



Cloudburst



I Want Your Love



Keep The Lights On



Mosquitay

PDX LESBIAN AND GAY FILM FESTIVAL

MOVING FORWARD

The Portland Lesbian and Gay Film Festival may not be one of the most famous, but its 16 years in existence has been well attended and diverse. It started 20 years ago when the (straight) owner of Cinema 21, Tom Ranieri, wanted to showcase LGBT film in his hip Northwest neighborhood theater. He quickly worked on recruiting queer organizers and Gabriel Mendoza came on board for the first official festival 16 years ago. When I sat down with Mendoza to talk about this year's films and the changing shape of a festival audience he seemed unsure about the continued relevance and success of gay-themed film festivals, but to me the Portland DIY spirit makes ours uniquely worth attending.

The changing entertainment landscape has seen more of us downloading movies in our homes rather than attending art house singleplexes. But, you can't get the same level of interaction with Netflix. The energy of going to a 500 person theater filled with other queers

who may laugh or throw popcorn at the screen at the same time is powerful and you have the opportunity to socialize and discuss the films at either the opening or closing night parties.

Indeed, Mendoza has always prioritized quality in the movies they choose to show, but is keen to make sure they continue to also be socially and politically challenging as we move forward. This is one reason the festival is moving towards a new name. It began as a completely unmarketable alphabet soup that had to be rebranded as the Portland Lesbian and Gay Film Festival to have any marketability. And although it won't technically be changing its name until next year, they are beginning to rebrand once again as the Portland Queer Film Festival. "It should have been that for years," Mendoza says, "but people were afraid of the word 'queer' so we had to go with 'gay and lesbian' even though some folks felt ostracized by it. It almost seems silly now that we have a 'queer' center; it's so mainstream ... but we've even talked about [the importance of having] a queer sensibility as well."

This sensibility has become the norm, and things that may have shocked audiences just a few years ago are almost commonplace. Travis Mathew's *I Want Your Love*, though not pornography, does show explicit sex. This seemed a big deal when John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus* was here in 2006 but the same level of gossip and controversy is certainly not expected for *Love* although discussions about why Mathews chose to show real life sex and what impact that has on the story are already taking place. It certainly gives it a documentary, or at least true-to-life quality that Mendoza characterizes as also very Portland. It takes place in San Francisco but "... feels like they filmed a night at a party in Northeast ... It has a weird authenticity." Indeed, you're likely to recognize a familiar face in local actor/performer/artist Wayne Bund, aka drag bear Feyonce. He, along with Ferrin Solano,