

cial circles and whose boutique was the center of Tel Aviv style. He died in 1990; the story of his fascinating, complicated life is told here through archival footage and present-day interviews with his family, friends and longtime partner, Eliezer Rath.

Braun and Rath were a couple for almost 40 years, but those years were far from serene. Braun was married to a woman when he picked up Rath, who was waiting his table. He evidently never stopped treating him like a waiter, and he seems to have had an ongoing harem of boyfriends besides Rath, who was perhaps the only one who would stay with Braun through his endless philandering. Rath—a likable, soft-spoken man in the present-day interview portions—recalls his partner in an obviously rose-colored way, but the cumulative recollections in the film cast Braun as a demanding, temperamental elitist who liked to be at the center of attention in the finest restaurants, surrounded by the most beautiful people. His relationship with the tolerant-to-the-point-of-masochistic Rath resembles the one between Joe Orton and Kenneth Halliwell in *Prick Up Your Ears*: One is a talented narcissist, comfortable at the center of attention; the other is an awkward, unsocial, unglamorous enabler willing to live in a shadow and give until it hurts.

After Braun's death, Rath inherited everything, to Braun's family's hurt astonishment. Their disappointment, along with Rath's long-suffering love, informs the rueful, discordant back-and-forth of the film's often contradicting interviews. Both sides come off as absolutely justified in their feelings. But from our perspective outside the situ-

ation, the clearest truth documented by the film is that Braun was an extraordinarily charismatic man, a star—and that the closer one gets to a star, the easier it is to get burned.

Jam!

A roller derby revival documentary by Mike Woollen, *Jam!* (9 p.m. June 30) confirms the eccentricity of this long-lost "sport," which still retains some hardcore fans. The film also demonstrates that a unique personality—at least a little crazy, maybe even a little desperate—is necessary when trying, against formidable odds, to resuscitate a fad that disappeared almost three decades ago.

The quixotic drive to get roller derby back on television (it attracted millions of viewers in its heyday) is spearheaded by Tim Patten, a gay man living in San Francisco. He pours hundreds of thousands of dollars of his own money into the project while dealing with the headaches of wrangling the sometimes shady and frequently unstable characters involved. Patten and his group represent a spectrum of the marginalized—people of every sexual orientation, people with HIV/AIDS and racial minorities, all of whom have complicated employment, financial and relationship situations—who seem to have found a refuge in their sport.

Patten is a mild-mannered guy who says surprising things: "The interesting thing about Alfonso is, he'll beat the shit out of anyone," or "People love racial conflict," or "Television is gonna get pimp-slapped by the Internet." Hence

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Fanning the Flames of Faggotry

When did you know you were gay? That's the simple premise of Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato's engaging Cinemax documentary *When I Knew*, based on Robert Trachtenberg's book of the same title. This time the pair responsible for *The Eyes of Tammy Faye*, *Party Monster* and *Inside Deep Throat* focuses not on celebrities but on ordinary people. They asked 150 everyday queers about the moment they realized they were, in Barbato's words, "radically and unacceptably different from their friends and family."



When I Knew asks 150 everyday queers about the moment they realized they were gay.

Premiering 4:30 p.m. June 25 on Cinemax, *When I Knew* shows the drastically different effects this realization can have from person to person. That isn't surprising in itself, but there's a specificity to each situation as the speaker recounts it that makes it memorable. One man laughs as he traces his gay feelings back to age 5, when he had "a very funny feeling" watching hunky Grizzly Adams in the 1970s TV show. That's when his bear fixation happened, too. Pop culture imagery was a powerful influence in the emotional lives of many of the interviewees, and not always positively. In an early version of reparative therapy, Sean remembers trying to go straight by staring at a Farrah Fawcett poster. Lisa recalls being in love with her classmate Wendy and associating her crush with the giddy 1960s pop song "Windy." The filmmakers cleverly illustrate each speaker's situation with whimsical and dramatic imagery, from television clips to psychedelic effects.

For some of the subjects, the memories are more quirky than traumatic. "Cynthia," replied one mother to her dyke daughter, "I already know. And I want to watch this TV show!" Sometimes a parent surprises his gay child, as when one father shelves the football game in favor of picking flowers with his son. Inevitably, though, some of the memories here are ugly indeed, as queer kids who cannot keep their secret face disdain, disgust and even outright banishment from the family.

Happily, though, there are plenty of balancing lighter moments in *When I Knew*. One dyke says, "I was a stud from Day One!" Another reveals, "I realized I was a lesbian, and I was so relieved." Then there are the unrepentant queers like Chris, 20, who show us a joyful future by celebrating what the reactionaries, whose numbers are shrinking, revile: "I'm Liberace gay," he proclaims. "Flames of faggotry seem to emit from my pores!"

—Gary Morris

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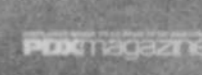
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