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Lesbian Culture, Politics, and Entertainment

December 2002

Girlfriends

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Hot Girls in the City

Lesbian drama takes over New York.

by **Candace Moore**

Difficulty hailing a New York City cab

at cocktail hour gives sex-positive Helen (Heather Juergensen) enough time to seduce straight (and severely dating-challenged) copy editor Jessica (Jennifer Westfeldt) into "going through with" a woman-seeking-woman rendezvous.



Kissing Jessica Stein experiments with lesbianism.

Kissing Jessica Stein

dir. Charles Herman-Wurmfeld
Fox Searchlight Pictures, 96 mins.

Wine-loosened repartee results in a promising goodnight kiss and a lukewarm romantic comedy that feels cuter on second viewing. Once adjusted to

the story line—Stein's foray into homosexuality leaves her self-actualized but ultimately het—it's entertaining to watch the gals (the film's writers/producers) dance a witty, but doomed, tango. DVD features deleted scenes, including a funny diatribe on a canoe. Grade: **B-**

Sex and the City: The Complete Third Season (HBO, 2002)

Cable TV has grown up, gotten relatively queer-friendly, and is easy to catch up with, given a few \$3.50 rentals. In year three of this intelligent, Emmy-winning series, consummate New York girls Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte, and Miranda buy more shoes, try out dildo models, compare boobs with steamy girls at spas, try to quit smoking, and say more hilariously sarcastic, cheesy, and true things. We get to revisit that spin-the-bottle kiss between Sarah Jessica Parker and Alanis Morissette, but must still wait for a re-glimpse of Kim Cattrall macking on Sonia Braga in season four. Grade: **A**

Manhattan (United Artists, 1979)

Alongside *Annie Hall*, this tribute to the Big Apple (and Woody Allen's Big Head) stands as one of the director's masterpieces, an example of his signature ability to make neurotic egocentricism funny. Middle-aged cynic Isaac (Allen) wrestles over whether to date his best friend's mistress (spunky Dianne Keaton) or a seventeen-year-old high school student (doe-eyed Mariel Hemingway). Meanwhile, Isaac fears his son, who lives with lesbian ex-wife Jill (Meryl Streep) and her lover, prefers ballet over sports; plus, Isaac gets basted as bad-in-bed in Jill's memoir, which happens to be the toast of the town. Grade: **A**

Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle

(Fine Line Features, 1994)

Jennifer Jason Leigh mimics twenties writer Dorothy Parker's slur so accurately in this biopic, she's practically inaudible. Turn up the volume to savor the delicacy of the dialogue—Leigh's dead on. She evokes the tough articulateness of the *Vanity Fair* journalist (who quit because she was paid less than male contributors), her seductive wry and self-destructive despair, and the speakeasy histrionics of a boozehound during prohibition. Star poetess of the Algonquin circle, the hotel salon responsible for the *New Yorker*, Parker surrounds herself with crisp minds like that of butch writer Edna Ferber (Lili Taylor), and collapses, dead drunk, in various milieus, even in a whorehouse in which she hopes to "go wild." Grade: **A-**

Candace Moore, co-editor of the small press *Runcible Spoon*, lives in Los Angeles.

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A Very Good Year

At the end of every year, *Girlfriends* goes on retreat to Guerneville, a little town near Northern California's Russian River. Our publisher Erin sums up the magazine's fiscal health, I give a speech about *Girlfriends'* successes and challenges, and we all take part in long hours of reporting, brainstorming, team building, and (our favorite) eating good food care of Fife's resort.

This year's retreat promises to be our best ever, mostly because it's been a great year for *Girlfriends*. I'm very excited just to be able to say that, actually. I've watched a lot of magazines go through a lot of trouble lately. In the gay world, we lost *Hero*, *Alternative Family*, *Anything that Moves*, and local newspapers like *Frontiers*; in the straight world, even mega-zines like *Mirabella* and *Talk* foundered. In 2002, advertisers spent 6.2 percent less on consumer magazines nationally than in 2001; *Girlfriends'* ad sales, however, were up significantly over last year. *Girlfriends* also beat the national downward trend in circulation: 8.3 percent more lesbians, in fact, are reading this issue than read our December 2001 issue. Next summer *Girlfriends* will be nine years old. It's my longest lesbian relationship, and I know from our strong renewal rates that for many of you, *Girlfriends* has become the U-Haul date you've never regretted.



At last year's retreat, I showed off my prized bottle of Solengo, an Italian red.

Speaking of you, because we go over our latest readers' survey results in preparation for our retreat, I've been having fun getting more familiar with you. It seems like you've had a good year, too: *Girlfriends'* average reader reported earning \$10,000 more this year than last year, and 7 percent more of you got your college degree. More likely

than not, you're partnered, and more than half of you say you've had or are hoping to have a commitment ceremony.

I'm just as excited about our readers' changing statistics as I am about our upcoming weekend in the redwoods. (We even have a staff talent show scheduled: I'm going to demonstrate how, blindfolded, I can differentiate between zinfandel, cabernet, syrah, and pinot noir. Catherine is going to tell our fortunes, and Jen and Ethan are going to do a "dirty dance-off," perhaps after they drink my wine.) We'll be in good shape for all the dramatic changes you'll see in *Girlfriends* next year, including a redesigned logo. Yep, the word "Girlfriends" on the cover will be going modern. 2003—watch out.

Heather Findlay, Editor in Chief

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