



Be Prepared

a Foo-Foo Head," to help "kewl kids" plan how to respond to their parents' questions. Typical of the entire book, there are several first-hand accounts of coming out from different perspectives, including tales from a boy who lost a possible boyfriend because he could not come out and another who came out only while recuperating from a suicide attempt.

Near a listing of gay-themed movies, there is an essay from a boy in Texas who was convinced that he was the only queer in his small and conservative town. By the grace of the deities, Vermont is not Texas, but growing up queer in a rural space is of interest to those of us in the Green Mountains. This essay would have given me some hope had I read it when I was 15 years old. The section of the book dealing with legal issues tells us about Vermont's hate crime and age of consent legislation, but must have gone to press before civil unions.

Also of use to queer teens in the state is the chapter on schools. There are tips on how to build support, start a gay-straight alliance, and handle harassment. The first-hand accounts of being out in high school are eye-opening, and may lead some kids to think that it is possible to do so safely. There is also a listing of books that inform on a variety of themes about queers in education that can be suggested to teachers or parents.

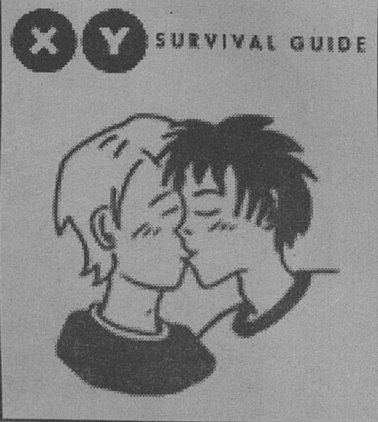
My strongest criticism of the *XY Survival Guide* is that some of it is not realistic for much of its target audience, especially in Vermont, where there is not an underage nightlife facilitating social contact.

The book is written with a politically queer bent, which is not at all useful for someone struggling to come out. In the section labeled "Networking and Politics", there are several questions analogous to the "What to Tell a Foo-Foo Head" list, in which kids see some questions from the religious right and possible ways of answering them. One answer strikes me as particularly ridiculous for this target audience of teens. In response to "the church says homosexuality is evil", the *Survival Guide* argues that the church, in wanting to keep the economy stable, created the taboo against sexual deviance interconnected with the fall of the status of woman, therefore, the church is only an "instrument of the patriarchy" that wants to support the bourgeois family. To us queer radicals, it is a perfect argument, but for a bunch of "kewl kids" who just got their guide to coming out 70 pages earlier, this section is not entirely useful.

I would have loved to have this book when I was 14 or 15, and would recommend it to any

XY Survival Guide:
Everything you need to know about being young and gay

Benjie Nycum
XY Press, San Francisco



young queer boys I know. Unfortunately, there is no mention of girls in this book and there does not seem to be any guide to being young and a lesbian; this book is boy-specific.

Although it is at times unrealistic, the *Survival Guide* is the first scout manual for queers that I have ever seen, and its listing of resources targeting gay teenagers is a positive and impressive indication

of the improving quality of life for them.

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REVIEWED BY JOEL NICHOLS

With sections on law and politics as well as coming out and sex, the recently published *XY Survival Guide: Everything you need to know about being young and gay* by Benjie Nycum provides young gay men with a handbook celebrating boys attracted to boys.

The book is not filled with erotic photographs of teenaged boys like the popular and controversial *XY* magazine from which the *Survival Guide* originates. Instead, its nine chapters, glossary, and list of resources at the end are illustrated by tongue-in-cheek cartoons that look like a boy-scout manual.

My scout manual was never this up-front, though. The guide has a no-holds-barred approach exemplified by the chapter on sex. After an introduction about a promiscuous 15-year old in Toronto, it talks directly about sex feeling good and the guilt sometimes associated with it. The introduction ends with, "Broaden sexual tolerances, deepen sexual experiences, be safe, learn from each other, and promote a general feeling of sex-positivity". It even includes a section they wanted to call "Buttsex," but decided to avoid some controversy by making the title "Tea with Grandma," followed by an explanation from the author. This section is a good example of the candid approach the author takes; it has 10 tips for "Exploring your butt," and it's only the second chapter.

Controversy aside, I found the coming out section (appropriately chapter one) to be helpful. Aside from historical background about Gay Liberation and modern legal victories (notably omitted are civil unions), it provides the closeted with 23 tips for coming out, a discussion of possible consequences, and myth-dispelling facts about queerness. My favorite part of this section is called "What to Tell

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