POZ Picks

November 1, 1997

Pick of the Litter

Keith Haring on the Wall

Seven years after his death from AIDS at the age of 31, Keith Haring's legacy is alive and kicking. Graffiti artists continue to copy his style, AIDS activists sport "Radiant Baby" tattoos and Haring's brightly colored sculptures are installed among the swankiest stretch of Park Avenue. It's a no secret that his vision of engaged art has permeated pop culture, but the recent exhibit at New York City's Whitney Museum proves how highly Haring's supervaried oeuvre is esteemed in the official art world. This three-ring retrospective, with an accompanying tape on which Haring discusses his work with pop-culture hero Andy Warhol, thrilled the masses and art critics alike. It's worth a trip to Canada's Art Gallery of Ontario, where the exhibit will be on display through January 16.

—Stephen Greco

Books

The Last Party: Studio 54 and the Culture of the Night

Anthony Haden-Guest (William Morrow and Company, Inc.)

When Steve Rubell, the co-owner and creator of Studio 54, died of AIDS in 1989, the final few embers of an aura of fabulousness seemed to die with him. The Last Party is the gossip, glitzy, bittersweet tale of a generation. Haden-Guest dissects the culture of the night while looking into the psyche of the nightclub owner—a social seismologist with the daunting task of predicting the shifts and quakes of the new. It was this '70s "euphoria" that drew a generation of trendies to New York City—only to be brutally awakened by the dawn of AIDS.

Still, Haden-Guest evokes the magic and madness of the '70s before they morphed into the morning after of the '80s. A photorealism that draws you right into the swirl of sweating bodies and disco-lights provides the stage for a night-time utopian dream.

The book has also fashioned a new CD, sold separately, forever preserving the silver-sequined sexy sounds of Disco Duck and Gloria Gaynor for new generations.

—Jeffrey Solomon

Autopornography: A Memoir of Life in the Lust Lane

Scott O’Hara (Harrington Park Press)

“Sex, at its best, is a mental and emotional exercise,” sums up porn-star-turned-sex-activist Scott O’Hara in this picaresque romp through a lifetime of sexcapades.

The author pays tribute to his obsession with men in a freewheeling anthology of erotic anecdotes, from unrequited teenage crushes on high school heroes to quick and nasty encounters with some of porn’s biggest...uh...names. O’Hara bares his soul and his innermost desires with unflinching and unapologetic honesty, including his personal brushes with AIDS-related lymphoma and KS. The result is an entertaining but frank exploration of the impact of AIDS on gay male sexuality and the gay porn industry of the ’80s.

O’Hara’s mantra: Sex, like life, does and should involve risk. That’s what makes it exciting. How much risk one is willing to take is the responsibility of the individual. His book’s moral: One should be prepared to live with whatever the results of that decision are.

—Dennis Daniel

HIV Law: A Survival Guide to the Legal System for People Living with HIV

Paul Hampton Crockett (Three Rivers Press)

Paul Hampton Crockett calls upon and combines two areas of expertise in this informative new book: He is HIV positive and he is a lawyer.

HIV Law offers useful and up-to-date information on ways to achieve estate- and health-planning goals, despite the law’s failure to provide adequate recognition and structure to gay or other non-traditional relationships. Crockett explains how the odds can vastly improve with careful and timely planning.

Crockett’s sections on securing and preserving health insurance are especially relevant, specifically the information concerning the Federal Health Insurance Reforms of 1996. Anyone living with AIDS knows that insurance companies are not our friends, but Crockett reminds us that even employers are not our allies when it comes to getting what we’re entitled to, and that we be our own informed advocates.

HIV Law provides practical solutions to navigating an intimidating legal system in a society that fears the virus. Also included is a directory of national, state and local resources for further information.

—Dan Johnston

Music

Andy Bey: Ballads, Blues and Bey (Evidence)

The distinctive four-octave voice—sweet, sincere, subtle and sad—rises from a burnished bass-baritone up through crooning falsetto tones.

Though he has been recording since he was a 12-year-old inspired by romantic balladeer Billy Eckstine, this latest stark, spare album has catapulted the now 57-year-old HIV positive recording artist to new heights, garnering him the best gigs of his life.

Admirers find Bey's ultralanguid style, with its late-night lounge feel, both lulling and hypnotic. Standout cuts on this new, almost-all-ballad CD include the classic "Someone to Watch Over Me" and "Willow Weep for Me." Introspective and full of integrity, Bey has sung with such jazz heavyweights as Charles Mingus, Max Roach and Horace Silver.

—Chip Deffaa

The Life

Original Cast Recording (Sony Classical)

Using his legendary style to expound upon a styleless decade, Broadway veteran composer Cy Coleman's (Sweet Charity, City of Angels) newest venture, The Life, is a thoroughly modern take on prostitution, street politics, drugs and AIDS in the early '80s.

Tony award-winner Lillias White is the jewel in this show's crown. As an aging prostitute, White's voice jumps off the CD to hustle her wares in anybody's living room. Her show-stopping performance of "The Oldest Profession" has already become a Coleman classic. Listeners will remember the Judy Garland-esque belt of Sam Harris, famous from his days on Star Search, in the role of Jojo, a streetwise hustler out to make a buck on the misfortunes of others. Also lending a solid performance is Bellamy Young, as a starstruck user on a par with Eve Harrington.

Although Ira Gasman's lyrics sometimes venture into the merely mundane ("When I say get on the stick, you'd better do it Nestle's Quik"), The Life manages to capture a specific moment in time—the heartbeat before the street was set ablaze by the epidemic. Indeed, it is White's character who complains persistently throughout the show of fatigue and other symptoms we now recognize as AIDS.

—Phil Geoffrey Bond

Cyber POZ

Spider Woman

If you are a woman, you'll want to take a spin around these websites. Since women's bodies and biology are different than men's, as if the reality of our everyday lives, there is a real need for woman-specific HIV information. From health care and treatment to public policy and advocacy, these websites (plus a whole lot of resources) deliver a wide range of data to empower any woman.

Women Alive

www.thebody.com/wa/wapage.html

IAPAC Women’s Health Issues

www.iapac.org/women.html

Wellness Web/Women and HIV

www.wellweb.com/women/WMHIV.HTM

ACT UP/Philadelphia

www.critpath.org/actup/index.html

The New York Times

Women’s Health

www.nytimes.com/women

Women’s AIDS Network

www.womens-aids-network.com

CDC National AIDS Clearinghouse Women & HIV

www.cdcnac.org/aidsinfo.html#Women

HIV InSite

hivinsite.ucsf.edu

—Ronnilyn Pustil

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