

DIAGNOSIS: JEW PAIN

Cutie Michael Feldman deals with being bisexual *and* Jewish. Oy!

Some people in the gay community contend that bisexuality doesn't exist, that it's a cover for people who admit to an attraction to people of the same sex but aren't willing to take on the gay identity. And, yes, many guys who call themselves bisexual fit that description. Still, I've always thought that viewpoint a little harsh, and when Michael Feldman says he's bisexual in his autobiographical one-man Fringe show *Diagnosis: Jew Pain*, I'm inclined to believe him. For one thing, he too thought that bisexuality didn't exist, until confronted head-on with a growing attraction to men that did nothing to abate his sexual fantasies about women. As the title suggests, the primary subject of the show is the pain of dealing with the dysfunction in his fairly conventional Brooklyn Jewish family. Coming to terms with his bisexuality, he also comes to terms with the expectations that weigh on him to be a "good Jewish son." Despite his own pain, Feldman still portrays his family with more compassion and wit than bile (that he reserves for a particularly unhelpful therapist). The show is a little rough around the edges—for example Feldman delivers one bit from the floor in a space where 90 per cent of the audience cannot see the floor—but Feldman's honesty, humor and charm win the day. His sexy, wiry, athletic, youthful stage presence certainly doesn't hurt the production, either.

Diagnosis: Jew Pain, various times (see the web site) at the Westbeth Community Center (155 Bank St @ Washington St), \$15, 212-279-4488, fringe NYC.org.

IN THE WINGS

- Here's another interesting gay-themed show from FringeNYC 2003: *LE LIVRE BLANC / the white book*. It's based on a book of the same name written by legendary queer author Jean Cocteau and published anonymously in France in 1928. It's a semi-autobiographical account that describes the love affairs of a young man in the early years of the last century. His attempts to find fulfillment are movingly conveyed, and his story ends with an impassioned plea for sexual tolerance and homosexual rights.
- The Fringe isn't the only festival going on right now. **Spotlight On Productions** is probably the most festival-happy producing group in town, hosting several festivals each season. Right now, they're showcasing a mini-festival called *Best of 2003* that highlights outstanding plays from their various festivals. One piece with a bit of a queer theme is *La Fénix*, about 17th century bisexual Mexican poet nun Sor Juana de la Cruz and her struggles with the Inquisition regarding the equality of women.
- In that same *Best of 2003* festival, you'll find *The Fairy Plays*, which explores the sordid side of fairies your kindergarten teacher didn't want you to know about. This collection of comic one-act explores such questions as, "Is my daddy a fairy?" "Can a fairy be a bitch?" and "Can a fairy change things from right to wrong?"



FURRY HAPPY PEOPLE: Kate Monster, Stephanie D'Abruzzo, Princeton and John Tartaglia

AVENUE Q Quirky "puppets and people" musical blossoms at its new Broadway address

As much as I liked *Avenue Q* when I saw it off-Broadway at the Vineyard Theatre, I wasn't sure it would work as well on Broadway. For all its raucous comedy and raunchy energy, this musical—about recent graduate Princeton (a puppet voiced and manipulated by the sexy John Tartaglia) looking for purpose in New York's outer boroughs—is an intimate, puppet-scaled show. I needn't have worried though: The show's producers have wisely moved the show into the Golden Theatre, one of Broadway's smaller houses. And audiences are going wild for it—at the performance I attended, the applause was

incredibly enthusiastic. My boyfriend and I looked at each other as if to say, "Gee, we like it, but these people *love* it." I'm very pleased for everyone involved in the show, most of whom are newcomers to Broadway. Lucky them, they're in what looks to be the first breakout musical hit of the season. The creative team's hard work is evident in the smart way they've tightened the second act, which dragged a little in the Vineyard run. The show overall is more polished and energetic. What was an off-Broadway pleasure is now a must-see Broadway delight.

Avenue Q, 8pm Mon-Sat and 2pm Wed & Sat at the Golden Theatre (252 W 45th St), \$21.25-\$86.25, 212-239-6200.



ALL THE RAGE: Michael Feldman