

DRUMMER REVIEW

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Celebrate!

The New American Masculinity

ON TARGET

Photographer Lou Thomas Glamorizes the American Male

by Jack Fritscher

- This entire review "On Target" is also available in Acrobat pdf.
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AUTHOR'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT INTRODUCTION



DRAFT VERSION



Written December 5, 1978, and published in *Drummer* 29, May 1979.

I wrote this three-paragraph blurb in gratitude to promote the visual bodyscapes of my long-time friend Lou Thomas who so willingly allowed *Drummer* to print his Target photographs when other photographers, such as his former partner, Jim French of Colt, refused because of issues with the publisher over payment and copyright.

In later years, ironically, after Lou Thomas' death, *Drummer* continued to publish his Target photos with no photographer/studio identification or copyright notice, and marked them only as "From the *Drummer* Archives" as if that gave all the permission in the world to rip off a dead artist's work. Taking advantage of death and AIDS, one thing some in the "gay community" are really busy about is what in art and media can be made into "gay community property."

Lou was very dedicated to dramatizing masculine-identified men and his homomale images fit the purpose of *Drummer* as I saw it: *Drummer* was more than about the niche of leather; *Drummer* was about recognizing ways of being a masculine male after eons of the gay image being effeminate. Tony DeBlase himself pointed this out as my purpose later in one of his first issues as *Drummer* publisher. As this piece mentions about discos and activists, the take here is not on "masculinity" as politics, but rather as preferential esthetic.

In this centerfold, Bruno was the 70s New York model—for both Colt and Target—who was the classic hairy muscleguy following the nonfat bear-path set by Ledermeister beginning in the 60s. Joe Kelly, who was also the cover of this *Drummer* 29, is pictured in what is probably a gay magazine centerfold “first”: a huge poster of a kiss.

On June 4, 1981, Lou Thomas wrote to me on Target Studios letterhead announcing his new magazine, *The Target Album*, which was to be a magazine evolved beyond *Drummer*: +We sort of lost track of you since you left *Drummer*....As you know, I’ve long admired your writing ability—it was a sad day for *Drummer* when you and A-Jay left. But I hope you haven’t stopped writing. In fact, Im hoping that you might have a good story up your sleeve for *The Target Album* #3, which comes out around Labor Day.+

In this way, my +Virtual *Drummer*+ work continued in dozens of other magazines. The story I sent Lou Thomas was published as +The Best Dirty Blond Contractor in West Texas.+

In his letter dated June 23, 1981, the first drum-roll of the HIVdisaster is sounded in the first paragraph before Lou states the quality of writing he was seeking. He wrote: +Sorry I haven’t gotten to this sooner. My partner, Bob Lewis, has been in the hospital....Frankly, we don’t just want jack-off material. Im looking for erotic stories, sexy stories, but also literate stories about the gay experience such as might appear in the New York.....Right now, my one main concern is good writing. –Jack Fritscher, April 23, 2000

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AMERICAN FLATS, NEVADA . This ghost town is host town for man-to-man exploration. Today’s sensually sophisticated Man-imals go beyond the limiting label “gay.” Gaydom is the stuff of discos and activists. The full celebration of things manly is the “stough” that disciplines a lifestyle truly in touch with the virile essence.

Lou Thomas, founding owner and photographer of Target Studios celebrates manhood not so much idealized as authentically realized. The Target Touchables stand for a straight-forward statement of the “New American Masculinity.” Target, like *Drummer*, is way beyond liberation and deep into celebration.

As a man honoring men, take cock and soul in hand and celebrate along with the likes of cover-man Joe Kelly and his man- friends, Kevin Coxe, Rod Mitchell, Jeremy

Brent, and Bruno who appear in Target's latest: *Javelin No. 4: Five-Card Stud*.

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