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All the Way

by Winnie McCroy

EDGE Editor

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Bryan Cranston as LBJ and Brandon J. Dirden as Martin Luther King, Jr. (Source:JRA Broadway)

From "Scandal" to the hit Netflix series "House of Cards," taking an insider look at the machinations of Capitol Hill has never been more popular. But the sinister wheeling and dealing of Washington, D.C., politicians is nothing new. As "accidental president" Lyndon Baines Johnson, Bryan Cranston runs the gamut from charming to menacing as he attempts to win re-election in 1964 in the new play, **"All the Way."**

The action opens right after President John F. Kennedy's assassination. LBJ has been sworn in, and is heading home in Air Force One. "The greatest leader of our time has been struck down by the greatest tragedy of our time," said LBJ. But unlike

Kennedy, who has been promising Blacks change in a 100-year-old bait and switch, Johnson has 11 months to Election Day, and intends to use it getting this Civil Rights legislation passed.

He is the first Southern Democratic president in 114 years, and like Frank Underwood in "House of Cards," uses his Southern charm to call in favors from the Good Old Boys while at the same time trading on his gravitas as president to demand that Northern politicians put their money where their mouths are regarding racism.

Although he obviously cares about passing this legislation and improving the lives of Blacks -- especially those living in the South and dealing nightly with arson, beatings, lynching and murders -- LBJ also realizes the vastly untapped potential that these Black votes will have on his election, now only 11 months away. In fact, his War on Poverty is surprising in this context.

As days, weeks and months tick away, we see LBJ's charming and cajoling with the likes of J. Edgar Hoover, his VP pick Sen. Hubert Humphrey, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Sen. Strom Thurmond, Sen. Richard Russell and more. We watch him make promises to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rev. Ralph Abernathy, as SCLC's Stokely Carmichael demands more, and the NAACP's Roy Wilkins urges pragmatism.

Like Underwood, he's the character you love to hate, especially when he drops quips like, "Everyone wants power. And if they say they don't, they're lying. Nothing comes for free, not even good. Especially not good." He proceeds to cut the Voting Rights Act out of the Civil Rights legislation. As he notes, "It's not personal, it's just politics." But politics is "a knife fight in a dark room with a slippery floor."



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Remarriage Equality: Cheyenne Jackson To Take Second Trip Down The Aisle

By EDGE | Feb 6

Merely six months after announcing his divorce after a two year marriage and a 13-year relationship with husband Monte Lapka, Broadway bad boy and now serial monogamist Cheyenne Jackson confirmed rumors of his engagement to new beau Jason Landau.



Dallas Buyers Club

By Ken Tasho | Feb 4

Please dear God, let both Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto win Oscars for their career-turning performances in this highly recommended film.

The infamous "Breaking Bad" character Walter White peeks his head out in Cranston's erratic hand waving and fiery diatribes such as, "I'm coming for you, and if you get in my way, I'll crush you." (His treatment of his wife, Ladybird Johnson (Betsy Aidem) is downright cruel, especially in light of the fact that her inheritance funded his first campaign.) And as with Walter White (and Hal from "Malcolm in the Middle"), viewers are treated to the sight of Cranston in his skivvies, once again. (That's one nice pair of getaway sticks, Cranston...)

But this is no warmed-over vanity project. Cranston holds his own for three hours, spending the majority of time onstage with his pants jerked up to a Fred Mertz-esque level and his prosthetic earlobes swinging in the breeze as his character wheels and deals his way to win 61 percent of the popular vote.

The cast is huge, featuring at least 20 ensemble players, and there are some familiar faces among the lot. You'll recognize character actor John McMartin, and "Star Trek" alumnus Ethan Phillips, as well as "The Big C" actors Roslyn Ruff and Betsy Aidem. Up and comers like Brandon J. Dirden as Martin Luther King, Jr. deserve your attention as well.

The set design by Christopher Acebo is simple, set up like a Congressional conference room, with props added and taken away on center stage to transform it into a living room, hotel room, or bedroom. Much of the ambiance is set by the projections posted on the back wall by Shawn Sagady, which move the audience between locales.

LGBT viewers will also easily draw the parallel between the racist legislation that lawmakers proposed to try and keep Blacks out of public accommodations to the recent rash of proposed legislation in Arizona and Kansas to keep gays out of employment, housing and public accommodations. These measures were as wrong back then as they are today.

It's clear from the proliferation of subway ads and TV commercials that press reps are giving "All the Way" the full-court press to keep every seat full during its extended run. Some advice: save your coins. Its long-winded history lesson notwithstanding, this play sells itself.

"All the Way" enjoys an extended run at the Nederlander Theater, 208 W. 41st St. in New York. For information or tickets, call 212-921-8000 or visit www.allthewaybroadway.com

Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York, where she writes about local restaurants in her food blog, <http://brooklyniscookin.blogspot.com/>

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Dig These Discs :: Toni Braxton & Babyface, Amy Ray, Jennifer Holliday, Mogwai, Nina Persson

By Winnie McCroy | Feb 17

Amy Ray goes country, and Jennifer Holliday rolls out the R&B. Mogwai drops instrumental, The Cardigans Nina Persson goes solo, and Toni Braxton goes back with Babyface for more R&B love songs.

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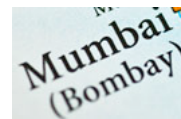
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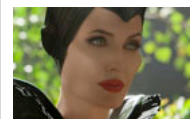
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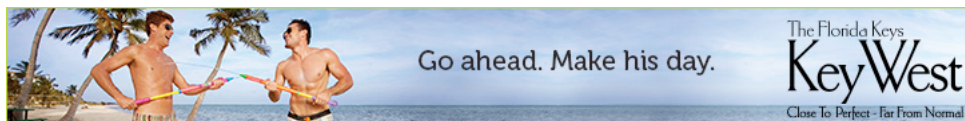
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