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film

Chicago 10

Brett Morgen (*The Kid Stays in the Picture*) furthers his reputation as a bold stylist with this flawed but electrifying documentary about Abbie Hoffman, Black Panther leader Bobby Seale and others who faced trial on charges of inciting riots at the tumultuous 1968 Democratic National Convention. Using archival footage, Morgen skillfully interweaves scenes of peace rallies with devastating images of police brutality. To depict the trial itself, he goes out on a limb with mixed results, employing motion-capture animation that's alternately hallucinogenic and hokey. Nick Nolte, Hank Azaria, Mark Ruffalo and the late Roy Scheider provide their vocal talents. **A-**

—Stephen Blair

Dog Day Afternoon

Originally released in 1975, *Dog Day Afternoon* showcases both director Sidney Lumet and star Al Pacino at the peak of their artistry. Based on the true story of a bank robber turned unlikely underdog hero named Sonny, the film is a flat-out

writer Frank Pierson mine the film's scenario for every vein of dramatic richness. By the end, we feel that we intimately know Sonny, his partner in crime, the police hostage negotiator with whom they end up in a standoff and the dozen or so employee hostages.

Sonny is a somewhat down-and-out, working-class Vietnam vet who's desperate because he can't afford to pay for his male-to-female partner's sex reassignment surgery. His occasionally funny ineptitude is ultimately touching; he's not a career criminal, but he complicates the robbery just as often through his humaneness toward his hostages as he does through his lack of experience. The character is so well drawn and played that Lumet and Pierson don't have to make any special case for Sonny's being human; the film just lets us experience his humanity and that of those around him, even in their moments of greatest conflict.

Dog Day Afternoon is now playing in high definition at Living Room Theaters, and there's every reason to catch it if you can. If you've already seen it, you'll better appreciate the film's superb gritty-naturalist feel on the big screen. And if you haven't, well, you're in for a treat. **A+**

—Christopher McQuain



The 1975 classic *Dog Day Afternoon* had a rare understanding of the ideals of gay liberation.

classic, cinematically speaking, and it offers the added pleasure of its almost unbelievably progressive attitude regarding its queer characters. In fact, mainstream American cinema has rarely been so queer-friendly, even in the years since; this film, released only a few years after the Stonewall riots, was a hit with a major star that had a rare understanding of the ideals of gay liberation.

Dog Day Afternoon also demonstrates the relative artistic freedom of its time; not for nothing is the 1970s still thought of as America's last (and perhaps final) golden age of cinema. The film is riveting, but it isn't afraid to slow down in order to gain some depth and traction; Lumet and screen-

Praying with Lior

It feels like bad karma to denigrate a film whose protagonist is a 12-year-old boy with Down syndrome who lost his mother at age 6, but the fact is *Praying with Lior* is basically a compilation of glorified home movie footage. Lior Liebling, who jokes that he has "Up syndrome," is a cute and funny Jewish kid who loves to pray. The opinions of his family members vary from considering him a public embarrassment

to thinking he is "closer to God" than anyone else. His developmental disability is viewed as possibly a divine gift by Lior's zealously religious father, who drills him on the wisdom of the Torah and leads him to believe the Messiah will appear at his bar mitzvah. Closes March 23 at Hollywood Theatre. **C+**

—Tony LeTigre

Stop-Loss

Nine years after her impressive debut feature film, *Boys Don't Cry*, queer writer/director Kimberly Peirce returns with this searing yet humane indictment of the war in Iraq. Ryan Phillippe is

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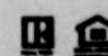
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