

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Understated 'All the 'Rage' a Pointed Satire of Gay Life

MOVIE REVIEW

By KEVIN THOMAS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Roland Tec's "All the Rage" offers one of the sharpest satires of gay life and values ever filmed. It's sexy, amusing and has an ending so inspired, so totally revealing, that the effect is all the more stinging for coming out of left field. It is also so cinematic you would never have guessed that Tec, in an especially adroit feature debut, had adapted it from his 1994 play "A Better Boy."

"All the Rage," a standout at the 1997 Outfest, takes us into a world of perfection. John-Michael Lander's Christopher Bedford has it all, including chiseled good looks and a good job as a lawyer in a Boston firm. His office is perfectly appointed as is his apartment in a fine old building. Outside the office his life is a regular routine of visits to the gym, trendy restaurants and bars, where he has no trouble picking up any man who catches his eye. Love 'em and leave him could be his motto, for he goes through men faster than you go through a box of Kleenex when you have a really rotten cold.

Still, since he's gotten everything he ever wanted, he wonders whether he shouldn't go for love as well. When his neighbors, longtime lovers Tom (Peter Burbriski) and Dave (Paul Outlaw), have him over for dinner they surprise him by inviting yet another neighbor, Stewart (David Vincent), an editor at a book publishing company recently arrived from the Midwest. Stewart is a nice-looking young man with large soulful eyes, and he meets one of Christopher's key qualifications: He loves both baseball and ballet.

Christopher regularly goes to the gym with one of his friends at the office, Larry (Jay Corcoran), who exclaims, "Are you telling me that you're going out with a man who doesn't work out!?" (As attractive as Stewart is, he is just a bit thick at the waist.) However, Stewart has a roommate, Kenny



Pinkplot Productions

Jay Corcoran, left, and John-Michael Lander sun themselves in the sharply satirical "All the Rage."

(Alan Natale), who not only works out but goes to the same gym Christopher goes to—needless to say, Kenny is a hunk.

Christopher is living in a house of cards and doesn't know it. It's not just that having been a glib, callous chaser he's not prepared for the warm and embracing love Stewart offers; he's also not prepared for the fate that awaits him once he makes a misstep. Setting himself up in his own eyes as the model of perfection, he's faced uniformly with unforgiveness—it's as if people are gratified to see him mess up.

Christopher's friends in a way

are as shallow as he is, quick to expose him and quicker to reject him. (None of these people have much use for forgiveness and understanding.) Ironically, it's a man (Jeff Miller) Christopher picks up who in a wholly unexpected way confronts him with himself.

Tec directs his large cast smartly, exercising the kind of control that satire, especially the understated variety, demands yet allowing his people to emerge as completely believable human be-

ings. Lander is selfless and wide-ranging as the vain, proud Christöpher who thoroughly embodies so much that gay culture idolizes. Not surprisingly, the look of "All the Rage" is crucial to its themes, and rarely has relentlessly trendy good taste been so suffocating. Shot in a mere 24 days, "All the Rage" plays like a contemporary "Vanity Fair."

■ **Unrated. Times guidelines: no nudity but pervasive sexuality, some language.**

'All the Rage'

John-Michael Lander..... Christopher Bedford
David Vincent..... Stewart
Jay Corcoran..... Larry
Jeff Miller..... John

A Jour de Fete release of a Pinkplot production. Writer-director Roland Tec. Based on Tec's play "A Better Boy." Cinematographer Gretchen Widmer. Editor Jon Altschuler. Costumes Sarah Pfeiffer. Music supervisor Claire Harding. Production designer Louis Ashman. Set decorator Holly Ratafia. Running time: 1 hour, 44 minutes.

■ **Exclusively at the Sunset 5, 8000 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood, (323) 848-6500.**

S.F. GAY FEST

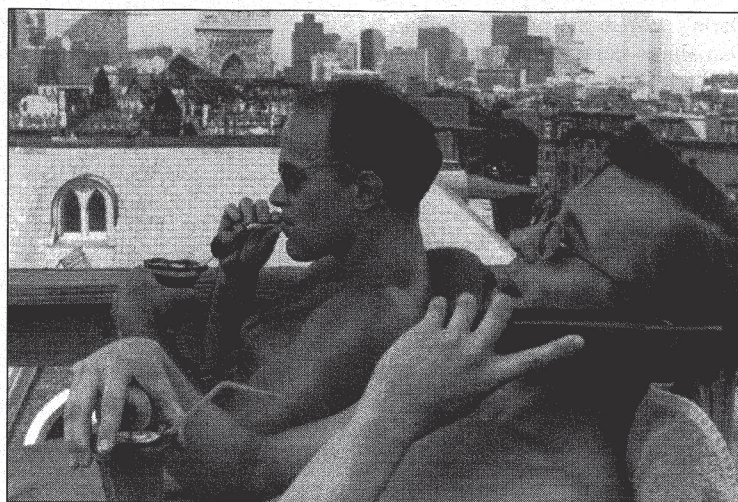
ALL THE RAGE

A Pink Plot Prods. presentation. Produced by Roland Tec. Co-producer, Catherine Burns.

Directed, written by Roland Tec. Camera (color), Gretchen Widmer; editor, John Altschuler; production design, Louis Ashman; costumes, Sarah Pfeiffer; music, Tec; sound, Doug Snyder. Reviewed at the Roxie Cinema, San Francisco, June 11, 1997. (In S.F. Lesbian & Gay Film Festival.) Running time: 105 MIN.

Christopher

Bedford John-Michael Lander
Stewart David Vincent
Larry Jay Corcoran
Tom Peter Bubriski
Dave Paul Outlaw
Susan Merle Perkins
John Jeff Miller



THE A LIST: Jay Corcoran, left, and John-Michael Lander are San Francisco guppies in "All the Rage."

One annoying thing about most recent mid-scale gay serio-comedies ("Jeffrey," "Love! Valour! Compassion!," "It's My Party") has been their taking-for-granted of a white, gym-buffed, yuppified urban male "A list" as being the center of the known gay universe. If nothing else, "All the Rage" is refreshing for the critical (though not mean-spirited) scrutiny it turns on this milieu. Though perhaps overburdened by its very serious wrap-up, savvy comedy should stir respectable biz — and perhaps some controversy — among gay urban auds.

Protag Christopher (John-Michael Lander) is the very model of a '90s "guppie": He's young (about 30), gorgeous, has a high-powered white-collar job and moves in a social world of similarly privileged gay Bostonians. He's also a status- and looks-obsessed egomaniac who plays nice, then delivers casual, stinging brush-offs to his innumerable one-night stands. "I want a boyfriend!" he whines to best friend Larry (Jay Corcoran). But such a perfect "10" can seemingly only accept another as his mate — and the elusive partner may exist only in the mirror.

So Christopher is nonplused when he finds himself fixated on a seeming rejection by dinner-party acquaintance Stewart (David Vincent). In truth, Stewart was just too shy, and too unjaded, to push mutual attraction to its horizontal limit at first sight. Cute but a bit nebbishy, with a low-paying book editor position and some actual body fat, Stewart is not at all what Christopher thinks he wants. But former's inadvertent hard-to-get game grabs the latter, who is used to being pursued.

Their romance sustains long enough to warm up Christopher's usually freeze-dried emotions — then longer still. As the initial glow wears off, protag's old short-attention-span ways resurface. Unfortunately, Stewart's flatmate is the same chiseled hunk Christopher had been lusting for at the gym for months. When temptation gets out of hand, the consequences are immediate, and dire.

Tyro stage-to-feature-film helmer Roland Tec (drawing on his play "A Better Boy") enhances this central tale with several subplots, each reflecting the difficulties of finding and keeping relationships. Christopher's workmate and bar-cruising companion Larry resents his newfound domesticity; his female pal Susan (Merle Perkins) finds little luck in the hetero singles scene; gay couple Tom and Dave (Peter Bubriski, Paul Outlaw) are fighting cool-off in their own long-term partnership. While di-

ologue could be wittier, Tec's screenplay cleverly advances through the humorous progression of scenes that ring variations on the same settings. A less successful device is having Christopher reveal his own (shallow) thoughts to the camera, as if he were keeping a video diary.

Once Christopher is stricken by the realization he's probably blown it with Stewart, we expect he'll be humbled enough to allow a happy ending. But pic pulls a last act that's surprisingly bleak, even briefly frightening, as one last bar pickup turns tables to give hero a cruel, apt appraisal of latter's soul. This wrap is striking yet perhaps more heavy-handed than necessary.

Perfs and pacing are sharp, tech package high-grade on limited means, with Boston-area lensing taking on a suitably glossy, sterile look.

—Dennis Harvey

Provocative look at gay physical culture

Budding director tells it like it is

Multi-talented American writer-composer-producer-director Roland Tec, 31, who is openly gay, says he cannot be bothered addressing the once delicate matter of "coming out" as there have already been other films dealing with the issue.

So in *All The Rage* – a clever literal and figurative title, considering the action – Tec looks at a commonplace aspect of gay mainstream existence: body worship.

The film is an expansion of his own play, *A Better Boy* (also a clever title), a one-hander he performed in his hometown, Boston, in 1994.

Tec has wisely chosen not to add performance to his list of credits for the film, his derivative but pleasant music for which is an early plus.

Indeed, given the basic character requirements of Tec's very superior hero, Christopher, John-Michael Lander fulfils these all the way through, for Christopher is indeed a better boy, certainly to his own way of thinking, and arguably all the rage on the gay scene.

The aloof, snooty Christopher almost has it all. A rich young lawyer, he is conservatively handsome with a sculpted body religiously maintained at a gym. He also has a driving libido, which, as an active homosexual, he exercises with consummate ease.

However, for all his intellectual and pulchritudinous superiority, he allows himself romantic delusions: he believes Mr Right is out there somewhere.

And yet he is actively practical



too: he willingly exchanges telephone numbers with after-sex ease with all his one-night stands – but he never calls them back.

It is this aspect of his demonstrably selfish behaviour that actively calls in the literal meaning in the title.

But Tec's film is not entirely serious – it does go as a social comedy, and the script is marked by a trenchant wit. But Tec reserves the most delicious irony for Christopher himself.

The requirements for Christopher's Mr Right are curiously simple, his chronic superiority notwithstanding: the desired elusive creature need only be into ballet and baseball, a not unlikely mix in gay America.

When Christopher does meet the homely, unlovely Stewart with those interests there is a tentative mutual approach before they embark on an inevitably temporary relationship, given Christopher's self-obsessed nature.

It is all a shrewdly observed scenario of gay life, and Tec has resisted being preachy in the Aids generation. Christopher is never shown flexing on, or even fishing about for, a condom. Common sense is a given.

Ironically, though, local screenings of *All The Rage* are preceded by Greg Lawson's hilarious two-minute Dutch film, *Safe Sex: The Manual*, which deals graphically with condom fitting.

The cinematography in Tec's film is often empathetic, and there are some beautiful shots of Boston.

The editing, too, is crisp and clever, including blue-tinged flash-forwards to Christopher dealing with his eventual come-uppance.

John-Michael Lander, quite literally a better boy, is perfectly cast as Christopher, the "grade-A moffie", as a local press release calls him.

The other characters, not as enthusiastically matched to their actors in the press release, are well played, if not as well drawn (they needn't be, actually) as Christopher.

Nevertheless, David Vincent draws sympathy as the kindly, trusting Stewart.

Paul Outlaw, as Stewart's neighbour who introduces him to Christopher, has a nice line in cynicism.

All The Rage is an intelligent, provocative cinematic debut for Tec as a director.

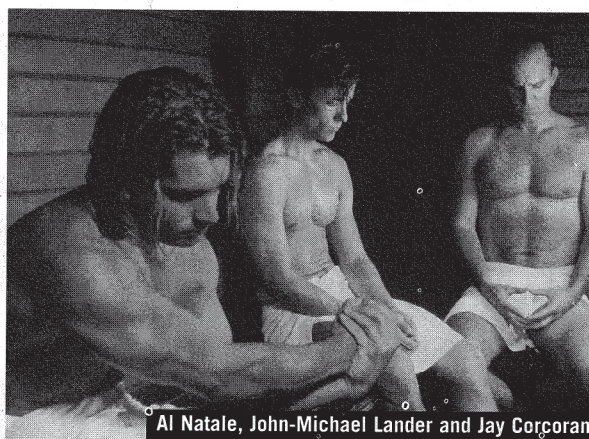
At his personal appearances at local screenings, he wisely defended the ending which clearly displeased many patrons. He would be wise to eschew any thought of a sequel.

■ *All The Rage* is in the Gay & Lesbian Film Festival at Ster-Kinekor's Golden Acre cinema complex.

Screening details: telephone 25 2720, 24 7377.



HX MAGAZINE



Al Natale, John-Michael Lander and Jay Corcoran

All the Rage

*Starring John-Michael Lander, David Vincent and Jay Corcoran;
written and directed by Roland Tec (Pinkplot Productions)*

If a course titled Homosexuality in Metropolitan Cities existed, *All the Rage* would be its first required viewing. It ain't gonna make every classmate happy—particularly those professional gym-addicted drones known in urban gay male circles as A-listers, who writer/director Roland Tec satirizes biting and entertainingly, but never cruelly in his dark debut comedy.

Smooth, buff and sexy egomaniac Christopher (John-Michael Lander) works, plays and exercises with best bud Larry (Jay Corcoran) between one-night stands and not returning tricks' phone calls. Everyone wants a slice, yet something is missing. Enter dweeby, unbuff and unsmooth Stewart (David Vincent), who wins Christopher's heart during a tense courtship. Several things, however, stand to unravel this newfound stability: hot gym dude "Donkey Dick," who happens to be Stewart's roommate; Larry's mixed support for Christopher's fulfillment; and the plain old neurosis that steers many queers from commitment.

Tec demonstrates a degree of restraint and comic maturity that one wouldn't expect to find here. Rather than slap Christopher on a griddle to fry, he opts for an unhurried flaying. Lander appears to be having a ball playing this charismatic hottie who is an internal mess. As for Larry, who only dreams of attaining his chum's A-list status, Corcoran balances a puppy-dog mentality and smoldering envy confessed by the "B-list" subjects of his own film, *Life and Death on the A-List*.

Tec has confessed to exaggerating the character of Christopher to the point where even a lower-echelon demon could distance itself. Well, he's not *that* awful, but there is a charge of intense emotional explosives ready to detonate. When it does, you'll be slack-jawed, even breathless. That is Tec's intention, and overall he succeeds. Besides, *All the Rage* is damn slick, and knowing its subject matter, you can expect loads of hot, scantily clad bodies, sex and laughs for all. Don't skip this assignment, no matter what you enrolled for.—Lawrence Ferber

New Times Los Angeles

New Releases

All the Rage This how-not-to guide to gay dating, set in Boston's South End, does a nice job of pirouetting between facile satire and melodrama. Written and directed by Roland Tec—author of the acclaimed opera *Stained Glass*, as well as ringmaster of the improv comedy troupe Naked Brunch—and based on his 1994 stage play *A Better Boy*, the film has at its root so-called “body fascism” and the cult of masculinity. Ex-competition diver John-Michael Lander stars as Christopher Bedford (his name consisting of cross streets in New York City's West Village, by the way) who has a deep, entrenched problem with shallowness, evidenced by a slow parade of one-hour stands. Once love arrives unannounced—amid the gym dandies, dreamboats, Toms of Finland, and lawyers in love—it engenders unanticipated and surprisingly dark consequences. The film is refreshingly controversial (as in igniting debate), and its Calvin Klein-style video confessionals work nicely to temper and then exacerbate the narcissism on display. With welcome comic relief via gal-pal Susan's (Merle Perkins) travails to find a straight man who doesn't either crow about his business exploits or call his mom during dinner. *Opens Friday.* (P.C.)

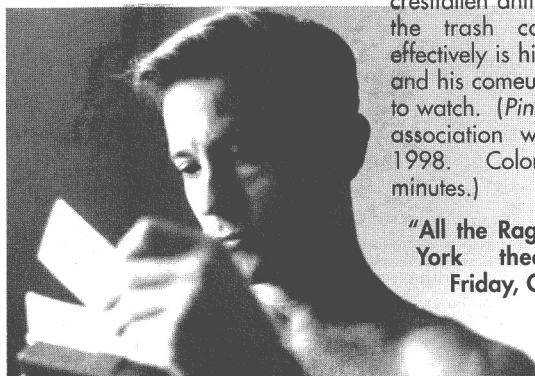


Film

FILM REVIEW "All the Rage" by Jay Jimenez

Once upon a time I worked alongside a couple of jackasses who were so incredibly delusional they thought the universe revolved around their psychodramatic world of barnyard fecal-laced rhetoric. These clowns were *real* mental midgets in the true sense of the word. Fortunately for my colleagues and I, our woes were short-lived. The powers that be slam-dunked these bozos into oblivion. This was a comeuppance that was long overdue.

I recently had the opportunity to view a splendid indie movie about a *reel* mental midget who gets his own comeuppance in writer/director Roland Tec's poignant and satirical, "All the Rage". The film stars John-Michael Lander as Christopher Bedford, a wealthy, handsome, nicely-buffed, 31-year-old attorney with a penchant for screwing (nearly) everyone in Boston's South End. Christopher's inanimate sidekick is a small black box. (Okay, so I thought those were only found in airplanes.) This box is filled with the phone numbers of hundreds of men who have *trick-led* into Christopher's life day in, day out, twenty-four, seven.



One evening, Christopher's buddies match him up with a vulnerable, soft-in-the-middle, nice guy named Stewart (David Vincent) who is everything *but* Christopher's physically perfect specimen. Needless to say, superficial Christopher is intrigued by Stewart's refusal to sleep with him on their first date. In a temporary state of monogamous insanity, Christopher convinces himself Stewart is *the* man for him. Later as boyfriends, Christopher devastates Stewart by bedding the latter's hunky roommate (Al Natale). Stewart finds out about Christopher's infidelity and makes a clean and decisive break from his lecherous beau.

Once again, Christopher spirals deeper into his world of self-absorbed ridiculousness, blaming everyone and anything for the sad, empty state of his existence. The director's use of black and white videography during numerous flashblack-like scenes adds a veritable edge to an already credible script. In the end, Christopher's buddies Dave (Paul Outlaw), Tom (Peter Bibriski) and Larry (Jay Corcoran) leave our crestfallen anti-hero in a heap by the trash can. Christopher effectively is his own worst enemy and his comeuppance is a delight to watch. (*Pinkplot Productions* in association with *Jour de Fete*, 1998. Color and B&W, 105 minutes.)

"All the Rage" begins its New York theatrical premiere Friday, October 16th.

'Rage' Erupts With On-Target Gay Satire

By Bob Graham
CHRONICLE SENIOR WRITER

"All the Rage" is a slick satiric comedy about a "perfect" gay lawyer that manages, before

its 104 minutes are over, to wipe the self-satisfied smile off his face.

Christopher (John-Michael Lander) is the type of gay man who inspires envy among some and resentment among many others. He is young, rich, handsome and almost completely self-absorbed.

After a string of airhead gay comedies hereabouts, it's nice to come across "All the Rage," which actually has a point of view. Written and directed by Roland Tec, it's particularly gutsy because the target of its satire is also, to a certain degree, its target audience. It opens today at the Lumiere.

At first it appears that if Christopher has any other interests besides the gym and his reflection in the mirror, it is in a string of men who are buff knockoffs of himself. He ridicules the sentimental guy who sent his lawyer buddy (Jay Corcoran) a dozen roses after their first date, calling him a loser at best and maybe a psycho. "Screen your calls and don't call him back."

The main topic of conversation in their upscale social circle is their sex lives. Sometimes it all becomes a blur. Christopher is merely doing what's expected when he

ALL THE RAGE: Comedy. Starring John-Michael Lander, David Vincent and Jay Corcoran. Written and directed by Roland Tec. (Not rated, 104 minutes. At the Lumiere.)

makes statements such as, "It's much more important to cultivate close personal relationships..."

Tec uses a string of quick scenes intercut with a monochromatic flash-forward in which Christopher addresses the camera and recites the attributes of his ideal "type," but there are hints of an underlying remorse.

The settings are law offices, trendy restaurants, gay bars, the health club, spiffy apartments, a therapist's office and a sex club. The action takes place in San Francisco's "sister" city, Boston, in case anyone thinks all this hits too close to home. The characters work on their tans on the banks of the Charles or up on the roof.

Tec's tone is satiric, but the really sharp thing about his approach is that it cuts Christopher some slack. He is not a completely supercilious jerk — otherwise, why should we be interested?

Many gay men might find the "type" of boyfriend he says he's seeking — a "sensitive, culturally literate jock" — appealing. When he meets Stewart (David Vincent), an editor for a small publishing house whose twin passions are baseball and ballet, it should

be a marriage made in heaven.

Stewart's indifference to many gay yuppie values — he doesn't work out at the gym and is starting to sprout love handles — could be seen as a point in his favor.

For Christopher, who is used to

exchanging telephone numbers with tricks he never intends to call, the relationship is a revelation, up to a point.

The title "All the Rage" is right on — and, yes, the pun works both ways.

Other members of this arch literary circle include an interracial couple on the cusp of an "open relationship," Stewart's roving roommate and a woman in the office who stares incredulously at a series of coffee dates who have answered her personals ad, including a self-described "professional white liberal."

There is also a therapist whose sole technique seems to consist of repeating back whatever a patient has just told her.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Comic cautionary tale about looks and really seeing

As you wait for the ax to fall on the love-'em-and-leave-'em hero, something surprising happens.

By Carrie Riekey
INQUIRER MOVIE CRITIC

Imagine *Ally McBeal* featuring two buff Boston attorneys, GWMS seeking soul mates with brains, bods and bank accounts equal to theirs, and you have *All the Rage*, a comic cautionary tale about how the heart and eyes have different appetites.

It is a movie for anyone whose romantic hopes ever have been dashed by that ugliest phrase in the English language, those three little words: "I'll call you."

This diverting, delicious and finally damning story marks the feature debut of filmmaker Roland Tec, who adapted it from his play *A Better Boy*. With crisp dialogue, crisp editing and a dynamic use of film and video, Tec creates characters who evoke both desire and disgust.

His principals are Christopher (John-Michael Lander), the golden boy with the cheekbones and physique more commonly found among male models than

estate attorneys, and his colleague Larry (Jay Corcoran), likewise a lawyer and gym bunny.

So accustomed is Christopher to being lusted after for his external — looks, money, status — that there's something lacking from his one-night stands. Namely, feelings for and interest in another. He cuts such a confident swath through the boardrooms, gyms and bars of Boston that he inspires envy in his friend Larry, who would happily take his leavings.

But even worse than Christopher's lack of bedside manner — he leaves admirers hopeful that he'll call — is his trophy box, a Rolodex containing the names and numbers of his numerous conquests who are waiting for the call that never comes.

While the audience waits for Christopher's comeuppance, something surprising happens: His deliverance. The attorney's good friends, longtime couple Dave and Tom (Paul Outlaw and Peter Bubriski), find Christo-

Review: Film

ALL THE RAGE ★★★

Produced, written and directed by Roland Tec, based upon his play "A Better Boy," photography by Gretchen Wichter, music by Roland Tec.

Running time: 1:44

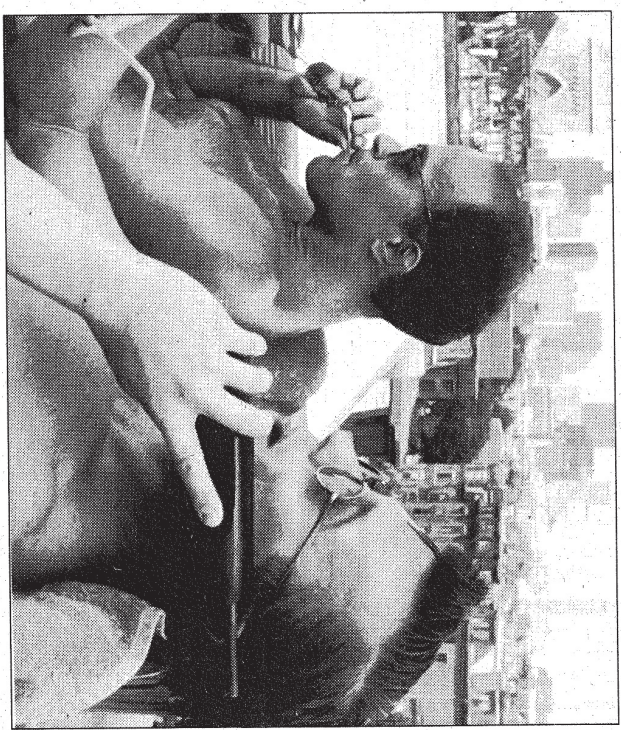
Christopher Bedford John-Michael Lander
Stewart David Vincent
Larry Jay Corcoran
John Jeff Miller
Dave Paul Outlaw

Parent's guide: No MPAA rating (mature themes, pervasive sexual candor and sexuality without nudity, profanity)

Showing at: Fitz at the Bourse

pher's cruising a little tired, not to mention risky. So they fix him up with a soulful-eyed editor named Stewart (David Vincent).

And while Stewart is as doughy as Christopher is chiseled, unlike the customary boy toys, he arouses something the lawyer has never before experienced. For the first time Christopher is desired for his *interrals* — his intel-



In "All the Rage," Jay Corcoran (left) is Larry, pal to confident, buff hunk Christopher (John-Michael Lander).

lect, his humor, his ability to show affection.

While Stewart's love makes Christopher a more complete human, it also triggers an emotional crisis. Why doesn't Stewart love him for his superficial? Dettly, Tec explores Christopher's predicament and the profundity of his shallowness in ways that are surprising, satirical and satisfying.