The 2002 POZCARS

For performances dashing, dastardly, and dubious in the still-crazy-after-all-these-years of AIDS...and you don't have to dig out that damn red ribbon!

January 1, 2003 By Tim Murphy and Kevin O'Leary

There was once a noble tradition of HIV (if not open HIVers) at the Oscars. Susan and Tim were scolded for defending Haitian PWAs, Tom got all verklempt over Philadelphia, La Liz won a special statue for her peerless advocacy, and stars flashed red ribbons as dutifully as they did fake smiles. But with AIDS no longer a cause celebrity, we have to roll out the red carpet for our own golden guys and girls. Thus, we present the first-ever POZcar ceremony. The envelope, please...

The "Let's Roll" POZCAR for AIDS in a post-9/11 World

- **George W. Bush**: Dubya's budget for '03 flat-funded domestic AIDS programs (despite the block-long ADAP waiting lists) and earmarked a mere $200 mil for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, but slated $38 billion for Homeland Security—four times what the fund needs each year to control the HIV disaster.
- **U.S. Intelligence**: In October, after a barrage of bad press for CIA bumbling on bin Laden, the National Intelligence Council proved that it can at least still count. The spooks issued a warning that without emergency measures, five of the world's hot-spot nations—China, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria and Russia—will have such high rates of HIV by 2010 that they may well pose security threats to their own regions and to the U.S. Hey, sometimes it takes a terrorist threat to make the trenchcoats care about AIDS.
- **Suicide bombers**: After a piece of a Palestinian suicide bomber tested positive for hepatitis B in June, rumors spread that future self-exploders might spread HIV. Israel's health ministry assured edgy Israelis that "we are very alert and very sensitive to check any bomber to see if he is carrying HIV." Oy, talk about testing too late!

The Liza Minelli "I'm still here, dammit!" POZCAR for Surviving

- **Larry Kramer**:The author, FoB (Friend of Barbra) and legendary "angriest AIDS activist" survived a life-threatening operation for a lifesaving liver transplant. While he was in surgery, the Associated Press, scumming for a scoop, issued a report over the wires that Kramer had died. Apprised of such on his recovery bed by buddy Rodger, "I was thinking, 'Why the fuck is he telling me this now!?'" 2002's cussingest comeback kid recounted with relish.
- **Colin Powell:** Virtually alone in a White House in heat over abstinence-only sex ed, the secretary of state stood up for condoms—and reality—on an MTV Valentine's Day forum ("I encourage their use among people who are sexually active"), stood by his words ("I don't take one step back") despite a flurry of right-wing rancor…and lived to advise moderation on other issues, rank and rep intact. Even better, speaking at a huge shindig in November honoring Global Fund mack daddy, UN honcho Kofi Annan, Powell boldly bid that the biggest threat facing the world today is—sorry Boss Bush, not Saddam or a secured homeland—but AIDS.
- **Patricia Ware:** For a midsummer moment, it seemed the actress– turned–abstinence ambassadress of Dubya's Presidential AIDS Council might be among the offal of an administrative shakedown. But when the dust settled, it was openly gay (and impudently pro-condom) Republican Scott Evertz who got the boot from his short-lived post as AIDS czar—and Ware who went on presiding over a council where born-again preachers outnumber PWAs and scientists. Evertz, for his part, may not have minded—he'd earlier expressed discomfort with his AIDS czar title—"especially because it didn't come with the requisite tiara."

The Venus and Serena Williams "Who D'Ya Fear More?" POZCAR

- **Thabo Mbeki or Tom Coburn:** What's scarier than a South African president whose case of HIV denialism is so severe that he balked at a court mandate that HIVer moms-to-be get free nevirapine to prevent passing the virus to their babies? Try an MD who pushed for criminalization of HIV transmission while in Congress and who, as the Presidential AIDS Council

cochair, disapproves of homosexuality and disses condoms as unsafe.

- **Resistance or Reinfection:** In February, a dubious study projecting that three-quarters of all HIVers have some resistance to some meds was hyped by the media as the death knell of HAART. (Never mind that Newsday's Laurie Garrett did that story back in '99.) Hysteria-wise, those PWA-panicking headlines run neck-and-neck with how the press inflated one (admittedly disturbing) case of superinfection, the late-breaking buzz at July's international AIDS confab, into a catastrophic kibosh for all HIV vaccine research. We love staggering stories, too, but don't pooh-pooh the public's power to grip the whole truth—especially when it can ruin an HIVer's day!
- **Sharon Stone or John Loan:** The bush-baring Basic Instinct bombshell donned red Versace to dominate a May amfAR benefit auction, tongue-lashing Monaco's Prince Albert into outbidding Calvin Klein for a Pete Sampras stroke session: "C'mon, you're a fucking prince!" Meanwhile, New Yorker John Loan allegedly lifted $3.4 mil from his job to pay health bills for his boyfriend, who later died of AIDS. If only Stone'd loaned Loan a Prince Albert…

The "E! Fashion Emergency" POZCAR for Most Dubious Makeover

- **David Pasquarelli:**The Frisco ACT UP hijacker and HIV denialist was driving the city's leading activists, public-health officials and reporters nuts with countless 3 a.m. phone greetings such as "You sick syphilitic piece of shit." Whether it was all those East Coast AIDS activists who rushed to protest his being dubbed a "terrorist" or those 72 days in the clinker, this scaredy bird sweetened his looney tune: "Maybe it is time for a tactical change. It was not my intention to frighten anybody." At press time, D.P. was about to go to trial on a long list of felony charges.
- **Jesse Helms:** In February, the octogenarian North Carolina senator confessed at a Christian confab he was "ashamed" he had done so little for AIDS—and vowed to atone in his final year in office. Had Divine been working in mysterious ways to transform the homophobic hound into AIDS' friend indeed? As ga-ga gays penned praises, Helms rushed to clarify that his new compassion covered only Africans: "I would make myself sick" to retract previous opinions that

U.S. gays had spread AIDS with their “deliberate, disgusting, revolting conduct.”

- **Justin Timberlake:** Did the pop heartthrob and ex-Britney boo have his heart set on a career makeover as an Elton John Mini-Me? In the video for a new John song, “This Train Don’t Stop There Anymore,” ’N Syncer No. 1 was stunning with his spot-on turn as the pop legend at his ’70s glammiest. Not least impressed was the Rocket Man himself, who accepted the Brits’ biggest AIDS award last year noting that “as a gay man, I’m lucky not to be infected.” La Elton pins his own makeover from drugged-out diva to sober HIV activist to the 1990 death of his buddy, PWA hero Ryan White. “That was when I decided to clean up my act.”

The Winona Ryder “busted!” POZCAR for Getting Caught in the Act

- **Tommy Thompson:** Bush’s head health honcho became the red face of American apathy at July’s world AIDS summit, when ranting activists staged a drownout of Thompson’s speech to protest the administration’s pennies for the Global Fund and “Just Say No” prevention policy. The GOP struck back by “ordering” Thompson’s health service to audit every federally funded AIDS group whose staffers had signed on to the demo. This Who’s Who of AIDS leaders cried, “Witchhunt!” Then Thompson, a Republican moderate in charge of a federal AIDS agenda that is to prevention what creationism is to evolution, let it be known that he would resign come spring—only to deny the report a few days later.
- **Nikko Briteramos:** In April, the freshman at Si Tanka Huron U. made national news as the first HIVer in South Dakota prosecuted for “exposing” his sex partner to HIV without first disclosing (he’d only just been informed himself after donating blood). By a curious coincidence, the cops nabbed the six-foot-five basketball star in his underwear as he and his girlfriend were playing around in his dorm room. The tiny college rallied around the popular athlete, whose father slammed the affair as “a public lynching”—and an election-year ploy by the county prosecutor, running for state attorney general. Sentenced to four years behind bars, Briteramos reflected on the squall: “All of a sudden I became so infamous that I wasn’t even on the same level with anyone anymore.” Sorry, kid, but that’s what happens when laws legislate your body a murder

weapon. P.S. His girlfriend tested negative.

- **Dan Pallotta:** It was an annus horribilis for the queen of AIDS profiteering, as critics dub him. Pallotta Team Works, which since 1994 earned cheers for netting $200 million in benefit bike rides and walks and jeers for spending $160 million to produce them and pocketing $11 million, closed its 250-staff operation in August. Scores of loyal riders had soured on Team Works for its sky-high sign-up fees and lavish self-promotion. Leading beneficiaries cut their ties, launching competing bike benefits. Even Avon split. For a guy grandiose enough to title his book *When Your Moment Comes: A Guide to Fulfilling Your Dreams by a Man Who Has Led Thousands to Greatness*, the moment seems to have passed.

The "Free Willy (and Wrap It in a Rubber)" POZCAR for Best Animal Stories

- **Rave rodents and crystal kitties:** A UCLA study found that cocaine caused HIV to reproduce 200 times faster than normal in a study of mice, while animal-rights activists dogged Ohio State University researcher Michael Podell into resigning—and fleeing the state—over a study in which he infected cats with feline HIV, shot them up with crystal meth and killed them to study the combined effect on their brains. Suffice it to say meth is not the cat's meow.
- **The lonely goat herd:** English HIVer Stephen Hall, 23, was locked up for six months last March after commuters on a passing train witnessed him boinking a billygoat in a field. Whether or not Hall disclosed first couldn't be determined.
- **T-bones and sympathy:** A UC Davis survey of 60 HIVers found that more preferred feline companionship to the canine variety, deeming Man's Best Friend too high-maintenance. That gave POZ's dog-loving Brad Peebles [see Publisher's Letter, POZ, July/August 2002] paws.

The Jam Master Jay "They Deserved Better" POZCAR

- **Stop AIDS Project:** Never mind that this San Francisco grass-roots group has an 18-year record of innovative HIV prevention by and for gay men. Or that new CDC head Julie

Gerberding, MD, learned not to blush over such gay phrases as “Booty Call” and “Sex Toys for Leather Boys” while doing time in the ’80s as a Frisco AIDS doc. Such are the repressive, regressive HIV prevention policies of the current White House occupant that Gerberding’s first act after appointment was to launch a “review” of hometown favorite Stop AIDS. Why? To evaluate the “effectiveness” of the workshops with the aforementioned gay phrases—a below-the-belt blow since they were already being audited by the feds for possibly violating “community standards.” Just what we need as HIV rates among young gay men spike—the fed’s boot on our tongues and our asses!

- **The Global Fund:** See “Global Fund and Games,”. Then e-mail Dubya at president@whitehouse.gov and ask him if the sight of millions of HIVers dying in their own shit doesn’t stir his compassionate conservatism. Or if the prospect of AIDS orphans marauding over the world makes waves at the new Department of Homeland Security, if nowhere else.
- **Kami:** Gracing POZ’s November cover may be the closest the HIV positive Muppet will get to crossing U.S. borders. Last summer, when South Africa’s version of Sesame Street welcomed the furry orphan, a gaggle of GOP grouches promptly warned PBS that such a debut on American Sesame could jeopardize its federal funding. American children, they opined, best not see such things. PBS swore it wouldn’t happen—until, perhaps, HIV “became a more serious problem” in the U.S. Hello? If they’d said that about people of color, the physically disabled or talking yellow birds, today’s Sesame would look more like Aryan Nation than the town square of diversity and democracy it’s been for over 30 years.

The Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne POZCAR for Behavior They Wish We’d Never Seen

- **China**, for succeeding South Africa as Biggest State of HIV Denial. In June, the UN slammed Big Red, declaring that its official estimate of 31,000 HIVers was a mite face-saving—by about 1.5 million. Then Wan Yanhai, 39, who heads Beijing’s fearless AIDS Action Project, was jailed for revealing “state secrets” after alerting the world to local health officials’ involvement in the blood-selling ring that had led to the HIV infection of countless villagers in Henan province. A

global outcry led to Wan's release—and more pressure on China to rip down the Great Wall around its full-blown epidemic.

- **Broadway diva Patti LuPone**, who threw what the New York Post called "a harrowing hissy-fit" backstage after fellow cast members in Noises Off made a post-performance pitch to the audience for donations for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. The original Evita, who has often raised her voice in a nice way for the AIDS group, explained that she didn't believe theater-goers should be hit up for more money after paying gonzo ticket prices.
- **Florida**, whose ban on gay adoption means partners Steve Lofton and Roger Croteau may have to give up Bert, the foster child they raised from infancy, because the state found out Bert had "sero-reverted" from his HIV positive status at birth and thus become "adoptable."

The American Idol "It Shoulda Been Tamara!" POZCAR for Unflagging Heroism in an Unflagging Epidemic

- **Bono:** Yes, there are still many anonymous AIDS heroes out there. And yes, the company of "tell it like it is" Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill on what Time dubbed Bono's summertime "celebrity road show" through AIDS-stricken Africa was crucial in keeping a Saddam-on-the-brain White House from denying dollars to the misery of millions of HIVers. But so far, no luminary since Elizabeth Taylor has brought to the fight against AIDS the high-powered celebrity wattage, charisma and commitment as the longtime U2 frontman did this year, blending a bleeding Irish heart with the smarts of a policy wonk—and all in fierce wraparound shades, to boot.
- **Bill Gates:** Vowing to spend 99 percent of his kids' inheritance, the Microsoft gazillionaire has made AIDS philanthropy a family affair, with wife Melinda and dad Bill Sr. working the phones. His Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has given half a billion bucks this year to the cause, and with ex-CDC shrewdie Helene Gayle steering his funding strategy, the fortune is bankrolling a virtual research industry in such much-ignored areas as microbicides and vaccines as well as a swarm of smaller projects.
- **Linda Grinberg and Belynda Dunn, R.I.P.**: As founder of the Salvage Therapy Coalition,

movie-heiress Grinberg made both forgetful activists and pharma CEOs focus on new drug options for HIVers like herself at the end of their treatment rope. Bold and beautiful Belynda Dunn shook Boston's African-American churchgoers out of their AIDS denial, then rallied everyone from the mayor on down behind her fight to get her HMO to cover a last-chance transplant for her hep C-savaged liver. She got the transplant, but died from organ failure following surgery—within weeks of Grinberg's fatal heart attack. Both women were 51 years old. At a time when homeland HIVer health is rising as activism is waning, these ladies spent their last T-cell raising hell. You, gentle reader: Because despite having to share your body with this stinking slob of a virus, you get up every day and go on loving and laughing and living. Because, if you don't have HIV, someone (or many) you love make you care enough to read us. If you're just reading 'cause you're curious, all the better. Curiosity can breed compassion, and both can breed commitment. So bless you all in 2003. And do not go gently—not until we can scan the face of the earth and finally deem this disease a word that's become so dear to our hearts in recent years: undetectable. Now go polish up that acceptance speech!

I WANT MY HIV TV

In '02, we could still look at AIDS inside the box:

- On a January *ER*, a young black rapper "on the DL" tests positive for HIV. Says one doc to cultural translator Dr. Carter (Noah Wylie), "So *down-low* means 'in denial'?"
- "No one's wearing condoms!" notes *Queer As Folk*'s Michael,stumbling upon a barebacking orgy boasting a fictional gay pundit who's gone on record rebuking unsafe sex (reflecting a real-life luminary famously caught online seeking it). Michael also takes a chance on love with treatment-failing Ben.
- On CBS' *Survivor: Africa*, Lex wins an SUV then delivers HIVmeds to a Kenyan clinic -- prompting Teresa's tearful telling of her own bro's 1990 AIDS death. Who knew?
- On *South Park*, Jared tells the gullible gang that "aides"(like, uh, a dietitian and trainer) made him slim: "Hooray for aides!"An instant pariah, Jared does a despairing *Philadelphia* turn in the

rain till the toilet-tongued tykes save the day. Laugh therapy?

- MTV's *Undressed*, full of nubile youth of all persuasions, wins a Cable Positive Award for, like, way cool handling of AIDS themes.

ONLY IN AIDS, KIDS

POZ *gossip maven Shirley Plotz shares her most memorable moments of 2002.*

- April 9 Boogied at Russell Simmons' UrbanAID2. Cutie Ja Rule told BET, "I wasn't really aware of the whole AIDS epidemic until I did the 'What's Goin' On' tribute." It takes a single.
- May 23 Africa with Bono and a flirty Paul O'Neill.Ran down my gold-flecked Viva Glam IV. MAC's raised $23 mil on that lipstick -- and I've left it on as many collars.
- Sept. 21 Back from Frisco with Liz and dog Sugarat Macy's Passport show and AmEx auction with Magic and wife Cookie.I'm in insulin shock!
- Dec. 27 Cruise called needing a date to Nicole's AIDSy *Hours* premiere. Mischievous *moi* sent over Michael Cunningham. Tom'll be crying, "Author, author!"

EUREKA! YOU'RE KIDDING?

Six years into the cocktail party, the treatment band plays on with a medley of old stand-bys and the catchy new "Once-a-Day." But were quested "The Next Big Thing."

Fuzeon Follies Roche spun so-data for its FDA-ready T-20 into midsummer media madness. But too pricey a tag, too little supply and too few new drugs to pair it with for a power punch hint that this first-ever fusion-inhibitor will not be the Sure Shot needed by HIVers stuck in Combo Limbo.

Drive-Through Diagnosis The release of an HIV test that antes up answers in 20 minutes could warm the 8,000 pairs of cold feet each year that won't take the walk back for results.

Facial Tensions A study showed that three out of four HIVers would trade long life to avoid lipodystrophy's "puppet cheeks," but absent better research, cross-pharma finger-pointing (D4T, j'accuse!) was the only fill-in we got.

So Hip It Hurts Bone loss blipped onto the side--FX rader as a mystery to rival lipo: Do the meds cause it? HIV itself? Immune recovery? "More hip research, fewer hip replacements," is 2003's mantra.

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