

Queerly digital

These three DVDs would make terrific gifts

BY ANDY MANGELS

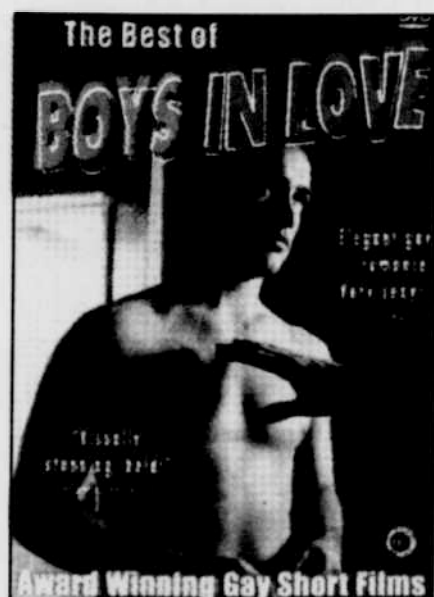
Holiday season is just around the corner, and if you're looking for some cool presents for the technologically advanced gay man in your life, check out this trio of queer-themed DVDs (all available on video as well, without the extras).

GODS AND MONSTERS Columbia/TriStar

This is the story of Hollywood horror director James Whale (played by gay actor Sir Ian McKellan), who is living a life of semiretirement in 1957, no longer politically welcome in Tinseltown despite his earlier successes with *Frankenstein*, *The Bride of Frankenstein* and *The Invisible Man*. He's doted on by his cranky religious housekeeper, Hannah (Vanessa Redgrave), but his world reawakens with the arrival of a hunky new groundskeeper, Clayton Boone (Brendan Fraser). The flamboyant filmmaker begins a process of slow seduction for the simple-minded gardener, but the younger man's angry heterosexuality—and the aftereffects from Whale's strokes—lead to an unexpected climax. Backed by producer and gay horror writer Clive Barker, queer director Bill Condon has created one of the most poignant gay films ever made. (His screenplay adaptation won an Academy Award.) McKellan is riveting, while Redgrave is compelling—and almost unrecognizable. But Fraser, whose past film roles never hinted at this kind of depth in his abilities, remains the most arresting presence. Highly recommended, this DVD has a commentary track by Condon, a documentary about Whale and the making of the film, production notes, trailers and cast bios.

THE BEST OF BOYS IN LOVE First Run Features

Consisting of seven gay short films from previous video compilations, this DVD features something for every gay man. The story of "Achilles" is told with astonishing



Award Winning Gay Short Films

stop-motion animation (and I do mean jaw-dropping). "Boot Camp" starts out as a leather bar fantasy but develops into a musical number. The longer "Death in Venice, CA" is a predictable encounter between a repressed teacher and his stepnephew that still manages some haunting imagery. "Dirty Baby Does Fire Island" features a stop-motion baby doll exploring sex and drugs amid the gay beach scene. "Karen Black Like Me" is the disc's biggest disappointment, spoofing one of the dark diva's 1970s horror flicks. "SPF 2000" loses its charm after a while, but the purposely badly dubbed exploitation aspects will get more than a few chuckles. Rounding out *The Best of Boys in Love* is the black-and-white "Twilight of the Gods," a love story between a Maori warrior and a soldier who has slaugh-

GODS and MONSTERS



tered his friends. Beautiful but haunting, it's a sad note to end the collection on; thankfully, the DVD allows you to shuffle the short films around to create your own minifestival. With only 1 1/2 duds out of seven, this disc still carries some amazing power in its bite-sized packages, lending credence to the old saw, "It's not the size, it's how you use it."

THE GAY DECEIVERS Image

Every now and then, you'll see a classic movie that shows how little our society has changed. Originally released in 1969, this film features two straight boys who are trying to dodge the draft and avoid going to Vietnam. They tell the Army they're gay lovers, but when Col. Dixon begins spying on them, they must move in together to an all-gay apartment complex to complete the illusion. Their girlfriends and parents begin to get suspicious, and matters aren't helped by the flamboyant landlord who keeps letting himself in to borrow something or cook a meal. Although he is a major "queen for a day" stereotype and the fashions and hairstyles (what were they thinking?) are dated, *The Gay Deceivers* easily could be remade today with few plot changes; the issue of the draft could be replaced by "don't ask, don't tell." Starring almost no one you've ever heard of, this film is surprisingly funny and, at its heart, positive in its portrayal of gay men. The DVD is no-frills, except for a completely crisp digital image, but this is one historical landmark you'll want to track down. **JB**

To find these queer DVDs and others, visit Portland's Gai-Pied, 2544 N.E. Broadway, or Movie Madness, 4320 S.E. Belmont St., or order them through gay-owned Wolfe Video, 800-GET-WOLFE, or TLA Video, 800-333-8521.

ANDY MANGELS is a media hound who's glad to put his television to use as an entertainment writer. He just wishes there was a way to lose weight while reviewing films. You can write him at AMangelsSW@aol.com.

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