

Movies!

Carole Cunningham
picks the year's best,
page 6.

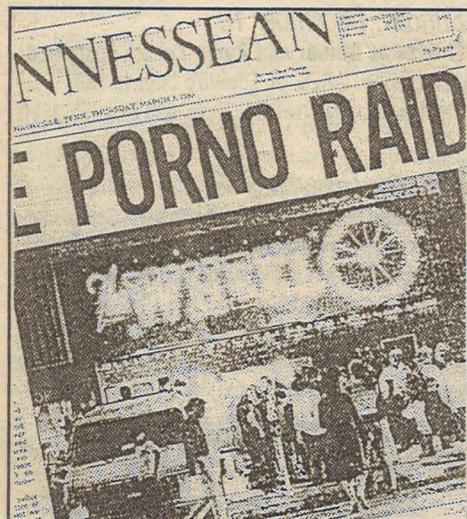
Dare

free!

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 39

THE LESBIAN AND GAY NEWSPAPER

DECEMBER 16-22, 1988



A massive raid on Nashville adult bookstores and suspected houses of prostitution in early 1983 produced banner headlines in the Nashville *Tennessean*, and established assistant district attorney Richard Fisher as the midstate's leading anti-vice crusader. Fisher is now advising the Nashville Coalition Against Pornography on ways to make pornography unavailable to Nashvillians. —ILLUSTRATION THE TENNESSEAN

ACLU Reports on Anti-Gay Violence in Tennessee

By DEBORAH BURKS
Staff Writer

Between April and December of this year, 23 incidents of discrimination or violence against Tennessee gay men, lesbians, and transsexuals have been reported to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) gay and lesbian hotline.

The hotline, operated from the state ACLU office in Nashville, was established last spring following a survey conducted by members of the Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance (T-GALA) which revealed that 37% of respondents had experienced some form of verbal or physical violence as a result of their sexual orientation.

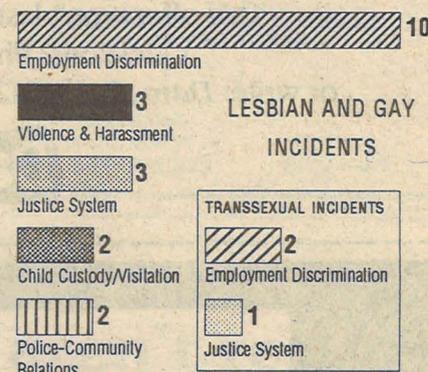
"The primary purpose in establishing the hotline was to continue the documentation of discrimination against sexual minorities, said

Hedy Weinberg, executive director of ACLU-Tennessee. "We wanted to generate some statistics to show the public, the media, and elected officials that action needs to be taken to prevent further occurrences."

Compiled by ACLU administrative assistant Julie Berbiglia, the summary of the hotline calls shows that employment discrimination is reported more frequently than violence and harassment and other forms of discrimination.

"I have been surprised at how few reports of violence or harassment we have received. I suppose this is because they're so common that people don't bother to call," commented Berbiglia. "Employment discrimination, on the other hand, is perhaps reported because people perceive that in this situation they have legal recourse."

Berbiglia explained that action can be taken



Breakdown of ACLU of Tennessee's statistics on discrimination against gay men, lesbians and transsexuals. —DARE STAFF GRAPHIC

Assistant District Attorney Richard Fisher Again Advises Nashville Anti-Pornography Efforts

By JEFF ELLIS
Managing Editor

Efforts by members of the recently-organized Nashville Coalition Against Pornography (NCAP) to rid the city of "illegal pornography" might best be directed toward alleviating prostitution, according to Assistant District Attorney General Richard Fisher.

The group was organized last month by a coalition of Christian fundamentalist-oriented groups to guarantee enforcement of state and local laws against selling obscene materials.

During a meeting with civic and professional leaders at the Capitol Club two weeks ago, Fisher told the group's members that ridding Nashville streets of prostitutes and drugs could help to stop the flow of "pornographic" materials in the city.

"I'm glad a citizens' group is being organized to fight pornography in this city, because the D.A.'s office is limited to dealing with cases that involve violations of state and local obscenity laws," Fisher said during an interview Tuesday.

NCAP spokesperson David R. Shepherd said earlier this month that Fisher had asked for the group's cooperation in bringing to his office any materials deemed obscene that were purchased at local adult bookstores and video arcades.

Fisher said the D.A.'s office would apply obscenity standards set forth in the case of *Miller v. California* is determining what constitutes obscene material.

"We look at the material and determine if it continued on page 3

by people who experience anti-gay harassment or violence. Phone harassment should be reported to the phone company and assault may be prosecuted if a warrant is sworn, she said.

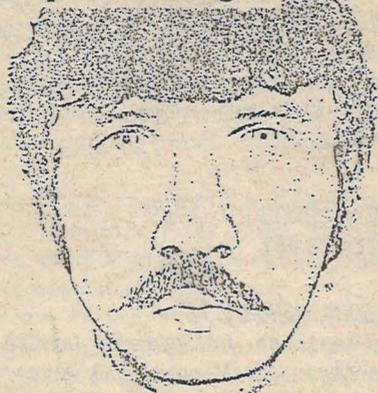
Berbiglia noted that because there are no laws in Tennessee which protect gay men and lesbians from discrimination, there is not much ACLU can do with the reports of employment discrimination. These cases are referred to an appropriate attorney.

The 12 reports of employment discrimination range from job interview questions about homosexuality to employment termination, including one military discharge. According to Berbiglia, some cases also involve gays and lesbians who are being threatened or harassed by other employees.

The employment discrimination and harassment of transsexuals was reported to occur, in most of the cases, because the individual was perceived to be gay.

While the hotline statistics were not compiled by the gender of the caller, Berbiglia noted that men call more frequently than women. "I'm not sure if incidents happen continued on page 3

Suspect Sought



Metro Nashville Police are looking for the murderer of Vernon Lester Larkin. Witnesses described the suspect: stocky build, about 5 feet 11 inches tall and about 170 pounds. He is described as having medium brown hair covering his ears and hanging into his face, dark eyes, a mustache and tattoos on both arms. Larkin was seen leaving The Jungle, at 306 Fourth Ave. South, Sunday, Sept. 4, with the suspect. Anyone with information about the case or suspect should call Detective Mike Smith at (615) 742-7560. Anonymous calls can be made to Crimestoppers at (615) 74-CRIME (742-7463). —SKETCH METRO POLICE

Nashville Group Plans Christmas Gifts for PWAs

By STUART BIVIN
Editor

"It's basically just a bunch of concerned people who got together to try to help see that there's a Christmas for people with AIDS who otherwise wouldn't have one," said Nashville community and AIDS activist Thom Carpenter of the Have a Heart at Christmas program. The volunteer program will place heart-shaped holiday ornaments in Nashville lesbian and gay nightclubs. Each ornament carries an identification number (to protect the privacy of the PWAs) and a gift suggestion for a specific person with AIDS, Carpenter said.

"The gifts are things like shirts, towels, food, toddlers' clothes,

diapers — things that can really make a difference to someone who's struggling with medical bills," he added.

The group asks individuals to pick up ornaments, buy the gifts suggested, wrap them for Christmas, and return them either to the Nashville CARES offices or to the bar where the ornament was picked up (with the identification number marked) by Friday, December 23.

Carpenter said that the group hopes to present gifts to some 70 individuals and families. All gifts received will be delivered to PWAs Saturday, December 24. The Have a Heart at Christmas program is sponsored by Nashville CARES and by participating bars. •



Thom Carpenter

INSIDE

Jeff Ellis tells what keeps us from togetherness: *Couples*, page 6.

Charisse Gendron rides the waves with rocker Patti Smith, page 9.

Lloyd Lewis takes a chance on God, page 11.

Personal: "Hi! Gene!"

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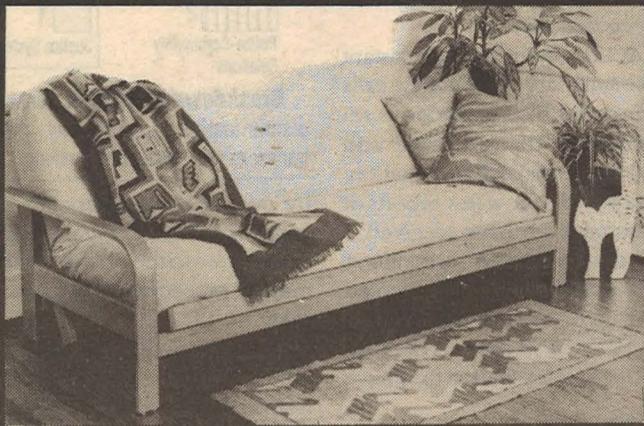
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Mondays

Gay Alternative Hour

Radio show, WEVL-FM 90, 6-7pm.

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)

Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 8pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Tuesdays

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)

Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 5:30 and 8pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Wednesdays

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)

Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 8pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Thursdays

P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)

Support group, St. John's Episcopal Church, 322 S Greer, 1st Thursday only.

Info 901 761-1444.

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)

Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 5:30pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Into the Light (Women's Alcoholics Anonymous)

Meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 8pm. Info 901 276-7379.

Fridays

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)

Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 5:30 and 10pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Saturdays

Twisted Sisters (ACOA)

Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, Noon. Info 901 276-7379.

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)

Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 8pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Sundays

Agape New Life Church

Sunday School, 9:30am. Worship service, 11am. Info 901 327-4145.

Into the Light (Women's Alcoholics Anonymous)

Meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, Noon. Info 901 276-7379.

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)

Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 8pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Nashville

Mondays

Nashville CARES

AIDS/ARC Support Group, 6:30pm. HIV Education Support Group, 6pm. Family

Support Group, 6:30pm. Info 615 385-1510.

Lambda Group

Closed Alcoholics Anonymous meeting for gay men and lesbians, Unitarian

Church, 8pm.

MAGNET (Married and Gay Network)

Support group for married gay men, 1st & 3rd Mondays only. MCC, 8pm.

Info 615 320-0288.

Tuesdays

Vanderbilt Lambda Association

Meeting for gay and lesbian Vanderbilt students, faculty, staff and alumni.

Vanderbilt Divinity School, Room G 23. 5:30pm. Info 615 385-4283.

Al-Anon

Open meeting, MCC, 6:30pm.

Nashville CARES

HIV Education Support Groups, 7pm. Info 615 385-1510.

Sober Sisters (Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous)

Closed meeting, MCC, 8pm.

Wednesdays

Sex Addicts Anonymous

Closed meeting for gay men and lesbians. MCC, 5:30pm.

Nashville CARES

AIDS/ARC Couples Support Group, 5:30pm. AIDS/ARC Support Group, 6:30pm.

HIV Support Group, 7pm. Info 615 385-1510.

MTSU Lambda Association

Meeting for lesbian and gay Middle Tennessee State University students, faculty,

staff, and alumni, 7pm. Info 615 890-3787.

Thursdays

Nashville CARES

HIV Support Group, 6:30pm. Visualization group, 6:30pm. Info 615 385-1510.

Alternatives (Alcoholics Anonymous)

Closed meeting for lesbians and gay men, MCC, 8pm.

Lesbian Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA)

Meeting, 8pm. Info 615 385-4776 or 615 352-5823.

Fridays

Sexaholics Anonymous

Closed meeting, MCC, 5pm.

Gay Parents Support Group

Meeting, MCC, 1st Friday only, 7pm. Info 615 292-0817 or 615 320-0288.

Alcoholics Anonymous Program Study Group

Meeting, Belmont United Methodist, 7:30 pm.

Saturdays

Nashville CARES

AIDS/ARC Support Group, 4pm. Info 615 385-1510.

Metropolitan Community Church

Mortgage Meal, all you can eat, 7:30pm. \$5.

Gay Cable Network

Cablecast, Nashville-Viacom Channel 35 (Community Access Television), 8pm.

Sundays

Metropolitan Community Church

Worship services, 11am and 7pm. Info 615 320-0288.

SPECIAL Events

Saturday, December 17

Christmas Party Black and White Men Together, Memphis, 8pm. Cash bar. Info 901 452-5894.

Sunday, December 18

Christmas Dinner and Party Potluck. Sponsored by Nashville CARES. St. Edward's Church, 188 Thompson Ln, Nashville. 5:30pm. Info 615 385-1510.

Monday, December 19

Christmas Dinner and Party Potluck. Sponsored by Memphis Gay Coalition. GDI on the River, 287 South Front St, Memphis. 7:30pm. Cash bar. Info 901 324-GAYS (324-4297).

Discussion Group *Religion and Being Gay*. Black and White Men Together, Memphis. 7:30pm. Free. Info 901 452-5894.

BWMT

* MEMPHIS

Wednesday, December 21

Special Support Group *Getting Through the Holidays*. Nashville CARES. 7:15pm. Info 615 385-1510.

Saturday, December 24

Christmas Eve *Word and Song*. Special holiday service. MCC, 131 15th Av North, Nashville. 8:30pm, following Mortgage Meal. Free. Info 615 320-0288.

Sunday, December 25

CHRISTMAS DAY

Monday, December 26

Benefit Comedy Big Ed does standup for Nashville CARES, at Zanies Comedy Showplace, 2025 8th Av South, Nashville. 8:30pm. \$10. Info 615 385-1510.

Tuesday, December 27

Dinner *Caring and Sharing Night*. Informal social evening. Black and White Men Together, Memphis. French Quarter Inn, Overton Square, Memphis. 7pm.

Saturday, December 31

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Watch Night Service Special holiday service. MCC, 131 15th Av North, Nashville. 11:30pm. Free. Info 615 320-0288.

Sunday, January 1, 1989

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Thursday, January 12

Brown-Bag Lunch *That Strange Girl: The Alice Mitchell Murder Case (Memphis, 1896)*, Sherre Dryden, Vanderbilt University librarian. Lesbian and Gay Studies Lecture Series, Vanderbilt Lambda Association. Sarratt 118, Vanderbilt, Nashville. 12:10-1pm. Free.

Your nonprofit event can be listed free in *Dates*. Write to *Dare*, Box 40422, Nashville, TN 37204-0422, or phone 615 292-9623 and leave a message. Please include information about time, location, cost, sponsor, and a contact person's name with address and/or phone number for verification. Deadline noon Tuesday for publication next Friday.

...anti-gay violence

continued from page 1

more frequently to men or if women are just more accustomed to harrassment and don't make reports," commented Berbiglia.

Information available from national sources indicates that reports of violence and harrassment against gay men and lesbians has increased in recent years. In 1986, 4946 incidents of violence or harrassment were reported to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF). In 1987, the number of reports increased to 7008.

"Does this really mean violence against lesbians and gays is increasing or that documentation has improved?" asked Kevin Berrill, director of NGLTF's Violence Project. "Well, we know that more victims are coming forward but there is most probably an increase in actual occurrence of violent incidents."

Berrill believes this increased victimization of gays and lesbians may be due to the enhanced visibility of this community.

"Having gay people more visible than ever is both good and bad," commented Berrill. "As we become more visible we have the opportunity to educate people and to challenge myths about our lives, but it also makes us easier targets."

What does NGLTF think the gay and lesbian community should do about the apparent

growth of violence and harrassment?

"Well, returning to the closet won't make us any safer," asserted Berrill. "We can hide, or we can get out there as a community and demand our rights to adequate police protection and education programs to deal with homophobia. We must also provide support and advocacy to those who have been victimized."

Berrill also noted that the passage of legislation such as the federal Hate Crimes Statistics Bill will help better the understanding of the problem. The bill was overwhelmingly approved by the House but was killed in the Senate by North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms' attachment of several anti-gay amendments.

"The limited statistics gathered from the hotline show that discrimination against gays and lesbians is rampant in Tennessee, be it in the workplace, healthcare or violence," said Weinberg. "There needs to be strong legislation in place to protect the community."

Weinberg says the ACLU hotline project will continue and she stressed the importance of its use by members of the gay and lesbian community.

"We want to make ourselves a place where the gay and lesbian community can come to report incidents of discrimination which are based on sexual orientation."

The hotline number is (615) 256-7028. •

...anti-porn assistant D.A.

continued from page 1

it stays within or goes beyond the limits proscribed by law," Fisher said.

Tennessee statutes define obscene materials as "patently offensive representations or descriptions of ultimate sexual acts," such as sexual intercourse, fellatio, cunnilingus or sodomy. The statutes outlaw the ownership, distribution and display of such materials.

"I don't advise retailers about what they can sell or how to conduct their business," Fisher said. "But the law says you cannot sell obscene materials and you cannot engage in obscene acts on stage."

Fisher in 1983 spearheaded an extensive probe of adult bookstores, massage parlors and prostitution operations which resulted in more than 170 arrests.

In early March of that year, some 180 police officers converged on 21 businesses suspected of violating the state's drug, prostitution, obscenity and conspiracy laws. The 170 people arrested were indicted on more than 675 charges.

"Many people were arrested for performing sexual acts at adult bookstores, film arcades and massage parlors," Fisher said. "A number of items, including books and movies, were seized."

According to one of the men charged during that raid, however, many of the cases were thrown out of court because Fisher's case for the prosecution was ill-prepared.

"He was made to look like a fool in court," the man, who asked that his name not be used, said. "He's probably behind what's going on now."

Currently pending in federal court in Nashville is a motion filed by attorneys for owners of local adult bookstores which would allow them to replace the doors on private viewing booths and to remove limitations on store operating hours.

A decision on that motion is expected from Federal District Judge William Higgins sometime this month.

The doors to the booths were removed and operating hours set from 8 a.m. to 3 a.m. following an investigation earlier this year by the Metro Health Department. Dr. Joseph Bis-towich, then-director of the department, told members of the Metro Council that adult bookstores are breeding grounds for sexually-transmitted diseases.

Fisher contended Tuesday that adult bookstores may also be breeding grounds for prostitution and drug trade. He said closing the stores could limit the spread of pornography as well as bring a halt to the drugs and prostitution.

"It blows my mind that women's groups and other groups dealing with special interests don't see how prostitutes are being used and abused, that their lives are being controlled by people who force them to become prostitutes and then take their money," Fisher said.

Most recently, Fisher was the prosecutor during preliminary hearings for some 42 men who were arrested as a result of a three-month-long undercover sex-for-pay operation conducted last December, January and February.

Local NCAP organizers are looking to a similar group's success in Chattanooga for inspiration in their efforts. The Chattanooga group was successful in bringing about the closing of adult bookstores and video arcades in that southeastern Tennessee city. According to sources there, the group then turned its attentions to closing the city's gay bars.

Several adult bookstores have reopened in Chattanooga, but none of them have private video booths, which are prohibited by local ordinance. The Chattanooga ordinances were used as sources when the Metro Council adopted restrictions for Nashville businesses. •

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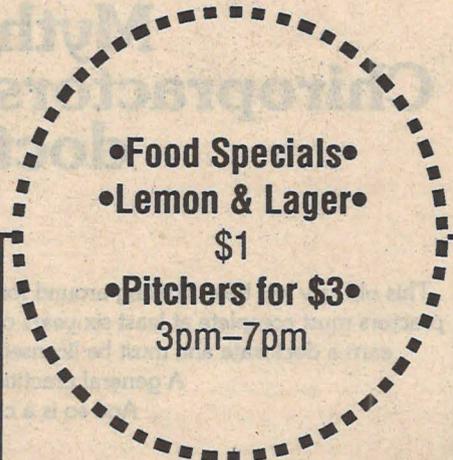
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COUPLES

This is the last in a series on same-sex couples.

By **JEFF ELLIS**
Managing Editor

For the unenlightened or for the uninitiated, same-sex couples may be a frightening reminder of what homosexuality is all about.

Even for the enlightened or for the initiated, same-sex couples may be a frightening reminder of what homosexuality is all about.

In the heterosexual community, same-sex couples may be reviled — thought of as perverts and sinners. Or they may be called "cute" as in: "Bob and Dan are so cute together. They can wear the same clothes and everything."

In the lesbian and gay community, couples also present somewhat of a paradox. In some circles, they may be considered role models, while in others, they are treated as pariahs — thought of by many as slaves to the roles represented by male/female couples.

But as the burgeoning lesbian and gay rights movement continues to make its presence felt in cities from New York to Nashville, San Francisco to Memphis, the same-sex couple more and more is becoming an accepted, albeit grudgingly accepted, fact of life.

Often isolated from not only other segments of society in general, but also from other members of the lesbian and gay culture, same-sex couples are mapping out new types of relationships — relationships without role models.

And as same-sex couples make their way through this uncharted territory, unique issues come to light along with the same problems that have plagued couples since Eve and Adam had apples for dinner.

"There are a number of issues that are universal for couples, whether they are male/female or same-sex couples," said Judy Eron, a licensed clinical social worker whose Nashville practice includes a number of clients who are members of same-sex couples.

Among the universal themes which comprise a litany of couples' complaints, Eron said, include the division of time.

"Many couples get in trouble about how time is spent at work, at home, and with or without each other," Eron said. "Also many couples have a difficult time defining what

'closeness' means to them. They may ask themselves, 'How close is too close?'"

Financial matters, family, personal values and differences of power in a relationship also present stumbling blocks for most couples, whether homosexual or heterosexual.

Regardless of what the differences are that may cause a couple to fight, Eron said the key to rising above those differences is "fighting fair."

"You have to accept the fact that if the other person in the argument doesn't win, you don't win. It's a non-competitive situation. Couples must have a real desire for the other person to have what they want. When that's the case, you can have a 'good' fight," Eron said.

While the lack of role models may help same-sex relationships to be more unconventional than male/female relationships, it can also present some unique problems.

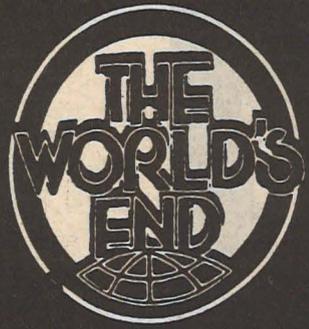
"What happens with a lot of same-sex couples is a lack of family support. And there is frequently a lack of role models," Eron said. "Most of us have Mom and Dad to look to as role models, but same-sex couples have trouble finding role models to look to for support."

Families may prove to be even more problematic if the relationship between child and parents is strained. If that relationship is strong, however, it can help to strengthen the child's relationship with his or her partner.

"In-laws are always a problem for most couples, but for a same-sex couple, the in-laws may feel it's easier to reject a child's partner," Eron said. "But there are other examples when the parents are very supportive and accepting of their child's partner."

Networking for lesbians and gay men is difficult in a predominantly heterosexual society, and same-sex couples may discover that difficulty compounded by virtue of the fact that they are part of a pair.

"Sometimes peer support is hard to find for lesbian and gay couples, because the circle of friends — if for a lesbian couple, their friends are also lesbians and if for a gay couple, their friends are also gay — may be viewed as



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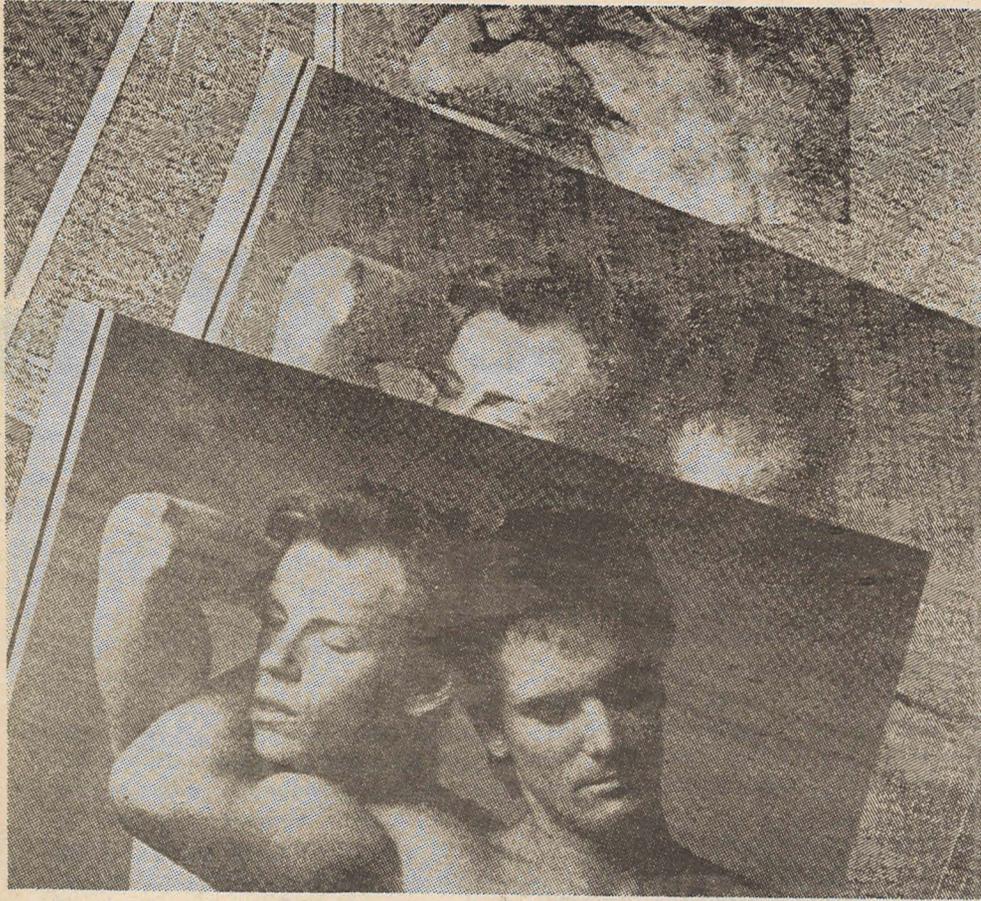
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potential sex partners," Eron said.

One problem that may be unique to same-sex relationships, Eron suggested, may occur when a romantic relationship (which includes sexual intimacy) becomes a friendship (with-out sex).

"There are different theories about why that may happen — enough that it is being written about in professional journals," Eron said, adding that such an occurrence seems more prevalent among lesbian couples.

"When people get too close, sometimes sex disappears. Couples may become too much alike. You need enough 'differentness' to keep things interesting," she explained.

For gay couples, the great monogamy versus non-monogamy debate may be the cause for most disagreements. In heterosexual couples, studies have shown that men are more likely to have extra-marital affairs than women. So among gay male couples, extracurricular affairs may even be expected.

For women, the problems are different. As Eron explained, many women may "lose their identity to a relationship" — a male/female or a lesbian relationship. When two women are involved in a relationship, both may lose their identities to the larger identity of their relationship.

"They may get lost in each other. That can happen for any number of reasons, but perhaps not having enough outside connections plays a major role in that," Eron said.

Often, because of an overzealous desire to be what one imagines one's partner wants, two personalities may meld into one blurred image.

"There's a problem in being too much alike," Eron said.

In the lesbian and gay community, it is not unusual to see a couple of different ages, different educational backgrounds, different employment histories and different social positions.

"Perhaps those differences are better tolerated in the gay and lesbian community," Eron suggested. "And another major difference may be different developmental processes, includ-

ing the coming-out process."

With the widespread movement of lesbian and gay rights efforts in this country, Eron said more and more same-sex couples are seeking counseling for their problems.

"Fifteen years ago, homosexuality was still officially called an illness, so I doubt there were many professionals who counseled same-sex couples. But as the gay and lesbian rights movement grows, people have started fighting for their relationships," she said.

"Today, a gay or lesbian couple is given validation they would never have gotten 15 years ago."

But not all counselors are equipped to deal with same-sex couples.

Like everyone else, there are those who are prejudiced against lesbians and gay men. Others, like Eron, however, are very open to lesbian and gay clients.

"For me, it's been important to know about the gay and lesbian community and to have friends who are gay and lesbian. So, I think that's helped me to counsel same-sex couples," Eron said.

Eron said that some couples may find it easier to talk to "someone like them," someone who is lesbian or gay. Still others, however, may prefer to deal with a heterosexual counselor.

"Sometimes, I think it would be best to go to someone who's most like you — someone who has knowledge and acceptance of you as a person," Eron said. "But often the sexual orientation of the counselor has no bearing on the decision. Knowledge and acceptance are really the most important things."

Because of the difference in the dynamics of relationships, same-sex couples must forge into new territories as they seek to define their "pairing" in new and unique terms.

In Eric Marcus' *The Male Couple's Guide to Living Together*, an unidentified Tennessee man advises: "Don't go into a relationship and expect things. You have to show your love and commitment. That's what will get into someone's heart and make the relationship. Then you find somebody else who's willing to put the equal into it. Then you've got a relationship."

And a couple. •

To our valued customers:
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Ann & Jo

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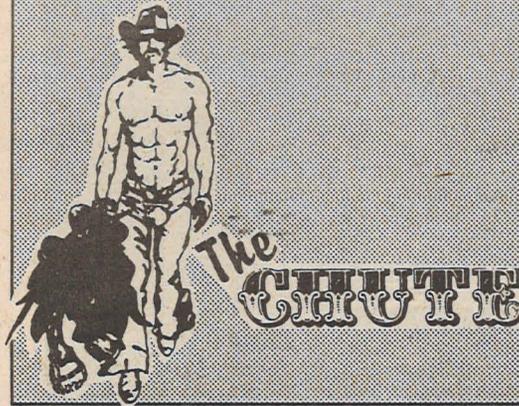
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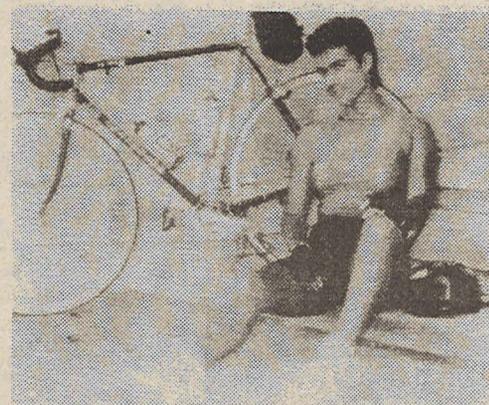
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Best of '88: the Movies

By CAROLE CUNNINGHAM
Staff Writer

Lame ducks were roosting in more places than the White House in 1988. Movie houses across America were filled with movies that were mediocre, commonplace, or just plain dumb.

Election years just may not be good years for film — with America's attention focused on either Greg Louganis' Speedo or the deranged criminals Mike Dukakis would loose on an unsuspecting nation, it may be no wonder that a movie like *Big* riveted the moviegoing public for over six months running (no apologies necessary to the talented Tom Hanks — he knows his movie "was no JFK" in film history).

The year's most controversial film was Martin Scorsese's *Last Temptation of Christ*. Again, no surprise that in a year when the pledge of allegiance was a central presidential campaign issue that a movie suggesting a slight diversion from the traditional scriptural account of Christ's passion would be crucified upon the self-righteous cross of the Reagan Right.

As it turned out, the Right didn't need a Robert Bork to interpret the Constitution through red-white-and-blue-tinted glasses: freedom of speech and expression could be as easily squelched through the private sector as through the judiciary.

Businesses and fundamentalists in Nashville succeeded in keeping the film out of town even before theater owners had the chance to screen the film — and before any of the irate preachers and dogmatists had seen it either. Most critics panned the film on its cinematic merits, but praised the chances the film took and the issues it raised. Those interested in prolonging their stay in Purgatory or worse may see the film this spring at Vanderbilt's Sarratt Cinema.

Yet among many swine, 1988 brought a few real pearls. But with the exception of *Last Temptation*, few films seriously challenged audiences' assumptions about politics, people, religion, or "values."

Oddly enough, there were few films of a political bent in this election year. The best and most controversial political film of 1988 was made in 1962: *The Manchurian Candidate*. The film was without question the best re-release in years and, despite its age, is included in my Top Ten List for 1988. Many of these best-of-films, including *The Manchurian Candidate*, are available now for home viewing on videocassettes.

While none of 1988's best films will change your life, your attitudes, or even your heart, they will either make you a little uncomfortable, a little happier, a little sadder, a little more understanding, or a little more patient with yourself and with that peculiar ailment we've

come to call The Human Condition.

Wings of Desire

German director Wim Wenders delivers an ethereal but moving film about the joys and pains of human life and how one winged traveller chooses the weight of humanity over the lightness of the angelic orders. *Wings* focuses on the modern survivors of war-torn Berlin as seen through the eyes of an angel played by German actor Bruno Ganz. The angel hears human beings' interior dialogues with themselves, and the beauty of these choir-like voices is as affecting as the simple lines from a children's rhyme that punctuate the events of the film.

Unsatisfied with the predictable but passionless life of the angels, Ganz's angel falls in love with a trapeze artist and chooses to become human to be with her. The film captures in black and white the haunting beauty of

John Cleese,
Wanda,
Jamie Lee
Curtis,
Kevin Kline,
and Michael
Palin from
"A Fish
Called
Wanda"



Berlin and bleeds to color as the angel becomes human. Fans of Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* will appreciate the homage Wenders pays to American filmmaking and the unique and persistent vision he has brought to German film.

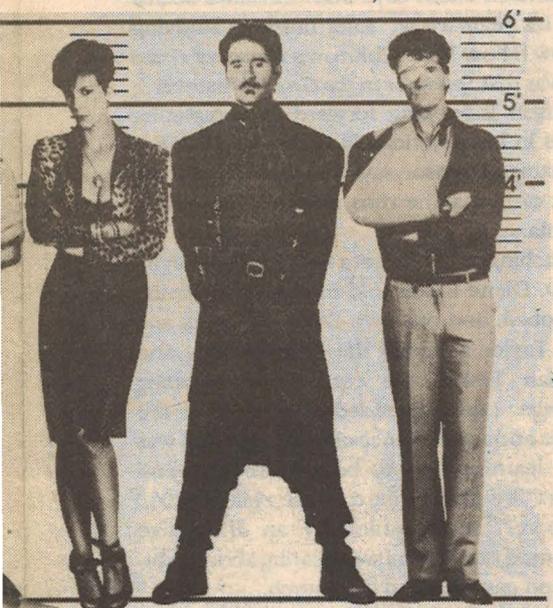
The Unbearable Lightness of Being

American director Phillip Kaufman brings a truly authentic middle-European air to one of 1988's most brilliant and haunting films. Set in Czechoslovakia in 1968 before and during the Soviet invasion, *Unbearable Lightness* succeeds in translating to the screen Milan Kundera's philosophical-political novel of the same name. *Unbearable Lightness* is a film about the price and the value of political and personal commitment.

Daniel Day Lewis, one of England's most accomplished actors (*My Beautiful Laun-*

es

drette, *Room with a View*) plays Tomàs, a self-centered doctor and intellectual who lives by the theory of threes – never sleep with the same woman three times in a row, or sleep with her only every three years, etc. Lena Olin, a beautiful, brilliant actress, plays Sabina, the “lighter” half of Tomàs’ life, and Juliette Binoche gives a subtle and effective rendering of Tereza, the woman who finally succeeds in getting Tomàs’ commitment to things both personal and political. Sven Nykvist’s photography is more varied and more textured than anything he’s done for Bergman, is, in fact, at times nearly adoring. Many women’s favorite movie scene of 1988 is in *Unbearable Lightness* when Tomàs’ two lovers Sabina and Tereza forsake their preoccupation with him during an at-first-uncomfortable and then simply breathtakingly beautiful scene with the two women photographing each other, Tereza with characteristic reserve, Sabina with char-



acteristic abandon. A not-to-be-missed film.

My Life As a Dog

Swedish director Lasse Hallström tells a gentle, affecting tale about a twelve-year-old boy in 1950s Sweden, and the heartbreaking passage of the child through the realities of death and life. Hallström has an ear and eye for children’s language and escapades, but more uniquely, a respect for their intelligence, vision and resilience.

Hallström seems to be saying in this film that we all have something to learn from the child’s capacity for understanding and accepting life’s tragedies without despairing from them, while focusing too on the price the child then and the child in us now has paid to survive those painful events. A sensitive, well-wrought film that is now available in video stores. Unless you have a strong aversion to subtitles, make

sure you rent the undubbed version of *My Life As a Dog*: the subtitles, while occasionally distracting, allow you to hear the Swedish actors’ voices, which are far more appealing and resonant than those in the dubbed version.

The Wizard of Loneliness

Based on a John Nichol novel of the same name, *The Wizard of Loneliness* enjoyed rave reviews but short stays in most cities. While often compared to *My Life As a Dog*, *Wizard* is a very different movie, with very different children, adults and situations. Comparisons are not needed.

The screenplay for *Wizard* had been bouncing among studios for almost twenty years before making it to the screen with help from the American Playhouse and Robert Redford’s Sundance Studios. *Wizard* is about a young boy named Lukas who is sent to stay with relatives after the death of his mother and the enlistment of his father during World War II. Lukas, who at the start of *Wizard* is an introverted intellectual sort, becomes by the end a sensitive and now caring young man whose illusions about controlling the actions of children and adults through his “wizard” persona have been forsaken in the interest of being human rather than magician.

Dylan Baker plays Duffy Kahler, a POW who goes AWOL from a military psychiatric hospital, and Lea Thompson plays Sybil, Duffy’s childhood sweetheart. *Wizard*, in addition to being an affecting rite-of-passage movie, may be one of the most subtle but passionate indictments of the effects of war on the human psyche.

The Moderns

Alan Rudolph scores another directoral victory with this often biting satire of the 1920s Paris arts intelligentsia. Those who love so-called period pieces will love Rudolph’s fascination with salon culture and the often passionate fools who populate Paris’ cafés. *The Moderns* is a suspense thriller/mystery with something for everyone who loves movies and art.

Keith Carradine plays the movie’s evasive and inauthentic hero Hart, a painter of exceptional talent who devotes his life to forgeries in the interest of commerce.

Hart’s nemesis is Stone, who made his fortune in condoms before turning to collecting Japanese art. Rudolph loves to surprise the audience and shock it – just when we think it is the forgery burning in the fireplace, we discover it’s the “real” Matisse, the “real” Cézanne in the flames. The emptiness and elusiveness of the art world is more comical to Rudolph than tragic. The film is full of brilliant scenes and catchy lines like, “It’s okay to broke in Paris. In America it’s downright immoral.” Rudolph is a director we can count on for both content and class.

House of Games

Playwright David Mamet both wrote and directed this fascination study of the con game. Lindsay Crouse gives a dry and chilling performance as Dr. Margaret Ford, psychiatrist and bestselling author of a book called *Driven*.

The emotional and intellectual ice queen decides to write a second book about people’s compulsion for vices like gambling, and while ostensibly helping a client who’s in debt to some seedy gamblers, Ford wanders into a classic *film noir* gaming house called House of Games. There Ford meets the ultimate con man and his hench-cons. Helping them run a

con just once whets our repressed heroine’s appetite for deception, an appetite Mamet suggests is already quite active in the practice of psychiatry.

Mamet’s visual style is as elegant and sterile as the characters in *House of Games*. To say more about the plot would give it away – but don’t stay away from this one. Hitchcock fans will appreciate Mamet’s often wry wit and detailed style.

A Fish Called Wanda

Without question 1988’s best comedy, *A Fish Called Wanda* stars John Cleese and Michael Palin of *Monty Python* fame along with Kevin Kline and Jamie Lee Curtis in a film whose tame middle-class surface provides the perfect setting for a new twist in Cleese’s twisted sense of humor. Jamie Lee Curtis shows a considerable talent for comedy and a considerable cleavage as smart and sexy Wanda.

Kevin Kline gives a terrific performance as her bungling Nietzsche-stricken fascist brother – sort of an Archie Bunker who’s taken night classes. John Cleese stars as the stuffy barrister who falls in love with Wanda and into an hilarious den of thieves trying to steal the jewels they’ve stolen from each other. *Wanda* works some wonderful magic with sight gags, and may make some viewers gag with its unflinching humiliation of a man with a stutter. *Wanda* is hilarious and smart – a rare combination these days, but something we can depend on Cleese to deliver.

Sammy and Rosie Get Laid

Stephen Frears (*Prick Up Your Ears*) and Hanif Kureishi (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) collaborated on this often uneven but interesting tale of the decline of London under the rule of the Iron Lady.

Sammy (Ayub Khan Barber) is an elegant, wry, but rather empty man who insists on an “open” relationship with his wife Rosie (Frances Barber), but whose passivity in life rarely allows him to enjoy the “opportunities” such a relationship should afford him. Rosie, on the other hand, sleeps with a trail of other men who stream in and out of her life like the leftist lesbians, black militants and skinheads who drift in and out of Sammy and Rosie’s flat. Sammy’s father Rafi, accused of frightening acts of torture while a government official in Pakistan, arrives in London with money he wishes to leave Sammy so that Rosie and Sammy can settle down and have a family.

While the father tries to curb the libertine ways of his “children,” rioters in the streets burn cars, houses and whatever sacred cows they associate with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Not a film filled with people one likes, but with people one loves to look at and ideas worth talking about.



— from “My Life as a Dog”

Working Girls

One of the most brilliant feminist films in years. Lizzie Borden directs this disturbing film about a day in the life of a “high class” call girl who also happens to be a Yale art student and a lesbian building a life with her lover and her lover’s daughter. *Working Girls* has sparked controversy among feminists who seem to think it requires a debate about the acceptability of prostitution.

Borden is not a moralizer, but a realist: it is the reality of Molly’s experience that is so painful because its pain is so clinical – Molly’s last haunted glance at the camera when she wakes by the side of the woman she loves is like a knife through the brain. No accolade for this film would be undeserved. Available in quality video stores.

The Manchurian Candidate

Made in 1962 and pulled from theaters shortly after John F. Kennedy’s assassination, *The Manchurian Candidate* may be the best movie about American politics ever made. *Candidate* stars Frank Sinatra, Angela Lansbury, Laurence Harvey and James Gregory in a tale about a Korean war hero who has been brainwashed without knowing it by a committee of international conspirators bent on destroying the chances of an American candidate for the presidency.

The film is a riveting psychological thriller that will panic anyone who thinks they know how politics work and who can and can’t be trusted. Angela Lansbury must be seen in her most savage screen role – you will never watch *Murder, She Wrote* the same way again. Viewers interested in the history of politics in this country, our fascination with political heroes, the public’s willingness to be coddled and the politicians’ drive to win at any cost, will relish this film’s unflinching, bare-handed slap to the American psyche. •



— Lukas Haas and Lea Thompson from “Wizard”

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Sociables

Hitting the Hot Spots

By JAAN STURGIS
Staff Writer

When I was out and about recently, who did I meet but a young lad from Dublin — yes, you get it — Ireland. The lad's name, you ask? David McQuire. I am not making this up. Visiting friends in this country, he was in the United States for Thanksgiving and returned to his native land for the upcoming holidays where he'll train to the Irish countryside to be with his mommy and daddy dearests.

Asked what he likes best about America, he had a quick and fascinating reply: convenience. Now who would have ever thought of that! (Yes, it's true that those Irish eyes are smiling. Ohhh.)

Last Saturday night I saw and heard a fascinating vocal and instrumental group, Encounter International. Visiting MCC in Nashville after their weekly mortgage meal, the group is made up of four lovely young women named Sandra Turnbull, Teri Cascio, Janet Robertson and Veronica Coleman. These four talented singers brought melody that wafted across the city as they sang "Oh Lord How Majestic Is Your Name" and "I Will Call Upon the Lord." Even for my liberal tastes, the did a most commendable job.

The highlight of last weekend? Well, it had to have been the tenth annual Christmas in Lockeland Springs homes tour. This tour had to be the best to date. (Yes, dearhearts, even though I was last year's tour chair, I would have to agree and my hat goes off to Michele Ponder for an utterly flawless job!)

Most interesting house? Well, that's quite debatable. Wayne Harper took a real liking to 1619 woodland, a recent rehab project in the "demonstration" block. Done by an interior designer named Ralph who works at Bradford's in Green Hills, more than just Wayne were heard muttering accolades over this stunningly restored property.

And I can remember the rubble that 1306 Stratton was three short years ago. Its classical styling won my heart the first time I saw it and many tourgoers, including Bud Blackwell and James Holland, granted this house the "Better Housekeeping" seal of approval.

You want lights, you say. Well, dearhearts, Charles Jones votes for the home of Rhett Frye and his husband, where not only did the house shine within an inch of its life but the 1500 — can you count that high? — lights on their Christmas tree made their Craftsman Bungalow seem like the year was 1915 instead of 1988. Bravo for you, boys.

Jimmy Capps says that it will truly be a Christmas that he will never forget. Well, my ears perked up. Of course I wanted to know why. Well, he said, spending the holidays with his parents and his extended family will mean 16 nieces and nephews, seven brothers and sisters and a partridge...sorry, I got carried away.

Dare publisher Stewart Bleaviens (is that how that's spelled?) said he couldn't tell me anything at all about a really terrific party he went to last Saturday, except that he was the only man there, and that everyone had a great time playing Pictionary, especially those who had beginners' luck. Bert Convy was neither invited nor there. I heard something from someone, though, about some unauthorized leg-wrestling and arm-wrestling. I'm sure this sounds much stranger than it actually was. If

you look *ever*so carefully, you might see some photos taken at the event on Gay Cable Network/Nashville in the next few weeks. That may or may not be Deborah Burks, former Davidson County leg-wrestling champ... oops, look how late it is.

The evil culinary genius of Jeff Ellis, meanwhile, plots a mass murder by sugar overload for his intended victims this weekend. Jeff says that he did get to WKRB last Friday, but did not play the sex trivia video game.

Steve Jenks was, um, *bound* for the time of his life a couple of weeks ago when he went to Sewanee for the Lessons and Carols concert, which still rings merrily in his ears. Although the concert was nothing short of superb, he says, Dr. Stanley Birdwell's party afterwards in Tullahoma was more than a boy — ah, yes — or a girl could bear.

His 7500 square-foot house is truly opulent, and lots of people were busy in the mirrored weight room (what could one have seen...) And the sauna room was, well, active, as well. The good doctor even had a slide show planned for one point in the evening, but Steve was too busy enjoying the scenery. And the view of the beautiful lake!

Meanwhile, guests dined on Swedish meat balls, a broccoli and chicken casserole, Waldorf salad and sinfully delectable desserts. Of all *kinds*.

Have you seen that Nashville couple Read Hodges and Tom Bryant? They recently boarded the Norway (the boat, dearhearts, not the country) in Fort Lauderdale for a week of fun in the sun. Ah, the good life.

Harrison Hicks says that Christmas seems like it's years away. After finishing studying fellow fellow Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (or was that *Splendor in the Grass*? Whatever.), Harrison is looking forward to completing finals in his American lit course at TSU. For Christmas, Harrison says that his sister will see a lot of him as he runs away to visit her in Atlanta.

Washington, D.C., got a little taste of heaven lately. Diane Easter told me that she, Penny Campbell, and our own Deborah Burks and Ann Taylor attended the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force conference, *Creating Change*. Diane attended seminars on the media and anti-violence efforts while Ann was busy learning how to be a successful fund raiser ("Would you like to make a gift of \$1000 or more?" accompanied by an affirmative head-nod) and Penny was hearing about lesbians and gay men and the church.

Deborah (no relation to the Chattanooga snack-cake queen), rumor has it, learned all about political seminars and sodomy. Funny, I thought that was sex. Some things they just don't teach you in college.

New York (notice how we're hitting all the hot spots here). The name just brings excitement to every bone in my body. And who wouldn't tell me about his trip there? Believe it or not, James Gidcomb wouldn't tell all. Maybe you can get something out of him, because I heard from, um, confidential sources that he had the time of his life.

Well, that's it again for another *Sociables*, dearhearts. Don't forget to ring up and tell what happened at your holiday affair. You may as well. I'll find out anyway. That's (615) 226-4034. Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night. •

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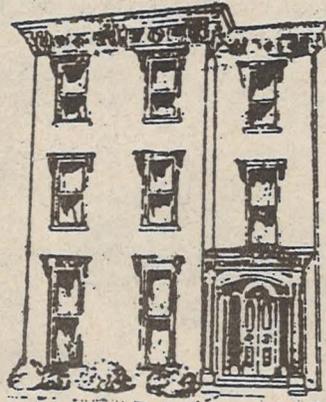
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Songs

Patti Smith: A Rock Heroine

By CHARISSE GENDRON
Special to *Dare*

As many people have noted, Patti Smith has evolved: her music has traded some of its former verbal and sonic wildness for serenity and unity.

Another way to say this is that, having begun her career as a priestess of Dionysus (Greek god of wine and fertility, worshipped in rituals that are the origin of drama), she is now a votary of Apollo (Greek god of the sun, music, poetry, healing and prophecy).

Pure Dionysian Patti is "Land," on *Horses* (1975), which uses as a springboard the simple pop song "Land of a Thousand Dances." The themes of sex, death, narcotics, poetic inspiration and the dream, and rock and roll are fused: "Life is filled with pain/I push it through my brain/And I fill my nose with snow/And go Rimbaud, oh go Johnny go."

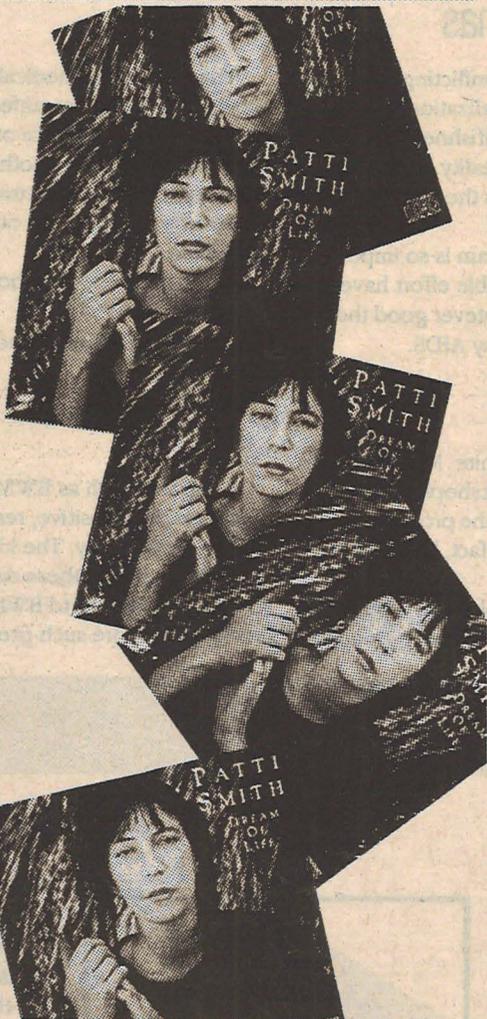
"Land" starts with narrative: Johnny (Chuck Berry's American kid, Patti Smith's desolation angel) stands at his locker as a boy approaches from down the hall. Transfixed, Johnny can't run, but watches his experience as in a film: "the movie kept moving as planned." Whether this state of alienation between mind and body represents a preferable alternative to mundane reality or a hell from which the narrator and Johnny try to escape through more extreme forms of ecstasy, I don't know.

The boy shoves Johnny against the locker and drives "it" in repeatedly. Johnny is laughing hysterically (penetration by knife, penis or needle having provided something besides pain) when he finds himself surrounded by horses, "white, shinin', silver studs with their noses in flames." The song supports all the associations: horses of revelation, potency, poetic inspiration (Pegasus); horse as a synonym for heroin and for a dance (pony); horses as personifications of ocean waves.

Thirteen years later, in "Going Under" on *Dream of Life*, Patti is still riding the sea's horses of death and spiritual rebirth, but here the journey's mystery is stressed: "We can hold on (I'm sure)/To the sea's foaming mane? It will serve us/We'll surface/and we'll plunge back again." The rhythmic, lambent sea is the abode of the sun (enlightenment, healing): "Sun is rising on the water/Light is dancing again/Let's go under where the sun beams/Let's go under my friend." Patti's earlier faith in immanent demons is now projected outward to embrace a benign and universal cycle of energy.

Like that of the Romantic poet William Blake, Patti's Apollonian vision illuminates social injustice and paints the new Jerusalem. She has expressed concern for the oppressed in the past, but now she is using a new language. "People Have the Power" (along with "The Jackson Song," written for Patti and Fred Smith's baby son) will appear in the updated *Songs of Innocence*, when Patti and Blake collaborate in heaven.

"PHTP" is a dream vision in which "the work of fools" is redeemed by the people's demands for peace. Here is one biblical scenario I'd like to visit, where soldiers lie down by shepherds in pollution-free valleys, exchanging "visions" instead of ammunition or petty hostilities: "and we strolled there together/with none to laugh or criticize." That supportive community might be as vital a condition of creativity as Di-



onysian rapture is an advance in Patti's ideas.

"Up There Down There" balances the idealism of "PHTP" with a glimpse of the apocalypse. Unlike most apocalyptic rock lyrics, it provides a realized vision of the distance between the cosmic and human orders.

"Up There," the spirit-sun serves humanity, while "down there" the "healing water" of the sea drowns a howling Jonah. His reaction is understandable, but ignorance of "the equation" of the elements - the sun we attempt to "hire," "the earth we grind" - has the spirits upset: "The world is restless/Heaven in flux/Angels appear/From the bright storm.../But what can we say/Man's been forewarned."

The singer of the song belongs to the human order, an angel of the hipster variety ("Cats like us are obsolete/...Thieves, poets we're inside out") striving to make it to the big leagues, but not there yet: "the borders of heaven/Are zipped up tight tonight."

Coolheaded enough to see that "In the end the end/Will be here just here," she still holds out a hope that before that last judgement humanity can achieve harmony with the cosmos: "Time for communication/Talking communication."

The world needs poet-seers, and women need spiritual mothers to nurture our female creativity. Terri Sutton describes the plight of those seeking rock heroines: "there's Patti Smith, Patti Smith...and Patti Smith."

That the situation is changing for the better doesn't diminish Patti's contribution. She has made her impact without using feminist language ("man" is her generic term for humanity), but I sense that this too may be changing, and wouldn't be surprised to find a developing female esthetic in Patti's future work.

Already on *Dream of Life*, besides the references to motherhood, are an allusion to a "need to weave/A silk of souls" and the tantalizing verses: "The sphinx awakens/But what can she say/You'd be amazed." •

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Views

Please. Have a Heart at Christmas

WE ARE BOMBARDED this time of year with conflicting messages: give, give, give; and get, get, get. The commercialization of what is supposed to be a religious holiday appeals to the selfishness in all of us, though it comes wrapped in a bundle of sentimentality.

It's rare that we see anything that truly embodies the values that the Christmas season nominally represents.

That is why the Have a Heart at Christmas program is so important.

The volunteers who give their time to this valuable effort have one goal: to see to it that people are not left out of whatever good there is in this season simply because they have been hit by AIDS.

Kudos to BWMT

THE MEMPHIS CHAPTER of Black and White Men Together (BWMT) last weekend sponsored a series of workshops designed to raise awareness of safer-sex issues. More than that, the program tried to show that safer sex is not unpleasant, that it can, in fact, be much more erotic than unsafe sexual practices.

The tragic spread of the AIDS epidemic and its physical devastation has had another, more insidious effect: it has made many among us

The staggering medical bills, coupled with the economic hardship placed on them by unfeeling and ignorant bigots who deny them employment, insurance or other compensation can leave those suffering from AIDS with another debilitating condition: poverty.

Have a Heart at Christmas is a simple and effective plan to match the charitable impulses of our community with the needs of those less fortunate.

We urge everyone who can to participate in Have a Heart at Christmas.

It is what Christmas should be. •

afraid of sex.

Programs such as BWMT's Hot, Horny and Healthy re-eroticize gay male sex in a positive, responsible, healthy and perhaps most importantly, joyous way. The idea that sex can be fun as well as healthy is a refreshing one in these dark days.

Congratulations to BWMT on their fine community service. We look forward to more such presentations. •

Pages

Gays/Justice: Worth Reading

Gays/Justice: A Study of Ethics, Society, and Law by Richard D. Mohr. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988. 337pp. \$30.00, hardcover.

By **JOE MAROHL**
Staff Writer

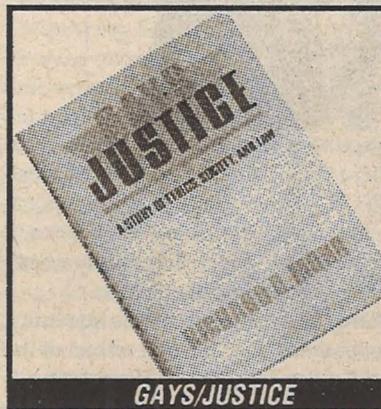
In 1989, the book you should give to your friends, whatever their sexual orientation, is Richard D. Mohr's *Gays/Justice*. It was the most stimulating modern essay on the civil rights of lesbians and homosexual men I have yet read. It deserves a spot next to Edward Carpenter's eloquent and quaint defenses of comrade-love and André Gide's *Corydon*.

Without claiming to agree on every point of argument Mohr presents, I have to admit I found it impossible to leave the book alone, reading the 337 pages of it in less than a 24-hour period, and now, over a week later, I cannot stop thinking about some of its more lucid and inspiring points.

In the introduction, Mohr explains that his intention for the book is to set forth reasons for the passing of specific civil rights legislation for homosexual men and women and to provoke his readers to action. As he says, the first half of the book appeals to the heterosexual mainstream, and the latter, specially to the homosexual minority. The book has five sections. Each one develops a separate line of reason, and, unlike most long works of persuasion, the book does not exhaust itself in the beginning only to fall into redundancy halfway through.

The first section takes a fresh look at what, for most of us, are rather settled issues: Who are gays? Is homosexuality immoral or sick? Do gay people choose to be gay? Mohr's argument here is so energetic as to make what he has to say seem novel even to those of us who have heard the usual spiel a thousand times. For one thing, Mohr's arguments are not the usual spiel.

There is no such thing as a "gay community," he argues, preferring the more individualistic "gay people." And gay people, he says, are perhaps largely to blame for the sorry political mess that they are in today in the U.S. Disco lambs in Republican pelts, we have sacrificed our sense of dignity in order to compromise



with parties who do not have our interests at heart. We have become reckless with our rights as Americans, not wanting to risk endangering what happiness and security we are already allowed in the world.

The second section argues the legality of a right to privacy regarding sexual matters and demonstrates that state sodomy laws, even when they are not enforced, insult the dignity of homosexual Americans. He further shows that sodomy laws, when they are enforced as in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, are not justly administered.

As Martin Luther King, Jr., once observed, a just law uplifts the human personality and applies equally to the majority and minority alike, whereas an unjust law degrades the human personality and subjects the minority to burdens not born equally by the majority.

The centerpiece of the book is Mohr's use of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* to advocate civil rights for gay men and lesbians and explain "why even conservatives should support gay rights." Without civil rights for all persons regardless of gender or sexual orientation, American democracy is seriously flawed, leaning towards corruption and incoherence.

The fourth section brings up legal problems associated specifically with the alarm over AIDS. The State has acted patronizingly. With-

out seeming overly alarmist, he points to the clear danger of quarantine laws directed not only against persons infected with so-called AIDS virus but against all homosexuals, through the invoking of legal instruments which exist even now.

Unless these instruments be blunted through the passage of gay rights legislation and the repeal of discriminatory laws, the future for gay people in America is left in the hands of majoritarian whim and to the fears and prejudices of the mainstream.

The last section deals with the presence of homosexual women and men in the profession(s) of education and the role they may play in provoking positive change.

Though he becomes progressively bleaker as he proceeds, Mohr states his belief that positive change will come, if at all, because gay people hold their dignity to be of greater value to them than their pleasure or comfort, and dignity, he says, holds more power for reform than political compromise, more personal rewards than economic prosperity.

Mohr's essay is not, however, without its weak points. His perspective on the issues the book covers are colored by his "classical liberalism." He does not resist the temptation to take cheap verbal shots at political opinions different from his own, however slight the difference, especially those on the left with which his own views might be confused—those of libertarians, Christian liberals, feminists, and "commies" (his word).

The problem of tone extends further to the absolutist bent of his rhetoric (reminiscent—a little—of Samuel Johnson's high-handed positivism), and to the general "burnt-out" pessimism of the conclusion. However justified the pessimism may be in this case, it works against his overall thrust.

These weaknesses do little to tear apart what is a landmark in argument for civil rights. Mohr's prose is vivacious and readable. His points are clearly and straightforwardly presented, and, as I already said, his prospect for gay activism in society and law is memorable and thought provoking. •

Pages

Taking a Chance on *Taking a Chance on God*

Taking a Chance On God. John J. McNeill.
Boston: Beacon Press, 1988.

By **LLOYD R. LEWIS**
Special to *Dare*

I first read about the publication of this book in *The New York Times Review of Books*. I was excited that McNeill had written another book.

His first, *The Church and the Homosexual* (revised and expanded in 1988), has become a "classic" for lesbians and gay men who are struggling with their relationship to the Church and other religious communities. The Church and the Homosexual brought pressure from the Roman Catholic Church for him to stop his ministry with and to lesbians and gay men. His steadfastness brought about his leaving the Society of Jesus and the priesthood.

I had great hopes for his new book. Unfortunately, and much to my dismay, he does not deliver. *Taking a Chance on God* is a disappointment.

His stated intention is "to provide a spirituality based in the revelatory experience of lesbian and gay Christians, a spirituality designed to meet their special needs and inform their pastoral action in the world" (p. xii). He also says that it is a "very personal" book. The particularity of his experience as a gay Roman Catholic therapist and ex-priest is the context for his reflecting and theologizing. Not bad!

If we have learned anything from the liberation theologians of Central America, Africa and Asia and from feminist/womanist theologians, it is that the particularity of one's life experiences bumping up against one's religious traditions and training, one's socialization and acculturation, and, for persons of the Hebrew-Christian tradition, one's understanding of the role and authority of the Bible, provide the raw materials for a theology of liberation.

However, the next, and I think crucial, step is the courageous and respectfully fearful willingness to state some general theological principles derived from one's particularity that others can test in the particularity of their own contexts.

McNeill fails to take the second step.

The theology and spirituality about which he writes is a traditional Roman Catholic theology and spirituality with a lesbian and gay bent that seems awkward and contrived. He quickly dismisses traditional and incorrect interpretations of biblical material that have been used against gay men and lesbians over the years.

But the theology, if we can call it that, with which he leaves us is a rather pabulum-like mixture of piety (sometimes bordering on piousness) and the jargon of therapy.

After reading and then re-reading McNeill's book - I wanted to be certain that I was not being too harsh - my gut feeling is that he is not asking lesbians and gay men to "take a chance on God" but to take a chance on the church and, in his case, the Roman Catholic Church. These certainly are two realities which should not be confused.

In almost every denomination there are lesbians and gay men who have made the decision to work within their denominations, to lobby for lesbian and gay rights in order to renew and restructure their churches as inclusive communities of faith. At the same time, there are lesbians and gay men who have left their denominations unwilling to give time to

what they have concluded is a lost cause and a no-win situation. For the most part, neither group confuses the institutional church with what they identify as transforming power, deity, god, God or goddess.

McNeill's god remains very Roman Catholic and, in many ways, continues to be defined by the patriarchy and hierarchy of his denomination and tradition. His occasional use of female pronouns and "Mother" when referring to god is a reminder of how anthropomorphically male his god is rather than a challenge to examine our assumptions about our own images of deity.

What lesbians and gay men need is a theology of liberation and a spirituality that opens up the magnificent varieties of ways in which women and men can be "religious" in a world whose existence too often depends on the vagaries and whims of men in powerful leadership positions.

Two other things trouble me about the book. First, throughout this series of essays, each concluding with a prayer, McNeill strives to define the special role that lesbians and gay men have in the transformation of society and the church. At first, being assigned a special role and calling seems exhilarating. How wonderful to have responsibility for the renewing of society and the church because lesbians and gay men have unique sensitivities and can do "religious" things that other persons of faith cannot.

That exhilaration quickly becomes a burden. Granted, gay men and lesbians come to the world or, better, can come to the world with insights and perceptions that can make them more responsive to racism, sexism, classism, age-ism and so forth. It doesn't always happen because lesbians and gay men are human, too.

McNeill's attribution of "specialness" to gay men and lesbians seems to become a works-righteousness stance. If lesbians and gay men are to be accepted, then we had best be "better" than everyone else. The responsibilities lesbians and gay men, particularly Christian lesbians and gay men, have for society and the church is no less or no more than other Christian persons of faith. To claim that we have more (even because we are so sensitive and special) is another kind of homophobia.

Second, one must consider how McNeill's reflecting on the gay and lesbian experience, his own included, is informed by his occupation as a therapist. He works with "troubled" lesbians and gay men, persons who, even though comfortable with their sexual orientation, experience family problems, relationship problems, vocational problems, and so forth.

Working day by day with troubled persons certainly can skew a person's perspective. Not all anger is pathological and not all frustration and pain is neurotic. McNeill is careful not to make this assertion, but the therapy language he uses does not always translate well or adequately into his attempt to construct a theology of liberation and a spirituality for lesbians and gay men.

I affirm that lesbians and gay men need to take a chance on God, however deity is defined. Taking a chance on the church is a risk that needs careful consideration. Taking a chance on McNeill's new book is, I think, ill-advised. •

Sunday, December 18

'Twas the Week Before Christmas

Conductors' PWA Show
MINNIE SQUIRREL
FLAWLESS
DANA ALEXANDER
MONICA MUNRO
SHELLY STONE
BIANCA PAIGE
DIANA HUTTON

2 shows, 10:30 and 12
All proceeds go to
Conductors PWA Fund

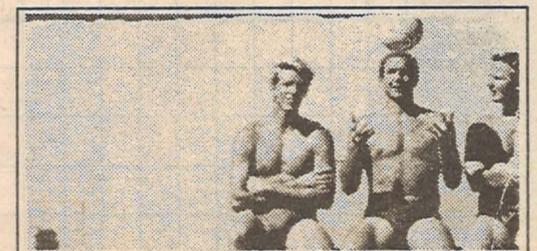
Warehouse 28 is proud to be a
Have-a-Heart sponsor

Sunday, December 25

Merry Christmas

No cover
Free Christmas Punch

TUESDAYS
Fun & Games with
Alexis Spaulding &
Dana Alexander
WEDNESDAYS
50¢ Draft, \$1.25 Bottles
No Cover
THURSDAYS
Shows
FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS
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