

FILM

**CHRONICALLY UNFEASIBLE**  
TLA Entertainment



Sergio Bianchi's 2000 film *Chronically Unfeasible*, recently released on DVD, calls to mind the work of Bertolt Brecht, the radical and hugely influential 20th century playwright and poet who used (some would say misused) dramatic tools to alienate the audience in order to politically and aesthetically galvanize it.

In true Brechtian style, Bianchi gives us (in lieu of a linear plot) a series of fablelike vignettes. The place is Brazil, the time is now, and, since the nation we're shown is as exemplary a model of a defeatist, hypocritical

**Debt to society**  
Bianchi does Brecht in a gritty little fable from Brazil

class and social system as there ever was, the tone is sardonic.

Bianchi excerpts indicative moments from the lives of our six would-be protagonists—a go-go bourgeois businessman and his philanthropic wife, a professor, a gay immigrant waiter from Poland, the manager of a chic restaurant and its owner—as an acute demonstration of that tried-but-true thing about the personal being political.

Glimpses into Brazil's male prostitution underground and a disastrous fling between the restaurant owner and the waiter is particularly provocative for the queer viewer.

The film has a broader, more didactic style than most of Fassbinder (another post-Brechtian filmmaker), but Bianchi evidently shares Fassbinder's view that sexual liberation in a vacuum, disconnected from other forms of social justice, is half-there and easily exploitable. It's a point executed with trenchant confidence; what we see

is recognizable and frightening. (In a way, this is also a horror film.)

*Chronically Unfeasible* is quasi-documentary sociology as take-no-prisoners satire; it's heartless yet honest, ugly yet spellbinding, unpleasant yet ultimately empathetic. The violence—of the emotional, economic and physical varieties—is posed as a question to the audience, and it's a question that clearly haunts the filmmaker himself. Bianchi's intent is to rob us of any blissful ignorance or oversimplified views we may have, and he's relentlessly successful.

—Christopher McQuain



Sexual liberation disconnected from other forms of social justice is easily exploitable in *Chronically Unfeasible*

**FRIENDS & FAMILY**  
Wolfe Video



Hollywood is full of hybrid comedies, pairing disparate subjects in search of laughs. "She's a nun, he's a punk rocker. They're detectives!"

Now comes the latest in gay hybrid: the odd, sometimes amusing *Friends & Family*. Its premise? Cross *The Sopranos* with *The Birdcage* (or, for older readers, *The Godfather* with *La Cage Aux Folles*).

Stephen (Greg Lauren of *The Wedding Planner*) and Danny (Christopher Gartin) are two erudite Manhattan lovers whose world seems to be picture perfect. To their "friends and family," they're successful caterers, but

their big secret is that they're really hit men for the Mafia.

When Stephen's parents come to the big city to celebrate FBI agent Dad's birthday, the boys must scramble to set up an elaborate dinner party. But to keep their secret life a secret, they must train their goombah Mafia buddies to be fabulous. Cue the stereotypes-on-parade as middle-aged Italian wiseguys learn to prance, flit and flirt. As expected, complications create much chaos, including rival gangsters, drag queens, right-wing militia revolutionaries and more.

For a movie about hit men, *Friends & Family* sidesteps most of the moral questions about Mafioso killers-for-hire. Stephen and Danny are so perfect in their chiseled good looks and sweet home life that viewers aren't supposed to question their illegal actions. Instead, the movie focuses on the wackiness of the current situation, and, while the comedy is solely of the "only in a movie, never in reality" variety, it's effective most of the time.

The cast is filled with familiar B-listers you've seen time and again (especially the Mafia men who've made careers out of variations on the role), creating a comfort zone for the viewer. Joseph Triebwasser's script is at times clever but relies too much on clichés; it also cribs so literally from *La Cage* that it could almost be a funhouse mirror remake. The direction by Kristen Coury (her debut) is barely professional, with the dinner party scenes especially poorly staged.

Which isn't to say that *Friends & Family* isn't worth watching. It's like a plate of Rice Krispie treats—sweet, gummy, overly familiar and perfect to share with...friends and family.

—Andy Mangels

The Joseph Landry Salon

602 SE 38th Ave.  
Portland, OR 97214  
503.231.3922  
Wed - Sat

PAUL MITCHELL

When one of a kind is important...

503-481-1323  
JimDailing@mac.com  
<http://homepage.mac.com/jimdailing/>

Westside Florist

Our professionals will arrange your delivery

Don Duncan owner  
Teleflora

(503) 642-9992  
1-800-356-1884  
Aloha Market Centre  
20455 SW TV Highway  
[www.westsideflorist.net](http://www.westsideflorist.net)

Coventry Cycle Works

Professional Service  
Comfortable Bikes  
Recumbents a Specialty!

(COME SEE WHY!)

Open Tuesday-Sunday  
(503) 230-7723  
2025 SE Hawthorne

Looking for something to do or need that special gift you can't find anywhere else in town?

Well then visit Let's Do Coffee, West Linn's gay owned and operated gourmet coffee and total gift shop. Let's Do Coffee has found some of the most unique, exquisite gifts as well as some of the best greeting cards in town (no, not cards to give your Mom!) Looking for men's skin care that works? We have it! Candles, gourmet foods, local art, jewelry, fun and whimsical gifts, too many great things to list.

Coffee • Pastries • Sandwiches • Quiche • Salads • Gourmet Desserts  
Computers & Internet Access • Cards Candles • Books • Jewelry • Gifts

Free wireless internet access, plus two work stations with internet access free of charge! Stay and relax or get your coffee on the run. Enjoy some of our gourmet pastries, sandwiches, quiche, or salads that are wonderful for lunch or dinner. Delight in an amazing dessert after dinner - we're open late seven nights a week!

let's do Coffee!

19373 SW Willamette Dr.  
West Linn, OR 97068  
503-635-4224  
[www.letsdocoffee.com](http://www.letsdocoffee.com)

Monday - Thursday 5am - 9pm • Friday 5am - 10pm  
Saturday 6am - 10pm • Sunday 7am - 9pm