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SCREEN - Film buff

Former Dallas journalist Alonso Duralde decrees modern canon for queer movies

By Lawrence Ferber

Contributing Writer

When it comes to films, Alonso Duralde is obsessed. "I taught myself to read by reading the movie papers," he remembers.

The Atlanta, Ga.-born Duralde funneled his love of cinema into a career. He was an entertainment journalist for The Dallas Times Herald, Dallas Observer and Dallas Voice. He also served as artistic director of the USA Film Festival. Now Duralde is the arts and entertainment editor for The Advocate and recently, he added author to his resume with "101 Must-See Movies For Gay Men" (Advocate Books, \$14.95), which hits bookstores on Nov. 15th.

A reference for filmgoers, "101 Must-See Movies For Gay Men" features gems like "Victor/Victoria" (the first gay film he saw), "Mahogany," "All About My Mother," "Swoon," "Beautiful Thing" and "Prick Up Your Ears." Duralde provides entertaining descriptions of his picks along with memorable quotes, fun facts and handy visual icons to indicate specific content — like man-on-man action, gays with guns and divas on the rampage.

On Thursday, Duralde heads back to Big D for a screening and book signing at the Out Takes Dallas film festival. The film he's presenting is the cornerstone of camp cinema, "The Valley of the Dolls."

Duralde, who lives in West Hollywood with his partner, Dave White, recently discussed his book, the criteria for his must-see list and where "Brokeback Mountain" fits into the formula.

Dallas Voice: How long did it take to put the list together?

Duralde: The better part of a year. I thought I could have written it off the top of my head, but I realized I had to go back and take another look, take notes and write down quotes.

In your catch-up viewing, were any films gayer than you had remembered? "Casablanca." While a lot of people think I'm kidding when I recast it as a gay love story, looking at it in that perspective, Claude Rains is so in



EXTRA BUTTER, PLEASE: On Thursday, Duralde screens the campy popcorn classic "Valley of the Dolls."



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love with Bogart from the get-go: He flutters around him like a moth the entire film and is clearly jonesing for him badly.

Which of these films are considered most important? Or had the greatest impact on gay pop culture? "I shudder to use the word important — this book is kind of silly. It's not an academic treatise at all. It's about entertainment. I think for a gay man probably "Showgirls" is the most quoted and referenced movie. But you can't underestimate "All About Eve" and its five decades of imprinting on the gay psyche. And "Baby Jane" for that matter.

You included lesbian films like "Show Me Love." Can gay guys appreciate Sapphic stories? They ought to. It's ridiculous for gay men to divorce themselves from the lesbian experience, because we really wind up sharing a lot of background in common. A gay man and lesbian of the same age will have gone through the same crap growing up and in their own coming of age and early relationships and all that kind of stuff. I think they speak to us a lot. "Show Me Love" is a delicious romance the way "Beautiful Thing" is. "Go Fish" has stuff to say about relationships and looking for love that are perfectly relevant to gay men and even straight people."

If this book came out next year, would "Brokeback Mountain" make the list? No question. Let's just hope "Brokeback" finds an audience among the non-gay community. They can pretty much count on every gay man in America running out to see it at least twice, I hope.

I would say it's a movie that fits into the Ang Lee oeuvre pretty well in terms of he makes all these movies about repression and society keeping people apart, whether it's Hugh Grant being of nobler birth than Emma Thompson in "Sense and Sensibility" or the suburban marital struggles in "The Ice Storm." "Brokeback" points out the tragedy of people who aren't allowed to fulfill themselves in their own lives because of what society mandates and the mores of that era.

Which of the movies in the book have you seen the most times? Probably "Valley of the Dolls." That was one of those movies that super rocked my world when I finally got to see it in my early 20s. It blew my head off because it was so bonkers. At one point, I wanted to do a book just about the "Valley of the Dolls" cult. That's a movie I can pretty much recite by heart, although nobody would stay in the room while I did it.

Have you started a sequel for the next batch of must-see movies for gays? Not yet, but people are already making suggestions to me. "Eyes of Laura Mars" fans, take heart: I will get around to it in the sequel if I get to have one!

"101 Movies Every Gay Man Should See" book signing and screening of "Valley of the Dolls," Nov. 10 at 6:40 p.m. at Landmark's Magnolia Theatre, 3699 E.

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