

The Men From The Boys

By William J. Mann

REVIEWED BY ROBERT SNEYD

books

OK, I admit, it was the cover that caught my attention first. There, in the window display of the bookstore on Commercial Street in Provincetown, was an attractive man in a sensual pose, bare-chested. Of course I picked up the book to take a look.

And then I discovered that this was written by a local boy, at least a fellow New Englander. I'm a sucker for pretty boys — even if only pictured on the cover of a novel — and local writers. So I bought it. I expected an entertaining summer diversion about how the pretty people spend the season in our version of Oz way out at the end of the Cape.

But I got so much more. William J. Mann's "The Men From The Boys" does not disappoint in telling the story of the Provincetown regulars. There's plenty about the fun to be found from Spiritus to the dunes. It goes farther, though, exploring how we as gay men create our own spaces and relationships and families.

And threaten to destroy them.

"The Men From The Boys" is the story of Jeff O'Brien, a 33-year-old writer, and the family he has created. We follow him through a year of his life, one that's more complicated than he ever imagined it would be. We go with Jeff through yet another summer in PTown with his lover of seven years, Lloyd, and former lover and constant confidant, 47-year-old Javitz, and his seasonal love interest, 22-year-old Eduardo.

And we tag along back to Boston through the subsequent fall and winter and back to the brink of another summer as the life he has so meticulously built for himself and his fam-

ily seems to unravel.

First Lloyd tells him that there's no passion left in their relationship. Then he's forced to face the awful fact that Javitz is much sicker with AIDS than he has yet admitted. And Eduardo, who was supposed to be nothing more than a one-night trick, blossoms into a romance that he can't seem to control but, of course, can't maintain, either.

Mann, who splits his time between Provincetown and Northampton, Mass., has created a story and characters with whom it's impossible not to bond. Jeff's worries are of both the trivial and consequential variety. In other words, the kind that we all face in our lives.

That magic of the book is in watching the characters develop. But Mann does it artfully, subtly. It's not until you're halfway through the book that you realize there's more to Jeff than the pretty bimbo pictured on the cover, the boy on the beach dreaming about what he's going to wear to Tea Dance — or what he's going to do afterward. He grows and matures and you end up by book's end caring deeply how his life is going to work out. And about all of these people in his life, the family that we create and recreate as we go along.

You care because you can see so many parallels in your life or the lives of your friends. These are the challenges and joys and sorrows that we all confront. Mann has written a book that reflects the gay society that's developed in the 1990s. It speaks to and about those of us who've passed our 30th birthdays, no longer the beautiful young Eduardos of the world and not yet the

Javitzes who got us here in the first place.

More broadly, though, it tells the age old story, from a gay perspective of life and love, true love, for both a lover and for the families we've developed and so cherish.

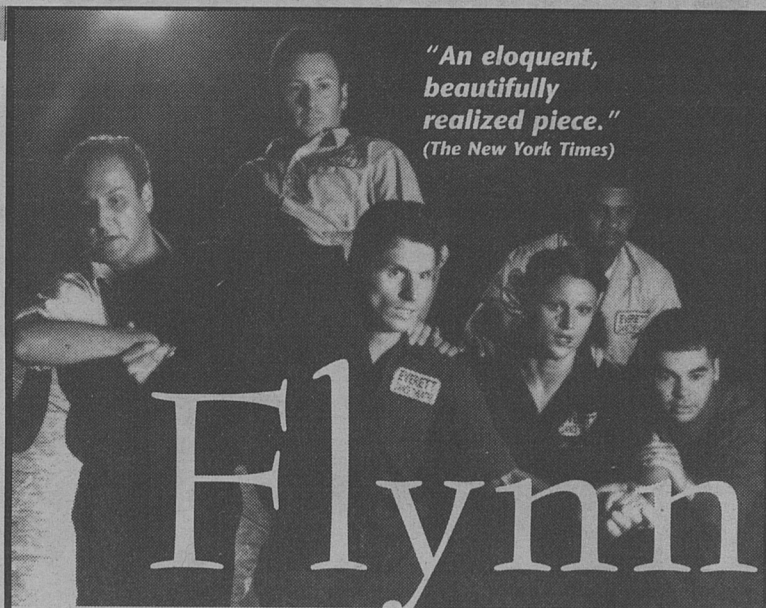
Mann, who also writes for such publications as *The Advocate* and *The New York Times*, will present one of the workshops at the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights' *Our Town Meeting* in Rutland on Nov. 8. His appearance is sponsored by *Glitter*, the Gay and Lesbian Literature and Film Club of Burlington.

Men Together Essays by Anderson Jones, Photographs by David Fields Running Press, 1997

REVIEWED BY PAUL OLSEN

In the book *Men Together*, essayist Anderson Jones and photographer David Fields provide the stories and pictures of twenty-nine gay couples. Subtitled "Portraits of Love, Commitment, and Life," Jones exclaims that, in the book, the couples "share their joys and sorrows, the challenges they have faced together, and the lessons they have learned about making love last." "Men Together is a moving tribute to the power of commitment and a poignant celebration of lasting love." If you aren't nauseous yet, keep reading.

While I am as romantic as the next lesbian is, I haven't the slightest idea why anybody would buy this book. The stories are trite and the insight provided into gay relationships is shallow. For example, Mr. Blackwell (of Ten Worst Dressed fame) and his partner,



"An eloquent, beautifully realized piece."
(The New York Times)

Everett Dance "Body of Work"

Thursday, November 20 at 7:30 pm

A major, nationally acclaimed dance company investigating the subject of labor, unions, and industry? You bet! *Body of Work* "rouses heart and brain," says *The New York Times* Dance Critic Deborah Jowitz, and "lays out the rock bottom equation: Work = money = power." This imaginative, seven-member Rhode Island company brilliantly blends dance, text, music, and newsreel projections to look at downsized workers, uprooted industries, and boom and bust economies.

A+ Arts Plus activities in conjunction with this performance include a Dance Theater Workshop. Call 652-4500 for details.



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R.L. Spencer, provide us with advice like "at the beginning you don't have to have many things in common. What you have to have in common is a thing called two bedsheets." Three cheers for perpetuating stereotypes. Two other rocket science candidates include songwriter Desmond Child and his partner Curtis Shaw who say, "Some senator said that gay people shouldn't be allowed to get married because they don't stay together and can't have families. But we can have families. Those things make you angry at your country." You go girl. Former Congressman Gerry Studds (D-Massachusetts) and his partner proclaim the self-evident by stating "I've often said, especially to gay audiences, that I think the most important

things we do are ironically the most routine." Thanks for that news flash Gerry. Frankly, I haven't read anything this patronizing since Greg Louganis (literally) came out with his sapping book, *Breaking the Surface*.

Complete with token interracial couples, a couple with a disabled partner, plenty of queer clones wearing muscle shirts or flannel, and a truly mixed couple (a conservative Republican and his left-leaning moderate boyfriend) the book sheds little light on gay relationships. While it does tell the story of twenty-nine couples (some of which are mildly interesting and easily read) and the photography is good, this

MEN TOGETHER, p20

Univ of MA, Amherst. FMI call (413) 545-4824.

9 SUNDAY

Gay Guy Get together. Bowling at the Brattleboro Bowl Putney Road across from Ames, next to the Hon Dynasty and Sarkis Market. 4 pm For more information, call Tom (802) 257-3095

Circus Amok: A Transgendered Circus. Gender bending performance ensemble featuring acrobatics and skits. UMass, Amherst. Tickets \$4. \$2 for youth/students/seniors. FMI call (413) 545-4824.

T Dance at The Edge formerly Club Rio in Rutland. Doors open 4 p.m. \$3 cover at the door. 12 Merchants Row.

10 MONDAY

GLITTER Book Night - Stone Butch Blues is this month's selection. Leslie Feinberg's autobiographical tale of growing up as a butch lesbian in blue collar Buffalo, pre-Stonewall. Available at Chassman & Bem - 10% off if you mention Glitter. 7:45-10:00 PM. The Rhombus Gallery, College & Church Sts., Burlington. 652-1103. FMI Contact Steven Kopstein at 802-434-5653 or email: GLITTERvt@aol.com.

Gay Guy Get together. Potluck at Tom Ziniti's "Marlboro North" dormitory, Rte 9, Marlboro. 7 pm. For more information, call Tom (802) 257-3095

12 WEDNESDAY

Movie night with Women of the Woods. Dinner at Oscar & Zeke's first.

5:00, Montpelier, FMI: 802-229-0109.

Rainbow Business Association Annual Meeting (see ad for more details) 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. \$5.00 per person UVM's Christ Church Presbyterian 400 Redstone Campus, Burlington For more information call 879-4527

13 THURSDAY

Men of Montpelier discussion group. topic gay sex stimuli. 6:30 at Kellogg-Hubbard library smiley room

Mariana Romo-Carmona reads from her new book *Living at Night* at Everyone's Books in Brattleboro, VT. 7 p.m.

Betsy Reed presents iHomoEconomics: Capitalism, Community and Lesbian & Gay Life, at UMass Amherst at 12:30 p.m. FMI (413) 545 4824.

13-15: Tribute to James Dean, stage adaptation of iEast of Eden by Champlain College Players. 8 p.m. FMI call (802) 860-2707.

14 FRIDAY

14-16: The Highlands Inn Work Weekend in New Hampshire annual clearing of the ski trails and wood stacking. Free food and lodging for labor. Bring your own tools. FMI call (603) 869-3978



mariana
romo-carmona

15 SATURDAY

Gender-Free Contradances, community dances for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals & allies, happen monthly in rotating locations in western Massachusetts. The next dance is scheduled in Greenfield, with a potluck at 6 pm, beginners' workshop at 8, and dance 'til 11. Admission is \$5-\$7, with no partners or experience necessary. A Brattleboro group of men usually carpools. For more info, call Mike Duffly (802) 257-8984.

Amelia's Book Swap & Potluck at Renee's. 6 PM. FMI: 603-542 1972.

CALENDAR
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