

In a February commentary, syndicated columnist Paula Martinac recalls her anger at browsing through her local gay and lesbian lending library and finding that "right alongside *Desert Hearts*, *Parting Glances* and other classic...movies was *The Boys of St. Vincent*—a deeply disturbing film about the sexual abuse of young boys by Catholic brothers at a Canadian orphanage in the 1970s."

She is right to be angry. But she should not have been surprised that even queer librarians unthinkingly coupled homosexuality and pedophilia in this way. The notion that all gay men are either potential or practicing pedophiles has survived beyond all logic, even in queer circles, thanks to enduring homophobia, well-funded right-wing religious and political groups (and their mountain of phony scientific studies) and a fear of adolescent sexuality.

With movies reflecting the popular mind-set, they should be the last place to look for fair portrayals of an issue deemed too dicey to discuss. Logically, the same impulse that made that librarian put *The Boys of St. Vincent* next to *Desert Hearts* should be the driving force behind films on the subject. Right?

Wrong. A survey of several movies and television shows from the past three decades shows a surprising complexity in portraying these relationships, with many variations. Typically,

Boys on the Side

Do cinematic depictions of adult/youth relationships blur an already thin line?

by Gary Morris



Dylan Baker and Rufus Read in *Happiness*

though not always, they do not equate homosexuality and pedophilia, instead consigning the problem to individual pathology or institutional repression or, in a few controversial cases, treating it as a socially disapproved but potentially positive force. In repudiating the equation of queer with child molester, these works seem to be doing what some segments of society cannot.

The first thing to note is that most of the films on this subject were made outside the Hollywood mainstream, either as

U.S. indies (*L.I.E.*, *Happiness*, *Eban and Charley*), foreign imports aimed at small arthouse audiences (*Our Lady of the Assassins*, *Ernesto*, *For a Lost Soldier*, *Clay Farmers*) or sexually frank foreign or cable television shows (*The Boys of St. Vincent*, *Queer as Folk*). The fact that most of these works had only a limited, or in some cases no, U.S. theatrical release suggests the level of anxiety that surrounds the issue and any portrayal of it.

The Boys of St. Vincent (Canada, 1994) follows the twin templates of institutional repression and individual pathology. Based on a 1975 scandal in Newfoundland, this three-hour made-for-TV drama shows a Catholic orphanage as a hotbed of gross physical and sexual abuse that's permitted by an omnipotent church and a cowed local police department. This brutal and very timely work never succumbs to the expected gay cliché. The main abuser, Brother



Gale Harold and Randy Harrison in *Queer as Folk*

Lavin, is portrayed as a nutcase whose molestation of 12-year-old Kevin is driven by demons he can't control. Any temptation to read him as a frustrated queer is trumped by his later life of marriage and children and by the film's unrelenting portrayal of Lavin as a straight-up, though not entirely unsympathetic, psychotic.

The successful straight male who's also an out-of-control predator occurs in other movies, most notably *Happiness* (United States, 1997). Like *The Boys of St. Vincent*, Todd Soldon's film features a paragon of heterosexual virtue, here a respected psychiatrist who's at once charismatic and fatally flawed. *Happiness* treats him as a complicated character, both repug-



The Joseph Landry Salon

602 SE 38th Ave.
Portland, OR 97214
503.231.3922
Wed - Sat

PAUL MITCHELL

Best *Since 1985*
Marble & Granite
GRANITE BLOWOUT!
Many Patterns and Colors
materials starting at **\$5.70** sq ft
Best Price & Quality Guaranteed!
Fax in Drawing for Free Estimate
~503-233-8817~

Financing Available
Mention Just Out for Additional Discounts

902 SE Mill ~ Portland, OR
Office: 503-233-9226

Auto, Home, Life, Health & Business
epb&b "Your Independent Insurance Agency"
insurance
Elliott, Powell, Baden & Baker, Inc.

Hartford still offers earthquake insurance on older homes

Marc Baker
Downtown Portland
(503) 227-1771
www.epbb.com

THE HARTFORD

BACK TO SCHOOL LOW PRICES!

Custom-Built Systems start at \$699

Include: Intel Pentium 4 1.6GHz Processor
Integrated Audio • 128MB RAM
56K Modem • 56x Speed CD-ROM Drive
Microsoft Windows XP Home and More!

Come see us today. We're ready to build for you!

PORTLAND AREA	SEATTLE AREA
503.297.1011 8122 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy Portland, OR 97225	425.394.1011 485 Front St. N., Suite C Issaquah, WA 98027

Visit us online at www.computerdrror.com
Formerly Computer Doctor

COMPUTER SERVICES NTSI

WE LOVE OUR VET!

LASER SURGERY NOW AVAILABLE!

Companion Pet Clinics Portland \ Salem \ Vancouver

M-FRI 8am • 6pm
SAT 8am • 5pm
WEST LINN Sun 11am-4pm

WEST LINN 19343 Willamette Drive • (503) 635-3115
CLACKAMAS 16317 SE 82nd Drive • (503) 657-9225
TIGARD 13500 SW Pacific Hwy • (503) 670-9707
82ND AVE NE 3150 NE 82nd Ave • (503) 546-1044

Let me find your new home

Scot Kamins

I Promise To:

- Build Your Trust
- Understand Your Wants & Needs
- Find the House You'll Make Your Home
- Keep You Informed Every Step of the Way
- Make It All Enjoyable, Fulfilling & Fun

"I Listen."

Scott Trahan Realty Brokerage 503-230-7855 cell 503-997-0199