

# LIGHTS! CAMERA! (LOTS OF GAY) ACTION!

SENSORY PERCEPTIONS HAS BIG THINGS  
IN STORE FOR THE FILM FEST—  
AND MAYBE EVEN BEYOND

BY LISA BRADSHAW

**T**ake the hunky Portland-grown filmmaker Miles Swain, funny San Diego director Helen Lesnick, Steve Guttenberg, small-town butches, queer crip artists, bathroom sex, bisexual husbands, transsexual MPs, torrid love affairs and flirty Slovenian girls—toss in a few lost souls—and what have you got? The sixth annual Portland Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Film Festival, slamming its way into Cinema 21 from Sept. 20 to 29.

The volunteers of Sensory Perceptions, who usher in the festival every year with no foreseeable end in sight, have increased the programming this year to 32 total screenings. They have good reason.

A year ago the festival began 10 days after Sept. 11. "Last year," says executive director John Campos, "our concern was 'Oh God, can this festival still go on? Can we get prints?' We couldn't contact people; we didn't know if they were alive or not." But, he continues, "something wonderful happened. Everything arrived on time, everyone was great, and our attendance increased by 34 percent."

With those kind of numbers, it's time to up the ante and see if people continue to attend in droves. If they do, the nonprofit wants to expand its offerings. The film festival would remain at the heart of its efforts, but, says artistic director Gabriel Mendoza, "we'd like to see Sensory Perceptions become an all-around arts organization, focusing mostly on queer interest...branch out into theater and performance art or bring gay and lesbian authors to town, that sort of thing."

It does rely, however, on audience participation in the festival. "There really is no show without an audience," Mendoza admits. And no expansion without a solid film festival base.

In the meantime, all four members of Sensory Perceptions are humming around the city ordering films, organizing nonfilm events, obtaining sponsors, publicizing and reining in volunteers.

And they're humming about the extraordinary film lineup, which includes 17 features, eight shorts programs, six documentaries and the trademark closing night sneak preview. Both opening night films (*The Trip* and *A Family Affair*) include the directors in tow, and actor Steve Guttenberg will attend the Sept. 22 screening of his directorial debut, *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead*.

The goal is to bring in the best of the best they've seen from around the country, always with an eye on representing the diversity of the gay, lesbian, bi and trans community. "We always want to get stuff that is new or [that] you're not going to see next week," Mendez notes.

The documentaries and shorts programs are both ranking high on organizers' lists this year because



From left, John Campos, Gabriel Mendoza, Debbie Caselton and reclining volunteer coordinator Tophér Wallace put on the shows. (Don't worry, they don't let them work behind the counter.)

they're of high quality and because they're so diverse. The festival has, continues Mendez, "a lot of documentaries that represent a wide variety of experiences."

*Beyond Vanilla*, for instance, explores the kinkier aspects of sexuality. Admittedly, the folks of Sensory Perceptions are not beyond vanilla but love the film. "It's explicit," says development director Debbie Caselton, "but it moved really well; it kept my attention the whole time. I might have been shocked, but I like it." Mmm.

*Some Real Heat*, a documentary about female firefighters in San Francisco and hailed by the whole team as one of the best films of the festival, is more up Caselton's alley. "The women are good-looking," she assures. "The uniform, you know."

The popular *Boys Shorts* and *Girls Shorts* programs have been increased from one each to two, which make up only half the scheduled shorts. "Once again," comments Mendez, "there's just a lot of diversity of people's experience, and that's the best thing about the festival. The shorts really show that in a big way."

Mendez is particularly taken with a collage of films titled *Raw*, which is composed of three-minute shorts by New York filmmakers. "Even if it's not directly about 9/11," he speculates, "it really comes across...especially the Manhattan crowd...you don't even really identify what it is; it becomes a part of our culture...a part of the way we think...it's pretty powerful."

Campos shares his own Portland-based Sept. 11 reactions in regard to the festival. "I've had a lot to think about...what my life is about and my point in life. But really at the film festival last year, so many people gave us perspective on that by thanking us for being able to, number one, escape things that were going on but, two, being able to see things that otherwise they would never see."

And that's the whole point for Sensory Perceptions. "You can arguably say that film is the greatest art form ever," asserts Mendez. "It's visual, it's intellectual, it covers the whole gamut...if you have a voice or you want to communicate, having it on film really defines its importance. You've got people, if you were telling a story, who won't respond to it, but when they see it, it takes on an extraordinary life of its own—it's almost supernatural. Because of that, having gay films or any other minority or disenfranchised group, anybody who...isn't represented as a whole, it's very important. Really, in a nutshell, that's what we're doing." □

See Page 27 for a complete list of programs or pick up a PORTLAND LESBIAN GAY BI TRANS FILM FESTIVAL guide at area venues. Visit [www.sensoryperceptions.org](http://www.sensoryperceptions.org) for an online guide.

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## 3-2-1 ACTION!

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW  
TO MAKE YOUR WAY INTO THE FESTIVAL



### PLACE

All screenings are at Cinema 21, 616 N.W. 21st Ave. You can park free at the Legacy/Good Samaritan parking structure at 22nd Avenue and Kearney Street two blocks north and one block west of the theater.

### TICKETS

Single tickets to all programs are \$7 and available in advance at [www.ticketweb.com](http://www.ticketweb.com) or 866-468-7623. Tickets may be purchased at the Cinema 21 box office the day of the show. The box office opens one hour before the day's first show.

### PASSES

Half Passes for the festival are \$75 and allow you into 16 shows (that's \$4.69 a program) and to the Sixth Anniversary Gala. Full passes are \$125 and get you into all 32 shows (that's \$3.91 a program) and the gala. Platinum passes are \$175, get you into all 32 shows and the gala, and allow you to enter the theater at any time and sit in a special reserved section. According to organizers, you will "be treated like royalty."

Passes are available online, at Balloons on Broadway and at Gai-Pied. You can also buy passes at the will call table at Cinema 21, which opens one hour before the day's first show.



Sensory Perceptions invites you to **In Vino We Trust**, a wine-tasting benefit 7 p.m. Sept. 10 at Crush, 1412 S.E. Morrison St. Food, music, prizes (in the form of the coveted festival passes), all hosted by wine-swilling goddess Rhea Neati. Tickets are \$20 in advance from [www.ticketweb.com](http://www.ticketweb.com) or at Crush.

Sensory Perceptions also invites you to the **Sixth Anniversary Gala** 8 p.m. Sept. 22 at the Fez Ballroom, 316 S.W. 11th Ave. Food, drink specials, dancing, entertainment and prizes. A festival pass or \$7 gets you in. Join them, won't you?