



Arnold G

by Ruby Comer

My face done fell and, child, Mama's ass is draggin' so I'll just kick back today and watch some flicks. I curl up on the settee with two of my six felines, sisters Sheba and Abba, and put on a few discs, including the HBO epic, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, an intriguing portrait of late-1800s America.

I call my friend, Arnold G, a singer/songwriter who is also a history buff, to hear his take on the movie, but he hadn't seen it yet. Raised in Camarillo, Arnold, a self-described "mixed mutt," is a proud blend of Spaniard, Guamanian, and Filipino. He started off his career as a dancer and print model, and out of his passion for dance blossomed his talent for music. The electronica sound and pulsating beat of *Driven* landed it in the upper reaches of the dance chart; this debut CD also contains the soulful AIDS awareness song, "Carry On." The companion DVD is jam-packed with mesmerizing faces of those who are living with HIV, some of whom have died, and other images of those who have taken an active stand over the years. A portion of the proceeds goes toward AIDS prevention programs. Arnold's next album, *Unplugged*, will be released next month, and he's currently planning a tour.

Buzzing in from Hollywood, Arnold lands at my quarters in the late afternoon. After watching *Critic's Choice* from the newly released Lucille Ball Film Collection, we break bread, literally. He brought some tasty sugar-free desserts from Mäni's Bakery. Yum.

Ruby Comer: The lyrics from "Carry On" are so poignant.

Arnold G: Thank you, Ruby. Yes, I've lost many friends to this epidemic. I used to be in denial because it was so painful. I wrote this song for my friend and promoter, Greg Gilbert, who died in 2005.

You have said that you use music as a tool

for social change. What motivates you?

The stats, Ruby! [He mocks a chuckle.] Forty million people are living with HIV/AIDS, twenty million have already died, and more than half of those newly infected with HIV are between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four.

Recently you performed at the fourth annual AIDS/LifeCycle fundraiser in Las Vegas. You mentioned that you were disturbed by lack of support from the gays for the "straights."

So many gay and straight cyclists pulled together to make a huge difference. All the speakers from this event *only* mentioned the gay effort and half the event was attended by straights. [He takes a bite of German chocolate cake.] I felt they were snubbed. My stomach was turning. I sometimes find the GLBT community to be selfish and not doing what's right for the entire community.

I sometimes think minorities can pull the elitist card, unfortunately. It's certainly a disservice to their own community.

The next week, I contacted a few GLBT HIV/AIDS organizations and asked to see their books to find out where the monies were going. It's public information. I got nothing but attitude or a run-around. I'm not attacking the GLBT community, I'm just concerned about how they run their organizations and the occasional attitude they don. I also spoke to more than a dozen gay HIVers and they felt cast aside by the gay community.

What kind of things were they upset with?

Some said: "I feel used by the system," "Once I revealed my status, my friends disappeared," and "Yes, I'm getting help with my meds but little money to survive on from SSI. I live like a cockroach." [He ponders a moment.] My goals are threefold: to create a better bridge between both communities, drive the cost of meds lower, and to have no-



cost counseling be provided to those who need it.

What a wonderful task you've undertaken.

We have to pull together whether straight or gay. We're all *people* who need to work in unison to make life better for each other.

Sí, Señor! Diversity need not be divisive. We're all in this life trying to survive together.

I know. We need to quit butting heads with each other. Let the past stay in the past and let's move forward. AIDS affects *everybody*. When I was at the closing ceremonies of the AIDS/LifeCycle this year it was such a heartfelt affair filled with all different kinds of shapes, colors, sizes, and beliefs, but they were all united for one cause. What a feeling! When we unite, Ruby, miracles happen.

Tune-up with Arnold at www.arnoldg.com, and download "Carry On" at www.agrecordsmusic.com, where proceeds from its sale go toward AIDS services. Read the full interview at www.aumag.org.

Ruby Comer is an independent journalist from the Midwest who is happy to call Hollywood her home away from home. Reach her by e-mail at MsRubyComer@aol.com.

RUBY ILLUSTRATION BY DAVIDD BATALONI; ARNOLD G PHOTO BY STEVEN CURTIS