

Summary Timeline

Drummer

Quick Timeline & Cast of Characters (The Evolution of Leather)

- Name Game: Who's Who and Not Who
- Key Timeline: 14 Turning Points of *Drummer*
- 3 Publishers
- 2 Editors in Chief, Some Other Editors, and an Art Director

A List of Frequently Confused Names Sorted for Convenience

- Mark Hemry, editor of this series of books, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*
- John Henry Embry, first publisher of *Drummer*
- Don Embinder, publisher of *Blueboy* magazine
- Jim Enger, bodybuilder icon 1970s, Fritscher companion
- Kenneth Anger, magus and leather filmmaker, *Scorpio Rising*
- John Rowberry, editor (never editor in chief) beginning in *Drummer* 40 through 86
- Robert Opel, Academy Award stalker, Fey-Way Gallery founder, and murdered *Drummer* photographer and writer
- Robert Mapplethorpe, photographer, Fritscher companion
- Sam Steward aka Phil Andros aka Phil Sparrow, legendary forebear of gay male writing and leather culture: intimate of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Chuck Renslow, Dom Orejudos, and Fritscher
- Jim Stewart, photographer, Fritscher housemate, early SoMa insider
- David Andrew Sparrow, Fritscher domestic partner (1969-1979; gay marriage by Catholic priest Jim Kane in Manhattan, May 7, 1972); his name bylines *Drummer* photography shot by Sparrow-Fritscher together

Hemry is not Embry; there is no “Mark Hembry.” Robert Mapplethorpe is not Robert Opel; there is no “Robert Opelthorpe.”

THE EVOLUTION OF LEATHER

BEGINNING AND ENDING THE LEATHER DECADE: THE 1970s

- September 30, 1970: The Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography releases its 646-page report recommending that all sexually explicit movies, books, and magazines should be legalized
 - November 25, 1970: The Leather Decade of the 1970s begins with the harakiri of Yukio Mishima, writer and soldier, who eroticised leather, uniforms, bodybuilding, edge play, and homomascularity
 - July 10, 1981: The Leather Decade ends with the burning of the Barracks Baths and Tony Tavarossi's July 12 death from a mystery disease at San Francisco General Hospital
-
-

DRUMMER KEY TIMELINE: 14 TURNING POINTS WHEN, WHERE, AND WHY WHO AND WHAT CHANGED

1. June 20, 1975. *Drummer* 1 premieres edited by Jeanne Barney and published by John Embry
2. April 10, 1976. Great “Slave Auction” raid and arrests by gay-bashing LAPD in tactical “Operation Emancipation” run by Police Chief Ed Davis, 65 officers, one helicopter, one bus, and 40 victims
3. December 1976. Editor in chief Jeanne Barney exits original-concept LA *Drummer* after completing *Drummer* 11 and parts of 12 and 13
4. February-October 1977. *Drummer* makes desultory move from LA to San Francisco; *Drummer* 12 (February 1977) is first hybrid issue with both LA and San Francisco addresses on masthead
5. March 1977. Embry hires Allen J. Shapiro (A. Jay) as art director and Jack Fritscher as editor in chief to change LA *Drummer* into San Francisco *Drummer*; beginning after *Drummer* 18 (August 1977), which Fritscher ghost-edited, *Drummer* takes four-month publishing hiatus, absent from the news stands and starting up again when Fritscher debuts his first issue, *Drummer* 19 (December 1977); the most representative, intense, archetypal, and perfect issue of *Drummer* in writing and graphic content

is *Drummer* 21 (March 1978); Fritscher edits *Drummer* for three years: 32 months; Shapiro designs *Drummer* for 34 months

6. Winter 1978-Spring 1979. During Embry's cancer surgery and absence, Shapiro and Fritscher further remodel and refresh *Drummer*; Fritscher refashions leather as the focal point of a broader masculine-identified magazine reflecting its readers' actual gender identity in the personal ads where *masculine* and *masculinity* are the most repeated keywords; Anthony DeBlase acknowledges: "Embry was the main person responsible for...allowing it [*Drummer* while he was absent] to be modified [by Shapiro and Fritscher]." (*Drummer* 188, September 1995, page 19)

For a year, a fog of depression and paranoia hangs over San Francisco and *Drummer*, both freaked out by the double-whammy of the Jonestown Massacre on November 18, 1978, and the assassination of Milk and Moscone on November 27, 1978. The mass suicide by Kool-Aid of 900 persons, mostly San Franciscans, at the People's Temple in Guyana was committed by former San Francisco Housing Board member, Jim Jones, who earlier had been arrested for masturbating and hitting on an undercover LAPD officer in the men's room of the West Lake Theater in LA; Jones was instrumental in electing Mayor Moscone to office. Jones and Moscone died nine days apart.

7. June 1979. Embry reveals his "Blacklist" in *Drummer* 30 attacking Jeanne Barney; the shadow list begins with Police Chief Ed Davis and continues with anyone uncontrollable by Embry who does not seem to like being held accountable by eyewitnesses

8. July 8, 1979. The assassin-like murder of *Drummer* writer and photographer Robert Opel in his South of Market Fey-Way Gallery follows Jonestown and Milk-Moscone killings by six months, and causes a new kind of gay hysteria in bars, baths, bistros, and the *Drummer* office

9. August to December 31, 1979. Shapiro and Fritscher exit together taking the *Drummer* salon of talent such as Robert Mapplethorpe, thus ending what Embry and others term the "classic 1970s *Drummer*"; Fritscher is the second and last editor in chief of *Drummer*; thirteen months after Fritscher exits, John Rowberry becomes editor with *Drummer* 40 (January 1981) to *Drummer* 86 (January 1986)

10. 1982. “HIV and VCR.” Virus and video change everything in editorial content of writing and photography; under Embry-Rowberry, *Drummer* becomes a leathery *People* magazine, featuring porn stars and Mr. *Drummer* leather-contest models

11. August 22, 1986. Embry sells *Drummer* to Anthony F. DeBlase and Andrew Charles, Desmodus Inc., whose first issue is *Drummer* 99; DeBlase and Charles take victory lap in special issue *Drummer* 100; Fritscher says, “DeBlase bought *Drummer* to save it from Embry.” DeBlase and Embry greet each other in *Drummer* 98 and immediately begin civil war in their various publications: *Manifest Reader*, *Drummer* 107, *Drummer* 120.

- AIDS-era owner DeBlase acts up: increasing with each issue from *Drummer* 100, with *Drummer* 150—e.g.: “Dykes for Madonna!”—being one of the worst of the nagging, preachy, camp issues, DeBlase mistakenly devotes even more pages to congenial leather contestants and, worse, he turns *Drummer* from jerkoff erotica into a whiney self-help examination of conscience over leather identity, gender, sobriety, and “how-to” articles in the magazine that had succeeded in the 1970s because its premise was based on the presumption that the readers, in fact, already knew “how to.”
- In their feud, salesman Embry must have cackled as the increasingly papal DeBlase murders his own business by encouraging his staff to publish didactic articles preaching to the politically correct leather choir. Subscriptions and sales of *Drummer* plummet.
- Once famous for writing about fisting with a punch, *Drummer* becomes irrelevant outside San Francisco-NY-and-LA to national readers wanting erotica rather than gay politics and leather mysticism. Rendered impotent, the erotic magazine is going out of business, and DeBlase is seeking an exit strategy when, like a lucky *deus ex machina* (for DeBlase), the earth shakes.

12. October 17, 1989. Loma Prieta earthquake destroys *Drummer* offices giving DeBlase an excuse to offer the floundering *Drummer* for sale in *Drummer* 140 (June 1990) with a more desperate full-page pitch, “*Drummer* Is for Sale,” in *Drummer* 150 (September 1991), page 4

13. September 1992. Dutch businessman Martijn Bakker buys *Drummer* and, beginning with *Drummer* 159, mistakenly Europeanizes *Drummer* whose secret of success is that it is a quintessentially American magazine of gay and leather popular culture; Bakker re-titles *Drummer* as *International Drummer*

14. 1996. Internet arrives and causes slow death of 20th-century gay magazines; *Drummer* 214 is the final issue (April 1999); Bakker officially closes the *Drummer* business on September 30, 1999

EYEWITNESS: *DRUMMER* TIMELINE & SCORE CARD
3 OWNER/PUBLISHERS + 1 CONTRIBUTOR

1. John Henry Embry, Publisher: 11 years, 1975-1986, issues 1-98

"Much of the 116 issues that followed the first 100 didn't have all that much to recommend it [sic]." —John Embry

2. Anthony DeBlase and Andrew Charles, AIDS-era Publishers: 6 years, 1986-1992, issues 99-158

"We were fools to buy *Drummer*." —Andrew Charles

3. Martijn Bakker, Publisher: 6 years, 1992-1999, issues 159-214

"The Dutchman was the sole killer of *Drummer* and all it stood for." —Mister Marcus

4. Jack Fritscher, Contributor: 17 years, 1977-1995; founding San Francisco editor in chief, March 1977-December 31, 1979; *Drummer's* most frequent contributor in 65 issues, often with several contributions to each issue; only editor to shoot *Drummer* covers "*Drummer* was a home, and a home run." —Jack Fritscher

"Jack Fritscher is...the man who invented the South of Market prose style as well as its magazines which have never been the same without him."

—John F. Karr, *Bay Area Reporter*, June 27, 1985

3 SAN FRANCISCO VERSIONS OF *DRUMMER*
SORTED BY 3 OFFICE ADDRESSES

1. “California Street *Drummer*” *Drummer* 12 - *Drummer* 18: 311 California Street (Embry’s first office in the prestigious Robert Dollar Building), San Francisco, on masthead.
2. “Divisadero Street *Drummer*” *Drummer* 19 - *Drummer* 31: 1730 Divisadero Street (a down-at-heel Victorian), San Francisco, on masthead; “Divisadero *Drummer*” is the *Drummer* edited by Jack Fritscher (14-17, plus ghost-editor of *Drummer* 18, *Drummer* 31, 32, and 33).
3. “Harriet Street *Drummer*” *Drummer* 32- following: 15 Harriet Street (a dump over a garage), San Francisco, on masthead; later, offices on Folsom Street followed by Natoma Street and Shipley Street.

“EDITOR IN CHIEF”

TITLE FOR BARNEY AND FRITSCHER ONLY

1. Jeanne Barney: *Drummer* 1 - *Drummer* 11 + hybrid issues *Drummer* 12, *Drummer* 13; outspoken founding LA editor in chief of *Drummer* (1975), and columnist, “Smoke from Jeannie’s Lamp”; editor of *Dateline: The NewsMagazine of Gay America* (1976); Leather Awards Humanitarian of the Year (1976); the only woman arrested by the LAPD at the *Drummer* “Slave Auction” and main contact for follow-up print and television news coverage; eyewitness to *Drummer* history through association since 1973 with founding publisher John Embry and to leather history since 1972 through Larry Townsend.
2. Jack Fritscher: *Drummer* 19 - *Drummer* 30, *Son of Drummer*, + hybrid issues *Drummer* 14-18 and *Drummer* 31-33; Fritscher and Shapiro re-fashion *Drummer* while covering publisher Embry’s long absences as he seemed to fall ill in 1978 and during his Spring 1979 cancer surgery and recuperation. See Embry’s “thank you note” in “Getting Off,” *Drummer* 30, 4th Anniversary Issue, June 1979. Anthony DeBlase in *Drummer* 100: “With *Drummer* 19 Jack Fritscher came upon the scene [where he had been producing behind the scenes since *Drummer* 14, ghost-editing *Drummer* 18]. Under Jack’s direction SM per se became less prominent, and rough and raunchy sexuality often written by Jack himself became the main theme.”

SOME OTHER “EDITORS” & “ASSIGNMENT EDITORS”

1. “Robert Payne” aka John Embry. Following Fritscher’s 1970s identity-driven *Drummer* exploring the new “gender” of gay masculinity with its

many foci, Embry reductively focused *Drummer* on the leather-pageant contest, Mr. *Drummer*.

2. John W. Rowberry. Following Fritscher, Rowberry was never “editor in chief” of *Drummer*; Rowberry had arrived from LA looking for work after quitting as the night porter at the Ramada Inn on Santa Monica Boulevard in WeHo; Rowberry was listed as “assignment editor” from *Drummer* 31 through *Drummer* 39, and finally—thirteen months after Fritscher’s exit—as “editor” beginning in *Drummer* 40. Changing *Drummer* from Fritscher’s 1970s reader-reflexive *verite* magazine of masculine culture, Rowberry reductively focused *Drummer* on genitality, on Mr. *Drummer* leather contests, and on video stars. After Rowberry exited *Drummer*, Embry turned on him and wrote in *Manifest Reader* (1997), page 79, that Rowberry was “no authority on the type of action” that Embry’s readers preferred. Some years after Rowberry’s death on December 4, 1993, founding Los Angeles editor in chief Jeanne Barney wrote: “I found Rowberry to be a good writer (when I edited him), but based on his editorial skills in magazines where he had sole editorial responsibilities, well, to be frank, he sucked.”

3. Tim Barrus. Provocative associate editor for only five issues, with publisher Anthony DeBlase, wrote his first fiery editorial in *Drummer* 117 (June 1988), page 4; earlier his fiction had appeared in Embry’s *Drummer* 67, 72, and 77. He also appeared unnamed in a photograph with and by Mark I. Chester in *Drummer* 138, page 24. In *Drummer* 122 (October 1988), a presidential election year, publisher DeBlase noted on page 4:

Barrus Resigns. I regret having to announce that Tim Barrus has resigned as Associate Editor. I was quite pleased with many of the improvements he had made in the magazine and with many of his plans for the future. However, he became quite concerned about Justice Department persecution of publishers of erotica and decided to sever his relationship with Desmondus Inc.

4. Joseph W. Bean. Editor (*Drummer* 133-*Drummer* 158 + hybrid issues *Drummer* 159-*Drummer* 161) with editorial coordinator Marcus-Jay Wonacott; in the process of exiting, Bean’s name does not appear on the masthead of ill-fated *Drummer* 161 (March 1993) which was allegedly mostly shredded and not distributed because of legal action over *Drummer*’s copyright violation of the World Wrestling Federation word, *Wrestlemania*; Bean, however, aids DeBlase’s exit and maintains continuity through the sale of *Drummer* to Martijn Bakker; Bean was the “earth-

quake editor” who kept *Drummer* alive in 1989-1990; see Bean’s “The Day the Earth Did Not Stand Still” in *Drummer* 135 (December 1989).

5. Robert Davolt. Operations manager, 1997, under Dutch publisher Martijn Bakker who hired him as an American manager with *Drummer* 209; Davolt titled himself both “editor” and “publisher”; in those straw positions, he managed to produce a total of only six issues of the “monthly” *Drummer* between April 1998 and April 1999 when *Drummer* went out of business with *Drummer* 214. Davolt became an accomplice in the killing of *Drummer*, the magazine, by spending all his energy on Mr. *Drummer*, the contest, where he could indulge his weakness for playing the social lion on his coast-to-coast grand tours producing the contest. Traveling on an expense account wrung from the struggling magazine, Davolt reduced *Drummer* to nothing more than the Mr. *Drummer* contest and video ads.

FOUNDING SAN FRANCISCO ART DIRECTOR

Al Shapiro aka A. Jay: *Drummer* 17 - *Drummer* 32; publisher Anthony DeBlase in *Drummer* 100 (October 1986) wrote that Fritscher’s discovery “David Hurles’ Old Reliable photos and A. Jay’s drawings characterized this era....and A. Jay’s illustrations for stories and ads had exactly the right look for Jack Fritscher’s version of *Drummer*.”

DRUMMER TRIVIA

- *Drummer* 1 and *Drummer* 2 were “closet” issues, with no names on masthead
- *Drummer* 4 - *Drummer* 12: no Thoreau “marching quote” on masthead

What rollicking fun...to reopen old friendships and even some ancient hostilities of that golden age. To be a by-stander to those vibrant talents and hear again those voices.... Can you imagine the pleasure in being able to put one’s arms around some of those people, just like you maybe should have done back then when they were still around and available?

—John Embry, *Manifest Reader* 33 (1997), page 5

Ten years earlier, in *Drummer* 107 (August 1987), page 91, running through *Drummer* 116 (May 1988), page 82, John Embry, having sold his megaphone that was *Drummer*, placed a classified ad seeking what I

term “eyewitness *Drummer* participants” from the 1970s for a book he was pitching for his Alternate Publishing. At the height of the AIDS plague, he knew of my completed book *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*. Even though Embry’s “eyewitness” book never happened, his instincts were correct. His *Drummer* “Wanted” ad paralleled my own years of preservation and reconstruction of the Golden Age of Leather in *Some Dance to Remember* (written during 1970-1984) and *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera* (written during 1979-1993).

WANTED
THE GOLDEN AGE OF FOLSOM

We are looking for input into a collection of the phenomena that was South of Market. The men, the experiences, the fact and the fiction, the legends and the graphics. Tell us your memories of those years for the most important leather volume ever. To be published by Alternate Publishing [John Embry], PO Box 42009, San Francisco, CA 94142-2009. Artists, Photographers, Writers may call (707) 869-0945 for more details.

“DRUMMER PAID THE BILLS” FOR ITS POOR SIBLINGS

In his latter-day magazine *Super MR 5* (2000), page 39, publisher Embry, at the sundown of his publishing career, finally confessed in print what *Drummer*’s army of unpaid and underpaid writers, artists, photographers, and staff without benefits always suspected.

Drummer was a cash cow milked to support sibling magazines owned by Embry, to prop up his annual Mr. *Drummer* contests, and to float his assorted ventures in mail order and—it was alleged—personal real estate.

In the nearly three years that I was editor in chief, *Drummer* had, according to Embry, a press run of 42,000 copies. A million people had bought and read some issue of 1970s *Drummer* by the end of my editorship with *Drummer* 33, December 31, 1979.

I did the math; I asked to be paid; I exited, mostly unpaid, to begin the 1980s afresh.

If only the income from *Drummer* had been spent on properly paying the talented gayfolk who created it.

If only the profit had been used to upgrade the production of *Drummer* by printing it on better paper that didn't feel like rag stock soaking up the photographs like inkblots.

History will not look kindly on the corners cut at *Drummer*.

Embry finally admitted with some transparency in *Super MR* (2000) page 39:

Drummer's steady growth made it possible for much experimentation, including [other magazines like] *Alternate*, *Mach*, *FQ* [*Foreskin Quarterly*], *Manifest*, and all the annuals [e.g.: *Son of Drummer*] that followed. None of our publishing lost money, some made more than others, of course. But it was *Drummer* that paid the bills and gave us the opportunity to increase and expand.



“Homosexuality in America” written by Paul Welch with photographs by William Eppridge, *Life* magazine, June 26, 1964. Pop-culture analyst Jack Fritscher, who experienced the *Life* issue as a twenty-five-year-old eyewitness subscriber in 1964, was the first historian to point out this seminal issue of *Life* magazine as a benchmark in the gender-identity history of gay culture. (*Life* emphasized the civil war between masculine-identified gays and female-identified gays.) His clarion point, now a canonical reference to many, was made in his heirloom “Rear-View Mirror” history column in *Drummer* 134 (October 1989). ©*Life*

Fritscher created themes to anchor and develop the following 21 issues of *Drummer* and it was the first time each theme was published in *Drummer*

- *Drummer* 20 (January 1978): Gay Sports
- *Drummer* 21 (March 1978): Prison
- *Drummer* 22 (May 1978): Cigars
- *Drummer* 23 (July 1978): Underground Sex: Gay Pop Culture—The Catacombs
- *Drummer* 24 (September 1978): Authenticity, Mapplethorpe, and Bondage
- *Son of Drummer* (September 1978): New York Art—Rex and Mapplethorpe
- *Drummer* 25 (December 1978): Leather Identity—Homomascularity
- *Drummer* 26 (January 1979): Cowboys and Performance Art
- *Drummer* 27 (February 1979): Gay Film and the Society of Janus
- *Drummer* 28 (April 1979): Gyms and Prisons
- *Drummer* 29 (May 1979): Dangerous Sex, Boxing, and Blue-Collar Men
- *Drummer* 30 (June 1979): Nipples and Arthur Tress Photography
- *Drummer* 31 (September 1979): Spit and Other Erotic Bodily Functions
- *Drummer* 118 (July 1988): Rubber (Keith Ardent)
- *Drummer* 119 (also dated July 1988): Bears
- *Drummer* 124 (December 1988): Bodybuilders and “the *Drummer* Novel,” *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*
- *Drummer* 133 (September 1989): Mapplethorpe and Censorship
- *Drummer* 134 (October 1989): Brown Leather
- *Drummer* 138 (March 1990): Satirical Upside-Down Earthquake Issue of *Drummer* titled “*Dummer*”: *A Unique Drummer Semi-Publication*
- *Drummer* 139 (*May 1990): Remembrance of Sleaze Past in the Titanic 1970s
- *Drummer* 170 (December 1993): Russomania—Shooting Porn

DRUMMER

ISSUE 108

ZEUS

PHOTOGRAPHS OF

MR. DRUMMER

CONTEST FINALS

**LARRY
TOWNSEND****RUN, LITTLE
LEATHER BOY!****LOVE AND PAIN**

BY THOMAS L. DAWSON

THE TROUGH

PART 2

BY ADOLPH

BEER-BELLIED BRUISERS

BY RICHARD A. WHITE

Cover Photograph
by Mikal Bales,
Zeus Studio