

Critics' Quotes

Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer Author and Book Credentials

• **Jeanne Barney, First and Founding Los Angeles Editor in Chief of *Drummer*:** “For those of us who were there inventing *Drummer* three decades ago, Fritscher serves up a thoroughly researched and well-written account of a particular era in gay history, reporting on what may well have been ‘The Golden Age of Leather’ and of *Drummer...Gay San Francisco* is an historical resource for those who want to know How Things Used to Be, as well as a nostalgic look back for those of us who were ourselves eyewitness participants. I invite you all to join us in this extraordinary walk down memory lane.”

• **John F. Karr, *Bay Area Reporter*:** “Veteran author Jack Fritscher is an anarchist of gay sexual prose, the man who invented the South of Market prose style (as well as its magazines...).... Fritscher writes with sweat and wit.”

• **San Francisco *Chronicle*:** “Jack Fritscher reads gloriously!”

• **Samuel Streit, Director, Special Collections, Brown University:** “....*Gay San Francisco* is a remarkable history of a remarkable time in a remarkable place, combining contemporary documents, photographs and reportage with a first-hand and first-rate memoir that brings an unforgettable era back to life....”

• **Planetout.com:** Fritscher is “the ground-breaking editor of *Drummer* magazine.”

• **Willie Walker, GLBT Historical Society, San Francisco:** “Jack Fritscher is a prolific writer who since the late sixties has helped document the gay world and the changes it has undergone.”

• **Catherine Johnson-Roehr, Curator of Art, Artifacts, and Photographs, The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, Indiana University:** “Those of us who are concerned with the preservation of GLBT history are very fortunate that Jack Fritscher has such a remarkable memory for the people, places, and pivotal events that he has witnessed over his lifetime. His long association with *Drummer* in San Francisco placed him at the center of the revolution, and *Gay San Francisco* is filled with significant details from those years.”

• **Mark Thompson, editor emeritus, *The Advocate*, author of *Leatherfolk*:** “What a good thing Fritscher has done in *Gay San Francisco*... This is an invaluable testament that will be useful for decades to come.”

• **Joseph W. Bean, former editor of *Drummer* and executive director, Leather Archives & Museum, Chicago, abridged from *Leather Times: News from the Leather Archives & Museum*:** “When it came to

Excerpt source: [Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)

creating an issue of *Drummer*, no one did it better than Jack Fritscher. He began reinterpreting popular culture in a leather context. With perfect pitch, he wrote with zest, energy, cynicism, sarcasm, respect, and awareness working out the blend of secret brotherhood and popular culture, guiding leathermen's hearts and minds. He had the skills, talent, and life-style experience needed. He could juxtapose God, gonads, and drooling desire. Fritscher's method was perfect for who we were and for the time. He grabbed us and we learned to think in his 'language.' He wrote with style, intelligence, and urgency. He changed as we changed in finding ourselves. I owe Fritscher a lot, starting with my adult sexual vocabulary. When I became editor of *Drummer* and an upcoming issue was at an impasse, publisher Tony DeBlase often counseled: 'Do a Fritscher!'"

- **Geoff Mains**, author, *Urban Aboriginals*, in *The Advocate*: "Jack Fritscher writes wonderful books...careful writing...a world of insight."

- **Jim Stewart, Department Head emeritus, Social Sciences & History Dept., Chicago Public Library**: "Jack Fritscher as 'eyewitness' in *Gay San Francisco* is kin to Christopher Isherwood as 'camera' in his *Berlin Stories*. Climbing the scaffolding of the chapter-and-verse structure of *Drummer*, he unfurls a rainbow flag of narrative about the foreign country of our gay past, and of its citizens and denizens, living, lost, dead, or forgotten."

- **Jim Van Buskirk, Program Manager, James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library**: "*Gay San Francisco* offers a uniquely personal perspective on the history and culture of one of San Francisco's previously under-documented underground communities—the masculine-identified."

- **David Perry, The Advocate**: "Jack Fritscher—himself something of an icon—didn't invent the Castro [and Folsom]. He just made it mythical...heady, erotic, comic....If one can learn American history from the novels of Gore Vidal, one can learn gay American history from *Some Dance to Remember* [the 'Drummer novel' excerpted in *Drummer*].... Graphically elegant style."

- **Marilyn Jaye Lewis**, founder, **Erotic Authors Association**: "*Gay San Francisco* is an essential document in the 'Gay Enlightenment' culled from the pages of *Drummer* ...Fritscher empowers the Truth of those times by enabling history to tell itself."

- **Richard Labonté**, critic and founder, **A Different Light Bookstores, BooksToWatchOutFor.com**: "Fritscher's *Gay San Francisco* account reads true to me...rewarding...I relish his...story being told."

- **Harold Cox**, publisher, **Checkmate Magazine**: "There were two great *Drummer* editors: Jeanne Barney and Jack Fritscher...Gay San Francisco is an essential acquisition for every GLBT collection."

Excerpt source: [Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)

• **Chuck Renslow**, founder, Chicago **Leather Archives & Museum** and International Mr Leather (IML): “*Drummer* was a map of leather culture; Fritscher and his book are unabashed and uninhibited tour guides.”

• **Justin Spring**, author, *Samuel Steward: A Biography*: “Fritscher has basically done all the research work that most academics won’t do—thus ensuring that historians, critics, and anthropologists will cut and paste with delight in the years to come.”

• **Larry Townsend**, author, *The Leatherman’s Handbook* and *Drummer* columnist: “Fritscher is the master of gay writing. He made 1977-1980 the Golden Age of *Drummer*, formulating entire issues, and then contributing writing and photography for 17 years through three owners.”

• **Queerink.org**: “*Drummer* brought us masculinity for the sake of masculinity.”

• **Calamusbooks.com**: “Fritscher’s *Drummer* in its early issues back in the late 1970s, was a terrific contribution to the erotic literature of gay men.”

• **Steven Saylor (Aaron Travis)**, author, *Slaves of the Empire*, **fiction editor of *Drummer***, reviewing Fritscher’s collected *Drummer* writing: “There’s enough ghettoized angst to keep the Manhattan literati wired for months...”

• **David Stein**, founder, **GMSMA**: “Fritscher, one of the great *Drummer* editors, seems to have been everywhere and done everyone during the ‘good old days’ of leather culture... Fritscher is the editor most responsible for making *Drummer* what it became. His aim was to reflect changes in gay culture even as they were occurring.”

• **Darel Hale, LA Frontiers**: “Fritscher is certainly an earthy writer, and has never been caught mincing words. And words are what Fritscher is all about. His prose is incisive. While it may offend some, it will deeply affect the reader who is not afraid of a little honesty in literature.”

• **Niall Richardson**, lecturer, Film and Media Studies, **University of Sussex, UK, author, *The Queer Cinema of Derek Jarman***: “...a fascinating insight into gay culture of the 1970s. Containing a wealth of original writing from one of the most important gay magazines, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer* chronicles an exciting era in gay history which saw the formation of leather culture and the active de-sissyfication of gay culture: factors which have shaped contemporary gay identification. Varied and compelling....a genuine enthusiasm for gay popular culture.”

• **Mira Schwartz, *San Francisco Review of Books***: “Fritscher is not shy....He plants himself squarely at the book’s center...as star witness, sociologist, and critic [of the] charmed circle Fritscher shared with [his bi-coastal lover] Mapplethorpe....Fritscher’s study of popular culture forms

Excerpt source: [Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)

the core of the book, *Mapplethorpe* [originally published in *Drummer*], as it did the setting of his memoir-novel titled *Some Dance to Remember* [excerpted in *Drummer*]...a personal, passionate memoir...a vulnerable look at a relationship with an artist, his work, and celebrity....*Mapplethorpe* is a portrait of the artists as young men.”

- **Tim Barrus, editor of *Drummer*:** “In the 1970s, there were two gay writers’ jobs in San Francisco. Randy Shilts had one at the *Chronicle*, and Jack Fritscher had the other at *Drummer*. Without Jack, there would be no *Drummer*.”

- **Michael Bronski, *Gay Community News*, Boston:** Fritscher’s collected *Drummer* features and fiction are “graphic, explicit...and unabashedly romantic in a truer sense than are most books [magazines] aimed at gay audiences....[The anthology, *Corporal in Charge*, is a] collection of [Fritscher’s *Drummer*] pieces which deal with individual consciousness. Like Genet’s work, Fritscher’s [*Drummer* writings] are essentially masturbatory fantasies...about the actual fantasy of romance...and gay men love to read about romance.”

- **Dave Rhodes, founding publisher, *The Leather Journal*:** “There is no written account of Old Guard leather. Fritscher’s detailing of the *Drummer* Boom in *Gay San Francisco* is unparalleled, and we need it.”

- **Rick Storer, Executive Director, *Leather Archives & Museum*:** “Fritscher is uniquely positioned as the creator of *Drummer* content, as a practitioner of *Drummer* content, and as an observer of *Drummer* culture. With insight and eroticism, he is the sole source for this thoroughly enjoyable erotic laydown of leather history.”

- **David Van Leer, professor, *Lesbian and Gay Studies*, *University of California, Davis*, and author of *The Queening of America*:** “Fritscher is a key player in the masculinity of homosexuality...Must reading for those who want to know more about their past and those who simply want to relive the days when it was fun to be gay. *Gay San Francisco* is history for GLBT people who want to know the diversity of our gay roots.”

- **Eric Rofes, Associate Professor of Education, *Humboldt State University*, author, *Dry Bones Breath: Gay Men Creating Post-AIDS Identities and Cultures*:** “For my university class ‘Gay Men’s Urban Cultures: San Francisco in the 1970s and Today,’ Jack Fritscher’s astounding novel *Some Dance to Remember* is required course reading.”

- **Rondo Mieczkowski, *Lambda Book Report*:** “Fritscher’s ‘pop memoir’ *Mapplethorpe* [as published originally in *Drummer*]...takes the inside track...in the style of gonzo journalism....He knows the scene he’s writing about. Unapologetically...iconoclastic...”

- **Charles Casillo, *New York Native*:** “Fritscher is intelligent, perceptive, sensitive, articulate — and a good writer.”

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• **Ron Suresha**, author, *Bears on Bears*: “Fritscher brings a loving ear, erotic eye, and lyric voice to American Gay Popular culture, and is an archivist active in researching, recording, and preserving the heritage of gay history.”

• **Joan Levin**, *Library Journal*: “Fritscher’s brutally frank memoir of his ex-lover, confidante, and colleague, drawn from the author’s personal documents, seeks to strip away the notoriety surrounding the defiant photographer Robert Mapplethorpe....In *Mapplethorpe*, [first excerpted in *Drummer*, 1978] Fritscher graphically portrays the masculine subculture of the homosexual community....Recommended for popular culture collections.”

• **Q**, *Philadelphia Gay News*: “Jack Fritscher is a master of gay prose pornography, a rarity in our...video-oriented culture.... The manner in which he manipulates language, sensuality, feeling, nuance, style, atmosphere, and even one’s visual sense...is enough to guarantee this book [of *Drummer* stories, *Corporal in Charge*] sensational status for many, many years.”

• **Kit Christopher**, creative director, *Stroke magazine*: “...veteran writer Fritscher’s fine prose has induced many soiled bed sheets over the years, and his style has set a standard in the industry.”

• **John Rowberry**, editor of *Drummer*: “The subject matter [of Fritscher’s *Drummer* writing] is as varied as Fritscher’s imagination, which seems endless and totally without remorse. What may really surprise you is that amid the graphic descriptions...there are actually ideas here.”

• **Torso Magazine**: In his *Drummer* work, “Fritscher writes funny, descriptive and on-target essays...Fritscher is positively riveting”

• **Jack Garman**, *Lambda Book Report*: “As a document of our times and lives, *Some Dance to Remember* [the *Drummer* novel] has no peer.”

• **Owen Keehnen**, *Honcho Magazine*: “Fritscher is an interesting man, a solid and intriguing blend of theory and knowledge.”

• **Alexander Renault**, *Pornographic Pulsar*: “Fritscher is dedicated to the preservation and continuation of gay cultural studies and the expansion of its horizons.”

• **Leif Waters**, *Bear Magazine*: “Fritscher is unlike any other chronicler of masculine perversion. His stories are...about growth, limits, expansion of the mind...”

• **Virginia Sink**, *The Tribune*, *Oklahoma City*: “Fritscher is a polished writer, editing his work to the bone...”

• **Nancy Sundstrom**, *ForeWord magazine*, “Fritscher is epicentric to gay literature...he is first and foremost an extraordinary American writer. He deserves a broad-based audience because his powerful and original voice rings in one’s head long after the book has been completed.”

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GAY SAN FRANCISCO: EYEWITNESS *DRUMMER*

A Memoir of the
Sex, Art, Salon,
Pop Culture War,
and Gay History of
Drummer Magazine
The Titanic 1970s to 1999

Volume 1

Jack Fritscher, Ph.D.
Founding San Francisco
Editor in Chief of *Drummer*

Collected and Edited by Mark Henry

A Narrative Timeline, Analysis, and Archive of Art,
Sex, Erotica, Obscenity, Homophobia, Identity Politics,
the Culture War, and the Salon around *Drummer Magazine*

Based on internal evidence in *Drummer* magazine,
and in journals, diaries, letters, photographs,
interviews, recordings, magazines, and newspapers
in the Collection of Jack Fritscher and Mark Henry

Palm Drive Publishing™
San Francisco

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For author history and for historical research www.JackFritscher.com

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This memoir is a product of the author's recollections and is thus rendered as a subjective accounting of events that occurred in his life. This is a memoir book of humor, comedy, and satire meant to refract the author's eyewitness experience of what might otherwise be objective history. While all of this written "oral history" may be true, none of it may be. It must be emphasized that the text and allegations are provisional. With the first pages written in 1977, this is the first history to begin the difficult documentation of *Drummer* magazine. The text, the lists, the quotations, the illustrations, the credits for the illustrations, and the annotated bibliography in this "work in progress" are as thoroughly fact-checked as possible from internal evidence in *Drummer* itself, as well as, where possible, from journals, diaries, letters, photographs, interviews, recordings, magazines, and newspapers found in the personal collection of the Jack Fritscher and Mark Henry GLBT Archive. Text and photographs may or may not be true and accurate, and do not reflect the sexual orientation of persons mentioned or depicted therein. The opinions, views, and allegations expressed are those of the author, or of the individual writers and speakers quoted, who themselves, in turn, do not represent the views or opinions of the author or the editor or the publisher; these opinions, views, and allegations may differ substantially from the opinion, views, and allegations of those who are referenced as personalities in this historical survey. The author, regretting any misrepresentation or misinformation or violation of copyright, apologizes; and he encourages documented corrections for future editions be sent to the publisher. Any person who is mentioned in these pages, or is an eyewitness to this history, or is a copyright owner, or is somehow concerned, is invited to correct or add or subtract from this book by contacting the publisher@PalmDrivePublishing.com

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This book of words and illustrations contains explicit sexual material which may be offensive to some readers or viewers. You must be 18 years or older to read this book. By opening this book, you acknowledge that you are 18 years or older. All persons who appear in any visual depiction of actual sexual conduct appearing or otherwise contained in this adult book and adult site were over the age of eighteen years at the time of the creation of such depictions. Some of the aforementioned depictions appearing or otherwise included in this book contain only visual depictions of actual sexually explicit conduct made before July 3, 1995, and, as such, are exempt from the requirements set forth in 18 U.S.C. 2257 and C.F.R. 75. With regard to the remaining depictions of actual sexual conduct appearing or otherwise contained in this adult book or at this adult site, the records required pursuant to 18 U.S.C. 2257 and C.F.R. 75 are kept by the custodian of records of Palm Drive Publishing whose address is 2755 Blucher 95472.

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How to Use This Text in the Printed Book and on the Internet

Initiated in 1977, this is the first history to begin the documentation of *Drummer* magazine. This book may be read as a narrative stream beginning with page one and continuing to the end. However, for both the fun of browsing and the ease of research, the book is designed with an index, and may be opened and entered on almost any page. Because each section is written to stand alone, what sometimes may seem like repetition is instead a refrain and rephrasing of a statement or a theme. The reader, who must be his or her own best critic, can turn the text like a chunk of Labrador spar to see the facets.

Responsibility and Transparency in This Book

For thirty years this book has been a work in progress. I was not paid, nor was I given grants, nor lunch, nor sex to write this book, nor do I expect much if any commercial return for the joy and labor required to fill in some big blanks in previously ignored and censored gay history. No agent or corporate publishers enforced spin, revisionism, or censorship. Asking the readers' indulgence, I assert that in my opining content and style, what is accurate is mine; what is inaccurate is also mine, and will be revised in future editions. What is here written is the eyewitness documentary and the oral history I have transparently offered for years to GLBT ethnographers. As a gay community service, my goal is to offer *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer* as the first GLBT book to be published simultaneously both as a low-cost-plus trade paperback, and as a free research document on the Internet. Visit www.JackFritscher.com

This Book Is Rated NC-17

An NC-17 rated book is one that is too adult for children 17 and under. NC-17 does not mean "obscene" or "pornographic" in the common or legal meaning of those words, and should not be construed as a negative judgment in any sense. The rating simply signals that the content is appropriate only for an adult audience. An NC-17 rating can be based on sex, violence, aberrational behavior, drug use, or any other element too advanced for minors.

Research Materials

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Authorship

Except for the signed introductions, Jack Fritscher is the author of all the writing in this book.

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Dedication

Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer

How the Boys in the Band Played On!

Gay San Francisco is dedicated to the following essential contributors to *Drummer* magazine: Jeanne Barney, Robert Mapplethorpe, A. Jay (Al Shapiro), David Sparrow, Larry Townsend, Robert Opel, Chuck Arnett, Phil Andros (Samuel Steward), Fred Halsted, Val Martin, Old Reliable (David Hurles), Jim Stewart, Rex, Tom Hinde, Lou Thomas, Mikal Bales, Wakefield Poole, Patrick Califia, Gene Weber, Bob Zygarelicki, Max Morales, Steven Saylor, John Preston, Richard Hamilton, M.D., Anthony F. DeBlase, Andrew Charles, Tim Barrus, JimEd Thompson, J. D. Slater, Mark Thompson, The Hun, Mason Powell, Robert Davolt, Ronald Johnson, Mr. Marcus Hernandez, Skipper Davis, Mark I. Chester, Efren Ramirez, Ed Menerth, Guy Baldwin, Ken Lackey, Joseph W. Bean, and John H. Embry

Special dedication and thanks
to my stoic editor Mark Henry
without whose remarkable diligence over thirty years
this material would have been
impossible to collect, analyze, and present

With gratitude to
Jeanne Barney,
Jim Stewart, Dick Kriegmont,
Michael Williams, Justin Spring,
Trent Dunphy, Bob Mainardi,
Chuck Renslow, Rick Storer,
and Mark Thompson

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**The Sexual Revolution
of the Titanic 1970s**

Epigraphs

...men everywhere,

Jazz...

Booze...

Life...

Joy everywhere...

—“(Oh, It’s Heaven) Nowadays,”

John Kander and Fred Ebb,

Chicago (1975)

Chicago opened on Broadway
the same June 1975 that *Drummer* debuted.

Whoever did not live in the years neighboring the revolution does not know what the pleasure of living means.

—Charles Maurice de Talleyrand

Bliss was it that dawn to be alive,
but to be young was very heaven.

—William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805)

To me this part of the city always seemed joyful
but now is just horror and nothing more.

—Pier Paolo Pasolini,

“The Search for a Home,” *Roman Poems*

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based on two tales by Ryunosuke Akutagawa

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Poster, *Rashomon*. Discerning readers of this droll *Gay San Francisco* memoir of the living, the DOA, and the MIA may appreciate the drop-dead minimalist tag line of *Rashomon*: “One dead body. Two [eye]witnesses. Three accounts. Four versions.” Jack Fritscher: “In the midst of allegations, truth lies.”

Excerpt source: [Jack Fritscher](#), *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness*
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