POZ Picks

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PICK OF THE LITTER

Jeanne and the Perfect Guy
Directed by Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau
Strand Releasing

The one thing more romantic than Paris in the spring is Paris in the spring with Virginie Ledoyen. As Jeanne, a French Holly Golightly with condoms in this musical about AIDS—*mais oui!*—she'll win you too. And like Jeanne, when you first meet Olivier (Mathieu Demy), you'll think, "This is the perfect guy?" Then he sings, and you melt with her. That he has HIV doesn't make him any less perfect to *bonnes vivantes* like our Jeanne. That said, what delights is more the duo's chemistry than ACT UP/Paris vet Martineau's script, which doesn't give enough of a French twist to a Hollywood ending.

—Kevin O'Leary

BOOKS

In the Land of God and Man
Silvana Paternostro
E. P. Dutton

Latino machismo leads to sexism, homophobia, violence against women and AIDS. So argues Silvana Paternostro, who sets out to expose cultural taboos, including those surrounding sex and rape, abortion and illness. Her mission takes her from the tip of South America to Queens, New York, where some Latinas attempt to "revirginalize" themselves with expensive "hymen reconstruction" operations. In Colombia, Brazil, Guatemala and Mexico, "women are infected by the ignorance, by the inequality that our culture glorifies as romance and love," she writes.

Paternostro soberingly chronicles the devastating rate at which women in Latin America are contracting HIV from unfaithful husbands and "snakeboyfriends" (many of whom do not admit their bisexuality). She's most compelling when bringing the statistics to life, with portraits of Brazilian transvestites and street children, of young women who risk their lives in self-induced abortions, of men and women struggling to talk about their own sexuality—and with the love story of a Guatemalan couple and their baby, all living with HIV.

Having grown up among the elite of Barranquilla, Colombia, Paternostro (now a New Yorker), traveled from the country clubs and beauty salons to the barrios and favelas for her reporting. She also writes of her own background and her American feminist perspective, which drives her work even as it makes her at times harshly judgmental.

This book should be translated into Spanish and sent to every home throughout the Americas.

—Mandalit del Barco

MUSIC

Dance With Angels
Various Artists
Centaur Records

The cover might prepare you for another benefit album of 20-minute "meat-rack megamixes" of songs you've never heard of, but check the playlist. What's this? Remixes of Madonna, Gloria, Janet? Strike up the band.

"Frozen (Club Mix)" is a revved-up version of the ethereal girl's stab at relevance last year. Janet's "Together Again"—a song memorializing friends who died of AIDS—was better left simple but Miss Jackson-if-you're-nasty is never one to say no to whistles and choirs, is she? (P.S.: If you skipped her *Velvet Rope*, you missed out big time.) Meanwhile, Debra Michael's version of "How Do I Live" sends Mattel doll LeAnn Rimes back to the kiddie table where she belongs. And when did Donna Summer start making great music like "Carry On" again? And is that Barry Manilow sneaking in the back door *again* with an only slightly overwrought remix of "Could It Be Magic?"

But make way—more room, please—for the beloved Aretha. Delivering "Here We Go Again" with the able assistance of producer du jour Jermaine Dupri, she reaffirms that today's divas (a word that meant something before VH-1 trademarked it) can't even carry Lady Soul's train.

So if you're still mourning the Morning Party or just want some background music for spring cleaning, get on your go-go boots and grab this CD. All of the net profits go to AIDS charities, so groove without guilt.

—Kevin O'Leary

THEATER

Snakebit
by David Marshall Grant
Century Center Theater

"The disease that dare not speak its name" might be an accurate description of a major subplot of David Marshall Grant's play *Snakebit*, now enjoying an open-ended run at New York City's Century

Center Theater. In this funny, engaging play about a complex three-way relationship among a gay man, his longtime best friend and the friend's wife, AIDS—or, since the dreaded acronym is never directly named, the *fear* of AIDS—serves as the catalyst for the revelation of a long-held secret that threatens to destroy the marriage and friendship.

The characters seem authentic—alternately confused, frightened, angry and ecstatic, often within the space of a monologue. And the audience isn't let off easily either, as the final scene raises more questions than it answers, including several that PWAs will nod at knowingly.

—Jeff Hoover

CYBERPOZ

Zoe Zone
Zoe Lorenz
www.angelfire.com/ky/zoezone

What makes Lorenz's personal web page special is the clean edge of her razor-sharp writing. Recounting a life most might call odd—abandoned at six weeks, she met her transvestite dad only years later and became his drug buddy until kicking heroin in 1985, the date that she was diagnosed with HIV—Lorenz, 31, defies you to say she's anything less than a normal mom who loves her kid and husband. For anyone who ever felt like the odd one out, check with Lorenz for a second opinion.

—Kevin O'Leary

Epidemic!
American Museum of Natural History
New York City

Looking to eradicate HIV? Now through September, take a turn at an interactive TV monitor at this unusual exhibit, where you can click and drag an "antiviral" icon into primary position to stop the virus from replicating. Once victory is yours, the rest of the tour—a fairly extensive history of infectious diseases ranging from the common cold to the rare Ebola virus—is worth a look (plus donation).

Snaking through several rooms, this darkly lit exhibit has a somewhat forced menacing air, especially in tableaux meant to convey devastation, such as a pair of rollerblades left outside a sick child's door. But there's enough information to overcome the kitschy aspects like the huge, brightly colored models of various viruses, bacteria and protozoa hanging from the ceiling.

Although the exhibit is generally accurate, little mention is made of the side effects of most antiretrovirals and the growing number of people whom treatment fails. This may have something to do with the exhibit's funder, Bristol-Myers Squibb, the proud purveyor of HIV meds ddI and hydroxyurea. The drug giant reportedly had final OK over the display captions and text of the

exhibit brochures. That aside, *Epidemic!* provides a relatively concise overview of AIDS.

—Jeff Hoover

SUMMER SCHOOL

In the dark about youth and HIV? Consider these titles your homework:

My Mommy Has AIDS (Dream Publishing) is a children's book (for ages 4 to 8) and labor of love by former nurse Lynda Arnold, who got HIV from an on-the-job needlestick in 1992. In a clever tale that will choke you up, Arnold, the mother of two adopted children, dispenses mama bear-hugs with delicate discussions of transmission and mortality.

San Francisco non-profit Health Initiatives for Youth has a rep for putting out great material by and for young HIVers. The second edition of **A Young Woman's Survival Guide**, a health manual for female gen-Yers with info delivered in a hip, urban tone, scores with incredible photography and daring poetry on the side. Also, the new **Thrive Guide** touches on almost every need-to-know for the under-25 set living with HIV.

Shot over three years by the late filmmaker Richard Kotuk, **Travis** (Independent Television Service) documents the life of an African-American child living with AIDS in the South Bronx. The movie isn't about milestones or "gotcha" crying scenes, but the real work of daily survival. The strength Travis and his grandmother, Geneva Jeffries, draw from each other is inspiring.

POZ contributor Donna Futterman and Caitlin Ryan's definitive guide to nature's young wildlife, **Lesbian and Gay Youth: Care and Counseling** (Columbia University Press), is the comprehensive guide parents and caregivers of gay teens need to make a difference. Futterman draws on her nationally recognized HIV expertise to create a how-to for those who mean it when they say, "Save the children!"

—Kevin O'Leary

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