

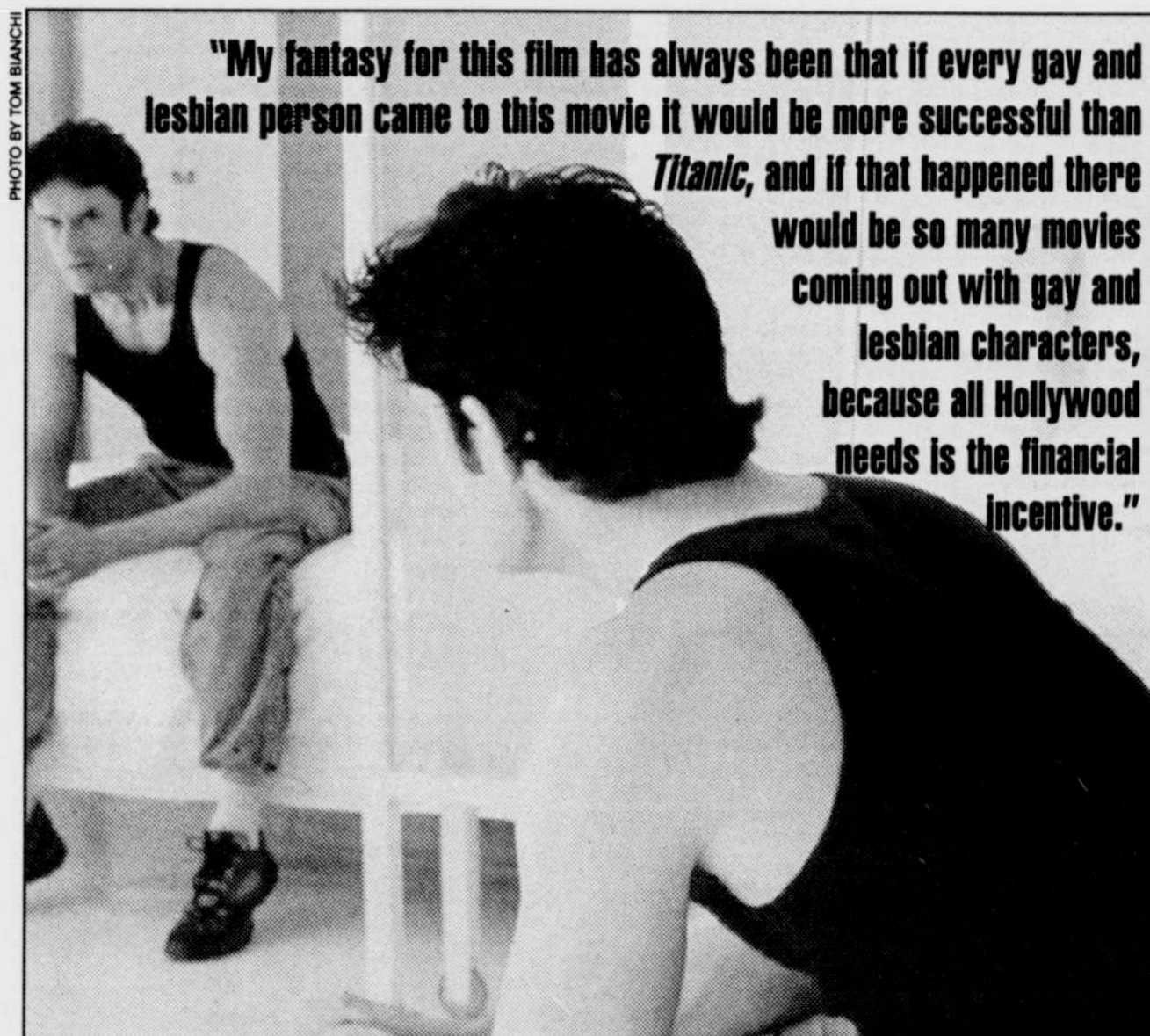
Everett talked about a lot of other things during the interview, but this is what stuck with me: That an openly gay actor who claims not to be overly political (isn't being out political in and of itself?) would consider his latest project a success if it paves the way for more movies with gay characters.

Although there are many activists who stridently oppose the mainstreaming of the gay community, I personally like the idea that a gay-themed film could be widely marketed and enjoyed by everyone—heaven knows we've all watched plenty of movies with nothing but straight characters. I, too, hope *The Nest Best*

Thing is wildly successful and Hollywood catches on that gay is good, because gay rights organizations can't buy the kind of PR and outreach that happens to people eating popcorn in the dark.

■ **THE NEXT BEST THING**, starring Rupert Everett and Madonna and directed by John Schlesinger, opens March 3 nationwide.

CHRISTOPHER D. CUTTONE is an amateur performance artist and one lucky bastard who spent 36 hours in the sun while y'all were cold and wet. He can be reached at cmonster@justout.com.



"My fantasy for this film has always been that if every gay and lesbian person came to this movie it would be more successful than *Titanic*, and if that happened there would be so many movies coming out with gay and lesbian characters, because all Hollywood needs is the financial incentive."

Next worst thing

Film critic Mark J. Huisman of the *Village Voice* has started a campaign to boycott *The Next Best Thing*, since, as he put it in his e-mail: "Paramount Entertainment, which recently gave hate monger Dr. Laura Schlesinger her own TV show, is currently spending a fortune to market its upcoming gay-themed film."

Rupert Everett was asked about the apparent conflict during the press junket. While Schlesinger's show was news to him, he offered his thoughts on the media access given to the conservative, homophobic right wing.

"It's this kind of issue that makes me really happy not to be American," he remarked. "Coming to this country and hearing Jerry Falwell saying you're like a junkie or alcoholic is depressing after a while and doesn't happen anywhere else, certainly not in Europe, in the same way. Totally scary I think."

Since then, officials from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation have met with representatives of Paramount to discuss Schlesinger's show, which will air beginning this fall. In a joint statement, GLAAD and Paramount described the meeting as a "positive exchange of differing perspectives" and said they expected the dialogue to continue.



Paramount's people discussed the format of the television show, which they claim will vary from Dr. Laura's successful radio show, in that there will be many points of view derived from a variety of sources, guests and a studio audience.

Toward something better

On a more positive note, the Internet site PopcornQ has started the Queer First Weekend Club, a movement to encourage attendance at queer-themed films during their opening weekends.

Simply buy a ticket and attend a queer film the first weekend it runs in your city. By doing so you are casting a vote for the future, club organizers say, and demonstrating that there is an audience for gay and lesbian films and that they should be allowed to remain in theaters longer. Every ticket counts, and women should consider turning out for guy movies and vice versa.

PopcornQ is the national facilitator for the club. Local gay, lesbian, bi and trans film festivals are the chapters of the club and are using e-mail to get out the word about upcoming first weekends.

So go see a fun queer film this weekend and vote with your wallet for more of the same.

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