

THE POWER ISSUE: THE BOYS FROM BUTT

HOMO-JOURNOS HARNESS THE POWER OF (PINK) PAPER



For today's installment of *The Power Issue* we sat down with **Jop van Bennekom** and **Gert Jonkers**, the darling duo behind everyone's favorite arty-cum-pervy fag-rag, **BUTT**.

Of course, when we say "sit", we mean we actually corresponded via the magic of the internet. Why? Well, a number of reasons, not least of all the fact that the boys live in Amsterdam. And they've been gearing up for the American release of *The BUTT Book* published by **Taschen**, a compilation of the last five years of the pink-papered mag. As if that's enough, the next issue of *BUTT* will be out sometime in December. One never can tell with these things.

In the meantime, dive on into that there jump and see what the boys have to say about growing up "in the exact geographical middle point of The Netherlands" (even though their towns have different names), the hows and whys behind the *BUTT* birth, the difference between their magazine and porn and - of course - what they look for in a penis.

When you're done pouring over the details, head on over to the *BUTT* website and to *Fantastic Man*: their less nudie, but no less incredible fashion mag. Because, really, we could also be a bit more fantastic. Except for Jop and Gert, of course...

(Loyal readers will notice we've changed the picture above. Jop asked that we change it. It seems he didn't like the way he and Gert looked. While we typically don't concede to subjective requests, he used four question marks. And he said please. So, we caved.)

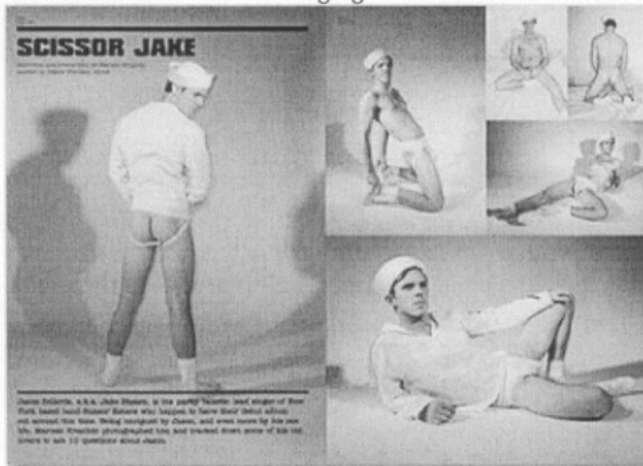
Queerty: The best place to start, obviously, is at the beginning: where were you guys born to what kind of families?

Jop van Bennekom: I was born in a small village in the exact geographical middle point of The Netherlands, called Scherpenzeel. I lived there until I was 18 and moved out. My father had a garage, selling and repairing cars. The rest of my family are farmers, both my grandparents had a farm, as most of my uncles and aunts. It's a very Christian family, very Calvinistic and sober.

Gert Jonkers: I was born in Otterlo, which is in the exact center of The Netherlands. It's a tiny village in a beautiful forest and the town is best known for the Kröller-Müller museum, which is one of Holland's best 20th century art museums; they have absolute loads of Van Gogh's, and lots more. Otherwise, the town has a rather nice tile museum. My father was a minister there of the Dutch Reformed church.

QT: Childhood was a traumatic experience for everyone, but in many cases more so for homos. Did you get the usual taunts and bullying on the playground?

GERT: Yep, totally that. We had a dog (thank god it was a big dog) called Boris and later one called Dolf (the former owner had called it 'Adolf' and we abbreviated it a bit) and every time I went walking the dog I was scared of groups of guys hanging around. Of course I was the fag, if only because I would occasionally wear high heels and make up and capes and stuff - this was from the age of 11. I bet it had a lasting effect on me. I'm still not keen on folks hanging around on the street and I'm not a huge street cruiser.

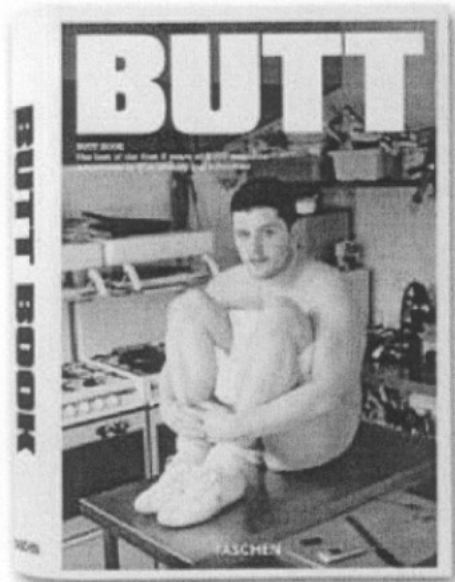


JOP: My god, I had a terrible childhood, like I was born depressed and never felt at ease with my surroundings. I guess it's the classic story of a gay guy growing up in a small countryside village full of people that hate everything that doesn't fit in. I still feel that those first terrible 18 years of my life drive me with what I'm doing today. I'm quite ambitious.

QT: Did you always want to go into publishing?

JOP: I think I was always interested in media. When I was twelve I wanted to work for television, and when I was sixteen I wanted to work for magazine. For me media always represented an escape, like 'the other world', an alternative. Even when it was mainstream media.

GERT: I wanted to go into music. I did for a while as a singer and later singer/songwriter and that was quite funny but I wasn't too hot on standing on stage and having people stare at me. Would that have to do with the trauma of the guys in the street staring at me when I was young? Gosh, I never thought of that, but maybe that's it.



QT: What was the impetus behind the creation of *BUTT*? Did you imagine it would become such an international cult magazine?

JOP: No, we just started a magazine that we were dying to read ourselves. We didn't feel represented in media, and in the end another 25,000 fags over the whole world felt the same thing. It grew from very small to what it is today; it progressed quite naturally.

GERT: Did we realize that there would be so many men like us all around the world who were dying to read *BUTT*? No. I mean, we didn't really think about it either. We're not marketers, thank heaven for that.

QT: Obviously the magazine eschews traditional concepts of so-called beauty. You're quite egalitarian, in fact. Do you have an ideal vision of man? Is there a type of man that you really just can't stand/don't find attractive?

GERT: Well, we're very keen on interesting men and you need more to be interesting than just ["beauty"]. To answer your last question: well, yes, something I really don't find attractive is a muscleman. I find a six-pack really awful on a man, and an eight-pack is even worse. I really, really don't see beauty in huge concrete scary muscles. Nor do I particularly fancy shrimps or other forms of anorexia. Otherwise I think I have a pretty broad taste. I hate piercings.

JOP: Zero fat bodies with six packs are gross, no? At least for us it's a total turn off. We try to avoid cliches in *BUTT*. We want to represent diversity. We don't have an ideal type; every man can be attractive in his own way.

QT: How do you feel about gay men who attempt to assimilate into the broader, mainstream world?

JOP: Good for them. I don't know. It's up for everybody to decide how they want to live and what they want to do. I do think a lot of gays don't really have to assimilate too much since there is already a whole mainstream gay world set up for you...

GERT: If it's the out mayor of Paris or Berlin, I think that's really great and exciting. Otherwise, in general it's not very interesting to be mainstream.

QT: How do you select your interview subjects and models?

GERT: Gut feeling.



JOP: There always a 'wish list' of people we want to feature and there is a group of contributors that suggest people to interview and we also get a lot of email of people suggesting someone or pitching themselves. Sometimes it's difficult to decide whether there's a story or not. We go out there and try, sometimes it turns out to be brilliant, sometimes not.

QT: What would you say to people who *BUTT* is simply a glorified porn rag? How would you convince them otherwise? Or would you?

JOP: No I wouldn't try to convince them because with one hard on per issue you can hardly call *BUTT* porn, most pages of *BUTT* are completely textual.

GERT: I'd be happy if people said it's porn. *BUTT* is not really the ideal wank material. It's not gross enough for wanking.

QT: Do you have an ideal penis type?

JOP: Definitely, I love a straight thick meaty cock that curves up a little bit with a thick foreskin, I love foreskins that are a bit loose and cover the head completely, so you can really work them. I think proportion is also really important, like thick and long is better than thick and short or long and thin. The ideal size of a penis is 20 cm I think. A lot of cocks that are bigger than that are weirdly shaped, they curve too much up or down or are twisted in a weird way or the head is really small, or the balls. I'm a cock fetishist, and I love pretty penises. I wish there would be more!

GERT: I like hard-ons.