

DIVERSIONS

Out With It!



by Lisa Bradshaw

It's all about quality

The reports have been coming in for more than a year now about the all-gay cable network. Reportedly, Showtime and MTV's joint venture called Outlet will launch in the next few months. In the meantime, Canada's all-queer channel has gone bankrupt.

The amount of conjecture in the press about whether this kind of cable channel is a good or bad thing is deafening. Is this the next logical step of queer acceptance into the mainstream, or will it prompt networks to stop putting queer characters into programming with the notion we're all congregated in one place? In essence, are we being ghettoized?

Forgive me, but my response is, Who cares? There is one reason and one reason only to tune into any cable channel, any cable show, any show on any station anywhere, anytime. Is it good?

Why did the British first-of-its-kind *Queer as Folk* fare so well amid the naysayers who said the world just wasn't ready for this kind of in-your-face gay sexuality and that it would make us all look bad? It was good! It was fun, the performances were great, the style was hip, the stories were a hoot, the sex was hot. My partner and I rented it and watched the whole season in one weekend. *We couldn't stop.* And then Showtime copied the whole thing to wide acclaim, too.

It seems to me a lot of TV works this way. For instance, I may be going out on a limb here, but I think the reason Ellen DeGeneres' first series got canceled is because it sucked. The second one—*The Ellen Show*—did not suck and would have done fine if the network executives (as they have done with other good shows) hadn't moved it all over trying to save it until no one could find it and just gave up.

But this doesn't have anything to do with Ellen being gay.

I'm not naive enough to think that being gay doesn't make a difference; a lot of people will or won't watch any show starring Ellen based on her being openly lesbian. But a good queer show will (and should) outlast a bad queer show any time. (Of course, *Will & Grace* also sucks, and it's still on the air, so what do I know?)

Anyway, if this eventual queer channel—which promises to run movies, sitcoms, specials and maybe even game shows all around being bent—is good, it's OK with me. If it's not at all good, it's not OK. That seems simple enough.

And speaking of being gay, how about those Academy Awards? Wow, we queers have never had so much influence and content in Oscar-nominated movies as this year. Too bad spokespeople are pretending that "gay" just doesn't matter.

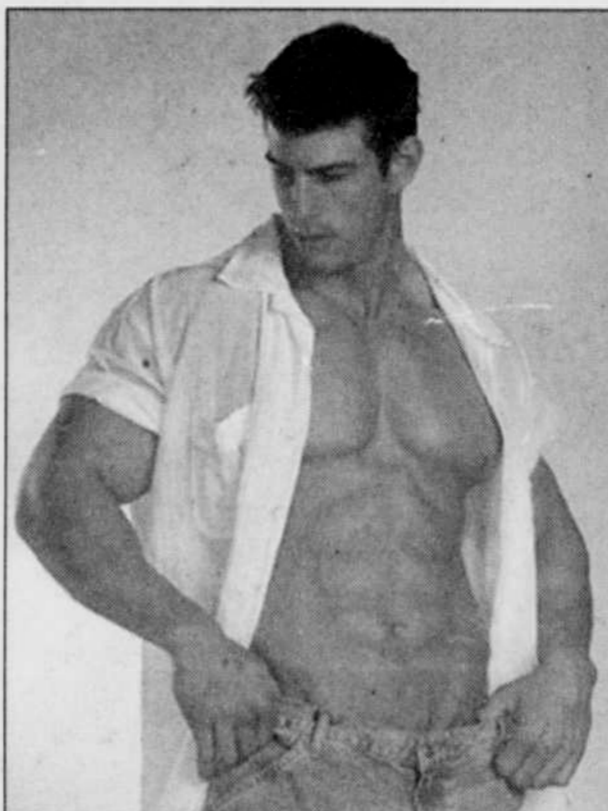
Everyone who has anything to do with *The Hours*, for instance, are quick to point out that the sexuality of the characters has nothing to do with the emotional impact of the Best Picture contender. The March 18 issue of *The Advocate* notes that the lead actors "argue that transcending such labels is exactly what has made the film so successful." And the British playwright who adapted the novel for the screen insists, "*The Hours* is not a gay film."

(Isn't it funny how you don't have anyone jumping to mention when films aren't straight? There's none of this nervous, "Oh, gosh, no, this movie isn't just for hets" or "The married couple in this movie transcends those kind of sexual labels.")

While I agree *The Hours*, like any film, is appropriate for any adult who wants to see it, let's not pretend that being a queer in the world today doesn't matter. Let's not pretend that sitting in a theater full of straight people who see Meryl Streep and Allison Janney playing women in a long-term relationship and their perfectly well-adjusted daughter and their intense, poetic friend dying of AIDS (Ed Harris, no less) isn't a thrilling, positive influence. It's easy to say queer doesn't matter when you're straight.

We finally get some great recognition at the Academy Awards (*Frida* and *Far from Heaven*, too), and now we're supposed to be beyond those labels? When were we supposed to be happy about it? Did we miss a decade or something? I'll be post-gay in a post-homophobic world, thanks.

Put your big, queer arms around these big queer movies and shout Hallelujah. ☐



He is *Men Magazine's* Hunk of the Month, graces the pages of *Honcho* and is walking among us

Straight shot

Forget Thor... All Hail the Mighty Atlas!" So reads the headline to the nude photo spread of Portland hottie Zeb Atlas (not his real name, believe it or not) in the March issue of *Men Magazine*.

The 32-year-old, straight pharmaceutical salesman and personal trainer is also the cover boy for this month's *Honcho Magazine* and one of the featured performers in Body Image Productions' *Solo Series, Volume 4*.

At 6 feet 3 inches tall, Atlas is a mountain of muscle with an appealingly goofy face. And he handily won *Men Magazine's* "Hunk of the Month" contest with 65 percent of voters casting their ballots for the dark-haired beauty. Comments range from "hot" to "cutie" to "amazing" and include ones that feature sexual fantasies with the local stud.

Atlas certainly isn't the first straight model to pose for men's magazines or appear in gay porn. (Is a solo jerk-off scene technically porn?) But his appearance does make one wonder what kind of thrill straight men get by being sexual fantasies for gay men and what his family and friends think about it.

Unfortunately, Atlas declined to talk with *Just Out*, so we weren't able to find any answers. We can only gaze and wonder.

Outrageous!

What could Socrates, Galileo, a humanities professor and Bertolt Brecht have in common besides controversial politics? Well, we could just tell you, but that would be, ahem, an outrage.

Running through March 9 is Portland Center Stage's production of 26-year-old Yale graduate Itamar Moses' new play *Outrage* at Newmark Theatre. It is, according to artistic director Chris Coleman, "perhaps the most ambitious play by a new playwright that I've read in the past decade."

A college campus in 1999, ancient Greece, 1940s Nazi Germany and 20th century Holly-

wood offer backdrops for everyone from The Oracle to Darth Vader. Annals of history reappear as historical figures rant, while head honchos (and honchas) of the university's humanities department pick through Milton's *Paradise Lost* via appropriations of thesis advisers, school funding and almost-make-out scenes. (Yes, kids, even one with Socrates and his muscle-bound protégé.)

Moses weaves two acts of multiple plot layers with a set complete with giant arched stairway, tiered substages and a circular map of the sky. *Outrage* offers a chance to romp in both ancient and modern pretty-boy land, where teachers can be students and students can be, well...you'll see.

Outrage shows at 8 p.m. March 7 and at 2 and 8 p.m. March 8 and 9. Tickets are \$12-\$47 from the box office or 503-274-6588.

Wyoming in Oregon

Thanks to Equity Foundation, Artists Repertory Theatre will take its production of *The Laramie Project*—seen last summer in Portland—on the road to rural parts of Oregon.

Equity initially raised money to get the show produced in Portland and has come up with nearly \$10,000 to help get it out to communities that otherwise wouldn't see it.

The play is about the people of Laramie, Wyo., in the aftermath of the Matthew Shepard murder and, according to ART's Allen Nause, "utilizes a structure that reflects that of most any community in America." He feels it "asks questions of our-



Artists Repertory Theatre takes *The Laramie Project* on the road around Oregon

selves about where we stand on issues of tolerance. Our hope is that it will resonate with communities across our state."

The production has already played in Pendleton and will show March 8 in Bend (ticket info from 541-383-7575), March 10 in The Dalles (ticket info from 541-993-0678) and March 12 in Newport (ticket info from 541-265-2787.)

Get naked for peace

Following in the footsteps of other organizations around the country, Portland's Explorers Club is sponsoring *Nude for Peace*—a group nude photo to protest the war against Iraq.

At 2 p.m. March 16, organizers will herd people into the shape of the Chinese symbol for peace for an aerial photograph. Spokeswoman Theresa Reed (aka Darklady) explains, "Although we are no fans of Saddam Hussein or his corrupt and cruel administration, we do not believe that Bush is being honest about his reasons for pushing for this war."

To participate in *Nude for Peace*, register at www.explorers-club.com/peace or e-mail edie@explorers-club.com. ☐

Compiled by LISA BRADSHAW, MARIE FLEISCHMANN and FLOYD SKLAVER



Robert Dorfman is Galileo (left) and Steve Wilkerson is Menocchio in the West Coast premiere of the beautifully complex *Outrage*