POZ Picks

Sights and sounds-The best in AIDS-related books, music, multimedia and theater

January 1, 1997 By James Ireland Baker

Music

Bilingual
Pet Shop Boys
(Atlantic)

More than any other mainstream pop group, the Pet Shop Boys have used their albums as a means of grappling with the HIV pandemic, presenting a kind of evolving AIDS narrative. Actually's "It Couldn't Happen Here" (1987) was inspired by the AIDS-related death of one of Neil Tennant's friends and was soon followed by Behavior's "Being Boring" (1990), which traced the life of a young man from the sexual liberation of the '70s to the funerals of the '90s. Very (19930 featured "Dreaming of the Queen," which used Elizabeth II's recent royal troubles as a metaphor for the untimely death of friends, with Tennant singing dispiritedly, "There are no more lovers left alive/No one has survived." But if this all sounds despairing, take heart: The Boys' new album is decidedly optimistic. In "The Survivors," Tennant offers an edgy sense of hope: "Somehow we're alive/Our head bowed/At memorials/for other faces in the crowd/Many roads will run through many lives/but somehow we'll survive."

For Our Children Too!
Various Artists
(Kid Rhino)

This album, the sequel to 1991's For Our Children, benefits the Pediatric AIDS Foundation and features the likes of Babyface, Cher, Natalie Merchant and Seal singing songs for kidds. But don't let the title fool you: This album will appeal to adults as much as, if not more than, children.

Books

Sanctuary
Clive Barker
(HarperCollins)

Horrormeister Clive Barker's new novel is about gay wildlife photographer Will Rabjohns, whose childhood connection to a murderous older couple, Rosa McGee and Jacob Steep, later inspires him to photograph the death of animal species in an uncompromising, ultimately terrifying manner (think of a cross between Ansel Adams and Robert Mapplethorpe). Barker makes a convincing connection between the destruction of our environment and the effects of AIDS, writing lyrically about Rabjohn's dying friends in San Francisco: "What they had never talked about, because it had not seemed likely, was that they would be...in the middle of their lives, and talking like old me: Remembering their dead peers and watching the clock until it was time for the pills." Despite its unsparing tone, Barker's novel is ultimately optimistic, as Rabjohns makes peave with the world, his past and his own mortality.

Always Remember
Photographed by Paul Margolies
(Fireside/Simon & Schuster)

The fashion industry has been among the hardest hit by the AIDS pandemic, so who better to design panels for the AIDS Quilt than, well, fashion designers? In 1993, Rifat Ozbek, a two-time recipient of the British Designer of the Year Award, began soliciting panels from fellow UK designers.

Meanwhile, the NAMES Project was doing the same in New York City. This book is the culmination of both efforts, featuring gorgeous photographs of equally gorgeous panels created by and for the famous, the infamous and the downright obscure.

The panel made for Perry Ellis by Pat Cool is, for instance, a tiny white name centered in a swath of purple. ("The size of his name in relation to the size of the panel represents his fear in dealing with the disease openly," Cool writes tellingly.). There's also a panel for Robert Mappelthorpe, one for Halston (made of his signature Ultrasuede) and one by Tommy Hilfiger. This beautiful book is as much about love as it is about loss, giving the lie to those who believe that fashion designers are concerned only with surfaces.

The Wild Darkness
Harold Brodkey
(Henry Holt)

Harold Brodkey's last book, a memoir subtitled "The Story of My Death," is problematic from the start. In the first chapter, set in spring 1993, Brodkey confesses surprise at the news of his AIDS diagnosis: The last time he was exposed to HIV was in 1977, he claims, equating his assumed exposure with the last time he'd had *homosexual* sex.

More disturbing is Brodkey's use of his diagnosis as an excuse to wrestle solipsistically with his professional and personal reputation, facing his oncoming death with an unconvincing literary *Weltschmerz*: "I'm tired of defending [my work], tired of giving life to it," he complains. In the end, Brodkey succeeds in conveying more a sense of his own self-importance than what it's like to live

with, or die from, AIDS.

Split Image
Charles Winecoff
(Dutton)

Like *Psycho*'s Norman Bates, the character he has become indelibly associated with, Tony Perkins lived two very different lives: On screen, he was a shy "straight" boy, while off screen he was, according to his biography, aggressively pursuing anonymous sex with other men.

Perkins' Hollywood-enforced secrecy about his true sexuality continued throughout his life-until, under the influence of psychoanalyst Mildred Newman, the actor decided to "go straight."

After a brief but passionate affair with a young Victoria Principal, Perkins began to play the role of the "family man," becoming the devoted (but often unfaithful) husband of photographer Berry Berenson and father to Elvis and Osgood.

When, in 1990, the *National Enquirer* announced that Perkins was battling AIDS, the terrified actor retreated into guilt, depression and denial. If the end effect of this fine biography is a tragic sense of incompletion, the onus is not on the conflicted actor so much as our culture: We stigmatize difference, diversity and disease, preferring to hear lies from our role models and heros than the abiding, if sometimes difficult, truth.

BUY ME A RIVER
A holiday gift guide for the armchair shopper

Believe it or not, there *are* alternatives to the hustle and bustle of shopping for the holidays. In fact, great gifts can be as simple as making a few phone calls. The following ideas either benefit AIDS organizations or can help your favorite PWA by providing regular deliveries of food, flowers or services. And when your shopping is done, remember to relax and throw another catalog on the fire.

- Home-cooked meals from Food From Home ($77 plus shipping, 800.235.7070), frozen fresh and shipped second-day air, give your loved one a week's worth of nutritious and easy-to-prepare cheer.

- Or how about an entire year's worth of chow? The elegant *Food Is Love* 1997 Calendar from God's Love We Deliver ($12, 201.313.57600 features black-and-white photos by New York City's most notable shutterbugs (including Bruce Weber and Nan Goldin), along with tempting recipes.

- Why just wear a red ribbon when you can eat one? Fabulous red ribbon cookies from Kathy's Kitchen are meaningfully delicious. ($15 to $25 or one dozen cookies in a tin, 212.229.1704)

- Say it with flowers: Smith & Hawken's Flower-of-the-Month subscriptions ($125 to $269, 800.776.3336) include deliveries of potted flowers and bulbs. A "tasteful" variation is Harry & David's Fruit-of-the-Month ($65.95 for three months, $259 for 12 months, 800.547.3033).

- Provide some long-distance pampering with the Complete Bath Set from the *National AIDS Awareness Catalog* ($28.95.800.669.1078). This set includes nine items, from maple-handled, pure-bristle brushes to a 100 percent natural loofah sponge for soothing away stress.

- Until There's a Cure offers fashionable bracelets ($20 silver-plate, $70 sterling, $500 gold, 800.88.UNTIL), but looks forward to the day the bracelet will be *out* of fashion.

- Turn the holiday greeting-card grind on its ear with CareCards from Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS (minimum donation $10, 212.840.0770, x251). Each card will bear your custom-printed personal message. And remember: "Thank you" notes will soon be in order...

- Keep in mind local options such as dog-walking service, house/apartment cleaning or a relaxing message by a PWA-friendly masseuse (check your local Yellow Pages). And many local AIDS organizations offer a bounty of gift choices.

- Last, but not least, perhaps the perfect gift is right under your nose-a subscription to *POZ* ($24.95 for one year, 800.973.2376).

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/POZ-Picks-December-1996-January-1997-12439-5346