

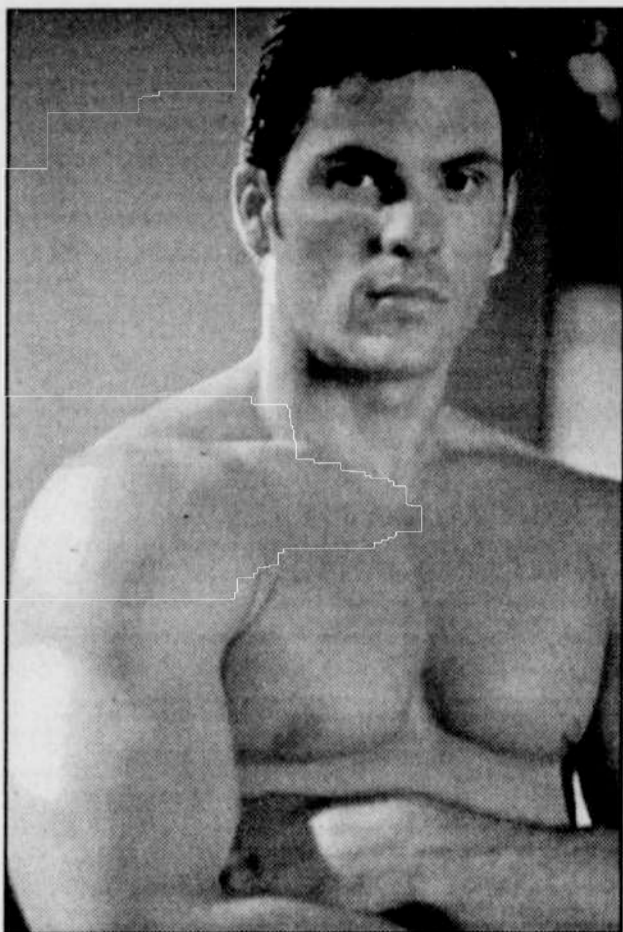
FILM

The first question I have for the incredibly hunky Scott Gurney, who plays porn star Johnny Rebel in the new film *The Fluffer* is: What would your porn star name be? He laughs, shakes his head and draws a blank. "I'll give you that at the end of the interview," he quips.

Gurney should have an answer, though, for why he chose to play an unsympathetic, gay-for-pay porn star drug addict in *The Fluffer*. "That character is so far from me," he solidly insists—making sure I am convinced. "He's interesting. The reason why the character worked is because you love him and hate him. When it gets deep into the movie, you feel for him."

And Gurney isn't afraid of being typecast. "The hardest thing to do is break out of a 'good boy' role. It is easy when you play a bad guy to [then] play a good guy because it's cool to see a bad guy play a good guy."

Still, a lot of straight actors (yes, he is, sorry guys) would shy away from this part—even



Who needs Viagra when you've got a fluffer?

from this film. "There is no role that I wouldn't do as long as people remember it's just acting," Gurney replies. "I mean, I don't know how much worse it can get [than this character]. I think I pretty much topped out the first time around!"

Although admittedly not personally chummy with his fellow actors, Gurney maintains it was a fun film set. "While we're shooting...everyone is laughing their balls off. During the actual filmmaking, we had more laughs than any comedy I've worked on; [yet] it wasn't written like that. When we all sat down and discussed the film before we started, everyone thought it was a

Gay for pay

Actor Scott Gurney puts the Rebel in Johnny Rebel

BY GARY M. KRAMER

pretty serious movie. We weren't sure whether to take certain scenes from a comical standpoint or a serious one, so we did it both ways, and it was interesting to see how they cut it together."

The set's joviality also extends to Gurney's participation in making up mock video boxes for the movie's fictional Men of Janus line. Co-director Wash West, an adult filmmaker, "had some good ideas from his experience. It's all goofy fun. If you don't look at the humorous side to it, the dark side is overbearing."

Gurney conducted some research to get into his part. "I did go see a couple of pornos—both gay and straight—being filmed," he reflects, "and when you're watching those, it's serious, and it would be embarrassing if you were laughed at while you were doing it." *The Fluffer* takes a bit of a lighter stab at its representation of

porn filming, "mimicking it" a bit, he notes. About the nude scenes, Gurney is up front about being full frontal, saying it "didn't bother me. By the end [of the shoot], I was buddy-buddy with everyone on the set, and they were real cool...you just have to go with the flow. It's work."

This same attitude is what the actor thinks drives performers who work in the porn industry professionally. "It takes a certain kind of breed...I was talking with this girl on a porn set, and this man comes over with scissors and she drops her robe and he starts trimming her down. And it didn't affect her one bit! She's buck naked and still holding a conversation with me."

With the success of *The Fluffer* at queer film festivals, Gurney, who lives in Santa Monica, Calif., with his girlfriend, is going to look for work in the nonadult movie industry. "I have had a couple of offers for TV, but I think I'm going to try to stick with movies. It doesn't matter as

"The reason why the character worked is because you love him and hate him"
—Scott Gurney

long as the character is interesting." After the interview, I realize I never did get Gurney's porn name. I guess he'll always be Johnny Rebel to me. [E]

GARY M. KRAMER is a Philadelphia free-lance writer.

Key grip

The Fluffer reminds us that fantasy is just that

BY CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN

The concept sounds like pure exploitation: A young man becomes obsessed with a male porn star, eventually becoming his "fluffer." (For those unfamiliar with the term, this is the person who keeps the actor's resolve steely between takes.)

But this is a slippery, expectation-defying little film. Co-directors Richard Glatzer and Wash West take our wide-eyed protagonist on such a twisty-turny trip through obsession, disillusionment and dysfunction that *The Fluffer* is in greater danger of becoming a *Lifetime* therapyfest than a cheesy softcore skin flick. To their credit, they avoid both traps.

Sean (Michael Cunio) is a Hollywood neophyte and aspiring film buff, with a *Wild Reeds*



Michael Cunio likes to watch

poster on his wall to signify his sensitivity. He's systematically renting the classics when a video store clerk accidentally gives him *Citizen Cum* starring Johnny Rebel (Scott Gurney). This is the beginning of his fixation, which leads him to a job as production assistant at Janus Films,

the adult entertainment company that has Johnny Rebel under exclusive contract.

Sean is manning the camera when an emergency arises and he's asked to "fluff" Rebel. Unfortunately for Sean, Johnny is temperamental, straight and a drug addict.

Meanwhile, Johnny's pregnant girlfriend, Babylon (Roxanne Day), works at a strip

club run by a tough old broad (Deborah Harry) and has to deal with the real Johnny—a constantly stoned, pathetically egotistical jerk who duplicitously has sex with other men for a living.

Sean makes a stab at a realistic relationship

with a nice young gay man like himself, but his Rebel fantasies keep getting in the way, along with a disturbing childhood sex-abuse trauma that's told, a la Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*, in black-and-white flashback.

The flashbacks are rather gratuitous, as is a party scene filled with real-life gay porn celebrities like director Chi Chi Larue and actor Cole Tucker, and the movie has its clumsy moments. But regardless of the mixed results, it's nice to see the filmmakers making a wholehearted attempt to do dialectic justice to their complex subject matter. And it all sounds more hokey than it plays.

By the time we get to the film's Message—"Fantasy is no substitute for reality"—it feels not so much like hectoring as it does a gentle, wistful reminder.

Cinema 21, 616 N.W. 21st Ave., screens THE FLUFFER Jan. 25 to 31. For more information call 503-223-4515.

CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN is a Portland writer and filmmaker.

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