



With this month's issue, *Out in the Mountains* celebrates its 16th anniversary. Last year was a time for us to reflect on the changes that our community experienced recently, from the civil union decision to the Take Back Vermont backlash. Now it is time to move forward, though, and prepare for the coming year.

With the grant recently awarded to the R.U.1.2? Community Center and the efforts by Democratic Gubernatorial Candidate Doug Racine to connect with our community as hints toward the positive changes that we are set to experience, this year, an election year, should prove to be an exciting one that will no doubt be full of twists and turns, wins and losses.

It is important to remind ourselves that connecting with the incredible people and places around us is what keeps our community vital and alive. We must continue to enrich our beautiful state with *the endless personalities, ideas, and compassion that cover its landscape.*

Traditionally, February is a time to celebrate our loved ones, so throughout the pages of this month's issue, I have selected articles that speak to these intimate connections we all have that bind us together.

Please join me in welcoming Pete Gershon as the new Art Director here at *Out in the Mountains*. He brings with him new ideas, keeping true to our vision of utilizing new voices and talents at this publication so that we can continue to fairly represent the diversity of our community here in Vermont.

Growth is synonymous with change, so I encourage everyone to support the organizations that are so important to our GLBT community over the next year. The more we work together, the greater the results.

And let us not forget to always look into ourselves to create the most effective change because the more we reach out to each other, the more incredible our lives can truly be.

Jason Whipple  
Editor-in-Chief

## Two US Groups to Launch "Gay-oriented" Cable Stations

### Canada's Pridevision looks for possible American audience

By KEVIN THOMAS ALTHOUSE  
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Three "gay-oriented" cable channels may be available to American audiences within the next year.

Less than a week after MTV and Showtime announced plans to introduce a cable channel targeted to the lesbian and gay audience, a Washington, DC-based entertainment group announced on January 17th that it is also planning to introduce their own version of gay programming, according to PlanetOut. And, the creators of Canada's PrideVision, a gay channel launched last autumn in the Great White North, have indicated interest in expanding their viewership southward to the U.S., according to reports. Apparently, the folks at PrideVision will await the results of the MTV-Showtime gay TV effort.

The MTV-Showtime proposal doesn't suggest a start-up date. If the network is born, it will be a premium channel, reportedly costing less than the current \$6 or more monthly fee for Showtime. Unlike Showtime, the gay channel will also include paid advertising. The MDC Entertainment Group is reportedly ready to fire-up their gay network, Alt1-TV, sometime early in 2003. This channel will be entirely ad-based, according to reports.

Toronto-based PrideVision was launched last autumn, and is a subscription-based, gay-oriented network for digital and satellite services in the provinces. The Canadian network spends about \$5 million in programming with a mix of British shows like *Metrosexuality*, as well as the American *Queer as Folk*, MTV's *Undressed*, and *Will & Grace*.

Programming for the Showtime-MTV venture could include gay-oriented information shows, documentaries and standup comedy with gay comics, according to a recent Associated Press interview with Gene Falk, Showtime's senior vice president of digital media. "It could include independent films with gay themes and story lines, many of which never see the light of day other than at gay film festivals and a handful of theaters," Falk reportedly told the AP.

Falk also tried to downplay concerns that the gay channel might precipitate opposition from anti-gay groups: "If people want to find a whipping boy to raise money for what they're doing, they'll find one."

The concept of a gay-oriented channel in the U. S. is not new; a Palm Springs group,

Triangle Multi-Media Limited, launched a 24-hour channel last August. One problem, though: no one can see the channel until the company works out distribution concerns with cable companies and satellite TV distributors.

And cItv, a relatively new gay-oriented Miami-based communications group, announces on its Web site (cItv.com) that it is "currently positioning and negotiating for 24-7 broadcasting via both cable and satellite." The Florida group does not, however, indicate when they plan to go national.

Now that gay-oriented, 24-hour cable TV programming in the near future appears as a given, a recent visit to MTV's community message boards can be instructive.

"I just have to say that I never got enough gay people on T. V. when I was a kid," wrote "evepstein" who was responding to a post that belittled a gay channel. "When I saw them they were either flaming homosexuals or manly lesbians. Being a Jewish lesbian I certainly ended up seeing a lot more of the Christian channels than I wanted to. And what about BET? Are you honestly going to tell me that gay people shouldn't have their own channel but religion and ethnicity deserve their own channels? Thank you MTV and Showtime." But, as with any argument, there are always two sides.

"We need to put a stop to this type of programming and allowance because it only serves to advance the 'problem'," wrote "VietnamVetUH1." The author didn't define the "problem," but most readers could probably extrapolate his meaning.

It was also instructive to ask a couple of gay Vermonters their opinion about gay-oriented cable television stations.

"I'm honestly surprised that they're really doing it," said Theresa Krieger, 25, of Castleton. "And if they do it, I think it's pretty cool—maybe a bit mainstream with informational issues about the gay community. I'd really like to see the issue of gay relationships, legal and otherwise, to be reviewed."

But Paul Leduc, 26, of Shelburne, thinks that a gay channel might further segment and exclude lesbians and gays. "I'm not sure that we can trust the entertainment community, a group that is notoriously and securely closeted, to make any programming choices for the rest of us," Leduc said. "I think the benefits of mere inclusion and acknowledgement through representation on current shows would be much more valuable and far less divisive." ■