



8: The Mormon Proposition

ven Greenstreet and narrated by Lance Dustin Black, screenwriter of *Milk*. The film opens with an endearing gay couple getting married during San Francisco's historic registration, and revisits them on the emotional roller-coaster ride that follows. Cowan and Greenstreet meticulously document the schemes of the Mormon Church in helping to pass Prop. 8, while showing the human cost of Mormon bigotry on families, individuals and society.

The litany of deceptions at work is quite extraordinary, from the church's setting up a phony organization through which to funnel money, to a massive ad campaign filled with lies, to downright extortion as pastors visit parishioners at home and say, "Based on your finances, this is what you can afford to give," and wait for the check. The film clearly links Mormon activities to gay teen suicides, and in a heartwrenching moment, follows a group of homeless Utah teens as they go "home" to a filthy building—abandoned, as they were. The only flaw in the film is that it fails to mention the shortcomings of the anti-Prop. 8 campaign, viewed by many observers as incompetent. Ultimately, though, *8: The Mormon Proposition* is a must-see for anyone interested in understanding why gay marriage was killed in California, and the true nature of the forces we're up against.

The second entry on this bill is a more celebratory one, a 43-minute profile of the International Drag King Extravaganza (IDKE), which began in 1999 in Columbus, Ohio, of all

places. Looking back gives the participants a chance to wax poetic on the peculiar pleasures of "male impersonation." Commentators with whimsical names like Flare, Carlos Las Vegas, Dainty Box and others are seen burlesquing such male stereotypes as a "Big Papa" good ol' boy and a nerdy teenaged boy. The film shows the DK world as an ever-changing locus for the most expansive gender play as these inventive "genderfuckers" include even "femme" male riffs in their repertoires.

Accompanying this show is *Stormé: Lady of the Jewel Box Revue*. African-American Stormé DeLarverie was the only male impersonator at the legendary New York drag club that inspired *La Cage aux Folles*. Archival footage and photos depict this striking performer at work—unlike many gender performers, she did her own singing—and as she is today, working as a bouncer. Expert commentators such as Lambda Award winner Joan Nestle offer context. The theme of authentic selfhood runs throughout this enticing 21-minute portrait. As DeLarverie says, "All I had to do was be me."

Saturday's lineup begins with another uncompromising black diva. *Unsung: Sylvester* is a brisk biography of the disco queen whose "Mighty Real" burned up the dance charts back in the day. Sylvester, born in 1947, is shown here in multiple guises—budding gospel singer, disco goddess, Cockette, "Paris chanteuse," even "Snake Woman" (to fevered Brazilian fans)—but is always recognizable for his glamorous getups and soaring falsetto. The portrait is fair-minded, not sparing us Sylvester's occasional shallowness ("I wouldn't get out of the car until someone opened it for me"), and friends and fellow artists weigh in on the strange magic that made up this character, who died of

AIDS in 1988 at age 41.

Next up is *Edie and Thea: A Very Long Engagement*, a funny, moving love story about two women who met during the closet days of the early 1960s and stayed together for more than 40 years, until Thea's death in 2009. These women's histories individually and as a pair, parallels that of the gay liberation movement. We see them in all its phases: dancing furtively in secret gay bars in the 1950s, flirting with therapy to "go straight," marching for gay rights in the 1970s, attempting to resolve the rift between feminism and lesbianism. Best of all, though, are the dynamic personalities that emerge. Edie and Thea's intelligence and crackling humor, well displayed here, must have helped them survive the difficult times. They're also refreshingly upfront in talking about sex, particularly the adaptations and compromises they've had to make as they age. In a characteristic moment, Thea reminisces wistfully about the sight of young Edie in a tight sweater: "She had a lot of action inside!" They leave the viewer with a simple, irrefutable message: "Don't postpone joy."

Equally powerful is Yony Leyser's *William S. Burroughs: A Man Within*. It's hard to believe Leyser is only 25, so finely crafted is this documentary (which took 5 years to make). Burroughs is an especially tricky subject. Widely considered the "godfather of punk," as well as a pioneer of queer, Beat and junkie culture, he seems too soft-spoken, too inward-looking to be a trailblazer. Despite the wild creativity (he's responsible for the phrases "soft machine," "heavy metal" and "blade runner") and expansiveness we see in his novels like *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs appears repressed, paranoid, rigidly unemotional, perhaps self-hating—more



William S. Burroughs: A Man Within

Even when sleeping with the rent boys who were his common choice, Burroughs kept a loaded gun under his blanket.

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QDOC: The Fourth Annual Portland Queer Documentary Film Festival

Thursday, June 3

- 7:30PM *Forever's Gonna Start Tonight* (USA, 54 min.), screening with *Get Happy* (USA, 25 min.). *Forever's* director Michelle Lawler and Vicki Marlane will be in attendance.
- 9:00PM Opening Night Party at Savoy Tavern & Bistro and Broder, 2500 SE Clinton. Tickets, including film admission, are \$20.

Friday, June 4

- 7:00PM *8: The Mormon Proposition* (USA, 80 min.) Director Reed Cowan in attendance.
- 9:00PM *A Drag King Extravaganza* (Canada, 43 min.), screening with *Stormé: Lady of the Jewel Box* (USA, 21 min.)

Saturday, June 5

- 1:30PM *Unsung: Sylvester* (USA, 48 min.), screening with *Sylvester: Mighty Real* (USA, 4 min.)
- 4:00PM *Edie & Thea: A Very Long Engagement* (USA, 61 min.). Directors Susan Muska and Gréta Ólafsdóttir in attendance.
- 6:00PM *William S. Burroughs: A Man Within* (USA, 90 min.)
- 8:30PM *Le Tigre: On Tour* (USA, 73 min.). Director Kerthy Fix in attendance.

Sunday, June 6

- 12:00PM Special Sneak Preview (USA, approx. 90 min.). Filmmakers in attendance.
- 3:00PM *Other Nature* (Nepal/USA, 57 min.)
- 4:45PM *Out in the Silence* (USA, 57 min.)
- 7:00PM *Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls* (New Zealand, 84 min.). Jools and Lynda Topp and producer Arani Cuthbert will be in attendance.

QDoc is held at the Clinton Street Theater, 2522 SE Clinton St. General admission tickets are \$8; students and seniors are \$6, and festival passes are \$75.

PATIO IS OPEN! Happy Hour: 4:30-6:30 weekdays
 Breakfast & Lunch 6 days a week 9AM - 2PM, Dinner weekdays from 4:30 and Sat./Sun. from 5:30
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