

Dallas VOICE

The Community Newspaper For Gay & Lesbian Dallas

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SCREEN - Keeping it real

OUT TAKES kicks off year 7, casts wide net to focus on 'realistic' films

With 71 films and 48 screenings, the 2005 OUT TAKES Dallas film festival has a lot to offer. With so many programs, it almost has no choice. Included in the 10-day festival, held at Landmark's Magnolia Theater, are a vast tapestry of modern queer experiences: elderly closet cases, lesbian moms, neurotic gay dudes, hottie studs, Iranian dykes and a Dallas-made feature about a gay bashing, fundamentalists and retribution.

This year, organizers announced the year's theme, "Reel World: Real Life," encapsulates that grand celluloid dichotomy: Should films be realistic or should the stories represent a vision that gays and lesbians should aspire to? What's interesting is that the Dallas gay film fest coincides with the November election, when Texas voters will decide on a constitutional ban for same-sex marriages. So next month, gays in Texas will find out how far apart realism and idealism are.

The following are reviews for OUT TAKES' first weekend, Nov. 4 through Nov. 6. Dallas Voice will continue coverage on the festival for the next two weeks.

Landmark's Magnolia, 3699 E. McKinney Ave. Tickets: all 5 p.m. screenings Monday-Friday, \$5; Monday-Thursday and Sunday screenings, \$9; Friday, Saturday and closing film, \$10. For a complete schedule, check outtakesdallas.org. 972-988-6333.

"29th & Gay"
James Sanchez (writer James Vasquez) has a birthday (see title) and



HAPPY BIRTHDAY: "29th and Gay" laughs about being queer and entering the third decade.



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an orientation (ditto). He's an average guy who resembles most of us more than we'll admit. And we'd be better off with someone like him than the guys we do go after.

He has a job (tourguide), but his career (acting) is going nowhere. He has two loving parents and two best friends: Roxy (Nicole Marcks), "straight girl and former roommate," and Brandon (David McBean), "gay boy and faithful sidekick."

"29th and Gay" is about James' 30th year, as he tries to get his life on track. He stalks a coffee shop waiter (Brian Doyle) and buys a computer to see if it's easier to meet men online than in bars.

Actress Carrie Preston ("Straight-Jacket") directed "29th and Gay" with a lot of gimmicks, some as cute as she thinks they are. But it's Vasquez' film, falling or (mostly) rising on the strength of his winning personality. You'll laugh and cry with him and leave the theater refreshed and ready to straighten out your life.

Reality isn't always as sweet or simple as it looks in "29th and Gay," but movies like this make us realize it can be.

Grade: C+

Nov. 4 at 7 p.m.

"Slutty Summer"

Here's the East Coast Chapter of the "The Broken Hearts Club" in a breezy romantic dramedy.

Markus (Casper Andreas) catches his long-term partner cheating and, unable to finish his novel, takes a summer job waiting tables where his best friend, Marilyn (Virginia Bryan) works.

The waitstaff includes Luke (Jesse Archer), a flamboyant party boy; inexperienced Peter (Jeffery Todd), who is saving himself for a serious relationship; and brooding Tyler (Jamie Hatchett), who gets plenty of sex but doesn't "do relationships." Four fags and a hag — consider the possibilities.

Markus and Tyler quickly hook up, becoming more than fuck buddies but less than boyfriends. Peter and Marilyn search the Internet for love and Luke

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has the sluttiest summer of all.

Besides playing the lead — a bland, passive character that doesn't require a lot of acting — Andreas wrote, directed and edited "Slutty Summer." If director of photography Jon Fordham deserves credit for the film's look, Andreas had the good sense to hire him and assembled his footage nicely.

There's enough intelligent dialogue mixed with the gay banter to raise "Slutty Summer" above the category its title suggests, while some softcore sexual montages should stave off accusations of false advertising.

Grade: C+

Nov. 4 at 11:10 p.m.

"When I'm Sixty-Four"

Tender, tasteful and touching, this BBC drama shows it's never too late to come out.

Two very different men find themselves, in their mid-sixties, lonely for very different reasons.

Jim (Alun Armstrong) has spent his life in a public (i.e., boarding) school, as a student and later a teacher. Retiring at 65 he lists the things he wants to do: 1) See the world; and 2) Fall in love.

Ray (Paul Freeman) is a working-class widower and unreformed hooligan with two grown children who take advantage of him for babysitting.

Seeing Jim's to-do list touches Ray as circumstances bring them together enough that they become friends. Each has repressed his homosexuality in his own way all his life, but their progress toward intimacy comes with surprising naturalness, setting the stage for geezer porn. Only a few wrinkle queens will be disappointed when the film doesn't go too far in this direction.

Director Jon Jones tells the story efficiently but unobtrusively, keeping your attention on the actors, not himself. The accents take some getting used to for American ears at first, but it's nothing like what Ray and Jim have to get used to — losing their gay virginity at their age!

Grade: C+

Nov. 5 at 2:15 p.m.

"Unveiled"

Jasmin Tabatabai, who could be Shoreh Aghdashloo's younger sister, stars as Fariba Tabrizi. Leaving Iranian airspace she ditches her headscarf, but she'll don even more restrictive apparel when she has to bind her chest to pass as a man.

Fariba is fleeing Iran because her lover's husband turned her in. In Germany, she applies for political asylum but is ordered deported. When Siamak, a fellow refugee commits suicide, Fariba cuts her beautiful hair to assume his identity and is given temporary resident status.

Working in a factory, she meets Anne (Anneke Kim Sarnau), a single mother who shows a small German town can be as oppressive for a woman as Iran. On a virtual dare, Anne asks the shy "Siamak" out. And in true "Yentl" fashion, the women fall in love as director and co-writer Angelina Maccarone delays the unveiling as long as possible.

For most of its length, "Unveiled" is easy to follow if hard to believe. Maccarone keeps the tone light enough that we're willing to suspend disbelief and enjoy the work of the fine lead actresses.

"Unveiled" isn't a bad film but the unclear ending, which might have swung the pendulum either way, is less than satisfying.

Grade: C+

Nov. 5 at 6:30 p.m.

"Hate Crime"

It's about a gay accountant, but Dallas-made "Hate Crime" isn't a by-the-numbers drama. Part gay love story, part mystery, part police procedural, part vigilante action and part trashy melodrama, "Hate Crime" is all good, though some parts are better than others.

Robbie (Seth Peterson) and Trey (Brian J. Smith) are poster boys for same-sex marriage. Robbie, a C.P.A., is satisfied with the status quo. Trey, the emotional, romantic works in his father's veterinary practice. He's convinced Robbie, after six years, to

have a commitment ceremony, and is pushing to expand their family.

Tension erupts and Trey is bashed in the park. We already dislike their new next-door neighbor, Chris Boyd (Chad Donella), the son of Pastor Boyd (Bruce Davison), who preaches hellfire and damnation to the good Christians of West Dell Bible Church.

With Trey in a coma Robbie, frustrated by police inaction, does foolish things that make him a suspect. Eventually, Robbie gets his gun.

Writer-director Tommy Stovall has made a remarkable first feature, blending genres seamlessly with minimal political preaching. The actors his script attracted attest to its power.

"Hate Crime" will make you laugh, cry and go online to shop for a bomb capable of wiping Big D off the map.

Grade: B

Nov. 5 at 8:40 p.m.

"Gay Sex in the 70s"

Now in their 50s and 60s, the men interviewed in "Gay Sex in the 70s" have happy memories of the sex they had between Stonewall and AIDS, the period Joseph Lovett's film spans.

We hear a little about the pre-Stonewall era and a little about AIDS, but most of the film is about what we did and where we did it. Even an unhappy ending can't dispel the overall impression of millions of Alices in a sexual Wonderland.

One drawback is that the film is totally New York-centric. Wherever they came from, the speakers all wound up in Manhattan during the Golden Age of Sexual Freedom. With cronyism worthy of the Bush administration, Lovett draws on his friends for testimony. Photographers, artists and pornographers take care of the film's visual aspects. Doctors supply technical information. And a shockingly mild Larry Kramer must have been heavily edited and/or sedated during his interviews.

Still photos excellently convey a sense of the time, place and what went on, while the porn clips add atmosphere but won't boost catalog sales for the production company.

“Gay Sex in the 70s” is clear in its focus. What it chooses to cover, it covers well.

Grade: B

Nov. 5 at 11 p.m.

“Little Man”

Nicole Conn has grown tremendously as a filmmaker since her lesbian romance “Claire of the Moon.”

“Little man” is so personal, Conn makes Michael Moore look like an impartial observer. It’s easy to get it wrong when you’re so close, but she’s gotten it exactly right.

Ordinarily, I’m not interested in children until they’re capable of intelligent conversation. So why would I care about one who’s born a hundred days early, weighing less than a pound? I had to force myself to watch this film, but then I was mesmerized by it.

Conn’s partner, Gwen Baba carried their first child. They hired a surrogate when they wanted another. Nicholas had to be born in the 25th week to save the mother’s life, and his every day of survival is a victory over incredible odds. Nicole stays in the hospital with him for 158 days, until he goes home. Both situations strain her relationship with Gwen.

Even Nicole — at times Nicholas’ only advocate — sometimes questions whether his quality of life will ever justify the suffering he’s going through.

The gender of Nicholas’ parents never becomes an issue, and only a really twisted individual (e.g., a Florida legislator) could say it should.

Grade: B+

Nov. 6 at 2:40 p.m.



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