



alphatribe

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10

FETISH STREET WEAR

Alphatribe discusses trends in fetish streetwear.

ISSUE 12

ALPHATRIBE MAGAZINE / ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: FETISH FLAGS, IBIZA TRAVEL GUIDE, SISTERS OF PERPETUAL INDULGENCE, DJ CARRANCO, THE PUPDATE, PALM SPRINGS LEATHER PRIDE, THE X-AWARDS, INTERNATIONAL MISTER LEATHER

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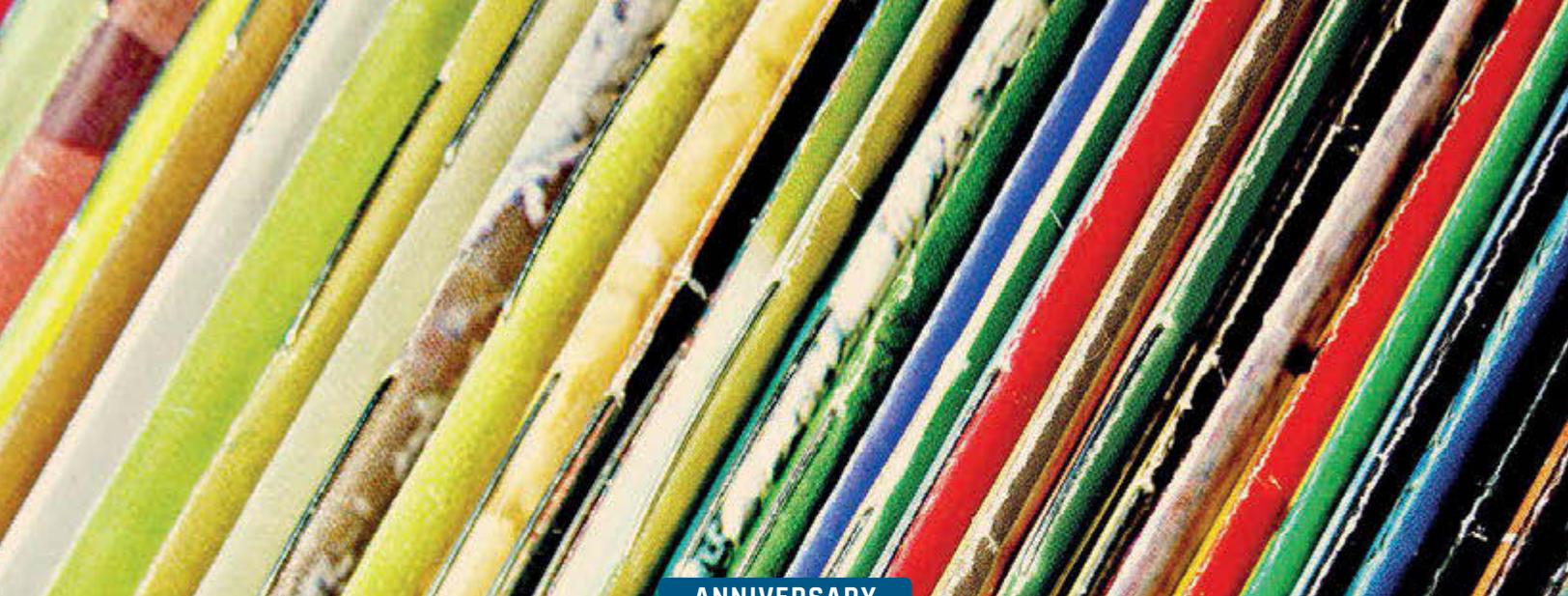
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Going back 40 years

Cover: "Tribute to Tom of Finland" by PAWEL SPYCHALSKI, winner MorePixx competition 2019



ANNIVERSARY

40 YEARS AGO: CHUCK RENSLow, TOM OF FINLAND, DURK DEHNER, AND DAVID KLOSS...

WALKING THE LEATHER CARPET THE FIRST IML CONTEST

SUNDAY, MAY 20, 1979

BY JACK FRITSCHER, PHD

Forty years ago in 1979, at the dawn of IML history, the first article published about the first International Mr. Leather was the five-page photo-spread "The IML Contest; The Envelope, Pleez!" in "Drummer" 31. At the request of IML founding father, Chuck Renslow, I was privileged to write this sporty bit to introduce and preserve the 26 historically important leather photographs shot by my longtime friend Bob Maddox, owner of the Male Hide Leather shop inside the Gold Coast bar. Twenty-five years later, Joseph Bean reprinted this IML feature in his 2004 coffee-table photo book, "International Mr. Leather: 25 Years of Champions," published for the Leather Archives & Museum by IML, Inc.

Framing leather and first Mr. IML David Kloss

In the emerging post-Stonewall world of 1970s leather culture, our work at "Drummer" required the invention of gay words to expand the vocabulary of the love that once dared not speak its name. We needed new words to write about new far-out kink concepts and leather identity like IML. This essay showed the value of the new word "homomascularity" coined out of necessity in 1978. That high-concept term focuses not on sex, as in the center of "homo-sex-uality," but on framing and claiming legitimate gender identity for masculine-identified men. Even Hal Call of the Mattachine Society was busting the myth that all gay men were effeminate. "Homomascularity" was designed as a calm and supportive humanist word, unlike the wrong word "hyper-masculinity" which, because of its prefix "hyper," sounds like a clinical diagnosis of the exaggerated toxic machismo of fundamentalist males who think dick energy, muscle, hairiness, combustion engines, alcohol, tobacco, and firearms make them men's men.

The first Mr. IML title-holder, Merchant Marine David Kloss, spoke explicitly to this point of homomascularity in 1979 when in 2019 he told me what the judges were looking for in that original IML class: "I was one of many exploring and immersing ourselves in the sexual excitement of leather. Our specific world at that time was men and masculinity. I imagine that to many that I met I embodied an approachable image of a leatherman. One that played hard and without reservations, able to represent to people of various sex and gear fetishes. (The reality of working on oil drilling rigs didn't hurt.) If you read the instructions to the judges, I sup-

THE ENVELOPE PLEEZ! THE WINNER IS . . . San Francisco's David Kloss



DRUMMER 22

Mr. America looks like an asexual American boy compared to the sexually upfront All American Men of the Mr. International Leather competition.

Lats and Latitude for lots of Attitude: when these Leathermen do you like they do you when they do you, you know you've been done.

Ain't no way nobody gonna rain on a macho meat parade: well planned, and packaged better than a basket lunch, by Chicago's classic GOLD COAST bar (where us midwest boys knew to go to come out as interstellar men).

Gold Coaster hoster Chuck Renslow runs full upstairs/downstairs with manager Pat Batt backed up by MALE HIDE LEATHERS.

Together, the hottest twelve contestants this side of the Apostles, man-ifested themselves in hardassed leather, definition harnesses, and Pavlovian jockstraps.

Judging was by godlike Olympic methods: "Keep in mind that what you are judging is not necessarily the handsomest face or the most muscular body; but, rather, the man who best typifies The Ideal Leatherman. A man whose command presence and sense of self communicates that special quality we celebrate as 'Leather.'"

Medallions hung on adult manly chests. Not a missed congeniality in the lot, these men typify what the 1980's have in store: *The New Homomascularity* calculated to blow the righteous socks off straights overdosed on stereofags.

Every man on stage was a winner, while The Mr. International Leather. First Place went to DAVID KLOSS, sponsored by THE BRIG, San Francisco.

The other men, daring to put their pees and ass on the world's toughest *Chorus Line*, were: Terry Hunter, Carol's Speak-easy, Chicago; Reg Simpson, RR, Miami; Donald Rahn, Foxhole, Denver; Stan Masterson, Landmark, Datona Beach, FL; Daan Jefferson, Gold Coast, Chicago; Jim Kazik, Wreckroom, Milwaukee; Harry Shattuck, South Town Lumber Co., Denver; Bill Maggio, Harder Than Hell Productions, Chi; Jesse Capello, Cafe La Fitte in Exile/Coral Bar, New Orleans; Durk Dehner, American Uniform Association, L.A.; Bruce Wachholder, Touche, Chicago; David Kloss, Brigg, SF.

— Jack Fritscher

PHOTOS BY MALE HIDE LEATHERS

THE WINNERS ▶

David Kloss, with (left to right) Pat Batt, Manager of The Gold Coast; Jesse Capello, Second Runner-Up; Durk Dehner, First Runner-Up; and Chuck Renslow, producer of the Mr. International Leather Contest and owner of The Gold Coast.



First Mr IML David Kloss and husband Remi in the 21st Century

pose I fit that description. We weren't looking for leaders, social causes, political correctness. Just someone that embodied the image." Building from his victory in 1979 to his active duty as a judge in 2018 for Israel Mr. Leather, he helped kick-start the IML tradition of community service in his lifelong advocacy and fund-raising for gay human rights and HIV/AIDS.

The 1970s Golden Age of Leather hit maximum intensity in the spring and fall of 1979. We were all running wild in the streets when suddenly guys heard of the startup of the twin contests of the first IML (May 1979) and the first Mr. Drummer (November 1979). Leather was getting organized in Chicago and San Francisco. As editor of "Drummer," I was happy to report on IML and its contestants who wowed the audience of a couple hundred leathermen. It was also a fun chance to satirize some of the rhetoric voiced about sexual objectification in the Miss America contest with its signature sashes and swimsuits worn with high heels.

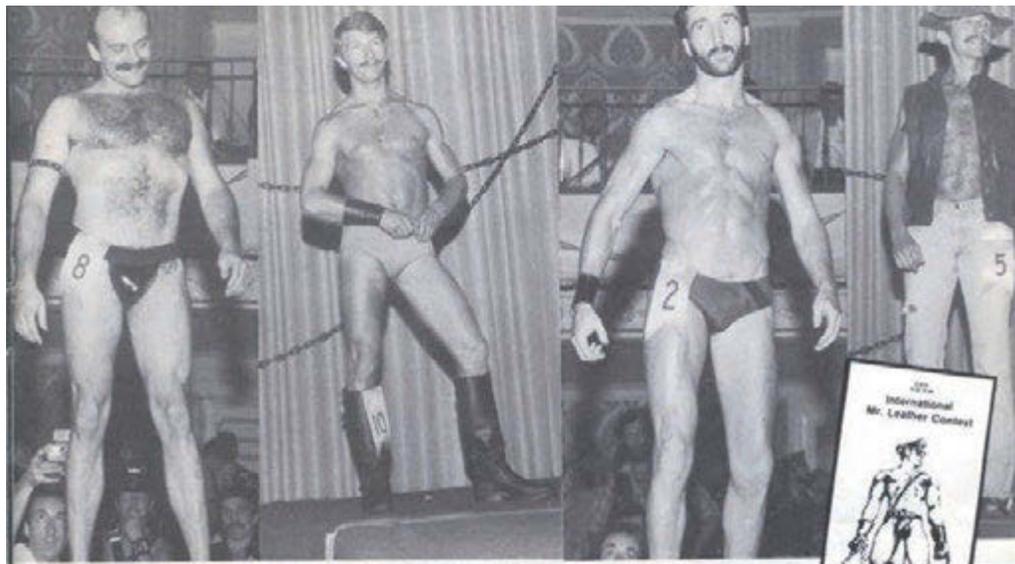
Chuck Renslow: Who's your daddy?

In this salute to the men of IML, I took a cue from Chuck Renslow who dedicated his life to glorifying the Platonic Ideal of leathermen. He began his show-biz career with his rugged Kris Studio leather-muscle photography in his "Triumph" magazine named after the Triumph gym he bought in 1958 with his lover, leather artist Etienne. After they staged their first casual physique contest at the gym, they quickly outed the test run of that straight muscle show when they opened their Gold Coast bar where they ran local leather contests before launching IML. By 1979, two years before AIDS, the ideal leatherman was recognized as having both personal human value and community worth, and was something and someone way more dimensional than a "Saturday Night Fever" disco hunk tricked out in chaps.

Playing devil's advocate around this grassroots identity was kind of my vocation as a writer of magazines and novels during that first decade of gay lib when everything our generation did was gonzo, experimental, and done for the first time. Back then,



THE INTERNATIONAL MR. LEATHER CONTEST



CAN YOU PICK THE WINNER?





Mr IML 1983 Coulter Thomas
shot by Jim Wigler

incoming younger writers, including leatherwomen like Society of Janus founder Cynthia Slater and FTM Pat/Patrick Califia, were also writing about framing and claiming positive gender identities in kink-club newsletters. Because leathermen in our new bed, bath, and bar culture were trying every recreational drug and sex trip possible to raise consciousness and the roof, we needed to think about, analyze, and name what the fuck we were doing and where the hell we were headed.

IML is the leather Super Bowl

"Drummer" had a goal to report the latest eyewitness news on the leather scene. After Brando in "The Wild One" in the 1950s, bars and bike clubs from New York to Los Angeles had hosted their own local leather shows

and contests, but IML promised to be an international Leather Super Bowl. That's why publisher John Embry and I fingered our advertising man Robert Dunn to fill Renslow's invitation for us to provide a judge at that first IML. Wanting the affable Dunn to be more than a judge, I asked him to be a reporter and talent scout gathering interviews and photos to help fill our hungry magazine that needed to be fed monthly. Embry agreed with that; but as a mail-order businessman who incorporated himself as Alternate Publishing, he wanted Dunn to be more than a judge, and sent him as a corporate spy. Under all our fun and fraternity, there was also the leather business which like all business is about buying and selling because bars, magazines, and contests are not non-profits. So profitable are they that Renslow famously

had to "pay to play" by dealing with the Mafia and police payoffs, as confirmed by Owen Keehnen and Tracy Baim in their fascinating "Leatherman: The Legend of Chuck Renslow." The Stonewall Inn itself was owned by mobster Matty the Horse Iannello, head of the Genovese crime family. That was then. Not now. All that was back in the day.

Born nearly one hundred years ago, Embry (1926-2010) was envious of millionaire Renslow's genius business ventures. The minute Renslow (1929-2017) announced IML, Embry, who had a shortlist of original ideas, heard a cash register and decided that he must have his own Mr. Drummer contest. When Dunn flew back with glowing reports, I turning forty watched the fifty-three-year-old Embry's face flush red with blood

pressure and green with jealousy as he grilled Dunn for all the business and production dirt from Chicago. It ticked him off that photographer Bob Maddox (1935-2009), who took more than a week to get his pictures developed, sent the prints by mail to my home address. The admission charge to that first IML contest was ten dollars for "one night only" while a year's subscription to "Drummer" cost fifteen dollars, about a buck per issue. The smell of money was in the air.

Backstage drama: no contest

Six months later, Embry, racing to



catch up, faked a Mr. Drummer "contest" in 1979, at the annual CMC Carnival held every November in San Francisco. In that stand-up leather orgy of thousands in Seaman's Hall, we the staff announced on stage that Sunday afternoon that Val Martin, the star of "Born to Raise Hell," was our first Mr. Drummer. It was just that: an announcement. Not a contest. There were no contestants. In Chicago, David Kloss had won a true public contest. In San Francisco, Val Martin had been hand-picked in our office by Embry, art director Al Shapiro, and me, to be the first Mr. Drummer, an honor which, honestly, as a four-time coverman, he actually deserved. In 1980, Val competed in the second IML contest and won First Runner-Up. He died in 1985.

All the espionage and drama of that backstage musical notwithstanding,

there was little question that the IML and Mr. Drummer pageants and parties were important events for developing and celebrating the new breed of leather identity. Two years after the first IML, HIV changed everything. During that AIDS emergency, leather contests were a sign of life and a beacon of hope, promoting safe sex and raising money.

As an embedded leatherman editing "Drummer," I preferred not to publish dispassionate porn-studio models posing at being leathermen in Naugahyde costumes. I wanted to subvert gay media's male gaze at soft youth with a new male gaze at harder homomale men who looked like our subscribers. That's why I started my "Tough Customers" column inviting readers to send in hot pix of themselves. I liked publishing photos from stage competitions showing real-life contestants working the cameras on the leather runway at passion shows like IML and Mr. Drummer. They were actual players dick-deep into authentic leather, such as First IML Runner-Up Durk Dehner. In the synergy of that first IML, the five judges included Robert Dunn, Tom Gora of "In Touch" magazine, and the three homomale artists, Lou Thomas, Etienne, and Tom of Finland. Durk had been shot by Lou for Target Studio in 1977, was painted by Etienne for the 1979 IML logo, and confirmed his friendship with Tom that led to their creation of the Tom of Finland Foundation in 1984.

Inheriting leather

During the past generation, the dual "reality shows" of IML and Mr. Drummer created a living documentary of leathermen and leaders representing our diverse kink community united under the Leather Flag created by second "Drummer" publisher Anthony DeBlase. Many of them have been filmed in interview by Christina Court, IML contest video producer and vice president of the Leather Archives & Museum. Their look on the bright stage helped fashion our look in the dark bars. Scoring the competition of Embry v. Renslow, IML is celebrating its fortieth year with its forty-first contest. When "Drummer" went out of business after twenty-four years in 1999, it took its twenty-

year-old Mr. Drummer contest with it.

At this moment of the 41st IML weekend, the 1979-2018 Honor Roll of forty title-holders and hundreds of worthy contestants, all first among equals, includes winners such as David Kloss; SFPD police inspector Lenny Broberg; first transgender and first wheelchair-ioteer Tyler McCormick; first African-American Ramien Pierre; kink-positive marriage and family therapist, Dr. Ralph Bruneau; and Mr. IML 2018, African-American choreographer James Lee. The IML winners pictured on the covers of



"Drummer" were Luke Daniel (twice); whipmeister Peter Fiske's Coulter Thomas; Colt model Michael Pereyra; barber of civility Joe Gallagher; and psychotherapist Guy Baldwin who as a "Drummer" columnist wrote about Chuck Renslow in issue 41.

This rainbow representation is what sustains IML as an international leather pop-culture hit with human value. Our annual cowhide cattle-call is also why the appealing community culture around IML has such deep roots, and such a promising and ongoing archetribal future. The ideal goal of gay media on page, stage, and screen is to mirror the way we were, are, and want to be our better selves as we walk the Leather Carpet of life with our best boot forward.

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