

queer/indie/vanguard cinema, Christine Vachon.)

But if it's less assured and expansive than Todd Haynes' film, its seams sometimes showing in its reckless veering between the cerebral and the intuitive, it also has less intellectual weight to stagger under; there's enough vivacious pleasure and energy here to compensate for occasional unevenness. Although there have been better films released this year, there's unlikely to be another one this simultaneously smart, fun and provocative.

**T**he *Meat Rack*—a relic revived by Dennis Nyback, Portland's premier archivist of grade-Z movies from stag to the mental-hygiene films of the '50s—is a historical curiosity, but the real reason to see it is for its high camp value. This was shot on a less-than-shoe-string budget with nonexistent production values, and its graphic depiction of sex both straight and gay (and kinky) must've seemed incredibly transgressive to anyone who witnessed it during its severely limited original release in the pre-Stonewall '60s.

When a young man decides he's had it with his small town and crummy home life with a surly father (his irresponsible, adulterous mom has left them high and dry), he runs away to the big city of San Francisco. There, he experiences a disillusioning, degrading and explicitly, thoroughly explored descent into loitering, hustling and eventual out-and-out whoredom. He rescues a nude female model from a lecherous photographer, and they fall in love.

However, she's forced to question their love after a) they're forced at knifepoint by two drag queens to have sex for a homemade porn film and b) she discovers him servicing an S/M trick with the business end of a strap. Distracted, she runs into traffic and is killed, the tragic result of Jimmy's prodigal, curiously exciting and again thoroughly, thoroughly depicted waywardness.

Don't go to see this movie alone; you'll be bored and insulted. But do go to see it with any friends you can round up who will appreciate the fact that 75 percent of *The Meat Rack* is exploitative verging on softcore, while the rest is a cheesy "morality play"—complete with ultra-soft-focus flashbacks to our protagonist's warped childhood—warning against the supposed dangers of running away from home, wearing alluringly tight clothing and whoring it up with drag queens.

To make the evening a complete trash orgy, Nyback also will be running original theatrical trailers for *Valley of the Dolls*, *One Million B.C.* and *Muscle Beach Party* along with the Lenny Bruce cartoon *Thank You Mask Man*, a vulgar yet sweet parable about the covert homosexuality of the Lone Ranger and Tonto. **J**

*HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH* opens Aug. 3 at Cinema 21. *THE MEAT RACK* opens Aug. 3 at Clinton Street Theater.

CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN is a Portland writer and filmmaker who has at least one angry inch.

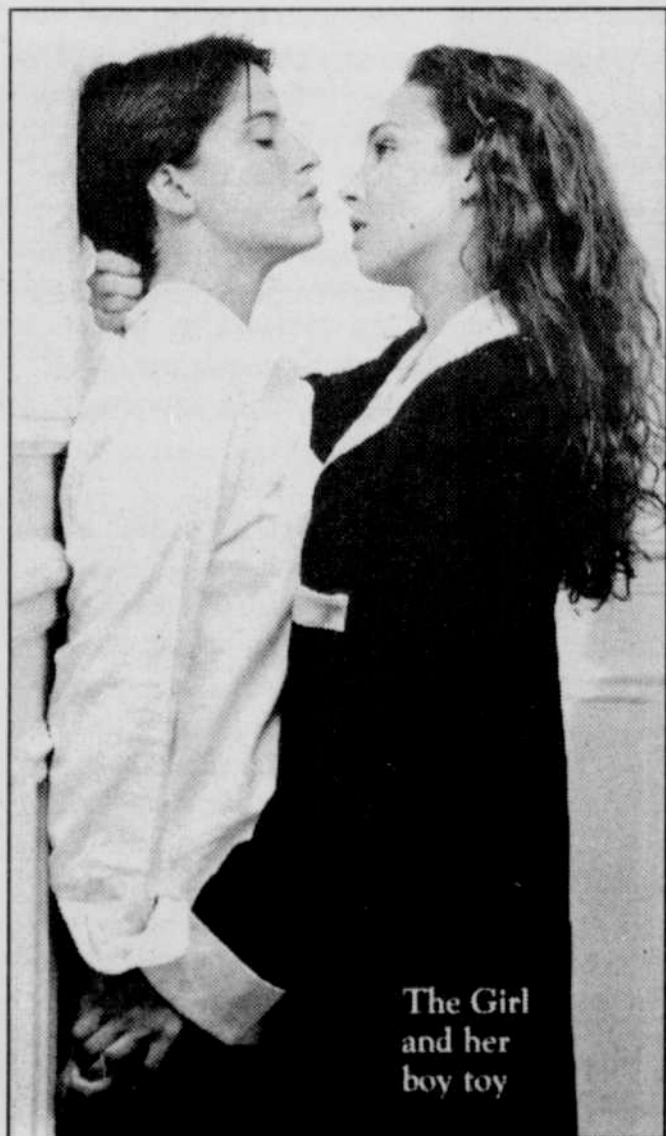
## Pretty in black

This *Girl* has no soul

BY ORIANA GREEN

**S**o here's my bias: I'm a writer. I like to tell stories. I like having stories told to me. I want character development and clear motivations. I want to see characters grow and change, to learn from their adventures. I'm also female, and true to type, I enjoy emotional expression. I want to know how characters feel about what's happening to them.

Although there's much to like about *The Girl*, a first effort from director Sande Zeig, for



The Girl and her boy toy

me it fails on all of the above points. For a low-budget film, she does make good use of her seedy side of Paris settings, which fit her uneven attempt at neo-noir.

Her tone is stylish and tough-edged, and the script supports that viewpoint with clipped dialogue; there just isn't enough of it to sustain a story line. Many scenes consist of only a few sentences spoken by one person.

Agathe de la Boulaye portrays a boyish 20-something butch-in-training, and her brunette charms might cause some hearts to flutter. She's smitten with the long-lashed lovely title character (Claire Keim), who takes her home the first time she asks—but then tells her this was strictly an isolated incident. (Only one character has a name, the butch's black girlfriend, Bu Savé, who seems wildly tolerant of her gal pal's new obsession.)

Our young stud melts when the Girl demands of her, "Tell me those words that no one's ever told me." Plenty of passion and bare skin ensue, but without a lot of context. We never really learn much about anyone in this story, making it difficult to give a fig about what happens to them. In fact, the numerous sex scenes are scantily clad with story, making this at times feel more like soft lesbo porn made for straight guy pervs.

Even the butch complains about that: "She never asks about my life; she doesn't know anything about me. When I'm not with her I stop existing for her altogether."

But she doesn't let that cool her ardor, and—surprise, surprise—the Girl relents. Then the story turns dark and violent with a silly sinister subplot about some gangsters, and the ending is just plain vapid.

Yes, there are worse ways to while away 85 minutes than watching attractive women make love, but it's a shame all that passion couldn't have been in the service of a better story. For me, every great movie starts and ends with a good story—without that it's just photography and special effects. **J**

*THE GIRL* opens Aug. 10 at Fox Tower Cinemas.



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