

THE SUPER HEROINES OF SUMMER

OUR GUIDE TO THE LESBIAN STORIES BEHIND THE BLOCKBUSTERS

The #1 Lesbian Monthly

July 2004

Girlfriends

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**sports & fitness
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Alien vs. Predator features a neo-Ripley caught in the middle.



Patriarchs vs. Amazons

This mega-monster flick sports maverick leading lady **Sanaa Lathan**; will she pick up where Sigourney Weaver left off?

Inspired by a video game that pits the monsters from the *Alien* and *Predator* films in a death match, this August 20th Century Fox will release a big-screen, gladiator-style collision of the two sci-fi franchises.

Sanaa Lathan (*Love & Basketball*, *Out of Time*) stars as Alexa "Lex" Woods, the blockbuster-hopeful's source of grrl power. A sharp, athletic twenty-something, Lex is the guide for a team of archeologists hired by billionaire entrepreneur Charles Bishop Weyland (Lance Henriksen) to take on an Antarctic dig. Described as a Lara Croft-type environmental scientist who has a soft spot for climbing Antarctic terrain, Lathan told *Sci-Fi Wire*, "She's the same as Sigourney's Ripley character in that she's very strong and independent, but I think that's probably about it." Chances are Lex draws on this maverick attitude after she and her crew find themselves in an icy temple, stuck between two genetically superior creatures locked in battle.

To the woe of diehard Ripley fans, Sigourney Weaver's signature heroine—who kept her cool and her buff biceps while battling sticky-fanged extraterrestrials—won't be appearing in *AVP*. The prequel positions itself between the two mythologies, after the Predators' skinning sessions on

earth and before the Alien pops out of Ripley's crewmember's stomach in outer space.

The first *Predator* oozed with masculinity. Remember California's Governorator, ripped muscles smeared with mud, *mano-a-mano* in the jungle with an invisible foe? Or his unarmed female companion who survives because, it's explained, she's not good enough "game" to be hunted? *Predator*'s poorly managed sequel, *Predator 2*, although it featured a tough Latina cop, reinforced the same patriarchal stereotypes: referred to not-so-affectionately as "having balls," she's on the menu because she's got the proper anatomy. Then she gets off because she's pregnant.

The *Alien* series, though, is rife with feminist and queer readability. There's the obvious fact that Ripley kicks ass, and her prowess isn't de-feminized, over-feminized, or underestimated; she's always the last woman (or man, or cyborg) left standing. The ambiguity of Ripley's sexuality is further explicated in *Alien: Resurrection*, where a cloned version of her character falls hard for a female robot (Winona Ryder), causing the film to play as an overdramatic lesbian flirt fest with occasional alien intervention.

Between the two species, my money's on the goeey Aliens. But where will *AVP* fall between the poles of misogyny and female empowerment? My guess: it will depend on our brave archeologist's ability to unearth the spirit of Sigourney.

Candace Moore recently edited the book Revolutions of the Mind.

video & dvd

Not So Mellow Dyke Drama

These DVDs of new and classic film revel in sultry scandal.

by Candace Moore

As aging starlets go, Elizabeth Taylor is no competition

for male playwright Charles Busch, whose shellac of face paint is only slightly thinner and far more convincing than that of the diva icon. Spoofing fifties melodrama, Busch (entirely in drag) plays Barbara Arden, a homicidal pop singer, and her less washed-up twin sister

Angela. The two roles are pure camp pleasure. High jinx ensue as a spoiled Hollywood family shares the sausage of a well-hung TV actor (Jason Priestly), drops acid, and takes rat-

poisoned suppositories. The implicit in this film (any melodrama worth its mettle has undertones of gay sex) is as explicit as the murals of bright red cocks splashed across the walls of the Sussman mansion. Grade: **B+**

Die Mommie Die!

dir. Charles Busch
(Sundance Channel Home Entertainment, 2003)



Charles Busch: the Mommie of all camp.

Craig's Wife (Columbia Pictures, 1936)

Dyke director Dorothy Arzner's post-depression classic reveals that outwardly peachy upper-middle-class households are a hotbed of betrayal and obsessive compulsion, setting the standard for domestic dramas to come. Housewife Harriet Craig (Rosalind Russell) considers her marriage one of convenience, which is obvious to everyone except her love-struck hubby Walter (John Boles). Will the jig be up, though, when Mrs. Craig nearly frames him for murder rather than suffer a bad bit of gossip in the society page? The family maid—chastised for not turning a vase “just so”—runs off with Walter's aunt for a “trip around the world.” What a lark! As are the many other coded slices of lesbian innuendo in Arzner's arsenal. Grade: **A-**

Far from Heaven (Focus Features, 2002)

Die Mommie Die! reproduces ol' fashioned melodramatic tropes with tongue firmly in cheek. But in the Oscar-nominated *Far from Heaven*, gay auteur Todd Haynes pays the genre, and Douglas Sirk's films in particular (*Imitation of Life*, 1959, *All that Heaven Allows*, 1956), an affectionate homage. Haynes teases out the race, class, sex, and sexuality issues bubbling beneath the surface of Sirk's oeuvre and the fifties and sixties themselves. Julianne Moore aces her performance as Cathy Whitaker, an optimistic housewife whose “perfect” husband battles his gay identity, and who falls in love with an African American gardener. Grade: **A**

Walk on the Wild Side (Columbia Pictures, 1962)

Life on the edge in New Orleans has never looked more savory than in this post-Hays code, black-and-white film set in the French Quarter. Thinly disguised as a morality tale, the pulpy flick revels in the non-traditional red-light lifestyles of its 1930s characters. Jane Fonda is Kitty Twist, a dirty-faced, no-good drifter who teaches polite Texan Dove Linkhorn (Laurence Harvey) how to hop a train to Louisiana in search of his true love, Hallie (Capucine). The object of his desire, meanwhile, has taken up residence in a brothel as the house madam's personal sculptress and love interest. Jo (Anne Baxter), the lesbian bordello owner, is a stern mob queen who would rather keep Hallie all to herself than share her with customers of “The Dollhouse” or worse yet, with a cowboy. Grade: **B+**

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Happy Birthday, Girlfriends

With which girlfriend have I had the longest relationship? With all my *Girlfriends* girlfriends, of course.

This issue marks a decade since our first, dated July 1994, but published in June to debut at New York City's Pride festival (itself celebrating an anniversary, the twenty-fifth of the Stonewall riots). So much has happened since. I remember renting a truck and delivering

5,000 premiere issues myself from the airport into Manhattan; today we have a newsstand distributor and subscription manager. I remember bunking on my aunt's floor that weekend; today *Girlfriends* is a major sponsor at Girl Bar/Club Skirt's Dinah Shore Weekend, and the wife and I get to kick back in the Presidential Suite.

Since that grueling two days in the Big Apple, our circulation has grown three-fold (the magazine now reaches 75,000 pairs of lesbian eyes every month); our page count has almost doubled (June 2004 boasted 80 pages),

and my staff here has grown from five to eleven. *Girlfriends* even has a (naughty) sister magazine in *On Our Backs*.

Girlfriends' success reflects the enormous progress made by our community. In 1994, there were no Tammy Baldwins in Washington, D.C.; there were no Melissa Etheridge wedding photos in *People*; Subaru and American Express didn't even know what a lesbian market was (a food co-op perhaps?); on TV, Ellen Morgan was just kind of, you know, not having much luck with men. We were all just beginning to tell our parents we were gay; now we're getting *married*.

To celebrate our big one-oh, Editorial Assistant Laurie Koh and intern Rachel Llewellyn took a trip down memory lane; the results can be found on page 44, where you can read about milestones (and gossipy tidbits) from the history of the magazine.

Some things haven't changed, though, including *Girlfriends*' mission. Ten years ago I wanted a gay magazine that was smart, well-written, good-looking, and just for women—and I figured there were others out there like me. I was right. Thank you for your support. I know that some of you have been with us since July 1994; however long we've been together, though, I'm proud of and grateful for each and every *Girlfriends* girlfriend.

Heather Findlay, Editor in Chief

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J. TROUTE

Girlfriends' first editorial intern Gré Craig, me, copy editor Diane Lowery, and technology consultant Elizabeth McLaughlin, way back in 1994.

Girlfriends

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