James Dean: Magnificent Failure

Written in 1960 and revised in September 1961, this feature essay was published in *Preview: The Family Entertainment Guide*, June 1962.

I. Author's Eyewitness Historical-Context Introduction written July 29, 2007

II. The feature article as published in *Preview: The Family Entertainment Guide*, June 1962

III. Eyewitness Illustrations

I. Author's Eyewitness Historical-Context Introduction written July 29, 2007

Revealing the Iconography of *Drummer*:
When James Dean Met Marlon Brando,
Heath Ledger, and Jake Gyllenhaal

Marlon Brando: "Stella!"
James Dean: "You're tearing me apart."
Jake Gyllenhaal to Heath Ledger:
"I wish I knew how to quit you."

As soon as we teenagers invented and liberated our tortured selves in the pop culture of the deadly dull 1950s, my leather bomber jacket morphed in meaning from "play clothing" to teen symbol. I was swept up by the movie *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and its theme song, Bill Haley's "Rock around the Clock," which was played every ten minutes on the radio because no other white rock-n-roll songs yet existed. At the same instant, I found my first lover in James Dean, in his jackets, his motorcycle, his face, his attitude, his *verite*. When he was killed at age twenty-four on September 30, 1955, I was sixteen, a junior in high school, and stricken with grief.

Even though I was in the Catholic seminary and was a sexually pure boy, art and literature and movies cancelled my chances of being parochial. (In 2007, it is more difficult to come out as a progressive Catholic

than it is to come out as gay.) I knew that James Dean was who we all were inside. That struggling universal identity was one of his secrets. He died young and found eternal life on film. Looking at him, seduced by his charisma, we discovered sex worship while we ate popcorn and went rocketing on in a rising perfect storm of popular culture that eventually led me to *Drummer*.

In 1956, I bought the paperback, *James Dean, A Biography*, written by his roommate, William Bast, whose unspoken clues and cues told me to read between the lines.

At the same time I wrapped a brown-paper bag around Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, a book praised in my high-school literature class, even though we had been cautioned by the priests not to read it because parts of it were impure.

With flashlight under my blanket covers, I was also reading Grace Metalious' sensational bestseller, *Peyton Place* (1956). I knew what Betty Anderson did to Rodney Harrington.

Those books were about a liberated life I was longing to have. In the pressure cooker of the conformist 1950s, we were reading in code the books that would liberate us in the 1960s.

On television in 1956, I watched TV news footage of the Hungarian Revolt as students marched through the streets of Budapest, and I wondered why we couldn't do that.

I never recovered from the 1955 death of James Dean any more than I have recovered from the 1963 death of Jack Kennedy. Distraught over JFK, I left the Catholic seminary three weeks after he was killed. I should have left on the Friday, September 30, 1955, when Dean died. Both men, aged twenty-four and forty-six, imprinted me and my teen-beatnik generation which grew to be the first generation of gay liberation and the first generation of *Drummer* readers.

By the time James Dean crashed his Porsche Spyder at sunset east of Paso Robles, California, he had appeared on Broadway as a gay Arab hustler in Andre Gide's *The Immoralist* (1954); and he had made three films in one year: *East of Eden* (1955) from the novel by John Steinbeck, *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) from the screenplay by legendary director Nicholas Ray, and *Giant* (1956) from the novel by Edna Ferber, the keenest lesbian of the fabled Algonquin Club. While the publicity-savvy Warner Brothers rushed the postmortem premiere of *Rebel* into theaters, the studio withheld *Giant* from screens for a whole year "out of respect" for Jimmy, watching Dean fever spread from teenager to teenager. We worshiped him the way Sal Mineo worshiped him even more than Natalie Wood wanted him with all her heart on-screen and off. It was not lost on

me that the gay Mineo's character was named Plato, and James Dean was his Ideal.

James Dean was masculine; he was blond; he was hot; he was California; he was American; he was gay.

I wanted James Dean. I wanted to be him.

I never wanted Marlon Brando.

In ways emblematic of the times, Marlon Brando was James Dean, or some said, Dean was Brando: Brando had done a screen test for *Rebel Without a Cause*; both attended the Actor's Studio; both rode motorcycles; both uncloseted a new kind of hyper-masculine sexuality; both became icons in gay leather culture.

By the late 1970s when *Drummer* was a bestseller on news stands all across America, James Dean had grown so iconic in queer memory that Bette Midler in *The Rose* (1979) was desperately seeking out blond men who were ghosts of the James Dean poster that hung in her garage. (Still obsessed a decade after directing *The Rose*, Mark Rydell directed the 2001 bio film, *James Dean*.) In 1981, a coven of gay divas — Cher, Karen Black, Kathy Bates, and Sandy Dennis — all playing disciples of Dean, starred in the Robert Altman play and film, *Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean* (1982). See my review of the erotic archetype of Dean in *The Rose* in the Virtual *Drummer*, *Man2Man Quarterly* #1 (October 1980), page 13.

Dean and Brando made leather culture and *Drummer* inevitable. The outlaw rebellion common to both Brando's *The Wild One* (1953) and Dean's *Rebel Without a Cause* liberated masculine gay men in the same r/evolution as Betty Friedan liberated women with *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) changing sexuality in the 1960s leading to the Stonewall Rebellion (1969), with a through-line threading Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* (1964), and John Rechy's *City of Night* (1963) and *The Sexual Outlaw* (1977).

In *Drummer* 16 (June 1977), there is an interview with John Rechy who in the 1950s as an LA hustler groomed himself after the fashion of James Dean who had been a sometime hustler in LA on Santa Monica Boulevard and in New York on 42nd Street. In his writing, Rechy has such high esteem for Dean, I suspect he hung out at Googie's coffee shop on Sunset Strip where Dean was a post-midnight habitue with the insomniac goth crowd that included Vampira, the camp TV hostess of horror films. Had Dean lived, and if Hollywood had wanted to film *City of*

Night, Dean, as Rechy's hustler, would have been as perfectly conflicted in his own way as Jon Voight was in *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), the John Schlesinger film based on gay author James Leo Herlihy's 1965 novel.

Brando and Dean fused into one archetypal leather image repeated a thousand times in irresistible 1950s "juvenile delinquent" photographs from Chuck Renslow and Etienne's Kris Studio in Chicago and from Bob Mizer's Athletic Model Guild in LA. The names of the characters Dean played all sounded like AMG porn stars: Cal Trask in *East of Eden*, Jim Stark in *Rebel*, and Jett Rink in *Giant*.

On Folsom Street in San Francisco, artist Mike Caffee sculpted his famous *Leather David* statue (1966) for Fe-Be's bar, but its leather jacket and cap were from Brando, and its existential slouch was pure, patented James Dean. In 1970, I bought a Caffee *Leather David* from Fe-Be's for $125. Research Mike Caffee, the statue, and leather heritage in *Popular Witchcraft: Straight from the Witch's Mouth.*

If Dean had not been seven years younger than Brando, Tennessee Williams might have had some interesting choices casting his leading men who were considered peers by their mutual Actor's Studio director, Elia Kazan. Dean was born too late, but perfect, for *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) and was counter-intuitively ideal for *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1948), and was dead too soon for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955). As a lifelong critic writing on Tennessee Williams, I have noted that very often the actors cast in Williams' plays are too old for the roles. What James Dean could have brought to Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*! Research Tennessee Williams: jackfritscher.com.

In the 1950s, I was a gay boy who — same as everyone else — did not know what being a "masculine gay" was, and I could not let go of Jimmy Dean because I wanted to be like him. I wanted to be the kind of man he was.

He so absorbed me into him that I began writing anguished teenage-boy fiction like "The Odyssey of Bobby Joad" and "Father and Son" which the Catholic press seemed happy to publish because the stories safely reflected teenage angst. In August 1957, as soon as I turned eighteen, I flew to New York for my first visit to Manhattan to track Dean's haunts on 42nd Street, on West 68th Street #19 where he had sublet, and in the Village on Christopher Street at the Theater de Lys where he had appeared on stage. That didn't take much time so I was soon catching folk singers in Washington Square Park and beat poets in coffee houses, and I was buying books on yoga and physique magazines, and dying my hair red. I was too young to know gay bars existed.

Homosexuality always pushes into the future those who listen which is why fundamentalists hate it and the change it causes. I was fifteen years

ahead of Lou Reed who got "me" right when he wrote his 1972 song, "Walk on the Wild Side": "Jackie is just speeding away — thought she was James Dean for a day." On August 14, 1957, having returned from Manhattan, I wrote an anguished eyewitness beatnik poem about the world, Greenwich Village, and James Dean titled, "Cry! The Young Hunters," which is re-printed as background gay *juvenilia* for "gay roots nostalgia" in this series after my *Drummer* article, "Leather Christmas 1977."

I was mad for James Dean, and wrote a feature article about him when I turned twenty-one in 1960; but I was a seminarian, and the priest-censor told me (cryptically) that my article was inappropriate and that no Catholic magazine would publish it.

For the next twelve months, I practiced what I had learned from the book written by James Dean's roommate, William Bast. Having learned to read between the lines, I taught myself how to write between the lines.

And I succeeded, even though I had to keep the closet door closed. My passion for him surfaced in my article, "James Dean: Magnificent Failure," published in the Catholic *Preview: The Family Entertainment Guide* (June 1962). But there was a price. I had to closet my idolatry of him and revise the title of the article with the oxymoron angle, "Magnificent Failure." In my spin, I had to open with disclaiming sentiments that evaporate as the article goes on. As a very young man, my theme was identity and cult. As a twenty-year-old I wrote about the legend of Dean overtaking the person he was; that was the exact premise I posited thirty years later writing my erotic bio about my lover Mapplethorpe when post-mortem scandals and fame erased what a sweet person he had been before he died too young.

In truth, James Dean imprinted a generation and me archetypally. Fully coming out of my closet during the mid-1960s, I exploded and wrote my young leather-biker novel, *I Am Curious (Leather)* aka *Leather Blues* (1969). I frankly "imaginated" my *mise en scene* on James Dean and his fuck-you attitude. In a weird coincidence signifying nothing, three days after I completed the final draft of that manuscript, I was nearly killed in a terrible car crash when rammed by a Checker cab that destroyed my vehicle with me buckled inside on August 9, 1969, at the same hour the Manson Family was murdering movie star Sharon Tate and four others including stylist Jay Sebring who designed the hair for the film *Spartacus* and opened the first "salon for men" in San Francisco in 1969. Urban legend rumored that the once-married Sebring was gay and into leather because of items allegedly found in the trunk of his car parked outside the murder house.

With the headlines the next morning, the culture-shaking Manson Family became part of my book, *Popular Witchcraft,* (1972) which I had

begun writing three months before. A chapter of *I Am Curious (Leather)*, based on James Dean's leaving home, and on our bomber-jackets, was serialized in *Son of Drummer* (September 1978), and was announced as "the new *Drummer* novel."

When I began shaping the psychological input of *Drummer* in 1977, James Dean (hot and dead), even more than the obvious Brando (old and fat), flowed into my concept of a homomasculine ideal for *Drummer* in fiction, features, and photography.

In the pop-art 1960s and 1970s, huge black-and-white photo posters of James Dean hung like icons on the walls of leather bars like Keller's in New York and Chuck Arnett's Tool Box in San Francisco. On Folsom Street, the Ramrod bar in those pre-VCR years switched on its 16mm movie projector every Wednesday night to build a crowd, and frequently screened reels from all three of James Dean's films, as well as Mel Brooks' "Springtime for Hitler" sequences from *The Producers* (1968).

In *Giant* (filmed in 1955), the chain-smoking cowboy Dean invented the "Marlboro Cowboy" that came to dominate 1960s American advertising. Before James Dean, the Marlboro Man, created by Leo Burnett in 1954, was not necessarily a cowboy. Post-Dean in *Giant*, Marlboro Country, fetishizing itself, became nothing but saddles, boots, yellow slickers, riding gloves, cowboy hats, and bunkhouses. The Marlboro Man so infused American ideas of masculinity that I folded that sensibility into 1970s *Drummer* to queer Marlboro's man-to-man sex appeal, and to ground *Drummer* so that it would not be light in its loafers. Just as the world loved the Marlboro Man, gay men internationally loved the open-faced American masculinity of *Drummer* which, with its leather and cowboy lifestyle, was not like all the other effeminate and campy gay magazines.

The most reviled issue of *Drummer* was first publisher John Embry's "Cycle Sluts" drag cover and contents of *Drummer* 9 (October 1976) which readers wrote they never wanted to see again. The second publisher Anthony DeBlase, pressured by political correctness, and desperate to sell the *Drummer* business, made a similar anti-erotic misstep leading to the death of *Drummer* when he printed "Dykes for Madonna" in *Drummer* 150 (September 1991). His mistake of switching icons Dean and Brando for Madonna in his nagging, preachy, and camp issue created an uproar, alienated core readers, and put off potential American buyers.

As if in proof of *Drummer* gestating the Marlboro male *isolato* image, Dean's laconic smoking cowboy in *Giant*, with his rifle slung across his shoulders, filtered through gay lore and surfaced as the prototype for actors Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger (especially) in *Brokeback Mountain* (2005).

Jack Twist was James Dean.

As an insight into the pervasive pop-culture influence of *Drummer*, it is worth noting that long before Annie Proulx ever spun the yarn for her sensitive Edna Ferber-esque short story for *The New Yorker* (1997), the archetype, plot, and characters of that cowboy love story had appeared in a dozen testosterone versions during twenty-four years in *Drummer*.

Dean died iconic, a misunderstood good boy, like an anguished Peter Pan who people judged was a victim of his life in the fast lane.

In other words, Dean was like a good middle-class boy who thinks he fits in until interior voices tell him he doesn't, and outsiders try to shame him with guilt.

James Dean died a rebel forever. That's what queers are. It takes an act of rebellion, an act of revolution to come out of the closet, and then—the sucker punch!—not get sucked down into gay culture where a lifestyle is not a life.

If readers thought I brought "something special" to the leather culture of *Drummer*, it was, maybe, simply that quintessence of liberated masculine-identified gay male I saw in the rebellious fuck-you stare of James Dean.

Because of his face that had validated a generation of young men, I changed the face of *Drummer* during my three years as editor in chief and validated the new generation of homomasculine men

- with my pen writing about our authentic leather scene and not about camp,
- with my own camera shooting real people who were players one could meet in real life, and
- with my grassroots *Drummer* Outreach to readers to participate in my gonzo journalism by sending in photos of their accessible selves for features like my "Tough Customers" so that *Drummer* was not filled only with the faces and bodies of don't-touch-me models.

If I hadn't struggled against all odds to write about a man like James Dean, I might not have become muscular enough to write *Drummer*.

Back in the 1950s when, as a teenager, I had to read between the lines, and then learned to write between the lines, I ached for the day I would write lines that were out, honest, *verite*, masculine, and erotic.

That's how James Dean fitted me up for *Drummer*.

He was identity.

He was desire.

He was a hot dangerous image a careful driver sees approaching in a rear-view mirror.

Speeding forward at 125 mph in his silver Porsche convertible, James Dean hovered in the back of the heads of *Drummer* readers in the 1970s.

II. The feature article as published in *Preview: The Family Entertainment Guide*, June 1962

**In a short, tragic career,
brooding James Dean unknowingly toyed
with the emotions of a generation and
even after death held their misguided loyalty.
Fortunately, the years have erased
this adulation for one who was,
in truth, no more than a…**

Magnificent Failure

by Jack Fritscher writing as John J. Fritscher

Near seven years his name has lived on three short years of limelit life. Valentino could not die and Byron will be seen forever at Missolonghi. Yet in the ruins of abrupt tragedy, when his searching was not ended, there was frozen in last season's generation the memory of the sweet lost pains of adolescence and the old times that are forever gone.

In September, 1955, when James Dean sped to his death in California's fertile Salinas Valley, Warner Bros. calculated and shook its collective head at the loss. The first crush of mail was indignant, almost hysterically resentful, piqued with premature death. Then the letters slowed to a trickle and Hollywood recognized the chilling calm that leads to obscurity. Yet in December there was a surprising increase; January delivered 3,000 letters; and by summer, 1956, the studio was averaging 7,000 letters a month with payment enclosed for photographs of James Byron Dean.

The for-once-amazed press agentry was stymied by the gratuitous flood of mail. From mouth to mouth spread the personal commitment to his memory, the adulation, the rumors. Through the high schools and junior colleges of the nation the secret whispered that Jimmy Dean was not dead, that he was horribly disfigured, temporarily insane, hidden away. The public demanded the whole truth about the young actor who lived and died almost between the blinks of a weary world's eye.

From city to city vulgar stage shows promised the ectoplasmic return of James Dean in person, on stage. A sculptured head sold out nationally at thirty dollars a likeness. Magazines entirely devoted to Dean vended hundreds of thousands of copies. His two released motion pictures were requested and rebooked across the country. Columbia Records pressed an extended play album of tortured painful music from the soundtracks of his pictures. A Forest record entitled *His Name Was Dean* sold 25,000 copies the first week of release.

What had begun spontaneously was perverted by calculation. The money changers were marching through hysteria.

Warner Bros., rolling with the punches, decided to hold the last Dean movie in reserve with release postponed "out of respect for a fine actor's memory." It was a gamble, shelving momentarily Edna Ferber's *Giant*, holding back the completed performances of big-box-office Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson; but it was also an ace in the hole. Everyone knew Jimmy Dean had completed his last scene as Jett Rink only three days before his death.

Fourteen months after the accident, with excitement at a fever pitch, Warners released director George Stevens' *Giant* which in the ensuing weeks won seven major Academy Award nominations, not the least meaningful of which was the posthumous nomination given James Dean for the best performance by an actor. With full integrity, but wounding loyalists' hearts, Yul Brynner went on to win that coveted 1956 Oscar for his performance in *The King and I*. It had been Dean's last chance.

Against the glutted background of such neon ballyhoo, it is easy to miss the personality of the twenty-four-year-old youth who, unknowing, toyed psychologically with the emotions of a generation. James Dean was a magnificent failure.

Tragedy stalked Dean's life and the shadows were always with him, driving him, tormenting him. "My mother died on me when I was nine years old," he cried melodramatically in a studio tantrum. "What does she expect me to do? Do it all by myself?"

From childhood he blamed himself for Mildred Dean's death by cancer and in blaming himself alternately loved and hated her the more for the pain he remembered in her face, for her enervating abandonment of him.

There was nothing in his life with his Uncle Marcus and Aunt Ortense to explain the moodiness, the brooding among the coffins in the Fairmont, Indiana, general store. His environment had been normal enough, adjustable; but Mildred had dreamed great unfulfilled dreams for herself and when they had not worked for her, perhaps they would work for Jimmy. They had to; they must.

James Byron Dean. The *James* was plain for Indiana; but the *Byron* was for Mildred. In Fairmont, there was no time for himself, troubled among the constant ghosts of his mother, plotting ways to repay her for dying. Existentially he did not know who he was or what he was, crippled, force-molded by the hope and wild dreams of his farm-girl mother.

The years in Indiana, portending no future, James Dean went to California, in 1950, to see his father; but the myths are tangled with the truth. Few knew him well; none knew him long. The devotees of such things can relate what stations there are.

In audition, the discerning Elia Kazan saw in the turbulent young student from U.C.L.A. the deep feeling and raw communication that translates a particular actor into a portrayal. Dean won the role of Steinbeck's tortured Cal Trask in *East of Eden*. The critics acclaimed his performance precisely because over the crags of tragedy his portrayal came to grips with truly human problems, something Jimmy Dean could not manage in real life.

Now he was on the way—with the gnawing emptiness still there. He received excellent reviews in the Broadway play, *See the Jaguar*, but the show itself closed within a week. Yet a niche seemed to be opening for his life. "Acting," he said, "is the greatest. Every town has its successful lawyers, but how many successful actors has it got? The first time I found out acting was as big a challenge as law, I flipped."

But the twenty-two-year-old actor could not reverse the equation. He gave life to characters in scripts, but the celluloid solutions gave him no peace in return. The title of his second picture, *Rebel Without a Cause*, fitted him well. Tormented genius? Angry man? Sullen, ill-tempered, snapping back at the acclaim given his artistry, he was despite the euphemisms of the magazines, an emotionally stunted misfit.

About his life there was nothing pretty. He did not drink, but he smoked too much, slept too little, drove too fast. He was running at a pace that would not let him see where he had been or where he was going. It was tragic when his $7,000 Porsche Spyder plowed into a Ford driven by a Salinas farmer. Mildred Dean had always wanted to protect him from farmers.

Any psychologist can explain idolization. Cult is a question of identity and in the case of James Dean adolescence found its Self, its personification.

Always emotionally immature, he was the heroic example of rebellion to adolescents experiencing normal emotional disturbances at the proper age. He rebelled against conformity and he not only got away with it, he got rich at it.

And there was insurance. He was solid. He was dead. His cycle was complete. There was no danger that once the investment of identification had been made he would desert his promises and fly to the adult society that youth imagines so callously wanting.

Identification enables one to regain an object that has been lost; in identifying with a loved person who has died or from whom one has been separated, the lost person's expressiveness becomes reincarnated as an incorporated feature of one's personality.

James Dean was dead; he had this appeal of lost tragedy and it found complementary expression in the varying degrees of sympathetic imitation characteristic of his prep-school followers. They subconsciously resolved he had not died in vain. A little of his struggle, a little of him, was living in them.

Everyone knew, even in the furor of 1956, that he had been hardly better than he should have been, that his inappropriate aggressiveness had repelled all but two close friends; but few paid ardent attention to his personal life. What had had important influence, what had been seen by millions, was the film image he had projected.

Sympathy was given him in *East of Eden*; identification with him was made in the searching nobility of *Rebel Without a Cause*; and the laurels of emotive versatility were paid him for *Giant*. Whatever James Dean was as a person, as an actor he was an artist eliciting an artist's due.

In the face of young legends, the phenomenon of James Dean has paled slowly and it has paled inevitably. The youngsters of seven years ago have outgrown the need for the expressive example of the boy who could not outgrow the tangles of his maternally dominated life; and now these young adults, content like the slowly-aging and little-increasing sets of Garland and Sinatra fans, are not rejecting and forgetting the James Dean of their nonage.

He is recalled with a wistful smile and a dash of pity; for his whole anguished life is a commemorative symbol of unresolved maturity's most temporarily endless period.

Another generation will have another lord; but those who remember like to think this was a little different, that he sparked a minute of truth, that for one brief shining moment when he was needed, James Dean was someone good and someone very special.

The secret of the spontaneity was that despite everything, despite all his personal shortcomings, his lost nobility flickered in empathy with every gangling kid whoever stood alone and aching on the threshold of the world. He seemed to understand the misunderstood.

In 1957, a partially fictionalized biography ended quintessentially: "Do not judge me as James Byron Dean. I am the man you dreamed me

to be. I am the parts I played throughout my meager yesterdays. I am the young and the lonely and the lost. I will remain a part of every one of you who knew of me."

Even in life he was more spirit than flesh.

Anticipating *Drummer* and the Gay Press

In 1956 in high school at the Pontifical College Josephinum, I began as a sixteen-year-old book-review editor for *The Josephinum Review*, and was the high-school senior reporter for the stodgy *Pravda* student publication, *The Ad Rem*. In 1960, I started up an alternative, but officially tolerated, college magazine which—referencing the "Body Electric"—I titled *Pulse*. The attitude and objectives and inter-activity in my introductory editorial (read: manifesto!) in the first issue, Halloween 1960, could just as well have been my first editorial in *Drummer* in 1977.

In 1960, I was militant against the apathy and passivity of seminarians who—stultified in the boring and conformist 1950s we had just exited—were not yet awake to the fact that Jack Kennedy signaled something as new for the American 1960s as Stonewall signaled for the gay 1970s. As a crusading college magazine editor, I was kept under strict surveillance by priests and was very nearly expelled for radical ideas. The disciplinarian Reverend Alfred E. Camp, called me into his office after my first issue, pounded his desk with his fist as hard as he could, and exploded with the line, "I am the editor of this magazine." I thought he was hallucinating. I had known him when he was a seminarian, and he remained a cunt even after his ordination to the priesthood.

As editor at the dawn of the 1960s, I called for social activism among the largely passive student body, and my stories in *Pulse* contained camp writing like:

> She acted strangely, as vampires will. Come to think of it, I did only see her at night. As I imagine it now, it does seem to detract from the romance of it all; she, lying there in her cold little tomb the whole day long, an extra-dry martini in one hand, Balzac in the other….I saw them drive a stake through her heart. "Good Lord, man, what are you doing?" I cried just making the scene. "Well," he said, "I'm not giving her a facial, that's for surenik."

My writing—a clue to my character—was the beginning of the Catholic Church threatening me for coloring outside the lines. Many of my fellow seminarians—like the future "Prince of

the Church" Bernard Cardinal Law dragging his persona and his kveeny entourage around the campus—seemed hungry for the status of the priesthood: life in a parish rectory staffed by cook and housekeeper; golf with rich parishioners at their country club; and Buicks!

I wanted to be like the romantic French worker priests who lived among their poor parishioners, fought for workers' rights, and earned their own keep. Pope Pius XII condemned the worker priests for being too close to Communism; he said nothing about the parish priests who were too close to capitalism.

In a certain underground resistance of "forbidden books and authors," I was sometimes able to read *The Catholic Worker* newspaper edited by the ardent, progressive, and saintly Catholic journalist Dorothy Day (1897-1980). (My mother's maiden name was *Day*.)

In January 1960, I was twenty years old. In two years, I would be living in the Negro slums of Chicago's South Side, and working for civil rights with leftist organizer Saul Alinsky and his grassroots "The Woodlawn Organization" (TWO).

Not quite knowing that DNA was about to throw the curve ball of homosexuality into my young life, I was four years from finding gay sex in 1964 at Chicago's twenty-four-story Lawson YMCA—where descending the staircase from the nude sunroof down past the cubicle rooms to the basement pool was like performing the gay-waiter title number in that year's biggest Broadway hit, *Hello Dolly!*

Before the delicious deluge of the Swinging 60s, I wrote this editorial in what would become my editorial style in *Drummer*:

> *Pulse* Magazine, Editorial, First Issue, Halloween 1960,
>
> Trick or Treat the *Pulse* you now feel is yours.
>
> Here is your first issue of "College *Mad*," a bouillon potpourri of college life. It is frankly an experiment, an expedition into the recesses of the student scene: the serious, the absurd, the off-beat, the up-beat.
>
> It is intended as a sampling and taste of current opinions, preferences, and trends. It purports to be a review of creative student craftsmanship and as such welcomes all manuscripts, ideas, and contributions of whatever kind.
>
> The format is expansive and dynamic enough to include a new, fresh approach in each issue. Published once a quarter, the May segment will be issued as a college yearbook [because we didn't have one].
>
> The purpose is entertainment; the policy is truth, rarely varnished and often raw. Suggestions, gripes,

letters to the editor, complaints? Drop them off anonymously. No names will be used—in fact, the anonymity is half the fun and all the freedom of saying what you have to say in a place where you will be heard.

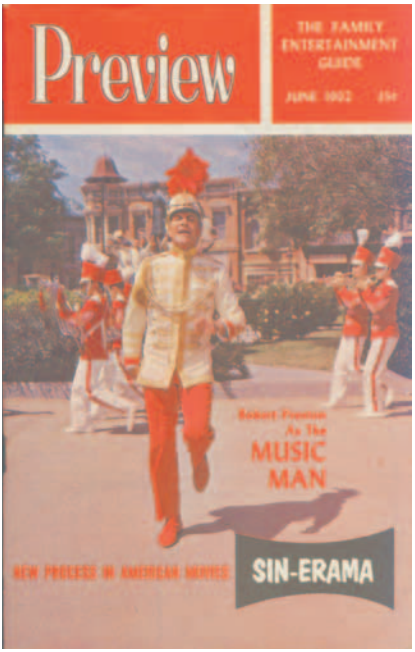
The title *Pulse* is an exclamatory reaction to the general acrotism of the college students. Nine out of ten collegians have a ring in the nose. [No one could have predicted that the metaphor would years later transgress into into a fashion accessory.] But that servility can be broken.

Lastly, this issue is not perfect. We hope each succeeding one will be better as you make it known what you want: more about politics? Monsters? Philosophy? Liturgy? Fellow students?

"We stand on the edge of a New Frontier. Give us your voice, your hand...."

Address all correspondence: The Editor, Suite 233.

III. Eyewitness Illustrations



Catholic Preview of Entertainment (June 1962) published Fritscher's closeted feature, "James Dean: Magnificent Failure."

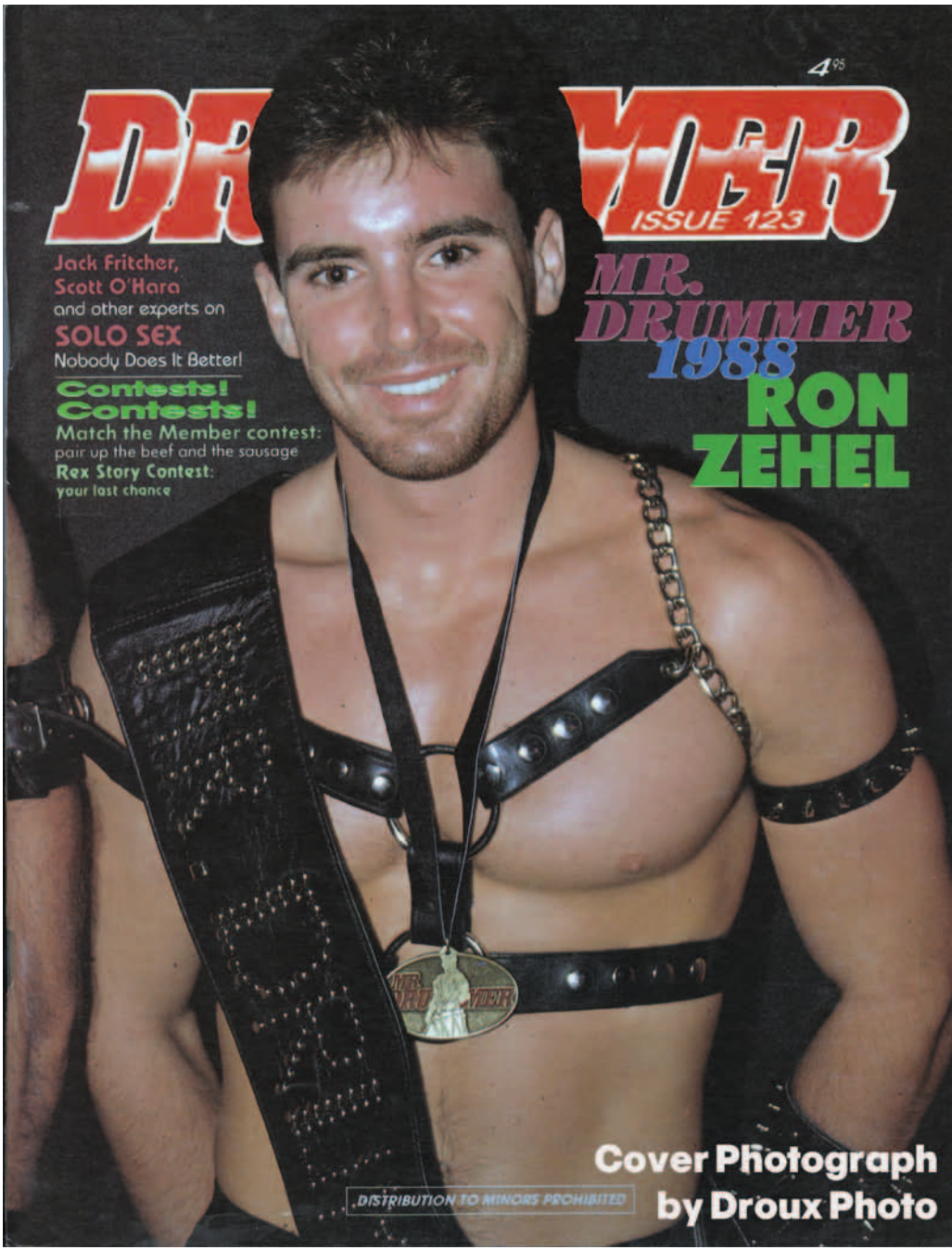
Captions: Eyewitness documentation of the existence of graphics providing internal evidence supporting Jack Fritscher's text are located in the Jack Fritscher and Mark Hemry GLBT History collection. Out of respect for issues of copyright, model releases, permissions, and privacy, some graphics are not available for publication at this time, but can be shown by appointment.

Eyewitness Illustration

Book cover. *James Dean, A Biography* by William Bast, New York: Ballantine Books, 1956. Having had William Bast's closeted biography of his life with James Dean on his bookshelf in the 1950s, Fritscher abandoned Bast's pre-Stonewall timidity when he wrote his own frank erotic biography of his life with photographer Robert Mapplethorpe titled *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*.

Eyewitness Illustration

Two book covers. *A Street Car Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams, Signet, 1951. *One Arm and Other Stories* by Tennessee Williams, New Directions, 1954. Having written academia's first doctoral dissertation on Tennessee Williams (1967), Fritscher continued to reference Williams' influence on homomasculine leather culture in Williams' scripts and casting, and made Tennessee Williams part of the theatrical subtext and ritual iconography of *Drummer*: *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, "One Arm," and "Desire and the Black Masseur."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