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JUNE 1-2 / PORTLAND

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Tickets (General Seating)

\$15 advance at
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\$12 for Students & Seniors

Parking can be a challenge—plan ahead!

FILM



Photographic voyeurism abounds in *Chop Suey*

Pretty pictures

Pretty boys and pretty girls make for pretty queer film this month

Chop Suey

Gay fashion and portraiture photographer Bruce Weber exposes the public to his amazing private collection and into the world of his photographic obsession—beautiful, young men, mostly nude—in his latest documentary, *Chop Suey* (opening March 15 at Hollywood Theatre).

Eyeing a young Peter Johnson at wrestling practice, Weber hauls him into his voyeuristic field and soon makes him into a sought-after model for the likes of Ralph Lauren and Versace—as well as a homoerotic icon. Johnson appears throughout the film, but the real stars are Weber photographs and their accompanying stories.

Chop Suey is, like the dish, a mishmash of images, textures and flavors. Weber's appealing, soft voice-overs lead the audience through a history of diverse personalities he has photographed. A standout is singing/pianist legend Frances Faye, who is shown in a multitude of video clips intercut with comments from her longtime lesbian partner.

Scenes follow one another with no real transition: One moment you're watching a naked supermodel frolic with a dog, the next you're hearing about Robert Mitchum's jazz singing. It's shot mostly in black and white, which emphasizes the simple beauty of the male form. This film is any photographer's wet dream.

That said, this isn't a normal documentary about one person or even a related group of people, and it's nonlinear as well as non-narrative. This is an experimental art house movie that, at two hours, is about 20 minutes too long.

The images are beautiful, but the concept is difficult to follow. Bring your patience.

—Lisa Bradshaw

Kissing Jessica Stein

Upon hearing the premise of *Kissing Jessica Stein*, my stomach churned. Two straight women decide to see whether they'd like to get it on and be lesbians for a while or, hey, maybe forever if it works out. This could have been very bad.

Fortunately for all audiences, it's not.



Two straight girls find love in *Kissing Jessica Stein*

Jessica (Jennifer Westfeldt) is a workaholic writer and copy editor for a magazine in New York. As the piles (and piles and piles) of books in her apartment show, she is extremely well read and educated. She's also beautiful and funny, but she just can't find the right guy. It isn't for lack of trying. In a hilarious string of scenes, all of her dates are simply useless buffoons.

Simultaneously, Helen (Heather Juergensen) is getting it on with her latest boy toy and running a successful art gallery. Her work and social life are full of queers, but she's never had the urge until recently, noting it's "the one thing I've never done." With the help of an adorable gay boy and a book of quotations, she places a personal ad.

Jessica finally finds a personal ad worth answering. But it's under Women Seeking Women. Well, how bad could it be?

Hence, these two straight-but-not-narrow gals embark upon a whole new world of homosexuality.

Instead of being shallow, trite or homophobic, this whole seemingly impossible situation works like a charm. The femme women amusingly jump through the hoops of gender norms and expectations: Who opens the door? Who pays the bill? Are we having sex yet?

Poor, neurotic Jessica tackles lesbianism as a research project rather than an emotional investment, which she has trouble making. Her wisecracking best friend, ex-boyfriend boss and Jewish matchmaking mother all want to know what's going on in her life, but she is too uptight to tell them.

The movie (opening March 20 at Fox Tower Cinemas) also has its drawbacks. These two women literally are the definition of lesbian chic—every heterosexual man's fantasy, really (see photo). And Jessica can be so extremely annoying, it becomes hard to imagine why the reasonably cool Helen continues to hang in there. The worst sequence is a wedding at which the couple become the object of attention—five minutes of queer audience eye-rolling ensues.

But Westfeldt and Juergensen, who also wrote the screenplay, balance the unreal qualities with logical grounding comments from minor characters; one of Helen's gay friends, angry at her mild dabbling in