

The Front Page

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Those Incredible Male Calendars!

by John Preston

On occasion I've been known to take things to an extreme. One of the most obvious examples over the years has been my passion for male calendars.

Once thought to be a passing fad, the word is in from publishers that calendars that feature erotic male images are a sure thing for continued production. We often want to think that it's a hidden gay market that produces so much beefcake. But the marketing directors I've talked to insist that it's not so. Straight women are being "liberated" and snatching up the male photographic products. And straight men are more and more willing to be the models in a field that was once limited to gay sexual outlaws.

Whatever the reasons, there's no doubt that the calendars do appeal to gay men. I, myself, have had as many as twenty on one wall, a bit of over-kill I suppose, but the impression was striking and the first of the month when I was able to turn all those pages at once was a new treat.

The calendars for 1985 are more than adequate to assure me that this coming year will have twelve days of pure joy for me. All those pages, all those men...

One of the best calendars does some work at breaking through on some of our images. *Black is More than Beautiful*, \$7.95, is produced by a new company with that same name. The pictures are perfectly taken, the men are handsome and the impact is a dignified sensuality. No full nudity here, handsome men acting naturally and with a tendency toward natural settings than leave you with the impression that the photos aren't posed.

Looking Good: The Men of USC, \$7.95, was one of the original male calendars. When it first came out it was treated as a joke, no one believed that a male calendar would have any appeal. This classy production by Landmark Calendars proves my point about the change in the market. *Looking Good* is looking like a big money maker. It's in the class of "face calendars." Not even a hint of nudity is allowed in this genre, a torn t-shirt's hot for them. There are two other calendars that go a little further while keeping *Looking Good's* squeaky clean, fresh as apple pie freshness about them. *Image Is* (\$7.95, Sterling Specialties) and *Second Glance* (\$7.95, Bo-



Above: a selection from The Scott Madsen Poster Book. On the cover: a great month from the *Black is More Than Beautiful* calendar.

Tree Productions) at least get to the point of bathing suits every once in a while.

But don't think that the limitations of the mainstream marketplace have inhibited all those publishers who are after the beefcake dollar. Without a doubt, without a second's hesitation, without a single qualification, the hottest calendar for 1985 comes from no less than Simon and Schuster. *Studs of '85*, compiled by the editors of *Playgirl*, is the winner. Obviously avoiding frontal nudity, the people who put this together have instead lifted the rear view to new heights. *Studs of '85* is a dream come true for the man who loves buttocks. Stunning.

Much more so than *Buns: 1985*. Last year's *Buns* calendar was a disaster. Leaving behind her tried and true formula, photographer Christi Jenkins has descended to being cute. This year she's back on track and had at least shown photographs of men's derriers that are worthy of being photographed. (Last year's tended to be pictures that had more appeal in terms of who was willing to pose.)

Not that men's rears are the only thing worth showing off in a calendar. Landmark also offers one called *Up Front*. At \$8.95 you'd think you could escape without having furry cats or bunches of grapes obscuring the images, but, still, it's hot. Actually, it's worth

the price just to get the added attraction: there's a "suitable for framing" print of the wonderful cover shot included in the package.

Not all the calendars that are available are of dream images. There's an air of authenticity around the *Firefighters USA* calendar that's endearing, even while the pictures are hot. At \$7.95 it has all the production values of Landmark's other products, but, trust me, these really are firefighters and they really are posing to raise money for a health foundation.

Much grittier, with none of the overt erotic stuff, is a calendar called *Last of a Breed: Portraits of Working Cowboys*. Sold for \$7.95 by the Texas Monthly Press, this black and white product has a haunting quality about it, one that does evoke a time past. If you or a friend has a thing for the real West, this is the one.

There are two new calendars this year that appeal to a regional theme. One is *Maine Attractions*. Only \$5.95 it can be bought by mail order from the Spring Street Gym at 119 Spring Street, Portland, Maine 04101. It's also black and white and shows local guys from the Portland area dressed, for the most part, in shorts and t-shirts. Not nearly as polished as the rest, many are going to find its very roughness delightful.

Two of Boston's institutions have combined for another product. *Metropolitan Men* has been photographed by Paul Parks, a celebrity in that city. It features the men who work out at the Metropolitan Health Club, a Nautilus and weight training gym with cafe and bar that's the sleekest bit of gentrification Massachusetts has seen yet. It's available by mail order for those of you who can't take advantage of the joys of sipping your compari and soda in the cafe as the men come and go from the downstairs locker room — an activity I highly recommend for all Boston summer visitors. Send \$11.95 to: Metropolitan Man, 96 Chandler Street, Boston, MA 02116. (Massachusetts residents have to add on sales tax.)

Simon and Schuster is the one very big publisher who's decided that male photographic images are a money maker in more than calendars. They have two books that have just come out that give you plenty of

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