

The God Squad: A Spoof on the Ex-Gay Movement by Rik Isensee

REVIEWED BY JOEL NICHOLS

The God Squad: A Spoof on the Ex-Gay Movement by Rik Isensee is blessed with a catchy title and funny topic.

Isensee, a San Francisco based psychotherapist, based this book on his experience with clients who have made it out of ex-gay treatment centers and have naturally become ex-ex gays.

The God Squad focuses on a young man named Paul, whom the Reverend Sly Slocock picks out of a gutter in San Francisco and brings to his ranch called Escape to convert.

In the course of the book, the reader meets a set of enjoyable characters that includes

a young black drag queen, a bible-freak twink, and a dyke named Sheila – Paul's fellow "converted". The cast is rounded out by Reverend Slocock, his sister and partner in spirit, Ruth, and a HomoNation activist named Jimmy.

The characters are simple; I did not find myself thinking about them after the book. A spoof has to induct the reader into a world that, at first glance, seems real, but filled with people who act too ridiculous to be real. Characters in a spoof need to behave in the most inane fashion to communicate their world to the audience. At times, these people seem to know they're in a

spoof about ex-gays and the sham cannot be carried off. Once the reader no longer believes that the world of the spoof could be real, it is not much of a spoof.

Greek orgy to test and reinforces the boys' heterosexuality. How the bonfires, wine, and writhing men help the boys turn straight is unclear, but it is a method Rev. Slocock brings

to the big conference of ex-gay ministries to try and sell to other treatment centers. It is an example of the sort of ridiculousness that exemplifies the entire movement, captured humorously by Isensee.

The God Squad is not the best example of a spoof brimming with hilarity and rib-busting humor, I suggest renting Christopher Guest's film, *Waiting for Guffman*, and laughing your way through the community theater antics of Corky St. Clair if

Rik Isensee

Isensee has tried to picture the ridiculousness and hypocrisy of the ex-gay movement by showing the relationship develop between the newly-straight Paul and the queer activist, Jimmy, who meet while protesting the Pride Parade. He shows some confused gays struggling with their parents' spirituality, others who joined to be thorns in the side of conversion, and others who just passed out in a gutter and ended up straight.

One of my favorite glimpses into the contradiction inherent in the movement is the Reverend's groundbreaking treatment using a virtual reality machine which recreates a

that is what you are expecting. If you do, however, want to have a good time reading a funny portrait of a movement so silly it is called "ex-gay" (why not just cut to the chase and call them what they really are, the "now-sad" movement), Rik Isensee's book is well written, funny, and full of cute moments that made me smile.

Joel studies German and Linguistics at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT. He is originally from Brandon, VT.

The God Squad

(a spoof on the ex-gay movement)

Rik Isensee

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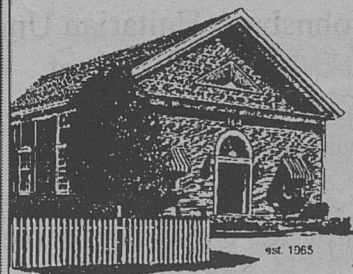
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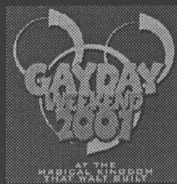


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