

Long overdue

After a nine-month respite, the Lambda Book Report and the Lammy Awards are back, now as a nonprofit venture

by Bob Roehr

Many faithful readers held their breath when word came last fall that the *Lambda Book Report* was suspending publication to reorganize. They feared it was the last they would see of the influential niche publication (circulation: 8,000) and its sister, the Lambda Literary Awards, or Lammys. But they can breathe easier now: Both are back and better than ever.

Lambda Book Report was the glue that held together the small world of gay and lesbian books and publishing. Deacon Maccubbin, the owner of Lambda Rising Bookstore in Washington, D.C., started it in 1987 as a vehicle to promote a more professional view of gay and lesbian books. Two years later he added the Lammys, to recognize the

40 to 48 pages, says Marks. Loyal readers will find a handful of extended articles at the front of the magazine and an expanded number of medium-length reviews. Capsule reviews are gone, and the graphic design is simplified.

Marks is excited by the increased frequency of publication, which "will allow us more flexibility to focus the theme."

"Healthy, happy homos," is the shorthand that assistant editor Kanani Kauka uses to describe a lead review in the July issue. It focuses on books delving into the "brain-mind" matrix of homosexuality.

August brings mysteries and erotica. "I'm sure the authors won't like us saying this, but beach reading," says Marks. "We are going to do



best in gay and lesbian literature. The awards are given at a banquet during the annual American Booksellers Association convention.

"Gay books are not reviewed thoroughly in the straight press," laments David Bergman, professor of English, writer, and editor of books such as *The Violet Quill Reader*. "Here was a journal, a place of record for all of the gay and lesbian books being published. Also a place to advertise and a place where publishers could be sure their books would be noticed."

LBR became must reading for book buyers and readers inundated with the growing number of gay and lesbian titles.

The nine-month hiatus reinforced the importance of *LBR* to that community.

"I'm hearing that publishers are telling [gay authors] their books have not done as well because the *Book Report* is not there to review them," says *LBR* senior editor Jim Marks.

"You really do need to think about it as part of an integrated industry," he says. "We are the trade report and there are gay bookstores and publishers. Removing that one piece has meant that reviews are hit and miss. It affects sales."

Maccubbin admits that finances played a part in the decision to restructure an operation he has subsidized from the start. But more importantly, he felt the journal wasn't fulfilling its mission to "in a very timely fashion, review every new gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender book that is published."

The revised *LBR* is a monthly publication of

all fun stuff."

The new *LBR* was incorporated as a nonprofit. "We have always functioned as a nonprofit; we were constantly broke; we had just never gotten it officially sanctioned," says Kauka. "This gives us a lot more flexibility."

The Lammys remain part of the *Lambda Book Report*.

Bergman sees the awards as important because they indicate that "what we are doing is meritorious, and the best of what we are doing is really significant. That helped change the way gay and lesbian writers regarded themselves."

He believes the Lammys opened the door for explicitly gay material to be considered in such prestigious venues as the National Book Award and the Book Critics Circle Award.

"I think it is at least in part because of the Lammys beginning to distinguish the best of what was being produced, at a time when people were willing to think of all of it as negligible," Bergman says.

The Lammy awards dinner has become a fund-raiser to help cover the gap between income and operating costs for the two projects. Marks is optimistic that ticket sales and corporate underwriting of this year's event, held June 14 in Chicago, "will come pretty close to erasing the deficit" for the next year of operations.

His two-year plan calls for a modest increase in circulation and advertising. Staff will grow to three on the editorial and two on the business side of operations.



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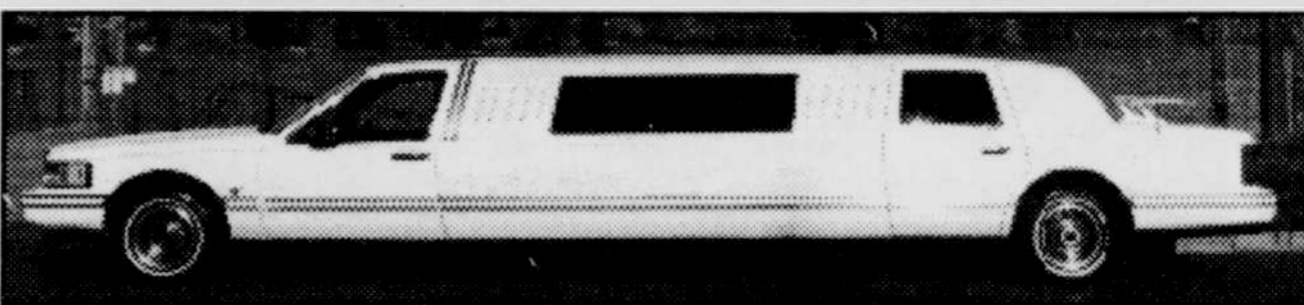
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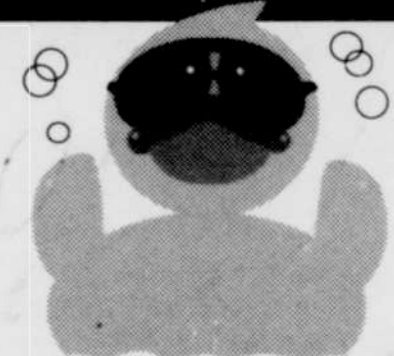
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