

Screen and Heard

Portland Lesbian and Gay Film Festival marks 15th year with first-rate lineup of diverse film fare

The LGBT community has come a long, loud and proud way over the last 15 years, so it's no surprise that the screen offerings presented by the Portland Lesbian and Gay Film Festival have followed suit.

PLGFF artistic director Gabriel Mendoza calls the 2011 crop of films, set for September 30–October 8 at Cinema 21, “overwhelmingly more sophisticated” than in previous years. “Queer filmmaking is not as niche as it used to be and audiences are hungry for more than coming out stories,” he explains.

Still, some things remain the same. “Our goal each year is to program the highest quality films we can get,” explains Mendoza, now in his 12th year with the event. “Our decisions are not necessarily based on politics or even social merit but aesthetics,” he says, adding that fest organizers strive for a schedule that represents the full LGBT spectrum.

The nine-day lineup kicks off with what Mendoza believes is the best opening night film in the fest's history. *We Were Here*, Portland director David Weissman's latest, is a searing but hopeful portrait of the AIDS crisis in 1980s San Francisco, and the disease's impact on the queer community.

Weissman—who co-helmed 2002's *The Cockettes* and is a co-founder and curator of fellow local film fest QDoc—will be in attendance at the September 30 screening, followed by a party at 23Hoyt featuring a performance by Holcombe Waller (who scored the film).

Mendoza is especially excited about three films that address gender identity: *Gun Hill Road*, a drama set in the Bronx about a father who returns home from prison to find his son considering gender reassignment; *Tomboy*, a French film about a 10-year-old girl who spends her summer pretending to be a boy; and *Romeos*, an outstanding Ger-

man entry about an FTM young adult.

Of the latter, Mendoza raves, “This film really captures some of the pathos and angst of dealing with hormone shots while trying to navigate one's way in the world. It's also very romantic.” Additionally, he gives props to *Weekend* and *August* for their intimate, fresh glimpses at relationships.

Elsewhere, films span the country (*Hollywood to Dollywood*) and the globe (along

with *Tomboy* and *Romeos*, Icelandic import *Jitters*), tapping genres from broad comedy (the star-studded *Mangus!*) to stately period piece (a British adaptation of Sarah Waters' novel *The Night Watch*) to B-movie camp (*Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same*). And if *Twilight: Breaking Dawn* is a bit too far off on your horizon, PLGFF 2011 even has vampires, thanks to the gay hitchhikers-meet-coffin-carrying trucker-meet-blood-

suckers setup of *Bite Marks*.

Sophisticated cinema? Hungry audiences? Check and check. See you at the movies.

The 15th Annual Portland Lesbian and Gay Film Festival runs Fri., Sept. 30–Sat., Oct. 8. Screenings take place at Cinema 21, 616 NW 21st Ave. For more information, visit plgff.org.

—AMANDA SCHURR

PLGFF AT A GLANCE

Fri., Sept. 30

7:30 p.m. *We Were Here*, USA, 90 min. Director David Weissman in attendance.

10:00 p.m. Opening Night Gala Party at 23 Hoyt, 529 NW 23rd.

Sat., Oct. 1

5:00 p.m. *Girl Shorts*. Titles to be announced.

7:00 p.m. *Hollywood to Dollywood*, USA, 79 min., directed by John Lavin. Subjects Gary and Larry Lane in attendance.

9:30 p.m. *Kink Crusaders*, USA, 74 min., directed by Mike Skiff.

Sun., Oct. 2

5:00 p.m. *Romeos*, Germany (subtitled), 94 min., directed by Sabine Bernardi. A superbly acted drama about Lukas—né Miriam—and the realities of his transition on his best friend, family and a new crush. Visit blogout.justout.com for a full review.

7:00 p.m. *Weekend*, UK, 96 min., directed by Andrew Haigh.

Mon., Oct. 3

7:00 p.m. *Trigger*, USA, 83 min., directed by Bruce McDonald. Childhood friends and lesbian rockers consider their history as a benefit concert looms.

9:00 p.m. *Going Down In LA LA Land*, USA, 105 min., directed by Casper Andreas.

Tues., Oct. 4

7:00 p.m. *Jessie and Jamie Are Not Together*, USA, 89 min., directed by Wendy Jo Carlton. A musical romantic comedy about two codependent queer girls, one with Broadway aspirations.

9:00 p.m. *Harvest*, Germany (subtitled), 88 min., directed by Benjamin Cantu.

Wed., Oct. 5

7:00 p.m. *Tomboy*, France (subtitled), 82 min., directed by Celine Sciamma. A preteen girl is mistaken for a boy and opts to live that way for a fateful summer, until the school year approaches.

9:00 p.m. *Mangus!*, USA, 88 min., directed by Ash Christian. Jennifer Coolidge, John Waters and Heather Matarazzo appear in this quirky tale of a quirkier community theater production, *Jesus Christ Spectacular* (yep).

Thurs., Oct. 6

7:00 p.m. *Gun Hill Road*, USA, 88 min., directed by Rasheed Ernesto Green.

9:00 p.m. *August*, USA, 100 min., directed by Eldar Rapaport.

Fri., Oct. 7

7:00 p.m. *Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same*, USA, 70 min., directed by Madeleine Olnek.

9:00 p.m. *Bite Marks* w/shorts *Regrets* and *Candy*, USA, 84 min., *Bite Marks* director Mark Bessenger in attendance. Vampires, a hitchhiking gay couple and GPS gone wrong—so very now.

Sat., Oct. 8

5:30 p.m. *Jitters*, Iceland (subtitled), 97 min., directed by Baldvin Z.

7:30 p.m. *The Night Watch*, UK, 90 min., directed by Richard Laxton. A BBC adaptation of Sarah Waters' novel about young Londoners during World War II.

Admission to Friday's opening night film, *We Were Here*, is \$12, \$25 including screening and party. General fest admission is \$9 per ticket. Voucher packets of 8 are \$69, a general festival pass (excluding opening night film and party) is \$85, and a platinum pass ensuring entrance to all screenings and events with no wait in line is \$145.

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