NEXT Confronts “The Bare Truth”

December 20, 2010 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

For those of you not familiar with LGBT media in New York City, NEXT Magazine is the major LGBT nightlife publication distributed in bars and other venues citywide.

HX was its rival for many years, but it is now out of business. Odyssey (originally from California) recently launched an NYC version, but NEXT remains quite robust with advertisers.

All of that is to say that editorial coverage in NEXT is seen by lots of LGBT folks. So I was pleased, to say the least, that NEXT did such a great job for its December 1st World AIDS Day issue.

For starters, they made sure that us gay and bisexual guys would pick up a copy by placing well-known model, singer and bartender Gregory on the cover offering readers a condom. Locals might remember that Gregory has the distinction of being the model who had appeared the most on the cover of HX. Nice touch.

"The Bare Truth" was the feature article, which addresses the decline of condom use. POZ blogger and longtime AIDS activist Eric Sawyer is quoted throughout.

Here’s an excerpt:

“Condom use is in horrible decline,” says longtime AIDS activist Eric Sawyer. Indeed, the 2010 New York Department of Health study reports that only 61% of MSM (men who have sex with men) say they consistently used condoms during anal sex in past year. Concurrently, HIV rates have been on the rise--a CDC report issued this September showed a 17% increase in new infections amongst MSM between 2005 and 2008,

and almost half of those diagnosed as HIV+ had no clue they were infected.

The article does a fine job of exploring the current challenges to safer sex messaging, which include misperceptions by younger gay and bisexual men that HIV/AIDS is now “manageable” and the popularity of bareback pornography.

"Positive I.D." was an additional story that focused on the NYC nightlife options for HIV-positive men.

Kudos and bravo and all that to NEXT for showing us how HIV/AIDS coverage can be made palatable for LGBT nightlife publications without losing its informative value. I hope more LGBT nightlife publications do the same.

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