POZ Picks

September 1, 1999 By Kevin O'Leary

PICK OF THE LITTER

No Boundaries
Various Artists
Epic Records

The benefit album genre played itself out in the early ’90s, but this one is worth a listen. Here, some of the biggest names in rock lend a hand to longtime AIDS fighters Doctors Without Borders (as well as CARE and OxFam) in rebuilding the lives of Kosovar refugees. Old reliables like Neil Young and Peter Gabriel are joined by those who watched Live Aid as kids, Alanis Morrisette and Sarah McLachlan—with live versions of “Baba” and “Mary,” respectively. Subbing for U2 on the playlist is Pearl Jam, whose single “Last Kiss”—terribly catchy for a song about a grisly car wreck—will boost the album in charts and hearts. Give it a go.

The Pretenders
Viva El Amor
Warner Bros. Records

“This is a clean-up job/Everybody grab a mop,” Chrissie Hynde declares on this new album, the band’s best in years. Dramas played out on CNN and in her own home have put fire back into her hook-laden themes of revolution.

Hynde’s renewed urgency is evident on the spit-polished, radio-ready single “Human,” but it’s not even the best offering here. Candidates for that honor in-clude the medical marijuana anthem “Legalise Me” and “Popstar,” a drive-by on shoddy up-and-comers that must have come in handy as Hynde gave rock-star lessons at this summer’s Lilith Fair.

If you just tuned in with their last studio album’s AIDS benefit single “I’ll Stand By You” or Hynde’s support of renegade ACT UP San Francisco, you should know that this is the album true fans have been waiting for. The rock messiah is risen. Look busy.

BOOKS

Getting It On

Edited by Mitch Roberson and Julia Dubner
Soho Press

With bestselling scribes John Irving, Martin Amis and Anne Rice sharing their latex excerpts, this tribute to the condom reads like a stop at the STD clinic. “I never thought I’d see *that one* here…” you’ll say at each new arrival. Is that Andrew McGahan going on about genital warts? And T. Corghessan Boyle riffing on rubber friction? And Nathan Englander, that young hotshot who seems to show up at the opening of every condom? Tie one on with this bunch as you wait for the doctor to see you.

The Boys Are Back in Town

Three survivors of the landmark gay writers group, The Violet Quill, are again ruffling feathers in literary circles.

POZ devotees who got a sneak peek at Andrew Holleran’s In September the Light Changes (Hyperion) in our August 1998 fiction issue will tell you that the author hasn’t delivered such satisfying work since *Dancer From the Dance*. With these 16 stories two decades in the making—we didn’t say he was quick—Holleran may not always tackle the subject of HIV head-on, but the work is suffused with loss, mem----ory and, for some lucky characters, renewal.

The Burning World (St. Martin’s Press) is a biography worthy of its subject, Edmund White. Stephen Barber skates briskly from the writer’s Ohio beginnings to his New York City nights—White has already exhausted this period in his own write—and the work truly hits its stride in detailing the aftershocks of the seropositive ex-pat’s trip to Paris, the gay lit ghetto’s equivalent of Joyce’s flight from Erin.

Felice Picano is not so lucky in his choice of biographer. In Picano’s cellophane-veiled roman à clef, *The Book of Lies* (Alyson), a queer studies hotshot dives into the wreck of the Purple Circle, a gay literary salon. Complete with a fake bibliography, this is a must for HIVers fond of literary guess-who’s, but for the real deal, check out the group’s catty correspondence collected in David Bergman’s brilliantly edited 1994 *The Violet Quill Reader* (St. Martin’s Press).

Undetectable
Directed by Jay Corcoran
Wringing Hands Productions

Don’t let its tired title turn you off to this fine new documentary. *Undetectable: The New Face of AIDS* follows a year in the lives of six Boston-area HIVers downing triple-drug cocktails. The three men and three women run the gamut: PIs work great for David, but Carole isn’t so lucky. Joe feels like he’s wasting what life he has left, while Belynda contemplates suicide when her meds fail—she

feels she's let down her friends. Anibal happily finds an HIV poz woman for some "instant gratification" after his doctor warns about reinfection. As for Matilde, her doc says she works too much, but the real work comes in convincing her son to take his Norvir while he's at school. Corcoran, whose 1997 gay circuit party–themed *Life and Death on the A-List* met with high praise, has again crafted a savvy depiction of the many contradictions of positive living. —Shana Naomi Krochmal

Out on the Strip

Just finished *Moby Dick*? Try *Ethan Exposed* (St. Martin's Press), Eric Orner's new collection of adventures from the unfabulous social life of Ethan Green. An alternative news-paper mainstay, the strip's cast includes Doug, the protagonist's sexy, seropositive lovah and most likely break-out character. Doug's Crixivan foibles and Ethan's annoying overprotectiveness add a refreshing touch of reality to this funny business.

Self-Help 911

Goddamn it, pull it together! That's the message of these books mining the inexhaustible market of gay boys with issues. (Memo to publishers: HIVers of every sex and preference could use a manual, too.) So pack your chakras and ids, kids, we're journeying to the center of the self.

Boasting enviable jacket blurbs from the enlightened Deepak Chopra and enlivened Candace Bushnell, ex-model Brad Gooch's Finding the Boyfriend Within (Simon & Schuster) is a paean to self-love and embracing your inner dinner date. And really, isn't it time that the gay community rediscovered the culture of narcissism and just said, "Hey, what about me?" Let you—and only you—past the velvet rope for this one.

Richard MacIntyre's *Mortal Men: Living With Asymptomatic HIV* (Rutgers University Press) is the result of the author's own 14-year battle against a disease he cannot feel. With sensitive, thorough interviews of fellow gay HIVers with uncertainty as their only opportunistic infection, the registered nurse examines the lives of people too long considered walking oxymorons—healthy people with HIV.

The Ins and Outs of Gay Sex (Dell Publishing) has a hot package for a medical manual, but it's the food for thought inside that really satisfies. Unlike most sex guides, this one doesn't gloss over HIV with a perfunctory glance. Plus it has the unique conversational tone of Stephen Goldstone, a New York doc who's seen it all. Go ahead, ask him about being too tight for your man or for the real deal on anal pap smears. The doctor is in—and out.

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