



THE SHOW MUST GO ON

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Not all films were available for review by press time. Below is a description of each program, listed in the order of the screenings, with reviews denoted by an asterisk.

THE MONKEY'S MASK: An Australian film based on Dorothy Porter's much-admired, unusual novel/poem, *The Monkey's Mask* is a film noir starring Susie Porter as Jill Fitzpatrick, an isolated, sexually frustrated lesbian detective in search of the perpetrator in a case involving the murder of Micky, a poetry student. When she meets the student's sexy, mysterious teacher, Diana (Kelly McGillis), the investigation—and her life—is thrown into disarray.

ALL OVER THE GUY: Tom (Richard Ruccolo) and Eli (Dan Bucatinsky), a duo misguidedly set up on a blind date by well-meaning heterosexual friends, come to terms with their differences in what is by all appearances a comedic but bittersweet love story. It's drawn comparisons to Woody Allen's literate urban comedies, and its trailers (especially bits with Christina Ricci and Lisa Kudrow) look very promising.

SORDID LIVES: A politically incorrect satire of small-town Texan life. The death of a family matriarch draws the whole crazy clan back to their tiny hometown, including an unhinged Tammy Wynette impersonator (Leslie Jordan) and Olivia Newton-John as a singing alcoholic.

EXPERIMENTAL SHORTS: A collection of shorts consisting of non- or anti-narrative and

conceptual work, often with unusual depictions of ideas about sex and sexuality. Includes "Adoring Caucasian," an exploration of the white male as ideal beauty object, and "Westward Ho," a bit of cowboy erotica by Portland experimental film goddess Vanessa Renwick.

JULIE JOHNSON: Sure to draw a crowd, this film by Bob Gosse (*Niagara, Niagara*) features Lili Taylor and Courtney Love as two married working-class housewives trying to strike out on their own by returning to school and ending their unhappy marriages. This newfound independence extends, at least for Julie, into a newfound adventurousness in her sexuality—she falls in love with Claire. Perpetual performance art hipster Spalding Gray co-stars as a college professor.

*** COME UNDONE:** Teen-age French boys from different worlds—one a brooding, depressive young man with an ill mother, the other a life-loving, exuberantly sexual drifter—meet on



The Monkey's Mask is film noir about a sexually frustrated lesbian detective in search of her perp

the beach and fall in love, creating complications neither of them could have foreseen. Hardly the melodrama it sounds like, this remarkable film is a temporally challenging, circuitous, ennui-ridden but uniquely satisfying slice of life, complexity and paradox intact.

O FANTASMA: A Brazilian offering about a



L.I.E. stands for Long Island Expressway, and it's about a neglected middle-class boy who finds love with a much older man

garbage man who also has a predilection for anonymous sex. As his encounters become increasingly desperate and graphic, he becomes obsessed with one particular stranger clad in fetish garb, and his sexuality itself begins to seem like a manifestation of his alienation. Surreal and arty—and said to include down-and-dirty sex so graphic as to be erotic (and/or disturbing, depending on your own tastes).

SOUTHERN COMFORT: One of the festival's few trans offerings, this documentary follows the tumultuous life of Robert Eads, a female-to-male transsexual living in the Deep South. The winner of a Sundance Jury Prize.

*** TREMBLING BEFORE G_D:** A documentary about the trials of gay and lesbian Jews, this sobering look at people being punished for their desires deepens understanding and empathy as we're introduced to its subjects, a wide range of Hasidic and Orthodox Jews, each experiencing the pain of conflict with his or her faith. A beautiful, sometimes heartbreaking look at the struggle still associated for some with their sexuality.

BIG EDEN: A popular favorite at gay film fests around the country, this one stars Arye Gross (*Ellen*) as a gay New Yorker who returns to his small hometown in Montana to care for an ailing family member and finds a unique brand of belonging, self-discovery and love.

*** THE WEEKEND:** Based on the novel by Peter Cameron, this is an ensemble piece about a man who returns to the family home of his lover, who he lost to AIDS. It features, among likable performances, the stellar work of Gena Rowlands as a vivaciously aging neighbor and Brooke Shields, who acquits herself nicely as Rowlands' rebellious daughter.

HUGE: A collection of three-minute

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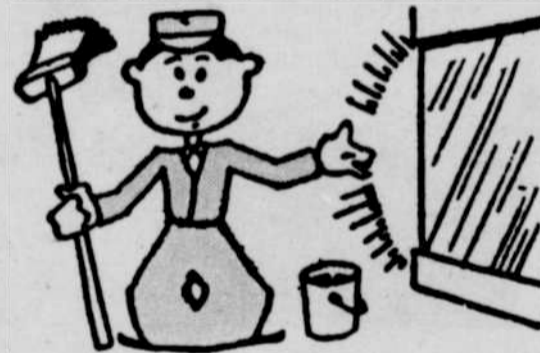
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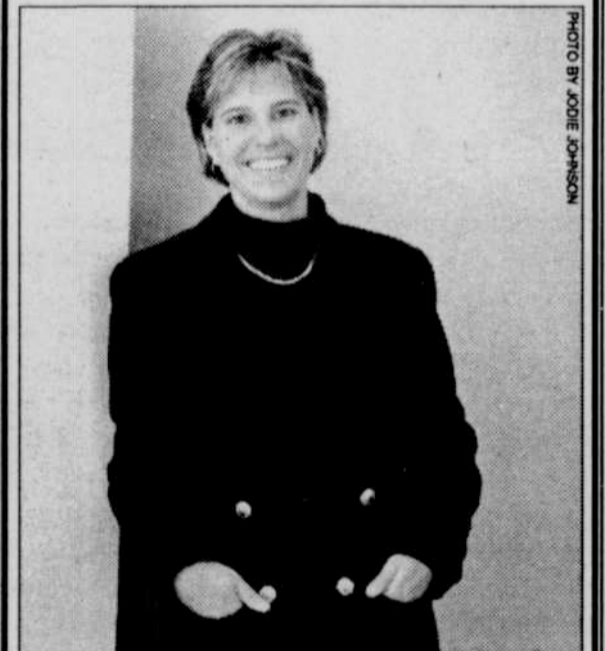
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