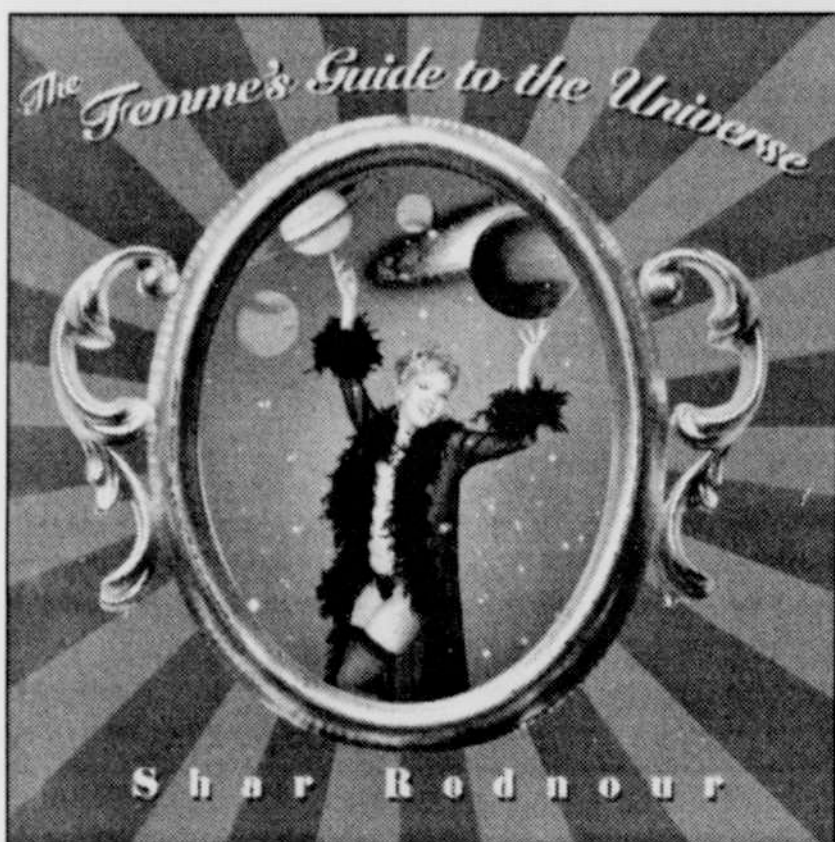


Dashing through the store

Last-minute ideas for nifty gifting



THE FEMME'S GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE
by Shar Rednour. Alyson Books, 2000; \$14.95 softcover.

Q: Whatever do I give the femme (or wannabe femme) in my life for the holiday season?

A: Shar Rednour's *The Femme's Guide to the Universe*, of course!

Rednour, erotica writer and self-proclaimed Queen of Femmedom, presents a guidebook for those aspiring to reach the pinnacles of Girl-Goddessness.

In a sassy and intimate voice, she introduces us to "Shartopia," the realm of endless possibilities where "there are always strawberries, chocolate, shrimp and avocados to go around." Her goal is to help you create your own "Youtopia," no matter your budget, location or marital status.

It's a sexy but also handy book. Where else can you learn to have sex in high heels, rescue an earring that's fallen into the drain and play host to a great party all in one fun-to-read guide?

The book is crammed with expert advice. Rednour, generous and "divafabulicious" queen that she is, has been around the block a few times and is willing to let you learn from her mistakes. "Don't put alpha-hydroxy creams on your eyelids," she advises at one point, "or they'll puff up like blowfish." From butt zits to dating hints, this girl knows it all.

A large chunk of *The Femme's Guide* is devoted to relationships, namely "femme-on-femme and femme/butch desire." Rednour encourages embracing these sexual identities and says, "To name yourself is one of the most empowering things you can do."

She celebrates the power of the femme-on-femme dynamic, saying, "They aren't doing what the Playboy Channel says they're doing." Rednour also praises "butch-and-femme lovelust," giving advice about communication and "reasons to try a good butch."

All of this generalizing could make a reader uneasy, especially the section devoted to "Butch Boot Camp" in which she says, "If you can't find a good butch woman, then you'll have to train one." The fact that she encourages women to manipulate their lovers into being male (she suggests, "Go shopping with her and ask her to try on the tailored suit in the men's section") undermines one of the pleasures of lesbianism (loving women, not men).

Still, Rednour recognizes the duality of butch women: "The butch embodies everything studly, honorable and charming in masculinity, yet she understands cramps and second-class citizenship firsthand. What a combo!"

It's up to the reader to pick out the sensible advice from the outrageous. Of course, what might be outrageous to some is sensible to others—not everybody has wondered how to clean smudges from a PVC corset. But, as Rednour would say, "Onward, darlings, onward."

—Jessica Citti

ROMANCE ON FILM, ROMANCE ON BROADWAY

Michael Feinstein • Concord

This two-disc set is filled with love songs crooned by gay pianist Michael Feinstein. He divides the collection evenly between tunes originated on the screen and those derived from the stage.

Film highlights include "As Time Goes By" from *Casablanca*, "The Way You Look Tonight" from *Swing Time* and Feinstein's theme song, "Isn't It Romantic" from *Love Me Tonight*. Broadway highlights include "The Best Things in Life Are Free" from *Good News*, "My Funny Valentine" from *Babes in Arms* and "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye" from *The Seven Lively Arts*.

Feinstein's passion for musicals is evident



him become more comfortable with his hidden desires.

"As a child during my formative years my parents would sometimes allow me to stay up

through-out. In fact, he hints in the liner notes that his early experiences listening to romantic songs helped

late to watch the old movies on television," Feinstein writes. "Something naturally made me gravitate to the love songs of musical films because they created a feeling inside of me and a yearning that I had not yet experienced at that young age."

I saw Feinstein tickle the ivories during the Equality Rocks concert last April in Washington, D.C. The poor guy was sandwiched between energetic artists such as Melissa Etheridge and the Pet Shop Boys, so the audience talked through most of his set.

Feinstein's mellow sound certainly isn't for everyone. But when it comes to curling up with your honey on a cold winter's eve, Feinstein is the ideal hearth to warm your heart.

—Jim Radosta

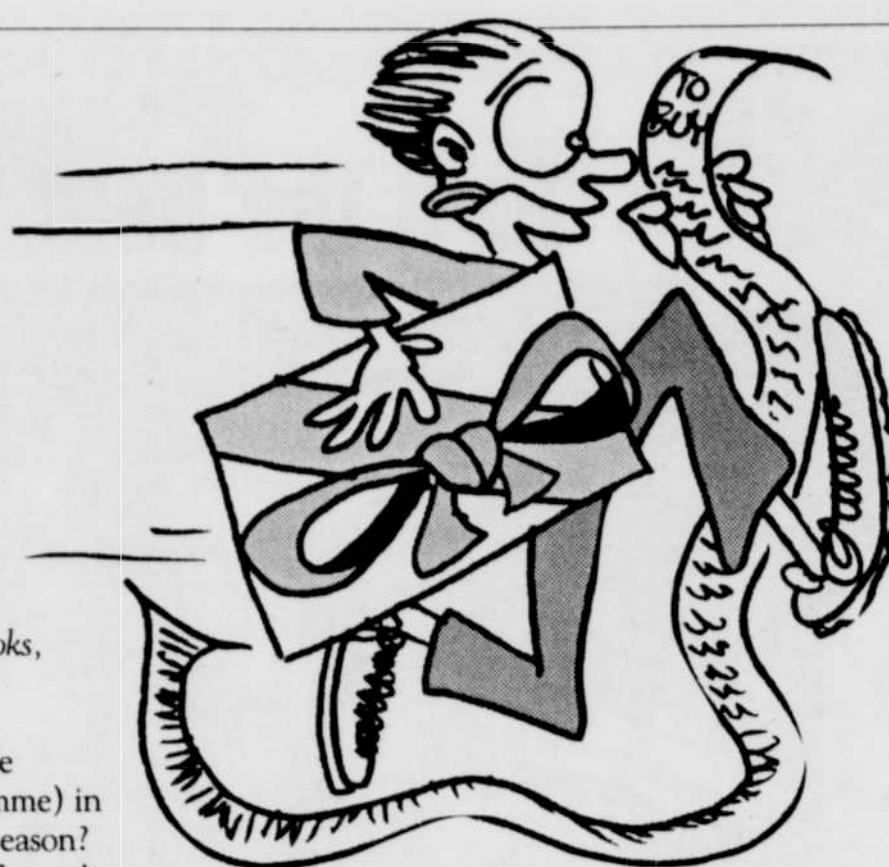
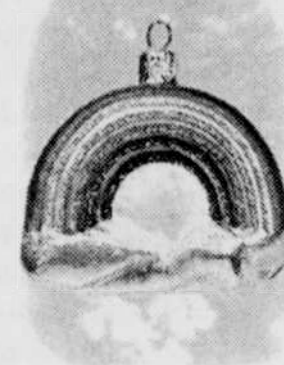


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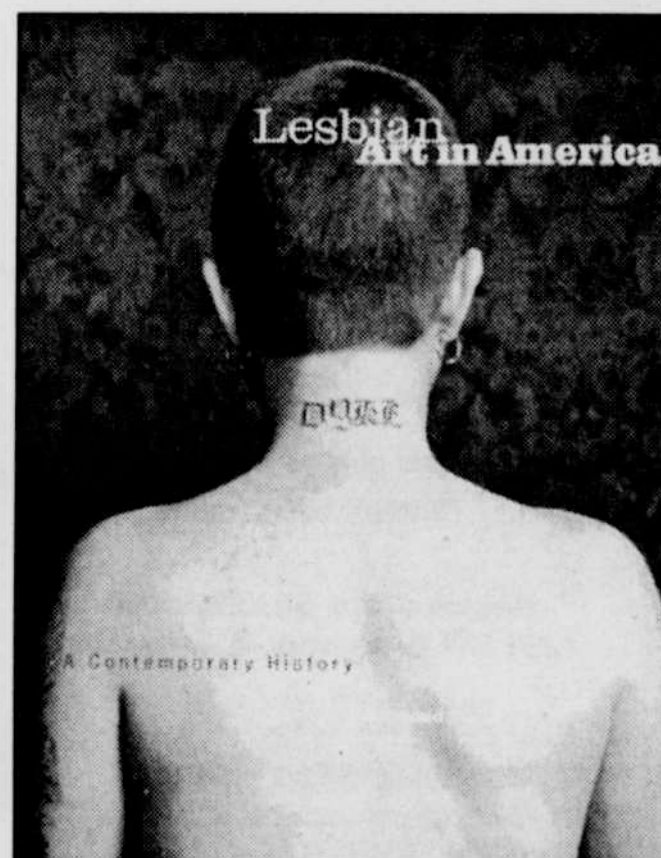
LESBIAN ART IN AMERICA: A CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

by Harmony Hammond. Rizzoli, 2000; \$50 hardcover.

Let there be no bones about it: This is a highly subjective history of, to paraphrase the late Audre Lorde, living, loving and making art in the trenches," says Harmony Hammond in her informative introduction to this pioneering work. She documents lesbian art in the United States since 1970 within the context of queer culture and political activism and profiles 18 prominent lesbian artists, including Kate Millett and Catherine Opie.

Although this is a visually stunning book, easily a coffee-table treat, *Lesbian Art in America* also nourishes the intellect with Hammond's sharp analysis and commentary. Truly the first of its kind!

—Catherine Samah





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