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Feb 2004

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# Quadriple Ellen Feature

video & dvd

it's possible to spend all day with Degeneres DVDs.

Ellen is not just in or of the moment her hilarious,

life-wise standup is a new kind of eternal pleasure. It is as if the right-wing baddies only made her more invinc-

ble and lovable; like Popeye, she's been guzzling spinach. Her new talk show is champ, albeit Rosie-reminiscent, but writing and performing live comedy is Ellen's stellar gift and she shows it in spades in this one-hour segment filmed at New York City's Beacon Theatre. Riffs on cell phones, procrastination, pickle-packing, and the thin state of toilet paper will have you gasping for air. Could laughter be the panacea for all of our modern anxieties? Grade: **A+**

**Ellen Degeneres: Here and Now**  
HBO Video, 60 min.



"This is Ellen calling. My new DVD is great."

**Finding Nemo** (Buena Vista Pictures, 2003)  
One fish, two fish, Ellen is a blue fish... In this cute Pixar animated feature, Degeneres lends her goofy vocals to Dory, a good-naturedly bewildered, if asexual, deep-sea inhabitant with short-term memory disorder. By means of amusing characters and masterful artwork (the DVD version adds insights to the computerized process), *Finding Nemo* manages to avoid the retro politics of the usual Disney fare. The flick follows the adventures of a cynical orange-and-white-striped clown fish named Martin (Albert Brooks intones his trademark neurotic whine) who's lost his son, Nemo, to an Aussie diver. Dory keeps Martin's spirits up through a hardship-packed search (including rapacious seagulls and abstinent sharks on a flesh-bender), at last winning a place in their reunited, alternative aquatic family. Grade: **B**

**The Love Letter** (Dream Works Distribution LLC, 1999)  
If I hear "when I peel an orange" uttered like it's poetic Spanish Fly one more time, I'm going to wrestle down Kate Capshaw's jogging, middle-aged bookstore owner, Helen, into the bushes outside her sleepy, nondescript East Coast town and cup my hand over her thin, pink lips. Perhaps the problem is that the DVD menu plays over and over again a reading of the badly written episode around which this romantic-dramaedy revolves. But Blythe Danner and Geraldine McEwan do play a darling aging lesbian couple, and Ellen Degeneres, as Helen's most-trusted employee, Janet, has a funny monologue while wielding a ketchup bottle. Grade: **B**

**Ellen Degeneres: The Beginning** (HBO Home Video, 2000)  
This HBO comedy special treats us to Ellen's interpretive dance version of coming out. Our heroine casually lampoons pop-culture oddities, such as the fact that there are directions on the backs of shampoo bottles. For whom? People raised by wolves or apes, she surmises. One moment she's quoting Nelson Mandela; the next she's describing being arrested in her car for blowing up an inflatable doll. Linda, through the valve in her crotch while naked, wearing only a harness, a captain's hat, and a paddle. Funny? An understatement. Grade: **A**



# Passion Plays

Happy Valentine's Day, dear readers. In honor of the occasion, which I've always thought was about love and passion—and yes, sex—we've packed this issue with tons of great stories about the things that turn us lesbians on. TV, for instance. Especially lesbian TV, which our cover girl Eden Riegel—although she herself isn't gay—is promoting in a really powerful way. I highly recommend Sarah Warn's interview with the woman behind *All My Children's* groundbreaking (and may I say very comely) lesbian character Bianca; *Girlfriends* is the first gay magazine to bring you a full report on AMC's contribution to dyke TV.

For an alternative viewpoint, check out Judith Halberstam's take on the absence of real lesbians in what *Vanity Fair* called "The Gay Heat Wave" on prime time. Halberstam points out how all the hit queers on the small screen—*The L Word* notwithstanding—are of the male sort, and how, all these years after *Ellen*, mainstream society still sees us as hopelessly unfunny, unfashionable, unsexy, and unmarketable.

At the head of our passionate February package is Louise Rafkin's thoughtful interview with Susie Bright. Back in the eighties, Bright's *Lesbian Sex World* rocked this lesbian's sex world, and her editorship at the groundbreaking dyke sex rag *On Our Backs* revolutionized the way the whole community talked about pornography, sex toys, BDSM, and butch-femme. It was because of Bright that I took my first editing job at *On Our Backs*; as a result, I guess you could say that Bright is indirectly behind the magazine you're reading. Rafkin elicits some of Bright's best, always articulate anecdotes about her work, especially her new book, *Mommy's Little Girl*.

One last note about passion: two days after our last issue went to press, the Massachusetts Supreme Court told the Bay State that it could not, according to its constitution, deny a loving couple the benefits and responsibilities of marriage simply because they were both men or women. Bravo! But, ironically, our last issue happened to be our annual lesbian bridal issue. Although it was chock full of good stuff for women who want to marry each other, our production schedule sadly prevented any mention of Massachusetts' historic decision. Luckily, our news editor Ann Rostow is happy to make up for the omission with "Boston Marriages" in this issue. Enjoy.



The sexy mag *On Our Backs* gave Susie Bright and me our starts.

Heather Findlay, Editor in Chief

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# Girlfriends

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H.A.F. PUBLISHING  
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3415 César Chávez, Ste. 101  
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415-648-9464 (phone)  
415-648-4705 (fax)  
staff@girlfriendsmag.com

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For advertising rates  
call 415-648-9464  
sales@girlfriendsmag.com

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Heather Findlay  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Mignon Freeman  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Alexa Prussin  
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

K Kaufman, Clair Whitmer  
COPY EDITORS

Anna Balkrishna, Laura Woodard,  
Erin O'Brian  
PROOFREADERS

Beth Brown, Patrick Califia,  
Jessica Lanyadoo, Candace Moore,  
Ann Rostow, Lori Selke,  
Michelle Tea  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Lynn Breedlove, Carellin Brooks,  
Gina Daggett, Judith Halbertstam,  
Alice Hill, Melissa Pareles,  
Louise Rafkin, Jennifer Vanasco,  
Sarah Warn  
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

J. Ethan Duran  
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Rani Goel  
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Phyllis Christopher, Su Evers,  
Horace Long, Rebecca McBride,  
Jill Posener  
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Kirsten D. Hammer, Robyn Head,  
Jennifer Kalis, Barbara Pollak  
CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Erin Findlay  
PUBLISHER

Scott Wazlowski  
ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER

Sid Mahnke  
ACCOUNT MANAGER

Heather Petrocelli  
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR

Kelly Fisher  
CIRCULATION ASSISTANT

Lemery Reyes  
CIRCULATION INTERN