

## The Return of Physique Pictorial

BY GAY TODAY - MAY 30, 2017

POSTED IN: BOOK NOOK, ENTERTAINMENT, JESSE'S JOURNAL, LIFESTYLE, PEOPLE

Arguably the most influential gay publication of all time was Physique Pictorial, which flourished between 1951 and 1990. The creation of photographer and film maker Bob Mizer (1922-1992), who created this magazine as an outgrowth of his Athletic Model Guild, Physique Pictorial was the greatest of a series of pre-Stonewall "physical fitness" publications geared towards gay men. In "A Short History of Physique Magazines" (2011), I wrote about the influence that beefcake mags had upon a generation of gay men who came of age and out of the closet in the two crucial decades that followed World War II. In its heyday, Physique Pictorial consistently outsold more respectable homophile publications like ONE and the Mattachine Review.



Though Physique Pictorial never claimed to be a gay publication, and legal restrictions kept Mizer from publishing full-frontal nudes until the late sixties, the photos and artwork in this magazine were very homoerotic. Physique Pictorial showcased some of the best male bodies on the planet, including Jack LaLanne, Joe Dallesandro, Steve Reeves and Mickey Hargitay. Physique Pictorial also featured the work of Tom of Finland, George Quaintance and Art-Bob. Mizer's use of posing straps to cover the goods did not save him from the moral police, and he served prison time for "obscenity." Though Mizer tried to keep up with the times, Physique Pictorial seemed quaintly outdated by the time it ceased publication, shortly before Mizer died. I am the proud owner of a copy of [The Complete Reprint of Physique Pictorial](#), a 3-volume set published by Benedikt Taschen in 1997 that shows the history and development of this seminal publication.



The Bob Mizer Foundation was established by photographer Dennis Bell in 2010 to preserve and promote the work of progressive and controversial photographers. To commemorate the 25th anniversary of Mizer's death - Mizer died on May 12, 1992 - the Foundation announced plans to re-launch Physique Pictorial. "Nearly 30 years later, we want to expose a new generation to Physique Pictorial," Bell announced. "We have volunteers from across the country who are assisting in this endeavor, from design work to writing." The first issue of Physique Pictorial in 27 years will be published in early August and will feature material both new and familiar. Each quarterly issue will prominently feature a popular Mizer model, along with biographical information. It will also profile other up-and-coming, modern-day photographers who focus on the male physique. The magazine will also run regular feature stories that explore elements of male physique photography in general and Bob Mizer specifically. "We want to maintain the artistic integrity of the original publication while updating it for a 21st century audience," Bell notes. To accomplish his goal Bell brought in art director Frederick Woodruff to forge the magazine's graphic design.

According to Woodruff, "Dennis and I are committed to preserving Mizer's spirit with the return of Physique Pictorial. Highlighting the beauty and power of the male form was always Bob's priority and we're continuing that standard." Bell agreed, adding that "we strive to meet that goal in all we do here at the Foundation - to foster enthusiasm for the art of Bob Mizer, which was revolutionary and even illegal in his time, but which is experiencing a renaissance today. Mizer was also known for being generous in his efforts to promote other artists and give them a place where their work could be recognized. We are thrilled to be able to extend that tradition here as well. This continuation of Physique Pictorial is an homage to Mizer's art and its lasting effect on our culture and on masculinity." Each issue of the new Physique Pictorial will cost \$20, and the Bob Mizer Foundation's website ([www.bobmizer.org](http://www.bobmizer.org)) will soon begin taking orders. Supporters of the Foundation may also purchase back issues of the original Physique Pictorial at the Foundation's online storefront.

Jesse's Journal  
By Jesse Monteagudo

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