

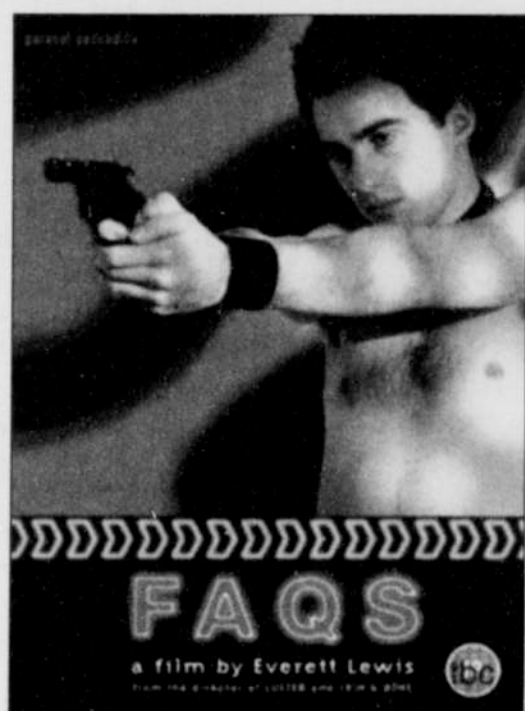
matter) can trump misogyny and homophobia.

The DVD's notable extra feature is "Everyone, Everywhere," a short film about the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. Sir Ian "Gandalf" McKellen narrates.

—SB

FAQS

TLA Releasing



Destiny. His performance is stylish, smart and tough—in other words, everything the film is not.

The DVD features commentary by Lewis and Lia. The pair also participate in a Q & A session recorded at the 2005 Philadelphia International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival.

—SB

The gay indie film FAQS is not so much a movie as a manifesto. And it's a really dumb manifesto at that.

With no subtlety whatsoever, it argues that all straight people suck and that they're irreversibly programmed to bash queers or, at the very least, call them bad names. Over the course of 90 minutes there's not a single queer-friendly straight character—and this is West Hollywood, not the Bible Belt.

FAQS is the malformed brainchild of Everett Lewis, a writer and director whose previous films include *The Natural History of Parking Lots* and *Luster*. Despite a lot of bad dialogue and crude character development, the script conveys the powerful message that queers can band together to fight homophobia.

Lewis' message is terribly muddled, however, bouncing back and forth between a pro-violence stance on queer activism and a "make love, not war" attitude that comes too late in the movie to balance out the militant content.

Cute but overly earnest actor Joe Lia plays India, a young man who flees his fag-hating parents only to be exploited by a sleazy straight pornographer. One night he's chased into a parking garage by gay-bashers, and a black drag queen named Destiny emerges out of nowhere to rescue him with some daunting gunplay.

Destiny is a queer den mother of sorts. She invites queer kids to live with her under the somewhat disturbing condition that they parade around naked for two hours a day. Gay male viewers will be happy to know that this little house rule results in an extended full-frontal romp for Lia.

The plot clumsily evolves into a string of romances and conflicts that force Destiny, India, India's boyfriend and other characters to evaluate how far they're willing to go to protect themselves in the straight world. Most of the actors are handsome and clearly game for some boudoir action, but the sex scenes fall flat because of bad lighting and obscure camera angles.

It must be said that Allan Louis is fabulous as

Ice Men

Wolfe Video

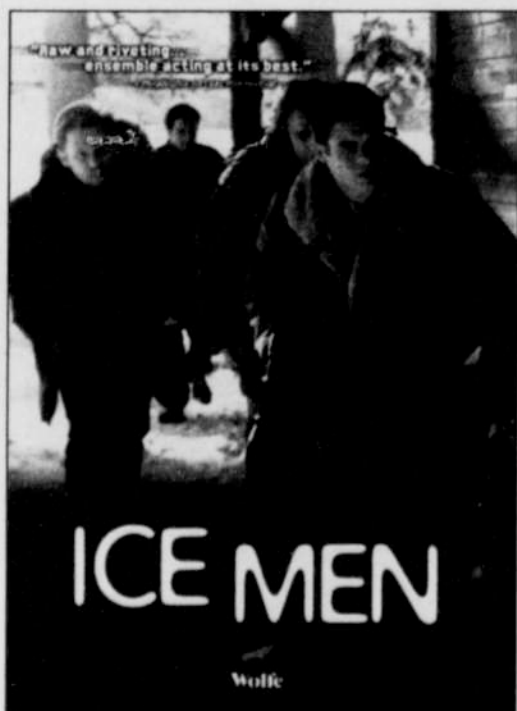
I wasn't expecting much from this film, which slipped under the radar like many an indie. And the tagline wasn't the most promising: "At a Remote Cabin, Guns, Booze and Testosterone Lead to Trouble." But director Thom Best and screenwriter Michael MacLennan have fashioned a solid variation on *The Big Chill* with a strong queer inflection.

Handsome, uptight Vaughn (Martin Cummings), bitter after a recent breakup with his girlfriend, has invited some friends up to his cabin for a weekend of male bonding and to celebrate best friend Bryan's (David Hewlett) birthday. Also along for the ride are macho Steve (James Thomas), gay, semi-closeted photographer Jon (Greg Spottiswood) and a couple of unexpected, and unwelcome, guests. The latter include Vaughn's wild brother, Trevor (Ian Stacey), and Vaughn's ex-girlfriend.

Bantering and bickering start almost immediately, promising not a happy-go-lucky exercise in male bonding but a lot of emotional fireworks that will change these relationships forever. And the film delivers as a slew of secrets, infidelities and betrayals slowly emerge. In one of the best scenes, Jon, forced to bunk with Steve, lets his fingers do the walking over his fetching body, thinking he's asleep. Typical of the film, the reaction is not the expected one from Mr. Hot Straight Boy.

Ice Men makes the most of the dramatic setting of the Canadian woods in the dead of winter—especially effective in a scene where a drunken Trevor plunges through the ice. The acting is variable, with occasional lapses into melodrama. Spottiswood is a marvel to watch as the gay boy, unerringly finding the character's sensitivity without slipping into bathos. But even when the acting falters, or contrivances peep through in what is essentially a very theatrical movie, the beauty of these troubled guys keeps us engaged.

—Gary Morris 10



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