

## FAMILY VIEWING

This year the Oregon Gay and Lesbian Film Festival brings the whole queer bunch together

by Kelly M. Bryan



Jewish lesbians gather with friends and family for their son's bris in *Everything's Relative*

As the song says, we are family, no? And as with all families, though we love one another, some of us have our differences. We may only get together once a year, but there's a bond that keeps us close.

In the spirit of unity and increased understanding, the organizers of the 1996 Oregon Gay and Lesbian Film Festival have done their best to bring the whole bunch of us together for a big

## Cinema

reunion—down to the weird cousin or two that many might wish to keep locked in an attic somewhere (*Cruising*, *Who Killed Teddy Bear?*). It's a laudable effort: There's something for almost everyone.

A number of the festival offerings have the ambivalent allure of home movies. Sure, some of the production values are shaky; sure, you may need to restrain the periodic urge to cover the projector lens with your hand to fend off mortal embarrassment—but many of these films will make you laugh, cry, reminisce, envision the future. You may see a younger version of yourself that you nearly forgot—or a side of yourself that you've never recognized. Facing one's vulnerabilities can be a good thing. Refreshing. Healing and all that.

Included in this year's festival of recent queer cinema is a sampling of some of the groundbreakers and "cult classics" that came before. Inspired in part by the release of *The Celluloid Closet*, the mini-retrospective is meant to provide those who've never seen the films, or those who'd like another look, with a chance to see them on the big screen. A few of these titles may meet with surprise or dismay, but festival organizers insist that they are our history and should not be dismissed unseen. It's your money, you make the call. Also, three filmmakers will present their work at festival screenings: John G. Young, director of *Parallel Sons*; Sharon Pollock, director of *Everything Relative*; and Douglas Langway, director of *Raising Heroes*.

### The Schedule

#### STONEWALL • 7 PM JUNE 21

Adroitly presented as one drag queen's version of the Stonewall legend, the film sidesteps controversy regarding what motivated who to throw what at whom and dives into a tightly scripted, engagingly acted, entirely pleasing boy-meets-fabulousness story that rivals Hollywood for romance. LaMiranda (Guillermo Diaz), a worldweary Puerto Rican "DQ," bails out and takes home from jail the fresh-from-the-corn-belt idealist Matty Dean (Frederick Weller), and the ensuing story converges with others into the mythic/historic events that transpired one hot June night in 1969 in the streets of Greenwich Village.

The Gay Liberation Movement's more sedate beginnings, in groups like the Mattachine Society, are sketched as a preface to the stirrings of more militant struggles, and some sly comparison is made of the ways that different race/class groups rebel. In one scene, the intricate mating rituals of '60s-era Fire Island, designed to remain one step ahead of the law, hints at the ludicrous constraints on same-sex love that were common practice of the day. Based on the book by Martin Duberman. (U.K./U.S., 1995, dir. Nigel Finch)

#### GET OVER IT • 3:30 PM JUNE 22; 9 PM JUNE 26

At one point, the main character of this film, Steven (Troy Morgan), mutters, "I feel like I'm in a Greg Araki movie." Welcome to the gloom generation.

Like Steven, *Get Over It* looks great. It has that blasé-chic, black-and-white, art/film school aesthetic down by law. And it sounds great: Sparsely inflected off-kilter guitar chords and plinky banjo form a fitting backdrop to the timeless hip and angst-ridden tale of Love Gone Wrong. Unfortunately, like its hero, this film has trouble getting real. (U.S., 1995, dir. Nick Katsapetses)

#### FANCI'S PERSUASION • 5:15 PM JUNE 22; 7 PM JUNE 24

A film for the young, the pierced and the forgiving. A fey femme clotheshorse (Jessica

**The Oregon Gay and Lesbian Film Festival**  
runs June 21-30 at Cinema 21, 616 NW 21st.  
Tickets for the benefit opening night are \$10 in advance,  
\$12 at the door, or \$15 for both movies (in advance).  
Regular shows are \$5.50 general admission.

Patton) and her terse troubled butch paramour (Boa) decide to tie the knot, which somehow spurs two of their friends into a battle of good and evil—it's hard to tell which is which—that is played out on a metaphysical plane. The contest threatens to wreak havoc on the wedding preparations (this could be a queer retelling of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and coincides with a bizarre electrical anomaly that imperils all of San Francisco.

The fact that I had met one of the actors (known as "Scrumby") in his bathrobe (him, not me) in a house on Uranus Street in that city did little to warm me to this hodgepodge of wacky aimless hijinks—but an early shot of Fanci's pink vinyl boots marching in superimposed fashion from Marin County over the bay and the Golden Gate did bring much cheer to my heart. (U.S., 1995, dir. Charles Herman-Wurmfeld)

#### A LITANY FOR SURVIVAL: THE LIFE AND WORK OF AUDRE LORDE • 5 PM JUNE 23

More a keepsake for familiar fans, this documentary places layers of interview—with Lorde, Adrienne Rich, Jewelle Gomez, Sapphire, Essex Hemphill and others—alongside wisps of poems, footage of literary events and political rebellions, and fragments of popular songs to create an impression of what fueled Lorde's fire. An early inspiration was a teacher named Mrs. Baker, who read her a story of a bear who eats his family, one by one, beginning with his parents. This story, Lorde says, sold her for life on the value of reading.

Griffin juxtaposes the momentous and the mundane aspects of Lorde's life, thereby fleshing out the legend. Filmed over several years, by its end the film shows Lorde ravaged but unvanquished by breast cancer, living with her partner in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Her message of survival and unflinching personal struggle to embrace one's whole self remains strong, even as her voice weakens.

The uninitiated will be frustrated by the lack of identifying titles for interviewees, which is a major oversight. This version is 30 minutes longer than the one set to air on *P.O.V.* (U.S., 1995, dir. Ada Gay Griffin)

#### FRESH KILL • 9:30 PM JUNE 23

A witty whirl of one-liners and seeming non sequiturs, this film may sweep you out of your seat or lull you into an image-bathed stupor. But there's a point to this picture, and Jessica Hagedorn's cagey script, Vernon Reid's score and winning performances by the principals—as well as a stream of cameos (Ron Vawter, Karen Finlay)—make it worthwhile to stay and stay attentive.

Shareen (Sarita Choudhury, *Mississippi Masala*) picks up garbage for a living, and Claire (Erin McMurtry) works at Naga Saki, a stylin' New York City sushi bar that serves "yamakazoo," (raw fish lips), the hot new food craze. The pair are raising their daughter with the help of an extended family from the restaurant, Johnny (Abraham Lim) and Miguel (José Zuniga).

Fresh Kills, at Staten Island, is the world's largest dump (true fact). Claire's mother, Mimi (Laurie Carlos), outlines its horrors on her cable TV show, but the plug is pulled when she gets too close to the truth and starts pointing the finger at GX, a power company that is diversifying into cat food. The trouble is, cats are disappearing and people are starting to glow intermittently green. Intercut with these urban woes are snippets of life on Orchid Island in the Pacific Ocean, where inhabitants make a living as the guardians of Taiwan's nuclear waste (another true fact).

Space does not allow a full description of the Rubik's Cube-like complexity of this film's plot lines. But tune in and you'll see sensuous acts of love performed on the accordion, hear lines like "It's only weird because we're wired," and be won over by the film's "rainbow coup d'etat." (U.S./U.K., 1994, dir. Shu Lea Cheang)

#### THE MIDWIFE'S TALE • 7 PM JUNE 25

A charming if chaste fantasy: A lesbian mother tells her daughter this bedtime tale of knights and "knightesses," where a brave and fair noblewoman (Stacey Havener)—untamed and uninspired by marriage to a decent-enough oppressor—is smitten by a chestnut-tressed herbalist/midwife (Gayle Cohen). The tale is complicated by the evildoings of a conniving curate and a doddering physician, who conspire to imprison and excute the midwife

Continued on page 33



Gabriel Mick (left) and Laurence Mason in *Parallel Sons*