-door looks mask a venomous tongue. Speaking recently about prison reform, Howard advocated lobotomies and castration for prisoners, chanting, "Snip 'em up top. Snip 'em down below. Snip, snip, snip!"

The other half of this Siegfried and Roy for the AM dial is Bouley, whose macho looks mirror pro wrestler Stone Cold Steve Austin (all comparisons, however, end there).

Each weeknight, Bouley and Howard commute to the Hollywood station from their home

in Long Beach, where they live with their cat, Matisse, and dogs, Ally (named after Miss McBeal) and Owen. And if all goes according to plan, they are hoping to adopt a Chinese baby girl, whom they have already named—Danielle Lee.

True opposites in every way, their contrasting personalities serve the show well, enabling them to debate a variety of issues from Elian Gonzalez to the escalating price of movie theater popcorn.

Please see 'Karel & Andrew,' F23

MOVIE REVIEWS

aul Ruiz's "Time regained" is a mesmerizing adaptation of the Proust classic. F4

all "Chuck & Buck" risky but successful high-wire act. F12

The Girl in the teakers." F6

raise." F10

RADIO

Stirring up controversy is all in a day's work for KFI's Karel Bouley and Andrew Howard. F2

MORNING REPORTS

Barbra Streisand is in talks to headline an all-star Democratic Party fund-raiser at the Shrine Aug. 17. F2

CYBERTAINMENT

CBS' even more voyeuristic "Big Brother" Web site is worth checking out. F24

JAZZ REVIEW

The Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra outshines singer Cassandra Wilson at Jazz at the Bowl opener. F18

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Theater Beat F23

TV Logs F24-F25

Howard Rosenberg has the day off.

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COMING SUNDAY

"Total Request Live" host and heartthrob Carson Daly is MVP of MTV. Now that he's reestablished his channel as pop music's premier taste maker, what's next?



'Karel & Andrew': Out in the Open, on the Air

Continued from F2

"We're complete opposites," notes Bouley. "Andrew's alternative; I like R&B. He's liberal, and I've been called a closet conservative. He thinks breaking news is something happening in Poland with their election. I think it's Barbra Streisand marrying James Brolin."

As David Hall, KFI's program director, puts it: "They see the world in a very no-bull---- kind of way. Like 'Seinfeld,' they're more likely to talk about the things that are not the biggest issues in life, but when you hear it, you're like, 'Yeah, that's so right!'"

In March, the pair celebrated their one-year anniversary as the nation's first openly gay radio hosts. It was also in March that the boys were bumped from the coveted afternoon drive to a less desirable early evening time slot (weeknights, 7-9 p.m.). Next week's Arbitron ratings will be the first to track how the team is doing in its new time slot.

The shift put then-newly nationally syndicated radio personality Phil Hendrie in their spot while they moved into his. It was made, according to Howard, so that Hendrie's show, which is broadcast live from the West Coast, could hit East Coast audiences earlier than 10 p.m.

"At that hour [10 p.m. EST], you get no ratings," says Howard, seemingly undaunted by the move. "We still get the same pay—we're still under contract [until March 2001]. We didn't feel bad about it—it's everyone else who's tried to make us feel bad. . . . 'Gosh, you guys must feel awful.'"

The only real alteration necessitated by the shift, says Bouley, was a modified intro. "In drive time it was, 'Driving you home or driving you crazy,'" says Bouley of his nightly mantra. "So now, since we're on a little later, it's 'Driving you home, driving you crazy or driving you crazy at home.'"

In the audio booth at the start of their broadcast, Howard, 33, is dressed in a tank top and reclines comfortably in his swivel chair, while Bouley, 37, stands with microphone in hand, taking charge.

"He tends to dominate the conversation," says Howard of Bouley, who clearly considers himself the star. (Their online bio lists Bouley as host, with Howard as his co-host.)

Also in the booth: their "kiddie" producers—Eliza and Tiffany, both 20. During the broadcast, Eliza Sultan fields calls while Tiffany Dennis, responsible for herding guests, doodles her name over and over again on a pad of paper. Supportive of his producers, Bouley says their youth keeps the show fresh: "In radio, everyone is a child, but we do have the young-

est."

Known for its conservative staple of stars—most notably Rush Limbaugh and Laura Schlessinger, KFI might seem an unlikely home for two out-of-the-closet homosexual men. But as it turns out, Dr. Laura, infamous for her anti-gay slurs, is a regular listener. During one of "Karel & Andrew's" recent segments concerning a wave of jellyfish attacks striking L.A. beaches, Schlessinger phoned in to report that her son had been stung.

"We asked her if she peed on him to take away the sting," cracks Bouley.

Their decision not to confront Schlessinger about her politics ("the timing was inappropriate," Bouley says) triggered a barrage of calls from gay listeners peeved at what was viewed as a missed opportunity to put the controversial

"We're complete opposites. Andrew's alternative; I like R&B. He's liberal and I've been called a closet conservative. He thinks breaking news is something happening in Poland with their election. I think it's Barbra Streisand marrying James Brolin."

KAREL BOULEY

about his show "Karel & Andrew" on KFI

radio personality, whose anti-gay rhetoric has drawn national protests, on the spot.

"Laura is an enigma unto herself, and we don't get involved in her politics or her battles with the gay community," says Bouley. "I think the gay people are stupid for picketing Laura—it only adds to her publicity. She doesn't have to buy the newspaper space . . . they're giving it to her."

While Schlessinger might tune in, not everyone is a fan. Turned-off guest Pat Buchanan recently cut short a scheduled half-hour interview, signing off after just 10 minutes in prime time, explaining he was due at "The Today Show." And Howard admits it was at times hard to get out of bed in the early days when threatening phone calls and e-mails were daily occurrences.

"Die faggot, die," he recalls as one of the more popular salutations.

Hall says the controversy wasn't totally unexpected: "Every single time I've put a show on the radio, some portion of the radio audience thinks I'm completely nuts. When I put Laura on KFI, there was a big protest because everyone thought she was too mean and the

show would fail miserably. When I put [Bill] Handel on in the morning, people said he was too shrill and screechy, and they hated it. And when I put Daryl Gates on, oh my god, people came out of the woodwork saying the radio station was racist. With Karel and Andrew, I probably got less than 25 [delegatory] e-mails or calls."

Aside from gay bashers, the hosts claim they have been inexplicably shunned by gay organizations, namely GLAAD, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

"GLAAD has not so much as acknowledged us," says a seriously disgruntled Bouley. "They've written letters about Laura, but they've never once said, 'Good job for KFI with Karel and Andrew.' They must not like us. Maybe we're too gay for them—or not gay enough."

GLAAD's entertainment media director, Scott Seomin, denies that.

"We love Karel and Andrew," he says. "We are totally supportive of them. We just don't currently have a category [in the GLAAD Media Awards] for talk radio—perhaps we should."

Even fellow KFI staffers, the boys claim, gave them the cold shoulder when they first arrived on the scene.

"No one would talk to us," remembers Howard. "They would avoid us in the hallways. It made it very hard when we started. I think they thought we were too gay and people's jobs were in jeopardy because two faggots were on the air."

But Hall says any animosity the boys may have sensed early on stemmed not from Bouley and Howard's sexuality but from what many viewed as inexperience. Says Hall, "Radio's a pretty competitive business, and they went from not having a regular talk show on KFI to prime time—and that caught everybody by surprise."

The situation has since tempered dramatically, Bouley says.

"For our 10th anniversary last year they threw us a party. They had a cake and bought us a Baccarat crystal heart."

"It's wonderful having a whole office committed to keeping you together," scoffs the far more cynical Howard, suggesting the kindness may perhaps be nothing more than smart business.

What both men are sincerely proud of is the influence they've had on listeners who once decried their very existence.

"We get e-mails saying, 'When I first started listening to you, I [expletive] hated you. I hated fags. But you know, you've really changed my mind,'" says Howard. "Even if that happened once, it would be great. But it happens every day."

• "Karel & Andrew" in on weeknights, 7-9 p.m., on KFI-AM (640).

Calendar Weekend

RADIO

Breaking Ground on the Air

Karel and Andrew, 4-7 p.m. anchors, are gay. Now that that's out of the way . . .

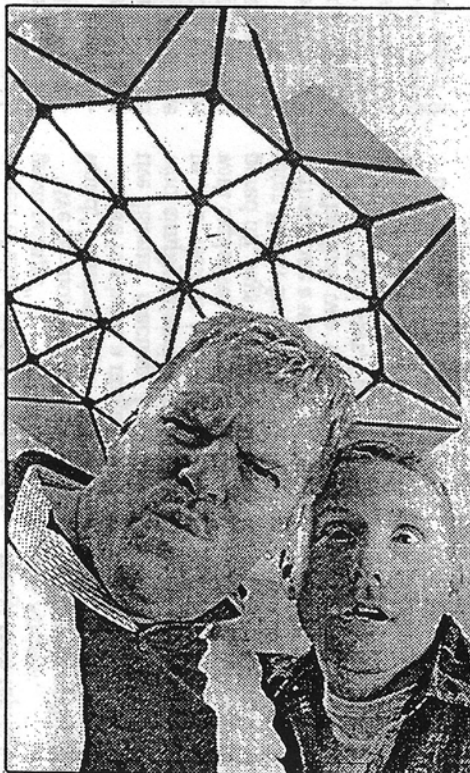
Around the Dial

By JUDITH MICHAELSON
TIMES STAFF WRITER

We aren't sitting in for anybody, honey. This time, we got the gig. Like it or not, L.A. . . . it's a brand-new day. It's the first day of spring, and we are here.

It had to have been one of the more bizarre beginnings in local talk radio—the debut, exactly one month ago, of “Karel and Andrew” in afternoon drive on KFI-AM (640).

Karel Bouley, 35, and Andrew Howard, 31, two guys who live in Long Beach, had been at the station just six months, and without a regular time slot. To everyone's surprise, they were the ones who leapfrogged over other candidates and got the coveted afternoon berth, held for 6½ years by John Kobylt and Ken Chiampou (“John & Ken”), who move to KABC-AM (790) morning drive in July.



LAWRENCE K. HO / Los Angeles Times

Karel Bouley, left, and Andrew Howard say they don't want their program tagged as a gay show.

“Karel and Andrew” runs from 4 to 7 p.m.; consumer advisor Clark Howard, syndicated by Cox Radio, which owns KFI, has the 3 p.m. hour.

That over-the-top exuberance belongs to Karel (pronounced *ka-RELL*), the lead talker, who called their arrival on the Southland's top-rated talk station “a Cinderella story—and God knows, I love shoes, glass or otherwise.” He said they had only limited previous talk-show experience, including a stint locally at KYPA-AM (1230), on Saturday nights, midnight to 4 a.m. “We're talking small. I have blow dryers that have more wattage than [that] station, OK?”

On that first afternoon broadcast, for those KFI listeners who hadn't heard them filling in for “Tim and Neil” at night or for Debra Rich on the weekends or for Bill Handel in the morning, or perhaps figured out something from the inflection and tone of Karel's voice (which even he acknowl-

edges sounds like a gay stereotype), they rather quickly identified their orientation.

"One of the reasons [KFI] thought it would be really shocking and provocative to have us do the afternoon show," Karel said, "is something we don't normally talk about... but you're probably sitting out there, thinking the same thing... Andrew and I are a couple, and we're not just meaning a couple on radio. We're a couple. We've been together 10 years—10 years in December."

"Well, you better knock on wood," Andrew said, "because you're getting on my nerves."

That was it for gay—other than the comments from callers that first hour—for and against—about having the pair as hosts. The team moved to other subjects, including corporations getting involved in the sponsorship of public projects, such as the tending of the Hollywood sign, and the Oscar show the day before.

And other than the subtext of references and asides, that has remained it. They have not dealt with matters such as same-sex marriage, AIDS or the fact that Andrew is HIV positive.

In KFI's conference room last week, they said almost in unison that the show is as gay as they are—but their topics aren't. It's not that they avoid the subject, insists Karel (identified here by first name, same as on-air), but they don't want "Karel and Andrew" to be tagged as a gay show. Or, as Andrew puts it, to "ghettoize" it.

"You're sitting there, talking about it, you're cutting out 90% of your listeners."

As for his voice, Karel says with pride: "I am a stereotype, but stereotypes are rooted in fact. This is not an act. This is me."

Their gig is no gimmick: shock value lasts only so long. Asked about their contract, they hesitate but then joy takes over. It's for two years, says Karel, with a one-year option for either side to renegotiate.

KFI program director David G. Hall, in a separate interview, says that "the main reason why I wanted them on the air is that they are very different. Smart, funny, they take life very seriously but are not always serious about it. They come from entertainment, and they've had a very uncommon and, I can only imagine, difficult life all these years, and that gives them a different perspective. It isn't that they're gay, but that adds yet another facet to the lens through which they see the world."

Karel and Andrew do have an agenda. Asked about the appeal of talk radio, Karel—comedian, music journalist and recording artist (he sings falsetto) whose recent work has been produced and released by Jellybean Recordings—mentions the "immediacy" of the radio mike. "And the ability," he adds slowly, "to show a large number of people that we think, breathe, act, talk and live just like they do, and to enlighten them about that. We have moved beyond it, and they can too."

Andrew, who has written plays

and screenplays (thus far unperformed) and is working on a children's novel, notes: "We're part of the post-gay movement. Just people being gay, moving into suburbia."

Scott Seomin, entertainment media director of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, says that "in the conservative genre of talk radio, it's really refreshing to have them on the air. As a gay man, I don't agree with absolutely everything they say but that's the point of talk. They're tremendously talented as broadcasters but, more importantly, a large metropolis would be underserved if gay broadcasters were not on the air. Even if not a topic, their listeners know they're tuning in to two gay guys who happen to be a couple."

While Karel and Andrew deal with serious issues such as Kosovo and food safety, they see their show as "afternoon drive lite." On Monday night, in an hour dealing with Yugoslavia, a caller asked if

they "had heard of Gen. George Patton." "Oh, yes," Karel answered, "I saw the movie."

As he says off the air: "When you're in your car at 4 o'clock, going home, what you need is something to entertain you. Either a different look at issues or [someone] nice. Rosie O'Donnell—she used to be criticized at first because she was so nice. Now she's like the queen of nice, and that equates to great ratings."

"We're not bitter, hate the world," Andrew says.

There has been a range of negative listener reaction, from those who simply missed John and Ken to the vicious variety, complete with epithets. The latter have tapered off, says their producer, Jennifer Keller, from several a day to perhaps one a week.

"The first two weeks was hard for me," Karel says, "because I experienced an emotion I never had, which was self-doubt."

But they've kept at it. Last week,

they were spiritedly disagreeing about the incident in which a man pulled a gun on O.J. Simpson in a golf course parking lot. Andrew was saying, "Hallelujah," while Karel sputtered: "The guy had a gun!" The argument spilled over into their breaks.

So when they disagree, do they ever take it home with them?

"We've worked through worse things than topics on a talk show," says Andrew.

"There's nothing that can really shake us," Karel says, referring to the immune-deficiency virus that Andrew contracted before they met. "When you sit with your partner in a lawyer's office and you're making out his will, fully believing that in the next year you're going to be using it when you're thinking about where he's going to be buried, when you go through that—or you're sitting there as he's going through a bone-marrow biopsy, everything else seems to pale..."



MP3 and the Internet: How we're outdoing industry homophobia
Women's festivals thrive at 25
Cracking the classical closet

SUPREME
DIVA
DIANA ROSS
ON FAME, FAMILY & CHASTITY BOND'S PET HAIR
PLUS
The life and death of Billy Jack Gaither

arts & media

RADIO

On-air pioneers Karel and Andrew do drive time **62**



MICHELE A.H. SMITH
FOR THE ADVOCATE



radio
Queering
rush-hour
radio

Karel and Andrew break new ground and brave the backlash on L.A.'s top talk-radio station
By James Anthony

Nothing in his nearly ten years of recording innocuous disco ditties and doing stand-up comedy prepared performer Karel for the front lines of queer activism. But when he and his partner, screenwriter Andrew Howard, took to the weekday afternoon drive-time airwaves of KFI-AM, the number 1 talk-radio station in Los Angeles, the verbal bullets started to fly: angry listeners on the telephone, sometimes more than 1,000 a day; a seemingly endless stream of scathing homophobic E-mail; drop-jawed coverage in the city's news media.

In the midst of scrolling through some of that E-mail, the entertainer exhales a deep sigh and shakes his head. "It's been an experience almost beyond mere explanation," Karel says. "I must confess that I didn't

profile slot—and definitely the first romantically attached gay couple to do so. In a flash after their March 22 debut the duo became the poster boys for queerdorm on talk radio. And this on the same Los Angeles station as archconservatives Dr. Laura Schlesinger and Rush Limbaugh.

The two never intended to "get too wrapped up in radio as a career option," says Karel. Two years ago, on a lark, he and his partner took on a late-night Saturday gabfest on KYP-AM in

Los Angeles. Laced with inside jokes and call-in segments from pals in the entertainment industry, the show was more "like going into a nice studio and talking to some friends," Karel recalls. "It was just a fun thing to do while Andrew finished his scripts and I worked on my music."

But the duo's popularity took off within the local gay



Karel (left) and Andrew, life and on-air partners

I must confess that I didn't expect the extreme intensity of emotion from the listeners. They've either really loved us or really hated the fact that there are two gay men on the air.

expect the extreme intensity of emotion from the listeners. There's been no middle ground. They've either really loved us really hated the fact that there are two gay men on the air."

Karel and Andrew, as they are known, are not novices. They spent a year doing fill-in shifts at odd hours on KFI before taking the permanent afternoon slot. Nor are they alone on the air: Across the country are a number of gay specialty programs and several out lesbian and gay radio hosts, including Al Rantel at KABC in Los Angeles (who called the pair "poofsters who make Tinky Winky look like Hercules"). But Karel and Andrew are the first gay talk jocks to hold such a high-

and lesbian community, leading to a year-plus stint on the all-gay Triangle Broadcasting network and to occasional fill-ins on KFI. But it wasn't until they were verbally bashed on the air during the 1998 Christmas holiday season by KFI personalities John and Ken for being "flamers" that they started to understand the role they'd inadvertently begun to play. The station was barraged with supportive calls and E-mail from locals. The American Civil Liberties Union even wrote a letter of concern on behalf of the duo.

"It's when the community voiced its outrage that we realized that we'd become flash points of activism," Karel says. "I wasn't comfortable with it at ►

first, mostly because people were telling me how to react, and neither Andrew nor I take kindly to that." And KFI has backed them up: On-air promos plug their show; program director David G. Hall calls them "thought-provoking, unpredictable, and frighteningly candid"; and their new contract

We don't shy from gay issues, but we're not interested in hosting a one-issue show.

speaks for itself. Karel says that KFI "may move our time slot in the future, but for now and for at least the next year, we're it [for drive time]."

Karel and Andrew do not spend an enormous amount of their time on the KFI airwaves addressing queer life. "That's what people expect us to do, so we're doing the opposite," Karel says. "That's the name of the game in talk radio: Keep 'em guessing. We don't shy from gay issues, but we're not interested in hosting a one-issue show. We've decided that it's a potentially greater act of activism to show the world that gay men are interested in a wide range of issues. We're not a bunch of one-trick ponies."

Yet Karel concedes that his and Andrew's sexuality is at the front of their listener's minds—and not always in a negative light. As he resumes wading through his E-mail, he's reminded of a recent note from a young woman who found comfort in the duo's on-air banter. "She first found us while we were doing fill-ins," Karel says. "She was in a small town in Northern California. She said she had no one to turn to except us, these two gay people on the radio who were matter-of-fact about their sexuality. It actually helped her that we're here doing what we do. Since then she's come out, and she's doing great. After that, honey, I can put up with just about anything those hate-mongers can dish out." ■

Anthony is a New York City-based journalist.

Find more on this topic at www.advocate.com

So California

Live! & Travel

Great Wall
Built to keep out invaders, it is
China's biggest tourist attraction

BACK COVER •••▶



"The King and I"

'King and I' at Terrace Theatre

"The King and I," a tale set in the 1860s about an English school teacher who travels to the royal palace in Bangkok to teach the many children of the King of Siam, will begin Tuesday at the Long Beach Terrace Theatre, 300 E. Ocean Blvd, through Sept. 27. Performances are at 8 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday and 2 and 7:30 p.m. Sunday. For tickets, \$13.50-\$44, call (562) 436-3661.

Theater

Kitty Carlisle Hart will perform the one-woman play "My Life on the Wicked Stage" at 8 p.m. Wednesday at the Audrey Skirball Cultural Center, 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles. For tickets, \$35-\$50 or \$100 VIP seating and reception with Hart, call (323) 525-0022.

Dance

"Le Ballet National Du Senegal," a dance company performing the traditional dances of West Africa, will perform at 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday and 2 and 7 p.m. Sept. 27 at the Irvine Barclay Theater, UC Irvine, 4242 Campus Drive. For tickets, \$27-\$32, call (714) 854-4646.

Events

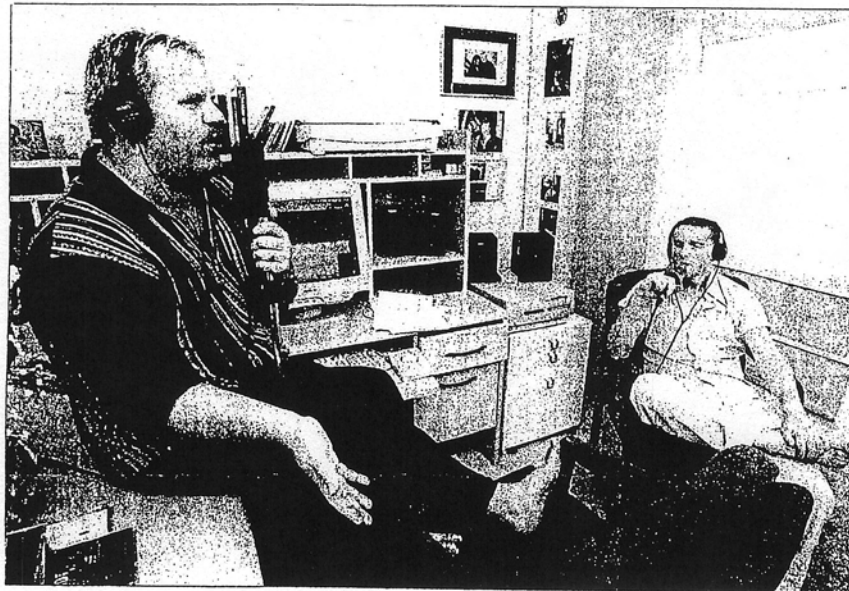


The Long Beach Coin and Collectibles Expo, with over \$1 billion in engraving and printing, will take place from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursday-Saturday and 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sept. 27 at the Long Beach Convention Center, 100 S. Pine Ave., Long Beach. Admission is \$4. For information, call (562) 436-3636.

- Compiled by Fred Ibarra

Coming Friday

Your fall movie guide featuring "Beloved" starring Danny Glover and Oprah Winfrey.



Radio DJ Karel (left) and his co-host Andrew Howard during their live talk show in their Long Beach home.
Matthew J. Lee/
Press-Telegram

Karel's World

Gay duo aspires to have their radio talk show go mainstream

By John Woolard
Staff writer

The Long Beach-based gay entertainer Karel has a simple yet lofty goal for his career.

"If Howard Stern can be the King of All Media, I can be the Queen of All Media," he says, laughing.

He may be laughing, but he's serious. Karel has fashioned a two-sided attack in his drive for fame.

One is his recording side. From 1994 to date, Karel has released a compact disc album and five CD singles of dance music.

The most recent CD, a multi-mixed single written by former Madonna producer Jellybean Benitez entitled, "Take Your Heartache Away," was given a positive review by music heavy hitter Billboard

Magazine and has been getting brisk play on radio and at dance clubs nationwide.

Then there is his radio talk-show side, which is the thrust of a budding notoriety and has earned him and his partner, Andrew Howard, frequent spots on talk station KFI (640 AM).

"I feel we have something unique," says Karel, 35, a 1980 Poly High School graduate who prefers not to use his given first and last names.

Their studio arrangement is certainly unique, especially when they do their daily "Karel and Kompany" talk show on The Triangle Radio Network.

The show - which runs from noon to 2 p.m. Monday through Saturday - is produced out of the Long Beach home Karel and Howard share. Each show day, they walk out of their living room and into a den that holds a small sound board, several phone lines and digital and e-mail hookups

to the Triangle Network's facility in Palm Springs.

The show, which will be one year old in August, is aired in the Seattle-Tacoma market during the week, and in San Francisco on Saturdays. Although Karel and Howard deal heavily with gay and lesbian issues and often tailor their guests around such issues, the aim is not an exclusively gay and lesbian show.

"Certainly we don't shy away from gay issues, but we don't shy away from mainstream issues, either," Karel says.

"A lot of gay issues are mainstream issues, anyway. We live in the real world, too," says 31-year-old Howard, who has been Karel's partner for nine years.

A typical Karel and Howard show involves a mix of live call-ins, guests and repartee between the two hosts.

PLEASE SEE RADIO / J7

RADIO: Host operates out of his Long Beach home

CONTINUED FROM J1

"We argue a lot, but when we leave the studio, it's over," Howard says.

Karel's and Howard's forays into the KFI studios have them thinking about the possibilities of jumping into the mainstream market: The Triangle Network will be able to uplink "Karel and Kompany" on satellite - that, too, has whetted

their appetite for greater exposure.

"Our main goal is KFI," Karel says. "We want the 50,000 watts they have to air whatever insight we have into society."

"There's something a little bit intoxicating about knowing what you say at a given moment about a given subject is getting listened to by thousands of people," Karel says. In order to make waves in

the sea of talk shows already out in the ether, Karel believes a certain smugness is necessary.

"I think you have to be arrogant," he says. "Am I arrogant? Of course I am. If you aren't arrogant about your abilities, you won't get anywhere on radio, or in the music business, for that matter."

For his part, Howard, the more reserved of the two, glad-

ly turns the spotlight over to Karel.

"I'm kind of self-conscious," says Howard, a screenwriter by trade who grew up in Big Bear. "I think talking is the best thing for Karel to do. I'm just along for the ride."

"That's why we're such a good pair," Karel says. "I like to fill up a room when I can, and he doesn't mind sitting in a corner watching it all."

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Welcome To Learning Curve

Finally, an alternative education and enrichment program designed

specifically for the gay and lesbian community. Our

fun and informative classes range from computer seminars to dance lessons to dating and relationships courses. Most classes are offered evenings and weekends, and range from 90-minute talks to 6-week training courses. Unless otherwise indicated, classes are open to both women and men, and are held at The Village at Ed Gould Plaza in Hollywood. For information about classes or to register call 323/860-7300.



Cultural Explorer

Learning Spanish From Scratch (parts I & II) From Useful Phrases to Basic Conversation

Learn basic communication skills in Spanish that are easy to apply in daily life and conversation. You'll learn to pronounce the sounds of spoken Latin-American Spanish, recite the Spanish alphabet, how to introduce yourself and others, and how to discuss common topics such as weather, time, school, city life, birthdays, food and customs. Part II will continue to build your vocabulary and develop your speaking skills in the past and future tenses. Hand-outs are provided. Also, the instructor will allow time for questions and answers about Latin-American culture.

Roger King, M.A. of the Spanish/English Language Service has taught Spanish at universities and schools for over 20 years.

September Part I (Beginning)

4-Week Course CU4299
\$49 Pre-registration/\$59 At-the-Door
Wednesdays, September 15-October 6, 7-9pm

October Part II (Intermediate)

4-Week Course CU42109
\$49 Pre-registration/\$59 At-the-Door
Wednesdays, October 13-November 3, 7-9pm

NEW!

Sexualities (for women and men)

Gay, Straight, and Bisexual Desires

How can you tell if you're really gay or really straight? Is everyone bisexual or is bisexuality a phase on the way to being gay? Can bisexuals ever be happy with just one partner? What forces are at work when someone suddenly discovers that she/he is gay? What about people who are straight, then gay, then straight again? Many of us experience our desires as fluid and not easily labeled. It can be confusing to us and threatening to our partners. Come explore your sexual and affectional desires in a safe and open atmosphere.

Stephanie Book Koehler, a psychotherapist specializing in relationships, hosts a bimonthly conversation salon "Lesbiantalk".

Workshop CU3199
\$19 Pre-registration / \$25 At-the-Door
Tuesday, September 28, 7-10pm

Smart Love

CONFERENCE

Conscious Coupling for the 21st Century

Single and looking for love? Coupled and wanting more skills?

Are you experiencing love as the most empowering force in the universe...or as one of life's greater disappointments? Every intimate relationship- short term or long lasting- can be a rewarding growth experience when you approach it consciously. This eye-opening conference is a gateway to the answers you are seeking. Designed for both singles and couples, SMART LOVE will

help you achieve new perceptions about intimacy and the challenges of coupling. As you participate in a series of interactive events presented by our community's most gifted professionals, a variety of workshops will provide insight into the emotional, cultural, legal, romantic, erotic and spiritual aspects of relationships from dating to permanent partnership. Co-sponsored by *Edge*, *Frontiers Newsmagazine*, *Fab!* and *Lesbian News*.

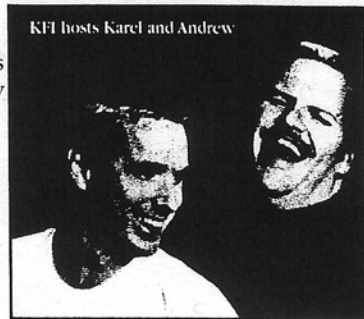
Keynote presentation by KFI talk show hosts Karel and Andrew. *Conference Presenters: Coreena Hendrickson, Katrice Jackson, Stephanie Book Koehler, Mac Nomura, Dr. Paul Oberon, Sandra Rogers, Elizabeth Schaeffer, Royce Sciortino, Barry Simon, Lee Ann Teaney, Dr. Marie Walbridge, and Anthony Zamudio.*

Conference SF31109

\$49 Pre-registration / \$59 At-the-Door

Saturday, October 16, 9am-5pm

KFI hosts Karel and Andrew



NEW!

Contemporary Art Exposed

How to Understand and Enjoy Contemporary Art

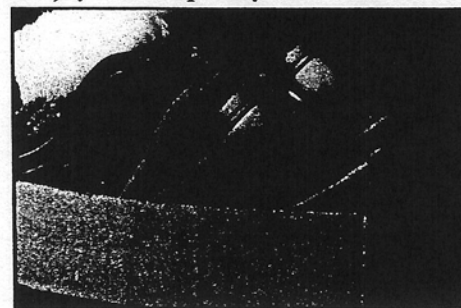
"Why is it that when an artist puts old shoes in a cardboard box it's called art, and when I do, it's junk?" This question and others will be answered by looking at the historical, philosophical and social motivations for Art that is being made today. You'll view slides of a variety of modern art forms, and receive handouts of selected writings that explore today's art. By the end of the workshop you'll be able to go into any contemporary art museum or gallery and understand what you see.

Rebecca Tuynman has a degree in Art History from Bryn Maur College and works as an educator at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA).

Workshop CF3199

\$19 Pre-registration / \$25 At-the-Door

Wednesday, September 22, 7-10pm



Call 323/860-7300 to register

Hit Dr. Laura where it will do some good

By Charles Karel Bouley

Last week in Hollywood yet another protest against radio entertainer Dr. Laura Schlessinger took place. The event was organized by the well-intentioned but misguided gay activists hell-bent on stopping Paramount from airing her new syndicated talk show. What all of the protesters seem to be missing is that they are helping Dr. Laura far more than they could ever hurt her.

Two years ago, when Andrew and I took over afternoon drive (one of the most coveted spots) at KFI AM 640, we had the same objections.

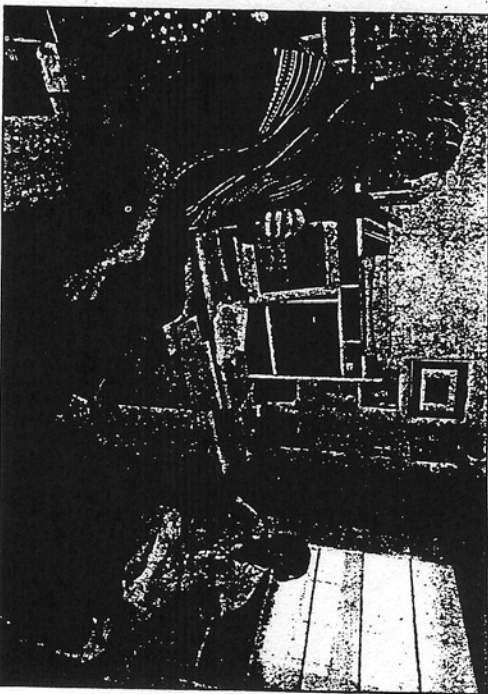
As the only openly gay male couple in Los Angeles drive time history, we were presented with a great conflict: How could we not go on air each day and spend a majority of our time denouncing Dr. Laura's comments, which aired only one hour before our show?

The answer was obvious — because doing so would only validate her, give her credibility and raise her public image (good or bad) to an even higher level. Why buy into that? Let her hire her own publicist.

Dr. Laura Schlessinger is not a psychiatrist or a psychotherapist. She's a radio entertainer. To get far in the business takes publicity and controversy. More than 15 million people tune in to her each day to hear what she has to say and ask her for advice. If you don't like what she has to say, turn her off. And if you're dumb enough to let what she has to say change your life, seek a real therapist.

But the fact is, not only does she have the right to say it under the First Amendment, but she feels she has the Biblical foundation and moral conviction to say it. And she gets paid very well to do it. Why? Because love her or hate her, people listen. In fact, in radio, the more a host is hated, the more those that hate them listen. Odd, but true.

The activists say she is full of hatred toward gays, and they contend that if her remarks were anti-Semitic or anti-black she'd be shut down in a moment's notice. All of that may be true and, if so, why promote her? That's what the Stop Dr. Laura website, the protests, the proclamations do. Promote her. When the evening news flashes the stories, whose pictures are shown? The activists? Nope. Dr. Laura's. Paramount couldn't



RADIO DJ Charles Karel Bouley (left) and his co-host Andrew Howard during their live talk show in their Long Beach home.

Matthew J. Leo

buy this much publicity for her. Every time a gay person gets on the air and denounces her, anyone who agrees with her tunes in and those who have never heard of her watch or listen just to see what it's all about. And that increases ratings. And that spells success.

So what to do with the problem that is Dr. Laura? There is no doubt she is ill-informed about the gay and lesbian community and hides behind a thin veil of bigotry. Obviously Paramount should drop her show, right? Wrong.

They knew what they were buying when they optioned it. Asking her to change is wrong. It would be like asking Rush Limbaugh to embrace Bill Clinton's policies and throw his support behind Al Gore. Groups like GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) who have met with Paramount with a list of demands or concerns about Dr. Laura should be referred again to the First Amendment or the court system.

The gay community doesn't have an unlimited budget to fight battles, and it's inappropriate these funds on newspaper ads and insignificant protests.

So, where does that leave the anti-Dr. Laura movement? Right where it started: nowhere. Where should it be going? Simply put, to the pocketbook. Dr. Laura is Dr. Laura because she is a commercially viable entity. Millions of dollars are made on her show. Hit her where it counts, in the pocketbook. Organize boycotts and negative publicity campaigns against her adver-

tisers. Take out full page ads denouncing them, and name names. As soon as she is seen as non-commercially viable, she's gone. Remember, it's never about the viewpoint, it's about the money.

More importantly, how about countering Dr. Laura with support for shows that present an opposing viewpoint? Why not use the thousands being spent and call upon the gay elite of the entertainment industry to create programming that presents a more balanced view of not only gay issues, but a more tolerant world in general?

Where are the gay networks? Five hundred cable channels and not one gay- and lesbian-themed channel? Four major talk stations in this market alone, and only two with openly-gay hosts, and none with financial backing or even major support from the same protesters out in the streets denouncing the good doctor. Hundreds of thousands being spent on newspaper advertising denouncing Dr. Laura and hardly a penny spent on promoting anything positive about the community itself, or anyone in it of note.

One year ago, Andrew and I entered the firestorm of talk radio an hour after Dr. Laura. We've suffered our share of hate mail and bigotry. Last week they moved our time slot from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. I received over 3,000 e-mails from non-gay parents, fathers, mothers, children, all expressing how much they've come to love and support the show. Why do I bring this up? Because that's how this battle is won.

Incorporate, don't segregate. Normalize the community and those who oppose it will seem ridiculous. Give Dr. Laura the rope to hang herself by providing positive role models, allocating funds to actually support those doing the good and stop spending so much time fighting unwinnable battles. Even if Paramount caves, Dr. Laura's show will be seen.

Her radio show is stronger than ever and her new book will be a best seller. How about creating a counterforce to balance the scales? How about throwing support behind someone, something, some entity that can equal the playing field? It may not be as glamorous as carrying a sign, getting some cables together or getting 7 million hits on a website, but it's a damn sight more effective.

Charles Karel Bouley lives in Long Beach and is the co-host of Karel and Andrew Live on KFI AM 640 Los Angeles from 7 to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday. He can be reached at karel@karel-andrew.com or at www.karel-andrew.com.

Pesticides for lunch

By Jeff Wise

A significant number of bottle-fed babies in California's San Joaquin Valley reach their entire allowable lifetime dose of the insecticide DBCP by the age of two. Some young adults who were exposed to this chemical as children are now experiencing increased levels of kidney damage, infertility and cancer.

If we knew 25 years ago — when millions of pounds of DBCP were applied to soil throughout California what we know now, the insecticide would never have been used. It would never have had the chance to leach into the San Joaquin aquifer, and babies in the valley would have been given formula made with safe, clean water.

DBCP like pesticides used all over the country, was never analyzed for its effects on children before it was used for crops. Even today, few if any pesticides are ever tested for effects on kids. Permissible doses for children of pesticides and weed-killers applied to foods have always been based on experiments and assumptions involving adult males, who could weigh 20 times more than a infant.

This why the National Academy of Sciences concluded in 1983 that young children were eating potentially unhealthy amounts of toxic chemicals in their fruit, juice and other foods. That's why in 1986 a Republican-led Congress voted unanimously for the "Food Quality Protection Act" (FQPA), requiring the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to make existing safety standards 10 times stronger for every chemical that has not been studied for its effects on children. Today, this "better safe than sorry" approach is the law of the land.

Just as EPA has set about enforcing the FQPA, however, more than 200 members of Congress are having second thoughts. They all support a proposed law that would gut the protection by making it impossible for the agency to apply the tensfold safety margin for children's exposure to pesticides. But most surprising of all, the author of the bill, Rep. Richard Pombo represents one of the congressional districts in the San Joaquin Valley facing a serious problem with ground water contamination from DBCP.

Why would members of Congress want to abolish a law designed to prevent the kinds of risks associated with pesticides like DBCP? And why is Mr. Pombo willing to subject millions of children across the country to the unknown effects of thousands of inad-



Los Angeles, CA
Print and Online Edition
Wednesday, June 21, 2000

Radio Show of the Week

"The Karel & Andrew Show": Karel Bouley and Andrew Howard may be gay and proud of it, but the always entertaining talk team's subjects range from current news to favorite movies and TV shows. They've done broadcasts from Miami on the Elian Gonzalez story, from Barstow where they went to discover the local culture and from the Grand Prix in Long Beach.

- _____ Top Headlines _____
- **Mel Gibson's family taught him all he needed for 'The Patriot'**
 - **Estrogen benefits questioned**
 - **Jennings looks at Jesus' life**
 - **Viewers deserve better 'Resurrection'**

- * Where: KFI-AM (640).
- * When: 7 to 9 p.m. weekdays.
- * Quote: "The only way to find out where we're going is to see where we've been, so we don't make the same mistakes again," Howard says. "Also, by looking at the past, you realize things are better now than they have ever been before. I'm not one of those people that romanticizes the past."
- * Off the air: When not in front of the microphone, Howard works at home in Long Beach on scripts for screen and stage. Bouley, too, writes and has co-authored the stage play "Out West" and the autobiographical "Dance... Or Else" and continues as the Soundtrack Editor for Billboard Magazine.

- * Background: Bouley has worked as a singer, actor, comic, TV personality, journalist and writer. The Santa Ana-born Andrew was content being behind the scenes until Karel dragged him into radio. They started at KFI in March 1999.
- * Taking a stand: During the Super Bowl, FedEx aired a commercial showing Munchkins inhaling helium. Howard and Bouley spoke out, saying the pulling of commercial was ludicrous and interviewed the opposition seriously — while inhaling helium the entire time.
- * You'll like this if: ... you like fast-paced talk radio. — Fred Shuster

KFI's Karel and Andrew face the nights

I RECEIVED a letter from talk station KFI-AM 640 this week promising me \$10,000 if I call in the event that my name is announced on the air between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. on June 1. I'll let you know if I won. It is KFI's way of getting the word out about the Phil Hendrie Show every afternoon from 4 to 7 p.m.

Giving away money is a time tested if not time-honored way of getting listeners to stay with a music station. What the promotional letter suggests to me is that KFI is looking to win back some lost listeners after John and Ken left to go do mornings on KABC-AM 790 and the afternoon slot was handed to Karel and Andrew for a year. Putting the "openly gay" couple on in drive time was the sort of daring move KFI Program Director David Hall is known for, but it was a gamble that perhaps didn't quite pay off.

The duo swapped places with Hendrie in what appeared to be an effort to resuscitate the afternoon drive ratings, which have apparently been hurt by KLSX-FM 97.1's Tom Leykis. Leykis, a former KFI afternoon drive talker who played a pivotal role in putting KFI on the map as a competitive talk station, is now reveling in the damage he has wrought on the station that wouldn't renew his contract back in 1992. He didn't hesitate to say the reason KFI and John and Ken couldn't come to terms was because he was pounding them in the afternoon drive time ratings contest.

But were Karel and Andrew such a disaster? Perhaps they were pushed a little too hastily into the fast lane of radio. But Hall's assessment of their talent seems to have been borne out. Putting them on in the night may be where they should have been to begin with. After

Listening in



SANDY WELLS

all, their first stint on Los Angeles air was at KYPA-AM 1230 (remember "Personal Achievement Radio"?). On Saturday nights, they gained some notoriety as hosts of the gay talk show "Different After Dark."

"You don't change a show to fit the time slot," says Karel Bouley, putting a philosophic spin on the time change that many in the industry regarded as a humiliating demotion. "You do what is real and honest. Let the program director decide where to put us. I feel people wanted us to feel worse than we do. We're still on the number one talk station. Do we miss drive time? Sure, it was a lot of fun. But evenings are fun, too."

As for the topics, politics is 90 percent taboo.

"Our show is 10 percent political," explains Bouley. "People don't want to know about politics, because it doesn't affect them. Rush isn't pulling the numbers he used to after the Monica Lewinsky thing exposed all the minutiae of politics. After 7 p.m., people don't want to hear about all that anyway."

Check out their Web site at www.karel-andrew.com. The hosts recently put up a casting notice for their first independent film!

A 'New Dr. Ruth' emerges on KLSX-FM Sunday nights

It's called "A Touch of Romance" and the host is billed as "a new and younger version" of Dr. Ruth.

"I love to hear what's on people's minds when it comes to sex," says Dr. Ava Cadell of her new KLSX-FM 97.1 program heard Sundays from 10 to 11 p.m. "There's no sexual theme off limits or too taboo for this program."

Among the program's features are "the weekly Sex-Q test," sex in the news and interviews with Hollywood sex symbols.

Cadell is a board certified clinical sexologist and relationship expert. Her published works include, "12 Steps to Everlasting Love," "Confessions to a Sexologist" and "The Stock Market Orgasm."



KPCC-FM Youth Book Club debuts today

It's dedicated to young adults under the age of 20 and it debuts today on KPCC-FM 89.3. The Book Group is a special segment of Talk of the City from 2 to 2:30 p.m. on the first Friday of every month.

Talk of the City's Friday host Kitty Felde came up with the idea after conversations with young listeners she met at the recent Los Angeles Times Book Fair.

"Many young people came

up to me with their parents and reluctantly admitted that they listened to KPCC on Friday afternoons while they were in carpool," says Felde who worked as a librarian in Compton to help pay her way through college. "Some of the most interesting literature today is for young adults and no one talks about it except librarians."

The show's co-producer, Amy Machado says publishers will donate copies of the books to be discussed to a selected high school or junior high

Mayor rolls out red carpet for wisecracking duo

► **TOURISM:** 640-AM radio hosts will explore Barstow this weekend.

By **TAMMY J. SCHOLL**
Staff Writer

BARSTOW — If all goes well this weekend, the people of Blythe may not be too pleased with KFI-AM's radio talk show hosts Karel Bouley and Andrew Howard.

Managers of the California Welcome Center and city officials are giving them a tour of all-things-Barstow in an effort to change their opinion of the community.

"We are going to show them all the great things this city has to offer," center manager Jennifer Rodriguez said.

The pair have bashed Barstow from their Los Angeles studio and area residents have not hesi-



KFI radio hosts Andrew Howard, left, and Karel Bouley interview Mayor Katy Yslas-Yent in front of the Route 66 Motel on Friday.

Lara Hartley/Staff Photographer

tated to respond.

"It's just light-hearted kidding around, like, 'Have you been to the McDonald's in Barstow because that is all

that's there.' This is a chance to see what it's about," said Eliza Sultan, assistant producer the Karel and Andrew show.

Bouley said a woman called in

to defend Barstow about five months ago and after a lengthy conversation, she challenged them to experience the city firsthand.

Tiffany Dennis, the show's producer, said they have received several invitations to visit Barstow from area residents.

"After making a couple of cracks, people send us e-mails inviting us here. So here we are, trying to see what Barstow has to offer," she said.

Rodriguez and Ginger Ontiveros have assembled an itinerary for them that rivals a weekend at summer camp.

"We have been planning this for a week. We want to show them a little bit of everything," Rodriguez said.

Karel and Andrew are expected to tour Rainbow Basin, Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad yard,

Please see **RADIO HOSTS, A3**

NEWS: The Lottery Commission voted to disband Superotto for a Powerball

HOMES / From A1

Under the emergency cost-cutting order, both Yountville and Barstow have been told to cancel all temporary help, reduce staff travel by at least 50 percent, prohibit overtime for workers and even put off the purchase of office supplies.

Excluded from any cutbacks are services directly related to patient care, insisted John Hanretty, chief of financial services for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which operates the homes. "The bottom line is, overall, there is not a significant impact due to the cutbacks," he said.

But there were protests in Yountville recently when management attempted to reduce delivery of food to residents, requiring more of them to come to the cafeteria for their meals. That cost-saving approach was later dropped, Hanretty said.

Barstow and Yountville also have more long-term problems associated with their financial management, Hanretty said. This is the second year in a row the homes have been ordered to take emergency cost-cutting steps to stay within their budgets.

"We want to change that direction," he said, and has told officials at both homes "not to spend the way you were spending the first five months of the year."

There are factors beyond managers' control threatening the financial stability of the two homes, including escalating medical costs for the homes and increasing utility costs, Hanretty said.

The veterans home in Yountville is one of the largest in the country. It has space for 1,125 residents in five levels of care. Barstow is a 400-bed facility.

The governor appointed a task force to examine health-care issues at Yountville and Barstow, and has asked it to report any recommendations by July 1.

Davis also is hoping to beef up the budgets of the veterans homes in the new fiscal year.

Davis has proposed adding \$20 million in the 2000-01 budget for various improvements at the homes, including \$4.5 million for recruitment and retention of staff, \$3.3 million to hire additional staff, \$3.3 million for facility improvements at both Barstow and Yountville and \$9.2 million for new construction at the facilities.

► IN BRIEF

Hearing Monday on redevelopment plan

BARSTOW — The City Council will hold a public hearing Monday to allow area residents to question the Redevelopment Agency's proposed capital improvement program for the fiscal years 2000-2005.

The plan outlines how much

money will be allocated for property acquisition projects, improvements to city streets, the Harvey House and the Sportspark.

The council's Redevelopment Agency meeting begins at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers at City Hall, 220 E. Mountain View. The council's regular meeting follows at 7:30 p.m.

RADIO HOSTS / From A1

Calico Ghost Town and Barstow Station this weekend.

"I changed our plans to visit and broadcast from a trailer park. I thought it would be condescending and not letting them put their best foot forward," Howard said.

Instead, the estimated 300,000 listeners who tune in to 640-AM heard Bouley and Howard talk Friday with Mayor Katy Yslas-Yent as she flipped hamburgers for a barbecue at the Route 66 Motel on West Main Street.

"It's really nice to have them here. I hope they enjoy the peo-

ple," Yslas-Yent said.

About 15 years ago, Bouley had a lousy time here when his family's car broke down. The ordeal left them stuck in Barstow for 11 hours.

"I have bad memories of this place from when my (parents) car broke down at a gas station. I really want my preconception changed. It should be fun," Bouley said.

They are expecting to end their weekend in Barstow around noon Sunday.

"By the time this weekend is over, we may have to start making fun of Blythe instead of Barstow," Howard said.

DRIVE TIME ON KFI Long Beach Pair Brings New Voice To Radio

By Leslie Madsen
Gazette Staff Writer

The weekday afternoon line-up on KFI AM 640 is standard talk-radio fare: Rush Limbaugh, Dr. Laura, consumer advocate Clark Howard.

And then from 4 to 7 p.m. there's Karel and Andrew, who may be the first openly gay male couple to have a prime-time show in American radio history.

Regular listeners who tuned in near the end of March were surprised to find that the usual afternoon and evening hosts, John and Ken, had disappeared, to be replaced by the Long Beach pair.

"The initial first shock was, where's John and Ken?" Karel said. "And since we're 180 degrees different from them, there was a big shock. John was known more as your sort of angry white guy, every-guy-next-door... with attitude."

Andrew Howard and Karel, who uses only that name, have an entirely different approach to radio. Karel said they wish to avoid too much negativity, so although they discuss politics and other hot issues, they try to keep the show focused on the positive aspects of life in Los Angeles County.

Although they are gay, Karel and Andrew do not tend to address gay issues. Still, Karel confessed that some listeners have had trouble adjusting to gay hosts.

"But for the most part," Karel said, "people have been saying it's a breath of fresh air on LA radio because... we enjoy life

them."

Karel emphasized that he and Andrew share a positive outlook on life, but beyond that similarity, their personalities and interests are very different. Karel is the public figure — a recording artist, a monthly columnist for *Genre Magazine* and a stand-up comedian. Karel said he enjoys watching VH-1 and the Academy Awards, while Andrew prefers the Discovery and History channels.

Andrew's background is in writing screenplays and scripts for the stage, and he would rather let his writing speak for him, Karel said. Still, Karel admitted, they get along well. They have been together for almost a decade, and never have been apart for more

than 24 hours, he said. So when Karel joined KFI, it was only natural for him to ask Andrew to accompany him. Over the past several months, they have worked their way up through the KFI ranks.

"We basically get paid to do exactly what we do at home," Karel explained. "We sit there and ketch over all kinds of stuff."

Karel and Andrew live in the Rise, Park neighborhood of Long Beach and use their show to promote the city, both on the air and at special events. They will enee the entertainment at AIDS Walk on April 25, participate in the city's Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade and the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach.



TALK TWOSOME. Long Beach residents Karel (foreground) and Andrew may be the first openly gay couple on prime-time radio in the United States.

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GREAT GIRLS

Carlene Girl Scout Troop No. 452 and Junior Girl Scout Troop No. 457 did their part to make Girl Scout history on June 24 when they climbed rocks at Glimbix in Huntington Beach, and played soccer at Huntington Beach Central Park. This was the 75th anniversary day a Girl Scout troop participated in Girl Scouts of the USA to conduct air-judged series of fitness events throughout 1999 on June 25. **Acornville Girl Scout Troop, No. 1989 and **Mad 365 Great Girl Scout** Troop, when they held an old-fashioned croquet tournament.**

FINANCIAL REWARDS

The Orange County Water District has been awarded a certificate of achievement for excellence in financial reporting for the 1998 fiscal year by the Government Finance Officers Assn. The certificate is the most prestigious recognition in accounting and financial reporting by a governmental agency.

Pat Boone unhappy to share spotlight with critics

HUNTINGTON BEACH — Few spectators enjoying the Fourth of July festival may have realized that celebrity grand marshal Pat Boone was less than thrilled with some of his parade day colleagues.

Boone was "a little surprised" that two of his outspoken critics, talk show hosts of "Karel & Andrew Live" on KFI radio, were asked to participate, City Administrator Ray Silver said. The surprise was mutual, Silver said.

"The KFI shock jocks were

pretty pathetic," he said.

On their show, Charles Karel Bouley and Andrew Howard had bad-mouthed Boone, as well as the parade officials who invited him, for being too old to represent the youth-oriented city, Bouley said.

"Were we polite about it? No," Bouley said. "[Boone] hasn't had a hit in 30 years. Maybe my grandmother knows who he is, but do surfers, skaters and skinheads in Huntington have a clue about him?" he asked.

Parade officials thought they

could change the minds of the radio personalities — both former Huntington Beach residents — by bringing them along, said Pat Silver, parade committee chairwoman.

City Councilman and publisher Dave Garofalo questioned the wisdom of trying to win over the two, especially Bouley, whom Garofalo knows from the days Bouley's company designed graphics for Garofalo's newspaper. Garofalo said he no longer keeps in touch with Bouley but remembers him as a man with

strongly held opinions.

"I was actually shocked when I saw them," Garofalo said. "I couldn't figure out why they were in the parade."

Silver said she hopes the controversy blows over without any more fuss because no one knows what these talk show hosts are capable of doing.

"If they did that to Pat Boone, what else can they do?," she asked.

Boone did not return repeated phone calls.

— Eron Ben-Yehuda

FOUNTAIN VALLEY CITY COUNCIL WRAP-UP

ISSUE: HYUNDAI BILLBOARD

Vote: 5-0
Summary: The council voted to postpone the public hearing for the 567-square-foot Hyundai Motor America billboard at 10550 Talbert Ave. to Sept. 7.

ISSUE: PUBLIC SAFETY RADIO
Vote: 5-0

Summary: The council allocated about \$122,000 to purchase equipment to participate in the 800 Megahertz Radio Replacement Plan, a new radio system that will unite law enforcement, public services, lifeguard and marine safety agencies county-wide on a common system for the first time. The city's current sys-

tem is old and deteriorating, and must be replaced, city documents show.

ISSUE: NEW POLICE CARS

Vote: 5-0
Summary: The council authorized a \$118,335 payment for five 1999 Ford Crown Victoria police cars.

ISSUE: NEW CITY YARD

Vote: 5-0
Summary: The council awarded a \$52,000 contract to CRSS Constructors Inc. to oversee construction of the new Corporation Yard at 17300 Mount Herrmann St. The old city yard at 18240 Ward St. will be sold.

— Ellen McCarty

Huntington Beach Hospital

August Community Calendar

EVENT OF THE MONTH

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Keeping It Light and Gay

Even Deadly Disease Can't Dampen KFI Radio Team's Spirit

by Tomm Looney

In Los Angeles, ever since KFI's (640 AM) afternoon drivers Karel & Andrew took over for the popular John & Ken, there has been press scrutiny.

Scrutiny and fascination about the fact they are an openly gay couple, the first to host a drive-time show in a major market.

Scrutiny about the audience reaction.

Scrutiny about their dip in the ratings since taking over "afternoon drive" (targeted at drivers) "daypart" (self-explanatory) in this, the nation's second-largest radio market.

In the early days, vile gay-bashing e-mail and phone calls were part of the unwelcome wagon equation as well. Many would have packed it in and called it a day.

Not Charles Karel Bouley and Andrew Howard. All the turmoil in their new radio lives is trifling compared to some of the purgatory these two have been through over the past 10 years.

"People say, 'Why don't you crack under the pressure?'"

Karel says, "Five years ago I was sitting across from an attorney, exercising a living will, last will, etc., buying a burial plot for Andrew. Today, he sits across from me doing afternoon drive on major market radio!"

Andrew Howard, the Andrew half of "The Karel & Andrew



Show," was diagnosed with the AIDS virus over 10 years ago and wasn't given much time to live.

Talkin' About Today

"He's had quite a battle," Karel notes. "Andrew was the first to test the protease inhibitors. They saved his life and led him to the cover of the Wall Street Journal."

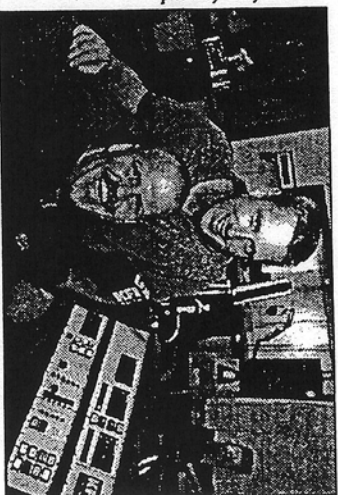
The twosome insist they now live for today, but observers claim that seems to entail *not* taking it easy like the doctor ordered. "They are working their asses off," said one KFI co-worker.

Karel still writes for Billboard magazine and just had a free-lance piece in the Orange County Register. He is currently penning a cover story on disco icon Sylvester for *Genre* magazine.

In addition, he and Andrew go through hours of prep work each day for their show. "It's true, we're working hard, but we love it," Karel beams. "The audience will come, they just have to. I'm enjoying this so much. So is Andrew. It's so nice to see how excited he is about life these days."

As I mentioned, KFI's afternoon ratings have dropped off since John & Ken left the station, more so with men than with women. Critics, pundits and even John & Ken—who are now working for the competition over on KABC—have been taking pot shots at them.

photo by Gary Leonard



KFI's Andrew (top) and Karel

"There is more to life than ratings," Karel waxes loquacious. "John and Ken should learn a lesson. Life is what you make it *today*. Be happy or get out of it."

The twosome told *Advocate* magazine that their contract guarantees them one year in afternoon drive at KFI. If the ratings don't pick up, the worst that KFI "suits" (read non-creative executives) can do is fire them!

"We sort of stumbled into this career and don't base our entire lives on it," Andrew reflects. "We were actually working toward other goals when this landed in our laps. So, if it falls through, we'll just pick up where we left off."

Yes, Andrew does speak! As with any team show, there is always one who yacks more than the other. Karel is the sound-bite hogger of these two—on the air and off. "We had great, fabulous lives before this, and we will after," says this man who knows how to get the last word in. Just ask the doctors of five years ago who had him out shopping for tombstones!

L.A. *Downtown News* Radio Reporter Tomm Looney conficts his interests with a weekend overnight chat show on 97.1 FM—Talk and as a sports anchor at KPWB News 98.

Los Angeles RADIO Guide

Vol. V No. 1 Los Angeles County's Only Radio Magazine Summer 1999



John & Ken

John & Ken Debut on KABC

Some radio industry observers would say that fixing the morning show as the last move is an unconventional way to rebuild a radio station. On the first anniversary of his arrival as program director of talk radio station KABC 790 AM, Drew Hayes gave a thumbs-up at the House of Blues following the John and



KABC Newswoman Carol Ramos

a dog muzzle and a poop scooper as aids for dealing with management criticism. Mid-morning host Dennis Prager played an accordion rendition of "Hava Nagila" and "Restaurant Show" co-host Mario Martinoli gave them a cake.

A fair number of calls from fans of their KFI show suggested that the latest programming decision by Hayes will pull listeners from their former radio home of more than six years. However, one irate listener carped, "Is this what talk radio has come to?"

Karel & Andrew on KFI

John and Ken performed their finale on KFI 640 AM Friday March 19. The talk station replaced the syndicated program with Karel and Andrew from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. The gay couple provides KFI with a local afternoon show for the first time since the John and Ken Show was syndicated in 1997. Before joining KFI, Karel Bouley and Andrew Howard had their own Long Beach-based syndicated show heard in Seattle and some other small markets, but not in Los Angeles. Consumer activist Clark Howard now hosts from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. A KFI spokesperson said the station management wanted a local program in afternoon-drive.

KPCC-FM Faces Uncertain Future

Minnesota Public Radio offered to become a partner with high-powered but under-performing Pasadena Community

Larry Mantle

College's KPCC 89.3 FM, connecting its vast mid-western radio empire through a Local Marketing Agreement (LMA). The deal would let Program/News Director Larry Mantle take charge, and the college would remain licensee. MPR would be free to use facility to develop new programs.

During his May 19 broadcast of "Talk," Mantle took his case in favor of the partnership with MPR to the listeners. The station desperately needs money, he told his audience. The deal would allow the KPCC to upgrade woefully out-of-date technical facilities and to hire a 10-person local



Karel & Andrew

Radio
Records
February



Karel and Andrew

It's been just over a year since the talk duo John and Ken departed their afternoon drive slot at KFI/Los Angeles to take over mornings at crosstown Talker KABC. Following their exit, speculation was rampant throughout the industry and the Hollywood media about who would take over KFI's coveted afternoon drive slot.

Within fairly short order, KFI programmer David Hall ended all the speculation and announced that the station's new PM drive team was to be ... Karel and Andrew! They weren't all that well-known, and they didn't really have that much experience as talk show hosts or, for that matter, any real track

“To succeed in this time slot, you have to appeal to the majority of listeners who are available, and the majority of listeners out there are not gay.”

record of on-air success. Yet here they were, taking over afternoons in one of the most competitive Talk radio markets in the country.

None of those facts, however, garnered press for the new talk team. No, what most of the headlines were about was the fact that Karel and Andrew are an openly gay couple who now host a daily show on a mainstream Talk radio station in America's second-largest city.

With nearly a year behind them, I recently caught up with Karel (“Just Karel, with the accent on the second syllable,” he says) and his work and life partner, Andrew Howard, to get their

take on how things are going to date, what it's like to work in a town where the media's favorite subject to report on is itself and the pressures of having people both in and out of the radio business assume that they won't succeed. But if the definition of what makes for a potentially successful talk host includes passion for your work, a drive to succeed no matter what and an opinionated point of view, these two guys just might have a shot.

R&R: First off, what motivated you to want to host a talk show?

K: For me, it was just an extension of me as an entertainer. I was a theater major, and I've done recording, comedy and stage performing. Radio was yet another way for me to entertain people.

A: It was the money.

K: Well, I'd certainly like to think your intentions are more noble than that!

A: No, they aren't. It was the money.

R&R: What is it that you hope to convey to listeners through your show?

K: Our mission is, first, to entertain people and give them a way to laugh at themselves and the world around them, and, second, to inform them and let them know what's happening out there in the world beyond the usual stories. Our goal is to talk about what people are really talking about and to give all issues a forum, not just boring and stodgy political issues.

R&R: So those who would assume, without hearing it, that the show is about gay issues would be wrong?

K: Completely wrong! We discuss those issues only when they happen to be relevant, and even then it's usually in a way that's not expected of us.

A: To succeed in this time slot, you have to appeal to the majority of listeners who are available, and the majority of listeners out there are not gay.

R&R: Do you take a lot of heat from the gay community for not taking advantage of your position to advance their issues?

A: Absolutely, but I also think that just about anyone who's on the radio has the same kind of pressures from their own peer groups.

K: I know that sometimes people think we should be the poster children for the gay community, but the fact of the matter is, I believe we do more to benefit their cause by staying on the air

Who Are These Guys, Anyway?

□ □ □ KFI's Karel and Andrew are definitely not your stereotypical talk hosts

and being mainstream than we ever could by getting on the air and talking to a majority of the audience about things that do not directly affect their everyday lives. A mom driving her kids home from a soccer game really doesn't care that much about gay marriage or Matthew Sheppard. For that matter, she probably doesn't care that much about Kosovo or Chechnya, either. Maybe she should, but I think it's important for us to know the difference between a *should care* topic and a *do care* topic.

R&R: Do you think the standard for success is set higher or differently for you because you're gay?

A: Yes, some, but I also think it works in the opposite way, to some extent. In other words, the perception of a lot of people is that the world hates us, so a lot of them really do go out of their way to show how much they love us.

K: I don't agree. I truly believe that we have to meet a higher standard each and every day simply because people are expecting us to fail. And the reason they think that is because they really don't believe that two gay people could possibly do a successful mainstream radio show.

R&R: What do you see as one of the major challenges to your ultimate success at this?

K: I think we have to be very careful about the perception of our show. Even though we refer to each other as a couple on the air, I think we have to be a little more discretionary than others might have to in terms of our subject matter. Because of who we are, we have to do that, because we don't want people to perceive us as being a one-issue show. Nobody can afford to be perceived as one-dimensional and be successful at this.

R&R: Most talk hosts want to take their show national, so I'm going to as-

sume that holds true for you. If so, how do you think Karel and Andrew will play in Peoria?

K: We think our show has broad appeal, and we would like to live in a world where a show like ours could go national. I think we would play in Peoria a lot better than most people would think. There's a perception in this country that gays and lesbians are a hate group of people, and, frankly, I think a lot of gays and lesbians do more to perpetuate that notion than anyone else. Most people could care less what we do at home. People simply expect us to c-

“I guess if we do have an agenda it could be summarized as tolerance.”

ertain them and give them information that they need. If we can do that in an entertaining and effective way, they could care less about our personal li-

R&R: Do you have a political agenda?

K: I guess if we do have an agenda it could be summarized as tolerance. You may not agree with the viewpoint of others, but you at least need to tolerate them. I don't agree with Dr. L. for example, but I can tolerate her viewpoint. Nothing I say or do is going to change her agenda, and I respect her right to have that agenda. She is who she is, and we are who we are, and tolerance is all about us being able to exist in this world.

Continued on P. 41

The Radio & Record Industries Information Leader



PROGNOSTICATOR

News organizations that rely on the Internet to reach an audience that increasingly checks news websites for their information. Radio already has an enormous advantage in this arena, and its presence will be a must for news organizations. They can't afford to take advantage of the Internet while we sit on the sidelines. We have archived material and reusable news, and we have the money and finance. Partnerships with other news organizations will add resources and extend radio's reach. But above all, radio news and talk must establish integrity and credibility as brands, because those qualities will be essential to stand out among the vastly multiplying sources of information in the future.

**Barbara Cochran, President
RTNDA**



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NEWSPAPER

K.T. Oslin Explores Her Roots On New BNA Set
PAGE 28



IN MUSIC NEWS

AUGUST 24, 1995

Indies Lead Nominees For Gay/Lesbian Music Awards

BY LARRY FLICK

NEW YORK—Melissa Etheridge and k.d. lang are among the major-label nominees for the first Gay/Lesbian American Music Awards (GLAMA), to be presented at ceremonies here Oct. 6. The late singer/songwriter Michael Callen earned the top number of nods, however, with his posthumously released Significant Other album "Legacy," which was cited nine times in six categories.



LANG

Callen, who died of AIDS-related complications last year, earned nods in the areas of album of the year and best male artist, among others. Etheridge and lang are competing in the category of best female artist.

"There are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered recording artists who have been waiting for a night like this for their entire careers," says GLAMA co-founder/executive producer Michael Mitchell. "This is the first time that this body of artists has been formally recognized, let alone honored."

Although other major-label acts were nominated, including Warner Bros. tunesmith Ferron and EMI's Gregory Gray, independent acts like Jeff Krassner, Turtle Creek Chorale, and David Clement dominated the categories.

In addressing the low profile of the majors, GLAMA co-founder/executive producer Tom McCormack says there "simply aren't that many out-gay artists on major labels right now. In terms of addressing the specific issues of the gay and lesbian audience, you'll find that on an indie disc first."

Julie Larson, director of A&R at Reprise Records, whose roster includes lang, agrees. "It's also hard for out artists to get signed right now," she says. "But things like GLAMA are a tremendous boost to the cause. This is a pioneering effort that I think will

break a lot of new and important ground for gay and lesbian artists in this industry."

Orbik artist Karel, who has been nominated as best debut artist, adds that GLAMA will "facilitate greater visibility" for out-gay artists in the industry. "It's nice to know that there are some people out there paying attention to what I'm doing."



KAREL

Other competitors in the field of best debut artist are Clement (Wild Monk), Krassner (Identity), Dudley Saunders (Fang), and Jallen Rix (Triam).

Besides Callen's "Legacy," nods in the album of the year category went to "This Is Not Going To Be Pretty" by Harvey Fierstein (Plump), "The Sacred & The Queer" by Jallen Rix, "Never Assume" by Jamie Anderson (Tsunami), and "Let's Flaunt It" by Romanovsky & Phillips (Fresh Fruit).

In the area of best male vocalist, Callen is noted along with Gray, Rix, Krassner, and Pussy Tourette (Feather Boa).

For best female artist, Etheridge (Island) and lang go up against Ferron (Warner Bros.), Catie Curtis (Guardian), and Margie Adam (Pleiades).

McCormack and Mitchell conceived GLAMA in 1995 as the first and only national music awards program to celebrate the work of gay and lesbian recording artists. The ceremony at New York's Webster Hall will be the culmination of a yearlong schedule of music events presented by GLAMA across the U.S.

Nominees for each category were chosen by a judging panel that comprised industry executives, music- and gay-media personnel, and recording artists. All nominated recordings are by self-identified gay, lesbian, or bisexual artists and were commercially released between June 1, 1995, and May 31.

Karel Has Learned Well: 'Dance . . . Or Else'



by Larry Flick

KAREL LEARNED about being a va from some of the best. As a one-time photographer of the likes of Diana Ross, Bette Midler, and Barbra Streisand, he took copious mental notes, digesting the mechanics, methods, and magical elements of each—all the while quietly preparing for the day when he would merge and give 'em a run for the bucks. With "Dance . . . Or Else," his rock-solid debut for the independent Urbik Records, Karel takes a key first step in that direction.



KAREL

Produced by a bevy of newcomers including Los Angeles upstarts Andrew Sonic and Sebastian Reyes, "Dance . . . Or Else" also succeeds in resurrecting an image that appeared to have died with the late Sylvester, namely the larger-than-life male disco icon, swathed in glamorous sequins, lip-licking attitude, and syncopated groove melodrama. Karel is a convincing successor to that throne, with his honey-coated falsetto and saucy phrasing style. Comparisons to Sylvester and that other high-pitched belter, Jimmy Somerville, are inevitable, but Karel shrugs 'em off and emphasizes his own natural gravitation toward that way of vocalizing.

"Singing in falsetto was instinctual," he says. "I had an all-urban musical experience growing up, hearing artists like Philip Bailey and the Stylistics. Truthfully, I didn't know that it was odd to sing this way until someone pointed it out to me."

Directly responding to his potential commonalities with Somerville and Sylvester, Karel coolly says, "It's always nice to be grouped with people you respect, but we don't sound anything alike. Our inflections and tones are all actually quite different. Case closed."

The case of falsetto vs. natural baritone was actually the source of dissension and turmoil during the recording of "Live To Tell," a deft reconstruction of the Madonna pop composition into a haunting hi-NRG battle cry for the AIDS generation. "I was in the booth, getting ready to lay down the vocal, and Andrew told me to sing in my reg-

ular voice," Karel recalls. "I refused to do it at first—to the point where I stormed out of the studio in a rage. I'd never really sung in my regular voice before, and the very idea made me completely uncomfortable. In the end, we wound up doubling both sides of my voice on the track, and the results were perfect for what we were aiming for with the song. I think I'll be doing more of that in the future."

The single version of "Live To Tell" has generated active play from hi-NRG club jocks—many of whom are also screening the homoerotic accompanying videoclip, directed by Andrew Howard and Gary Bowie, which juxtaposes expressionistic performance shots of an HIV-positive dance troupe with scenes of Karel walking through a cemetery. Heavy stuff, but typical of the openly gay singer's politically direct demeanor.

"For me, coming out has never been an issue, since you take one look at me and you know that I'm a queen," he says with wicked giggle. "It wasn't until halfway through recording this album that I knew being an out-gay man would instantly render it a political issue—even though the intention was to make an album about feeling good. But my attitude now is that if you are a heterosexual person who listens to my album and enjoys it, then you've had at least one positive experience with a gay person."

Beyond "Live To Tell," which also benefits from ex-Snap singer Thea Austin's soulful vamping, "Dance . . . Or Else" vibrates with rhythms that carefully teeter on the line dividing the dark, elite trance/house sector and the revelrous world of hi-NRG.

Karel is at his most playful and effectively charming during the cryptic, but contagious "Hips Or Lips (Dean Martin)" and the air-punching "Keep On Do'in' It," both of which plead to be released as singles.

"I've always felt that my greatest strength as an artist is my ability to draw people in and leave them smiling, because I am truly in the moment and having a blast," he says with a prideful smile. "I'm a good communicator."

Karel is putting his skills to use right now with a series of gigs, mostly on the West Coast. He is already assembling ideas for his second album, on which he plans to flex his budding songwriting muscle. "This is only the first chapter of what I hope will be a long and interesting life as a diva," he says with another stream of giggles. "I was born for it, darling, born for it!"

IF LANG WERE QUEEN: Enigmatic torch singer k.d. lang once again acknowledges the unwavering ardor of the dance music community by insisting on house remixes of "If I Were You," the first single from her latest Warner Bros. album, "All You Can Eat." Sources at the label say that the single—a yearning, midtempo pop interlude in its original form—was initially not considered a viable club prospect. It was lang's urging, as well as her choice of producer Junior Vasquez to twiddle with the track, that triggered this angle of the project.

"I'm interested in [remixes] because it's an art form," the singer says, noting that it was also her idea to do the remixes for "Lifted By Love" as a part of the label's Gay Games promotion last year. Shortly after its release, that record went to No. 1 on Billboard's Club Play chart. "I found [the outcome] interesting. It's very important to concentrate on the piece of art I deliver. Then if someone else wants to take my art and manipulate it, that's fine, as long as the initial delivery is purely mine."

In the Vasquez versions of "If I Were You," the tension of lang's original performance escalates to white-knuckled urgency, pushed over the top by the track's rattling tribal percussion and meaty house bassline. The Main mix shows the chorus smartly fleshed out to anthemic proportions, conjuring fond comparisons to J.V.'s landmark post-production of Madonna's 1994 smash "Secret." Vasquez's penchant for combining drama with wicked humor is most evident on the X-Beat Miss Queen dub, in which a field of dark rhythms sprouts a maddeningly infectious loop of the word "queen"—fetched from the song's opening line. "If I could only be the queen of popularity." As the loop rolls on seemingly forever (all the while, swerving in and out of mind-numbing echo effects), the groove soars and swoops with a coating of minor-keyed synths, accelerating to a frenetic percussion climax that is downright scary—not to mention endlessly fun and cathartic. We cannot get enough of this . . . and we predict neither will

most turntable artists with a taste for house.

TWIRLIN' AT MCA: MCA Records U.K. dance A&R visionaries Steve Wolfe and Anton Partridge are at it again. The two are spearheading a new dance-intensive subsidiary of the label, tentatively named Sound Proof Recordings. Partridge will oversee the label with MCA promotion manager Matt Day.

Partridge says Sound Proof will function in a spartan style similar to an indie, with splashy remix packages kept to a minimum and a creative emphasis on experimental or edgy underground fare.

The label's first release will be "Century Falls" by Crispin J. Glover's Century Falls, followed by the long-anticipated "Reap (What You Sow)" from Junior Vasquez and gospel belter Vernessa Mitchell. Also on the agenda are EPs by Victor Simonelli and Chicago legend Marshall Jefferson.

There is no word yet on whether MCA's stateside arm will pick up any of these records.

GROOVELINE: Rhino Records enhances its sturdy catalog of retro-dance compilations with "Give Your Body Up: Club Classics & House Foundations," a three-volume CD/cassette collection of faves and nearly forgotten treasures from the salad days of house music. Hearty props go to the set's crafty executive producer, Eric Neff, who avoids obvious, overexposed selections in favor of rare, juicy nuggets like "Bad For Me" by Dee Dee Bridgewater, "You Got Me Running" by Lenny Williams, and "Down To Love Town" by the Originals. For those who need more mainstream-prominent jams, there is "Touch And Go" by Ecstasy, "Passion & Pain" and "Over Like A Fat Rat" by Fonda Rae. But, as you can see, even the hits are gems that jog the

memory. Here's hoping this is the beginning of a run as long and fruitful as Rhino's "Disco Years" series.

Speaking of compilations, the catalog coordinators at Motown are proving to be quite adept at fashioning bits and pieces from the label's vaults into must-have multi-track albums. Its latest series is the two-volume "Funkology," which features yammers like "Behind The Groove" and "Square Biz" by Teena Marie (the true mistress of funk/disco—where are ya hiding girl?), "Boys" by Mary Jane Girls, and "Strutt My Thang" by Ozone. At the risk of sounding like our parents, they sure don't make 'em like that anymore.

Also on Motown is "Inner City Blues: The Music Of Marvin Gaye," which will likely stand as the only tribute album that we can stomach for more than a day or two. Besides the hotly touted, wildly inspired pairing of Madonna and Massive Attack on "Want You," the album clicks with Neneh Cherry's affecting take on "Preacher Man" and "God Is Love/Mercy Mercy Me" by Sounds of Blackness. Fine for chillin' out or for club jocks who guide their crowd down a more subtle, funk-paved road.

Music U.S.A. Records in New Jersey does its bid to revive interest in a pair of dormant acts. Colon Abrams kicks it lovely on "As Qu As It's Kept," a vigorous houser produced by Ellis Pacheco and deftly remixed to suit hard-house heads Benji Candelario. Aly-Us returns in fine form with "Let Us Lead The Way," though we can live without guttural flip-side jam, "I Want Fuck You." It only serves as unnecessary distraction from the side, which is among the act's best recent efforts.

Assistance in preparing this column provided by Terri Horak in New York

Billboard HOT Dance Breakouts

FOR WEEK ENDING OCT. 21, 1995

CLUB PLAY

1. TOCCATA & FUGUE IN D MINOR VANESSA-MAE ANGEL
2. WHEN THE MONEY'S GONE BRUCE ROBERTS ATLANTIC
3. FIND A WAY SOUL SOLUTION JELLYBEAN
4. EVERYBODY MUST PARTY GEORGIE PORGIE VIBE
5. WE ARE FAMILY BABES IN TOYLAND REPRISÉ

MAXI-SINGLES SALES

1. MOREL'S GROOVES PART 9 GEORGE MOREL STRICTLY RHYTHM
2. UNION CITY BLUE BLONDIE CHRYSALES
3. KEEP THAT ASS CLAPPIN' DJ FASHION STRAPPED
4. KILL OR BE KILLED ROUGHNECK SOLDIERS THAT WAX
5. RUNNIN' THE PHARCYDE DELICIOUS WHYL

Breakouts: Titles with future chart potential, based on club play or sales reported this week.



Rough With The Smooth. Cooltempo/EMI chanteuse Shara Nelson, left, with labelmate Guru after a recording session for his latest album, "Jazzmataz Vol. II: A New Reality." She appears on the track "Nobody Knows." Nelson is also promoting "Rough With The Smooth," the first single from her sophomore album, "Friendly Fire," which is out in the U.K. this month and slated for U.S. release the first quarter of 1996. In the meantime, the 12-inch single is getting worldwide club play. Look for Nelson to hit the U.K. concert trail before the year's close.

Our Very Own Diva

The large and loud sound of Karel

By ROSE APODACA JONES

I LIKE TO TEST THE BOUNDARIES OF WORDS AS MUCH as the next writer, but there are always some words that become so trendy, so overused and so abused that the very peep of them makes me wince.

"Diva" ranks high on the list. Of late, any strong woman with an attitude and heeled boots is instantly proclaimed a diva. A fox with a feminist bent? Then diva you must be. It's super-sexy queen, goddess and all those other neat names designed to make women feel better about their place in the world.

Oh, sure, like "prima donna," diva has long been stretched to mean more than the star female singer in an opera. Donna Summer, Diana Ross and Aretha Franklin merit diva status. Their place in music history might come in a different chapter from Maria Callas', but their vocal powers are no less thrilling. Diva has also come to be associated with star qualities: drama, outrageousness, sometimes even turgidity, but always an attitude that commands attention.

So it was with great Marge Simpson grimacing that I received a release from local hi-NRG artist Karel, whom you may have caught this summer when he opened for Bronski Beat at the Galaxy Concert Theatre or for Grace Jones in Los Angeles. Or maybe it was at Metropolis in Irvine when he debuted his remake of Madonna's tribute to those living with AIDS, "Live to Tell"—including a video featuring a dance troupe plus an actor from Costa Mesa's Morgan Agency, which has a "proof positive" division of HIV-positive actors and models.

Karel is a hulk of a neon-white man with a soulful falsetto that recalls the irrepressible Sylvester (who said he knew well) and ex-Bronski Beat crooner Jimmy Somerville. He loves to tell you he's gay, and he repeatedly insisted, "I'm large and loud, and the world must deal with me."

He also insisted he's a diva. In the disco sense of the word, he's certainly got what *Billboard's* dance columnist,

Larry Flick, noted as that "larger-than-life... swathed in glamorous sequins, lip-licking attitude and syncopated groove melodrama." Does he ever. He's bursting with the stuff, even when he's not singing. Karel is, after all, every conservative Orange's nightmare. He relishes presenting himself as the biggest faggot in town, one with a queen's touch—a very heavy-handed touch. He'll tell you he picked

it up from Diana Ross, Bette Midler and Barbra Streisand, honey, whom he photographed at all the award shows he covered for a couple of gay publications and *The R&B Report*. As a publicist for Vesta Williams, an R&B songstress with an attitude to match the voice, he got close enough to study her M.O.

Which is why, over "diva," yours truly prefers another label for this saucy belter from Surf City: the queen of disco.

But then, hi-NRG is the euphemism of the hour for disco—er, dance music—so perhaps we're also supposed to let a queen call himself a diva.

At a recording session recently for a single that's sure to become Karel's third hit on the dance charts, the diva energy in the studio was near atomic. We were in a room filled to the gills with state-of-the-art decor. Stonecutter Studios is where producers Michael Eckert and Dain Noel do their magic with dance artists like Karel who've decided not to wait around for a big label and have instead started their



own. In Karel's case, it's Orbik Records in Huntington Beach; he also writes songs, co-produces and promotes.

Steve Bronski, who said he fell for Karel's vocal range when he opened for Bronski Beat this summer, jetted over from Scotland to oversee production of the new single, "Don't Stop." It's a classic Sylvester song Bronski reconstructed with a faster tempo and meatier bass line than the 1982 original. It got me out of one of the most pissed-off moods of the year, so it's got my vote.

The triple threat of divas in the house included Jeanie Tracy, who backed Sylvester way back when and now charts in the U.K. as a solo act. When Karel phoned her to request her supersonic vocal support on the single, Tracy, having followed the bits and bobs on him in the music columns, responded, "I thought you'd never call."

During the session, Tracy heard Karel's track and freaked. It sounded like their dear departed Sylvester.

Also there was Thea Austin, whose voice turned Snap's "Rhythm is a Dancer" into the 1993 dance record of the year. Austin had backed Karel on three of his recent album's eight tracks—including the title track, the club fave "Dance... or Else."

Oh, yes, count Karel as the third. During a cigarette break, Karel commented that "dance music is fairly healthy now, thanks especially to hi-NRG." He added that our homeboy Karel is contributing nicely to the scene, too. "Occasionally he makes my hair stand up, and that's what moves me. That and the emotion in his voice."

Karel grew up listening to the Stylistics, Phillip Bailey and other black pop and R&B singers back when he was attending Poly High School in Long Beach, where he graduated as valedictorian in 1980. But it's his partners in the collaboration that he credits as his most critical influence. "I may have the voice for a Number One record," he said, "but I surround myself with the talent who can get me there."

During the 20-somethingth try at a verse, Bronski begged of Karel, again: "Not too many ad libs."

Karel repeated the line, in a tone that both mimicked badly a Scottish accent and questioned the request. Karel then wanted a double-laid vocal.

"No good singer had that," retorted Bronski. "You won't."

Bronski talked through a line, indicating where Karel should punctuate. "It's 'deeesire' you 'newffelt beefore.'"

"That would be for a woman," teased Karel, responding as if he were ignoring Bronski's instructions. In reality, he did what he was told, trusting a man he'd sent for from thousands of miles away, with a knack for turning a dance diva into gold. His voice soared and swerved and inspired a tapping foot.

Each word sung was picked apart. Bronski requested a restrained singing of "heart." Karel, no surprise, has a tendency to dramatize, overdo it. Bronski was there to remind him not to on every line.

He finally delivered a straight line. "It's kind of sedate, don'tcha think?" asked Karel. Hmmm, spoken like a true diva. □



Divas, divas everywhere: Steve Bronski, Jeanie Tracy, Thea Austin and Karel



Brian Wilson
Mike Love
Reunite
To Write,
Record
New Tracks
SEE PAGE 1

Single Reviews

EDITED BY LARRY FLICK

KAREL Get On Up (no timing listed)

Producer: M. Eckart
Writers: Eckart, Todd
Publisher: not listed

Jimmy Somerville sound-alike breaks and impressive sweat on this retro-conscious call to arms. Peppy percussion and slick keyboards will click primarily with hi-NRG jocks, though a beefier remix could spark more mainstream play. (April, 1993)

KAREL Turn It Up (no timing listed)

PRODUCERS: Sabby, Thea Austin
WRITER: Sabby, T. Austin, C. Bouley, A. Howard
PUBLISHER: not listed

Orbik 1001 (maxi-cassette single)

Karel steps closer to becoming the Hi-NRG Fave he deserves to be. Possessing a cutting falsetto reminiscent of Jimmy Somerville and Barry Gibb, he wails feverishly over a spiraling, synth-driven disco beat. Purists, take heed. (July 1994)

KAREL Live To Tell (5:41)

PRODUCERS: L. Anderson
WRITER: Madonna, P. Leonard
PUBLISHER: WB/Blue Disque/Webo Girl/Johnny Yuma
Orbik 2201 (12" single)

Madonna's hit ballad is transformed into a stirring hi-NRG throw down. Karel's glass-shattering falsetto is contrasted by deep-voiced harmonies that add to the haunting vibe of the track. Check out the dramatic video accompanying this track, which has a stark and affecting AIDS subtext. Contact 714-374-9516. (August 5, 1995)

Dance

ARTISTS & MUSIC



by Larry Flick

FULL OF NRG: Singer/tunesmith Karel has been slowly evolving into a rock-solid performer during the last few years, honing his Jimmy Somerville-like falsetto into a soulful instrument that you want to hear again and again. The potent, full-length "Dance....Or Else" makes good on the promise of his 1993 singles with nicely produced jams that range from the cheeky and fun "Hips or Lips" to a heartfelt, uptempo reading of Madonna's "Live To Tell," which is

supported by an AIDS-themed video clip. Sometime Snap! singer Thea Austin appears on "Live To Tell", as well as several other cuts. This set is available later this month on Orbik Records...

March 18, 1995 Dance Column

Karel's Album Picked In Year End Top 10

Karel's Album, "Dance...Or Else," picked by BILLBOARD Dance Music Editor Larry Flick as one of the 10 Best of 1995 in Special Year End Issue!

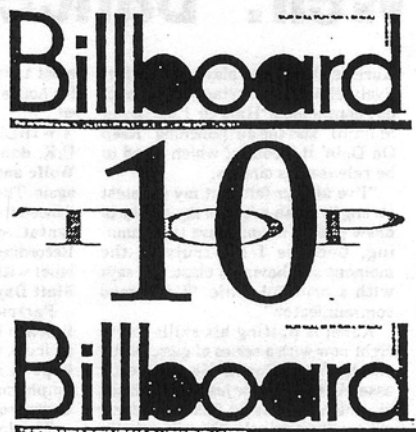
Critical acclaim keeps pouring in for the Karel "Dance...Or Else" project. The music industry bible, BILLBOARD MAGAZINE, asked its editors to name their top ten of 1995. Dance Music Editor Larry Flick named Karel's album as the 10th best album of the year.

But Mr. Flick didn't stop there. He then made it a point to single the album out in his year-end Dance column.

Dance

ARTISTS & MUSIC

Buried Treasures: ...we offer an invitation to go back and give the following records a listen. You never know what gems you may uncover.



Karel, "Dance...Or Else," (Orbik). We have little doubt that the ghost of the late, great Sylvester lives inside this ballsy young belter. On his first album, Karel combines vibrant hi-NRG colors and dark trance shading with slammin' results. Go directly to his haunting HIV-conscious cover of Madonna's "Live To Tell."

One listen to the project and it's easy to see why it is getting all of this attention. By far, Karel is one of the most exciting Dance Music Artists to come around in some time. The album is a consistent blend of Hi-NRG tracks blended with Karel's own soulful brand of belting. Many songs, including the single "Live To Tell" have an extraordinary Pop feel and benefit from the background vocal assistance of Thea Austin (from SNAP!).

The Billboard mention comes on the heels of Karel's successful tour, including opening spots with Grace Jones, Bronski Beat and Dead or Alive, proving that Karel is a complete package: dynamic album AND charismatic live entertainer.

All of the Karel projects are distributed through MS Distributing with offices across the United States. Specialty markets are handled by Lambda Rising in Washington, D.C. and Ladyslipper in Durham, NC. Contact them directly or Orbik Records at 714/374-9516 or email Orbik@aol.com for more information.

saucy phrasing style...BILLBOARD

KAREL IS ONE OF THE BEST REVIEWED ARTISTS OF ANY YEAR!



Live To Tell: Madonna's hit ballad is transformed into a stirring hi-NRG throw down. Karel's glass-shattering falsetto is contrasted by deep-voiced harmonies that add to the haunting vibe of the track...Larry Flick, BILLBOARD

Dance...Or Else Karel could launch

of fleet of ships with his mighty pipes. He's channeling Sylvester's sequined attitude with a divine falsetto that recalls Somerville at his best. The touchstone here is the reworking of Madonna's "Live To Tell" performed with Thea Austin. But "Get It Up" and "Turn It Up" can work you overtime...Andy Jones, GENRE

Karel has a stunning falsetto vocal delivery and blatant disco sensibility along with a stirring video creating a cool disco romp with an underlying urgency to the lyrical passages...Gary Hayslett, DANCE MUSIC AUTHORITY

Dance...Or Else resurrects the larger-than-life male disco icon, swathed in glamorous sequins, lip-licking attitude, and syncopated groove melodrama as Karel is a convincing successor to the throne, with his honey-coated falsetto and

Dance...or Else is a relentless journey through Hi-NRG dance styles and lives up to the threat of his earlier singles. The album is insistently booty-shaking, full o heavy house grooves driven by the singer's soulfully soaring falsetto...Will Grega, Syndicated and THE GAY MUSIC GUIDE

Karel is a hulk of neon-white man with a soulful falsetto that recalls the irrepressible Sylvester and ex-Bronski Beat crooner Jimmy Somerville. Many call him a diva, buy yours truly prefers another label for this saucy belter from Surf City: the queen of disco...Rose Apodaca Jones, OC WEEKLY

Jump in now. Karel is not playing around. His project is solid and his persona larger than life. So get in now or be one of those 'I knew him when's' because this artist is headed directly to the top of the charts....Doug Hansen, SD ENTERTAINER

Karel

BY MATTHEW CONSOLA

Being deemed a male Bette Midler and the next Jimmy Somerville is no small feat and one tall order to live up to. But HiNRG Fave and California native Karel states he's more than up for the challenge. Combining forces with industry veterans Thea Austin, whose voice propelled Snap's #1 hit "Rhythm Is A Dancer" to international acclaim, Michael Eckart & Rodd Todd (Stacey Q and Bardeaux), and Andrew Sonic (Megatone), Karel has assembled some of the brightest stars in pop music allowing him to shine as one of the scene's hottest new artists.

Whether in the role of song writer, artist and co-producer on his latest album *Dance... Or Else!*, or as a record label executive as President of Orbik Records, Karel is no stranger to the peaks and valleys, joys and frustrations of life in the music industry. From his home in Huntington Beach, California amongst his garden of lush flowers and Coy ponds, Karel takes time out of his hectic schedule to speak to DMA.

DMA: This album took over 18 months to create and has been 3 years in the making. Why so long?

Karel: This album had to be just right. If I had rushed it, I may have never gotten to work with some of the best in music today.

Speaking of the best, you're working with Thea Austin and Michael Eckart. How did this all come about?

Thea and I had been friends for many years. We met while we were working as journalists for *The R & B Report*. It was back then that I also met Michael (Eckart). Later I was working publicity for Vesta Williams... the most incredible R&B singer I have ever met... while she was at A&M Records. I hooked up Michael & Vesta for a project. As a thank you, Michael said, 'You've always sung... why don't I write a song for you?' I told him that that would be great, and

he wrote 'Everybody Get On Up' and 'L.O.V.E.R.' (along with Rodd Todd). I hadn't wanted to record for many years after Sylvester's death because we were such great friends and because we had that same range. After he died, it was very difficult to keep making the same music. I didn't want people to think I was trying to copy or replace him. I could never do that!

It was almost two years between "Everybody Get On Up" and singles "Turn It Up" and "Live To Tell". Why the gap?

They were difficult times. "...Get On Up" sold quite well, but it was during the whole faze-out vinyl scene. Suddenly there were all these people who wanted to fund the project, and it took me about six months to decide I wanted to do it on my own... so I created Orbik Records. Thank God for people like Fred Held of M.S. Distributing. He and his company stood by me during this transition period. He's a true inspiration and always makes you feel like you're top priority.

Where does Thea fit in the picture?

Thea had landed the Snap gig, and when she returned she said, 'let's work on a track together.' What started as a track turned into an album. Then, while actually driving to the pressing plant to press "Turn It Up" featuring Thea Austin, I stopped for a meeting with the legendary R&B promoter Eddie Holland (The Holland Group - who wrote most of the Supreme hits). He heard the single and said, 'We want to put it out.' After it's release, though, I decided that these incredible R&B promoters were not really dance promoters, so after months of legalities, I took it back.

So two years after... "Get On Up" you have a top 40 national pool & club hit with "Turn It Up", and then comes the your current hit single, a dance cover of Madonna's AIDS tribute ballad "Live To Tell". Why this cover, and why a dance version?

After a show one night, my manager was presented with a business card. This guy said he had some songs for me. I called and it turned out to be Andrew Sonic. He (Andrew) had just come from a project remixing a Sylvester re-release for Megatone and had always wanted to actually work with Sylvester. Being that Sylvester and I were so close, and similar in style, he felt this was fate. He had actually wrote Hips or Lips but had this great reworking of Madonna's "Live To Tell". I heard it and knew I had to do it.

But you didn't just do it, you did a dance version and a video that portrayed the real meaning of this

song.

I know, I know... I was told you can't successfully remake a Madonna track... you can't make an AIDS themed video (whether the song is about AIDS or not)... and your video's star can't be an out HIV positive model / actor. BULL!

...And is it successful?

Yes, but even if it was not, it was a labor of love, and I had to do it. So many friends in my life are living with AIDS and I don't know how they do it. I could never have the strength. The song is about the secrets that many HIV+ people have on how to live life day by day and enjoy every sunrise. Their courage overwhelms me.

You've decided to release "Live To Tell" as a double single.

We call it Double eXposure. Three mixes of "Live"... and three mixes of another album track "Get It Up". Two for the price of one, what a deal!

Speaking of remixes, do you feel pressured as an artist or label to have to put out a house mix, techno, trance, pop etc... in order to get exposure?

Yes, you do feel the pressure and I get complaints sometimes when I don't include a dub mix stripped down with only vocal teasers or a big special obscure house version. But first of all, we're a small label and can't afford to be like Mariah Carey and release 100 mixes. Secondly, I believe in staying true to the original track. We do our own mixes when we feel it's appropriate to the song's integrity.

Isn't having so many different styles of mixes for the same track a reflection on the segmented music communities of today?

It used to be you went out to a club and the DJ started in the early evening with low BPM's and slowly built the energy all night. By midnight he was in the 130's and the energy would be pumpin' all night. And in the course of the evening you heard everything from Donna Summer, to Sylvester, to Depeche Mode. Now you have to go to a spe-



cific type of club to hear a specific style of music. It's a shame! But then again, much of the state of dance music is the fault of the record companies.

How is that?

In the eighties, with the explosion of remixers, artists got lazy and let the remixers do everything. The labels didn't want artists, they wanted singles... often one hit wonders. So true talented singers like Thea, Martha Wash, Jeanie Tracy, Lonnie Gordon, Izora... they had to go overseas to seek fame. Then their tracks had to be imported back into this country to be heard. Even Anita Baker was dropped after her first album *Songstress*. They told her she couldn't sing. Can you believe it! They said she wasn't pop enough, and no one would buy it. So she went to a label worth taking a chance and boom... Rapture. Need I say more?

You've been described as the male Bette Midler and the next Jimmy Somerville many times. Why do you think that is?

Besides the obvious similarities of a high falsetto that not many people do, I love to perform live! I have a need to connect with the audience. The studio is too demanding and exacting. Especially since I'm working with such disciplinaries like Thea. But on stage, you draw your energy from the crowd and I explode.

What's in the future for Karel?

Besides getting ready to open for Grace Jones, I'm ready to start recording again. Actually, things look as though I'll be working with Steve Bronski of Bronski Beat soon. I recently opened for him and he asked me to record with him. He wants to do a double sided single, covering either a single Sylvester track or an entire medley. I want to re-ensemble Sylvester's old back up singers. To work with Steve and Sylvester's original back ground singers...