



The DL Chronicles sometimes collapses under the weight of its clichés.

takes and bloopers, a photo gallery, a backlot featurette and director commentary.

—Gary Morris

Vibrant Energy: Black Men Revealed, Contemporary Edgy Images

Published in Portland, *Vibrant Energy: Black Men Revealed, Contemporary Edgy Images* is a lavish, large-format photographic tribute to its subject. The book features 101 beautifully lit images by 19 photographers arranged by chapters with titles like “Edgy,” “Fantasy,” “Portraits,” “Elegance,” “Playfulness,” “Kink” and “Tumescence.” The images themselves range from the witty theatricality of Rotimi Fani-Kayode’s “Every Mother’s Son/Children of Suffering” to the stylized artistry of Jack Casado’s “Atlas Kissing” to the charming anecdotalism of Geoff Manasse’s “Two Holding One.” Mapplethorpe’s not here, but his spirit is, in an elegant close-up with flower like Paul Dahlquist’s “Broderick Lee.” There are also representations of hardcore and kinky sex by well-known photographers like Mark Chester.

Vibrant Energy opens with a curious statement by Larry Cross, who, per the title page, “conceived and produced” it: “Its focus is not about nudity, nakedness, sexuality. It is rather an affirmation of black men using the vehicle of being unclothed to confirm that affirmation.” It’s an old dodge to say that a book featuring naked men is not about nakedness or sexuality, but that doesn’t make it so. *Vibrant Energy* is in fact a showcase for highly sexualized black male imagery: How else to explain photographer Ajamu X’s “Cock and Glove,” a close-up of, well, a huge hard-on held by a gloved hand, with none of the rest of the black man being “celebrated” visible? Is Dahlquist’s “Draped”—featuring another hunky, well-hung naked man with his face completely hidden—

fetishization of the black male or a comment on fetishization? The interest of *Vibrant Energy* may, paradoxically, be increased by the fact that there are arguments on both sides of this issue.

—GM

Purple Panties

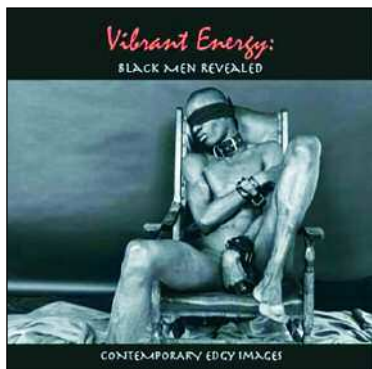
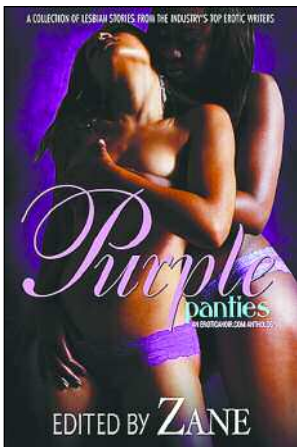
Erotica stretches back to the earliest writings and art of the “civilized” world, as witnessed by the steamy Roman novel *Satyricon* (written during the reign of Nero) and those eye-popping frescoes from Pompeii featuring concubines, slaves and senators getting their freak on. That would seem to make it an old-fashioned genre, but erotica is probably more timely now than ever. As always, if you can’t get the real thing—and with technology from TV to cell phones increasingly taking away precious time from cock-sucking and clit-licking, sex is getting ever more theoretical—at least you can read about it.

A sexy, dyke-themed anthology like *Purple Panties* (Strebtor Books, 2008; \$15 softcover), focusing on women of color, is thus a welcome visitor to the harried, horny modern. According to her introduction, editor Zane is not a lesbian, but you’d never know it from these stories. Of course, as with all such anthologies, the writing quality varies wildly—does one really ever “ride a wave of lust”? Where can I find such a wave? But the best of the lot satisfy as both quality fiction and one-handed reading.

A case in point is “My Side of Things.” This story crackles from the first sentence: “Have you ever had a loose secret? One that dangles inside your mouth so that every time your lips move, you fear it will fall out into your conversation?” The speaker is American southerner Marsalis, who, with her regular “ol’ girl” out of town, is lusting after a fellow student, the mysterious Sabela from Tanzania. Author Raquel Moore breathlessly tracks her heroine as she ratchets up to dizzying heights her campaign to get Sabela in bed and the latter’s alternating rhythms of lust and pushback. There’s also some serious self-discovery and self-revelation amid the droll humor, along with some exceptionally vivid sex when Sabela finally reveals her “secret.”

Other highlights here include Laurinda D. Brown’s “It’s All or Nothing,” a strong portrayal of a middle-aged woman rescued from a quietly deadly marriage by a vibrant younger woman; Regina Jamison’s “Mom’s Night Out,” which features a sizzling scene in that emblem of domesticity, the kitchen; and Joy Bringas’ “Miss Julidene’s Sexy Items,” which gets points for 70-year-old Mrs. Thompson asking the question that has plagued so many of us: “Should I get the 7-inch dildo or the 8-inch dildo?” (She wisely picks the 9-incher.)

—GM



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