# Let’s Talk About Sex

May 1, 2004 By Staff

Because in a magazine about surviving HIV, *eros* and *epidemic* make fine bedfellows—*shame* and *silence* do not

You can’t expect decency from a magazine whose first cover story ended with the writer (HIV negative Kevin Sessums) bedding his subject (Barry Goldwater’s HIV positive grandson, Ty Ross)—in this case, safely. But *POZ*, proud to say, has never aimed for decency—except to make decent the dastardly idea that HIVers want, need and deserve sex as much as anyone else. “Sex is the most powerful force in the world, to be worshiped and learned from, not harnessed, hidden or ignored,” wrote our hopelessly horny “Sick and Tired” columnist, the late Stephen Gendin, in 1997—a dictum we’ve done right by for a decade.

In our early years, sex came mostly in one flavor: homo. From lithe dancer Bill T. Jones and circuit queen Thom Collins to such porn stars as transgendered Karen Dior and brainy Brit Aiden Shaw, we preened with proof positive that HIV needn’t nix anybody’s gay ’90s. High-camp Dominic Hamilton-Little skewered the best-selling *Rules* dating guide with his own protocol for positives: “Don’t blurt out the news of your seropositivity right after the first kiss—unless this is a revenge date, in which case you might want to add that you also have thrush.” And lest true ladies be forgotten, refreshingly raunchy “HIV-enhanced” River Huston dropped by to tell us just how far a girl would go for the big O: “You start calling your clit a collection box and hope for donations.”

But *POZ* came to celebrate desire in its many shapes and sizes. We probed the sex lives (and true loves) of HIVers everywhere, from porn stars Scott O’Hara and Tricia Devereaux to sweet-faced senior Jane Fowler, whose menopausal diagnosis made her a safe-sex activist for the Viagra-charged AARP generation. Then there’s coming-of-age Hydeia Broadbent, who is dealing with the raging hormones and hopes of adolescence in a body born with HIV—and was, the last time we checked, doing just fine “taking a break from boys.” We’ve printed our own sizzling centerfold of Playboy Playmate–turned–PWA postergirl Rebekka Armstrong. We’ve run pieces by ex-addicts fretting over unsafe crystal-meth marathons, former fisters waxing nostalgic for the old days of excess, teenage bug-chasers and masturbation missionaries. We’ve banged the drum for “beyond condoms” prevention ranging from (not so) simple disclosure to magic microbicides. We’ve been slammed for “glamorizing barebacking” and wondering whether, on some level, sex just may be worth dying for. And, believe it or not, we’ve remained mindful that just as it’s possible to find yourself in sex it’s also possible to lose yourself there.

Through it all, our aim has been to dramatize the delicate balance between our rights (to hot sex)

and our responsibilities (not to spread this evil virus). We haven't always succeeded. But even at our most "shocking," we were driven by the conviction that it's better to talk openly about our desires—even our raw ones—than to be shamed into silence. So let the sex debates rage on. Meanwhile, savor this visual orgy of some of the *POZ* decade's sexiest HIVers. [Image not available]

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