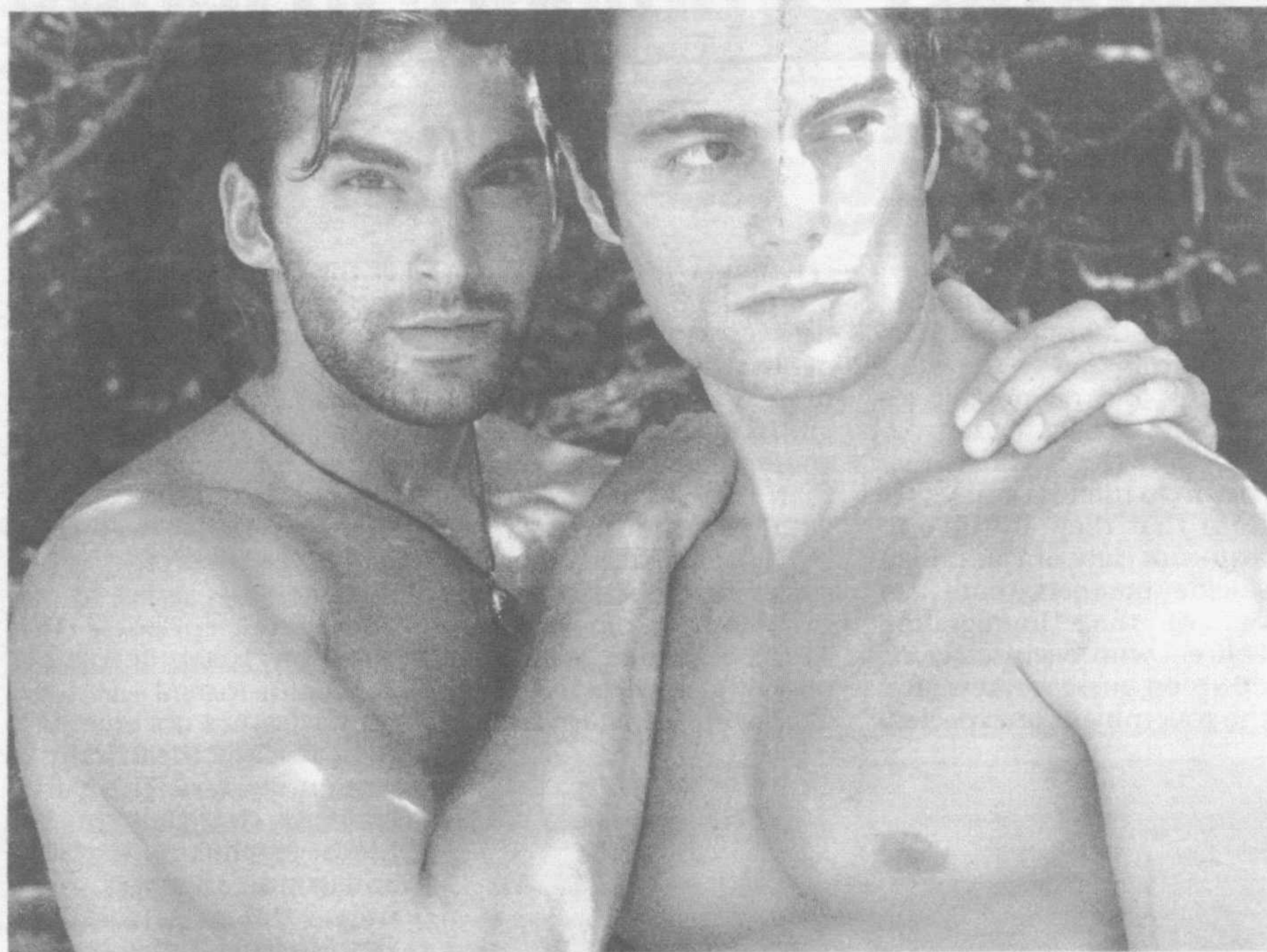


TV REVIEW 1710



The oft-shirtless CHARLIE DAVID and JON FLEMING star in the steamy 'Dante's Cove.' Photo: Here! TV.

Casting Their Spell

'DANTE'S COVE' GIVES A NEW MEANING TO 'FANTASY' GENRE

By Brian Moylan

Usually when a show is classified as a "fantasy" series, that means that some magic, mysteries and monsters are involved, like "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" or "Charmed." But Here! TV's "Dante's Cove" takes fantasy to a whole new level. They have the supernatural angle covered, but they also show plenty of flesh and same-sex action that will have viewers creating some fantasies of their own.

The show, full of hot guys waving their wands, kicked off season two on Here! TV on Friday, Sept. 1, and the first season is currently selling like hot cakes on DVD. Here! is an all-gay, on-demand service available from most digital cable providers as well as a streaming channel on satellite providers DIRECTV and Dish Network (to check availability, visit heretv.com). This season of "Dante's Cove" is comprised of five, one-hour episodes that debut every two weeks.

Season two picks up with the impossibly hot and over-sexed denizens of the Hotel Dante (located on an undisclosed tropical island) trying to defeat the forces of evil—mostly with their shirts off or in bikinis.

There are some differences this time around. The second season was filmed in Hawaii instead of Turks and Caicos and features a whole new set and surroundings. In this

campy series, the change is laughed off in the first episode. Anyway, you don't visit "Dante's Cove" to look at the architecture.

The show's action revolves around Toby (Charlie David), his boyfriend Kevin (Gregory Michael) and his best friend Van (Nadine Heiman). Here's where it gets tricky: Ambrusius (William Gregory Lee) is a warlock proficient in the magic art of Tresum who is trying to capture the heart of Kevin

Thea Gill from 'Queer as Folk' plays a mysterious newcomer.

because Kevin awoke him from a centuries-old curse. He's also trying to ward off his nemesis, witch and Hotel Dante owner Grace (Tracey Scoggins).

Caught in the mix are Toby and Van, whose girlfriend, Michelle (Erin Cummings), doesn't like her dabbling in the dark arts. Also there's Kai (German Santiago) and Grace (Thea Gill from "Queer as Folk") as a newcomer with some magical talents of her own.

"For some people, there was some confusion in season one with the whole

Tresum magic and how it all worked," Charlie David says. "In the second season, it's all making more sense."

"There's definitely points on set where I have to tell myself, 'You are fighting a warlock because he's stolen your boyfriend and this is a life or death situation and you must get home before the sun comes up' and then I have to act," laughs David, who is gay.

Newcomer Gill says she had to learn a new acting style for the over-the-top series. "Sometime you wanted to force it because the dialogue is so extreme in terms of the magic dialogue," she says. "The more I reminded myself to keep it grounded and related to me as personally as I could, the more real it became."

Gill says she did a lot of research about witches and witchcraft. "What I extracted was that it all comes down to power, so I had to find my own personal power in as intense and exciting and seductive way as possible," she says about her new role.

For his part, David says he can't always promise that the show is so bad it's good (but it usually is), but he tries his best to make the fantasy believable. "I think for me as an actor there is some growth in working in this genre," he says. "Some of the situations are so far from my reality that I have to connect the dots sometimes before thinking what I should do."