



We've Come a Long Way, Baby

Gay classics return on DVD

by David Alexander Nahmod

An Early Frost Wolfe DVD

In 1985 *Queer as Folk* creators Ron Cowen and Daniel Lipman gave us this daring, dramatic first, a made-for-TV film about a gay man with AIDS.

Through the years *An Early Frost* has been chastised for whitewashing and romanticizing the horrible plague that killed many in the first post-Stonewall generation of gay men. It might be time to give it a second look.

The film pulls no punches in its tale of young, handsome, semiclosed Michael (Aidan Quinn), whose life will most likely be cut short by his AIDS diagnosis. We see the all-too-harsh realities of the early days of AIDS, the bigotry, the fear, the endless succession of deaths.

Michael and his lover, Peter (D.W. Moffett), struggle to redefine their relationship in the face of the disease, while Michael's parents (the superb Gena Rowlands and Ben Gazzara) simultaneously deal with his diagnosis and his sudden outing. Dad, a homophobic "man's man," must face his own prejudices when an ambulance service refuses to take Michael to the hospital during a frightening late-night seizure.

And Michael, facing mortality in his late 20s, sits helplessly by as his new friends in the hospital disappear one by one.

Although AIDS is no longer an automatic death

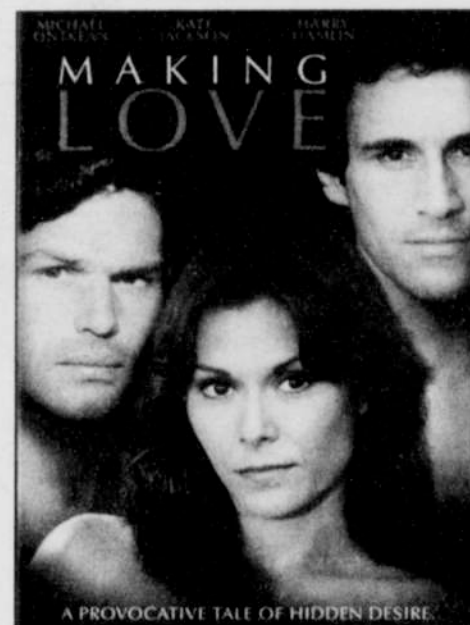
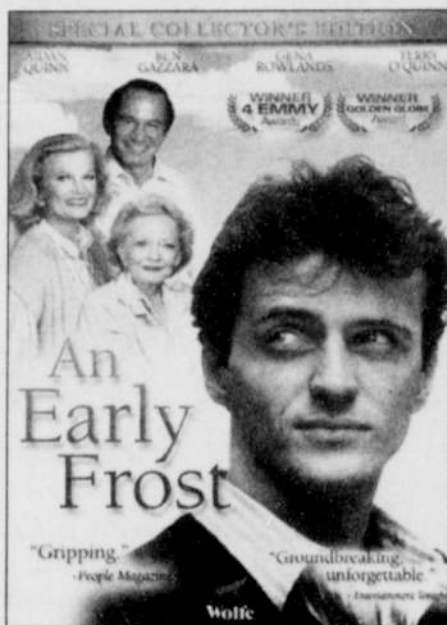
sentence, *An Early Frost* presents what was the reality of AIDS two decades ago. It was a courageous film to make. Beautiful, sad and uplifting, it remains a heartfelt work.

Wolfe Video presents a flawless print of *An Early Frost*. On an insightful commentary track, Cowen, Lipman and Quinn discuss the making of the film, which included many battles with network censors.

Also included is a short documentary. *Living with AIDS* follows the final days of San Francisco AIDS patient Todd Coleman, who died in 1986 at age 22. The film follows his final days, struggling to maintain his dignity, finding pleasure where and when he can and trying to soften the loss of his soon-to-be-bereaved lover. It's a deeply moving tribute to a long-forgotten hero of the AIDS epidemic.

Making Love Fox DVD

Considered a groundbreaker in 1982, this film has not aged as well as *An Early Frost*, although it's better than some would have you believe.



Similar in tone to 1940s "women's pictures," a genre long adored by gay men, *Making Love* is a romantic soap opera about a "happily" married doctor with a secret.

Zack (Michael Ontkean) cruises gay bars but doesn't have the courage to act on his desires—until he meets Bart (Harry Hamlin). The two embark on a passionate love affair while Zack's wife, Claire (Kate Jackson), notices all the "signs." The truth slowly comes out as Zack learns to accept who he really is.

Making Love shocked people in 1982. Director Arthur Hiller was not afraid to show Zack and Bart

in bed, nude and kissing. This took guts on the part of all involved. But Hiller, who directed 1970's infamous *Love Story*, equates drama with orchestral music. Although the script by gay writer Barry Sandler tells a courageous story, Miller's old-Hollywood style makes the film seem campy rather than realistic.

The cast is good. Jackson and Ontkean had played a couple on *The Rookies*, an early 1970s TV series, and have a great onscreen rapport. Ontkean and Hamlin make for a beautiful, sexy couple you want to root for, even though

it's made clear early on that they are not meant for each other.

Although no masterpiece, *Making Love* is worth seeing as the first Hollywood studio film that dared to tell a gay story without backing down from its subject.

Unfortunately, Fox offers no extras other than the film's trailer. A commentary or interviews with the film's three still-active stars would have been nice. **D**

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