

Now and Lens

Checking in with this year's QDoc curators

BY GARY KRAMER

For its fifth year of programming, QDoc co-founder Russ Gage curated the lineup—marked by films about queer politics and history, coming out, gender reassignment and music—with the assistance of Jennifer Morris. *Just Out* chatted with the curators about what they think you will want to watch.

Just Out: What is your criteria for selecting a film?

Russ Gage: I think a film that speaks to the issues of importance to the LGBT community, and a film that will encourage further discussion on the topic. It should also leave people with a feeling of satisfaction and be entertaining as well as enlightening.

Jennifer Morris: Is it a powerful story? With only 11 slots, you have to think of your audience. It's about the films and filmmakers, but it's also about wanting to provide stories your audience will embrace, and encouraging them to explore and see new films.

JO: So what films do you think audiences will embrace, and what films should they explore this year?

JM: Embrace: *Arias with a Twist*, and the artistry of Joey Arias and Basil Twist. What they've done is eye opening. Explore: *Hit So Hard*. It gets into who Patty Schemel is and [her] whole experience. These people are older now and they really reflect on it. It explains

that time and that group of people, and how they influenced music.

RG: Embrace: *I Am*. I think that's a really powerful, personal story and it has this universal appeal. It's the PFLAG film for

India. [Director Sonali Gulati] interviews all these families in India about their coming out process—both gay people and their parents. They are very valuable and very timely. Explore: *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye*, a very beautifully made film. I wasn't a huge Throbbing Gristle fan, and I was not expecting how incredibly playful Genesis was. [Director Marie Losier] was the right person to follow Genesis around, because she was so experimental, and Genesis was into that.

JO: What can you say about QDoc's political films and how filmmakers chronicle social issues?

RG: Queer film has been political for decades.

Curator's Pick: Patty Schemel in *Hit So Hard*



Inspired: *Voices Against Prop 8* is about a topical subject that was created immediately. I think what struck me was all of the footage around the demonstrations and what amazing spirit was shown in terms of

people's reactions to Prop 8.

JM: What's wonderful about *On These Shoulders We Stand* is the people have fantastic stories that resonate. You can connect with these people. The politics and drama is all there but it's all about the people.


JO: QDoc also has two films about gender reassignment—*The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye* and *Becoming Chaz*. Do you think they will cannibalize audiences?

RG: Some people will love *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye* and others will love *Becoming Chaz*. Our job is to connect the right audiences with the right films—to reach out to the viewers who will appreciate them. I don't think the same

audience will love both films, but they are not mutually exclusive; there will be plenty of crossover. These are different films made by different filmmakers. Marie Losier [*Genesis*] makes artistic profiles of individuals, and Randy Barbato and Fenton Bailey [*Chaz*] are much more pop oriented and down with what's happening in TV and indie film.

JM: The two films are very different. *Chaz* is a straight-up doc. He was brave and nice to invite the directors to film this journey he was going on. *Ballad* is much more experimental, and the process of transitioning that they are going through is very different. The audience for *Genesis* will be folks who know who Genesis is and his music, and their cultural world.

JO: Do you think it is worthwhile to show a mediocre film about an important topic, if for no other reason than to start a conversation?

JM: The characters can shine through a mediocre film. It is important for issues that don't get much attention, especially in the LGBT community. It's important up to a point. If people can connect to what's happening, it's okay if the production values aren't the greatest. I think the queer film audience is very sophisticated. I think a lot of the documentary filmmakers don't always take into consideration how sophisticated queer audiences are. They are much more preachy and not as in depth or complex. The politics takes over, and you miss the real story. 

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