POZ Picks—March 1997

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

March 1, 1997 By James Ireland Baker

Books

The Activist's Handbook
Randy Shaw
(University of California Books)

This book provides an abundance of information on activism for a new generation. Author Shaw, director and supervising attorney of the Tenderloin Housing Clinic in San Francisco, rejects "the notion that current political conditions have confined social-change activism to the history books." Indeed, he effectively uses history as a blueprint for future-and present-activism, showing how to harness the media, the courts and the electoral process to build coalitions and inspire "fear and loathing" in politicians.

I'll Be Your Mirror
Nan Goldin
(Scalo)

Published in conjunction with Goldin's retrospective at New York City's Whitney Museum of Art, *Mirror* is the most comprehensive compilation of the photographer's work to date, spanning the '70s to the present. At once luminous, sad and celebratory, Goldin's photos initially documented the denizens of New York's East Village in the early '80s, but later focused on tragedy as AIDS began to affect her friends. It is impossible to remain unmoved while viewing Goldin's photos of, say, her friend Alf Bold in his hospital bed or the funeral of Cookie Mueller. "It's not bullets that catch these soldiers, and there's no bombs and gunfire," wrote Mueller, who died of AIDS in 1989. "These people are dying in a whisper." But Goldin's work amplifies this whisper, bringing it to the ears-and eyes-of the world.

Jerome: After the Pageant
Thomas Avena and Adam Klein
(Bastard Books San Francisco)

When Jerome Caja's friend and fellow artist Charles Sexton died of AIDS in January 1991, Caja

memorialized-and immortalized-him by mixing his ashes with glitter an resin, creating *objets d'art* from the resulting paste. If Caja's response to grief seems, well, *unusual*, then it's perfectly appropriate: The word unusual can be justly applied to much of Caja's life and work, which is highlighted in this oversized, beautifully produced book. Created from such artistic substances as nail polish, eyeliner and lipstick, Caja's work is unsentimental and unflinching. It is also, in the words of art critic David Bonetti, "ethical and profoundly humane."

Kicking the Pricks
Derek Jarman
(The Overlook Press)

"The HIV virus doesn't frighten me," wrote British filmmaker, painter and designer Derek Jarman, who died of AIDS in 1994. "I go to bed with it." Written during the filming of Jarman's *The Last of England* (1987), this collection of journal entries and notes creates a self-portrait of the brilliant arthouse filmmaker. The fourth in a series of autobiographical works, *Kicking* is filled with stories of the author's childhood (his father was a kleptomaniac), reminiscences of David Hockney and Andy Warhol, and eminently quotable observations ("I don't believe in the gold at the end of the rainbow, but I do believe in the rainbow").

Life Is Not a Rehearsal
David Brudnoy
(Doubleday)

When conservative Boston talk-show host Brudnoy came down with a bad flu in 1988, friend suggested he be tested for HIV. The test came back positive-and Brudnoy was so terrified of public exposure (what would his fans think?) that he went to an out-of-town doctor and never submitted bills to his insurance company. But the dreaded moment finally arrived: In 1994, an on-air coughing fit sent Brudnoy to the hospital mid-show. Hospitalized for weeks, he nearly died from AIDS-related health problems, but returned 10 weeks later to proclaim: "I am a 54-year-old homosexual. I was suffering the first attack of HIV-the AIDS virus." Now healthy, Brudnoy continues to work as a talk-show host, movie reviewer, cultural commentator and professor at Boston University. "I am not a wholly new man," Brudnoy writes, "but I am better for what I've gone through. The damn AIDS isn't going to get me just yet."

Music

The Veil
Esquizito
(PSW Music)

A former member of the Lavender Light Gospel Choir, Esquizito (Eric Perez) writes and sings about some difficult subjects. In "Don't Try It," a "warrior cry" for safer sex, he announces: "The very first victory of the day is to get up and stand by my bed-and then I decide how to shake that victory, no matter how bad things appear to be." By day, Esquizito teaches social health and

violence prevention; at night, he creates his music, a compelling contemporary fusion of jazz, blues and Brazilian rhythms. Call 800.484.7281.

Work It! Dance=Life
Various Artists
(Priority Records)

Dance music is often associated with the mindless, apolitical hedonism of club culture, but this CD will allow you to shake your booty-and feel good about it later. Featuring everyone from Janet Jackson and Gloria Estefan to Reba McEntyre and Barry Manilow, this stellar compilation benefits educational services at the LA Gay and Lesbian Center.

Film and Video

Shooting Stars
Directed by R. Starzecpyzel
(Dragon Rising Productions)

This lively and honest video documents eight PWAs during their Wednesday therapy sessions in Provincetown, Massachusetts. The men discuss multiple losses, memorial services, dating, anger, love, sex and changes in their bodies. A portion of the proceeds goes to the Provincetown AIDS Support Group. For more information, call Benyo Music Productions at 800.413.6996.

Television

Breaking the Surface: The Greg Louganis Story
(USA Network)

What happens when a buff, bronzed teen heartthrob plays one of the greatest swimmers who ever lived in a biopic for the USA Network? The television version of Greg Louganis' bestselling autobiography stars Mario (*Saved by the Bell*) Lopez in and out of Speedos. And guess what? He's unexpectedly good, particularly in the scenes when Louganis tests positive.

CYBER POZ

AIDS Activism on the Web

If AIDS activism was defined in the streets in the '80s, today's hotbed of advocacy is the Web. From national organizations to local groups, online hell-raisers are on the Web. There's even an online *POZ*.

The largest and most comprehensive list of AIDS activist organizations is contained in the Queer Resource Directory (QRD), which began as an archive for Queer Nation.

For personal activism, Project Inform provides in-depth information targeted to HIV/AIDS laypeople. Its mission and challenge: “Take charge of your health.”

ACT UP/NY http://www.actupny.org

Aegis http://www.aegis.com

The Critical Path Project http://www.critpath.org

HRC http://www.hrcusa.org

Marty Howard’s HIV/AIDS Homepage http://www.smartlink.net/~martinjh

POZ http://www.poz.com

Project Inform http://www.projinf.org

QRD http://www.qrd.org/qrd

ACT UP ESSENTIALS

Who said the revolution wouldn’t be televised? In ACT UP’s case, he revolution was not only televised-it was videotapes and filmed and written about and endless argued over. This list provides a sampling of books, films and videos chronicling the organization’s history.

READ Larry Kramer’s *Reports from the Holocaust* (St. Martin’s Press, 1994), a collection of essays, provides essential reading from a founder of Gay Men’s Health Crisis and ACT UP, *AIDS Demographics* (Seattle Bay Press, 1990), by Douglas Crimp with Adam Rolston, offers an overview, highlighting the group’s brilliant graphics. *Women, AIDS and Activism* (South End Press, 1990) is an in-depth view of women and the pandemic, written by the ACT UP/NY Women and AIDS Book Group.

WATCH The video *Stop the Church* (Frameline, 415. 703.8650) chronicles ACT UP’s landmark 1989 demonstration against Cardinal John O’Connor at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City. Another video, *Seize Control of the FDA* (GMHC, 212.337.1950), documents ACT UP’s 1988 seizure of the FDA in Rockville, Maryland.

EXPLORE *DIVA TV* (Damn Interfering Video Activists) has been broadcasting coverage of ACT UP and AIDS issues since 1989. Its archives provide access to vital voices and actions of the crisis, past and present. *DIVA TV* is accessible through the ACT UP/New York website (see Cyber *POZ*, above).

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