

Dallas VOICE

The Community Newspaper For Gay & Lesbian Dallas

- NEWS
- LIFESTYLES
- CLASSIFIEDS
- DIRECTORIES
- ARCHIVES
- ADVERTISING
- CONTACT US

SCREEN

By Steve Warren

Contributing Film Critic

The following reviews are of films included in the 2005 Out Takes Dallas film festival. The festival runs from Nov. 4 to Nov. 13. Reviews for the final weekend, Nov. 11 to Nov. 13 will be included in next week's issue of Dallas Voice.

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.com

"100% Woman"

In the biggest surprise of "100% Woman," transsexual trailblazer Michelle Dumaresq is advised by Renee Richards, who was in a similar situation a generation ago, to stop competing in women's sports. While Richards' courage in her day may have made things easier for Dumaresq, Karen Duthie's film shows it's still no picnic.

Six years after surgery, Dumaresq is approved by the Canadian Cycling Association to compete in the women's division in downhill mountain bike racing. After her first win, some other bikers circulate a petition to disqualify her on the grounds that — among other things — Michelle is still male "on a cellular level."

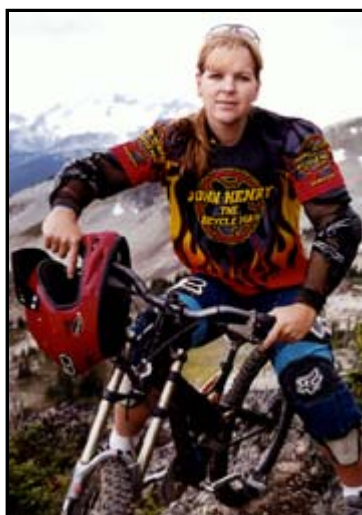
Despite scientific evidence that hormones have eliminated any physical advantage she may have had, the protests continue. Some protesters come off as sore losers, while others seem to be making a sincere, if unsuccessful effort to understand. One racer who's sympathetic is America's Missy Giove, an out lesbian Dumaresq meets at the World Cup.

Grade: B

Nov. 5 at noon. Screen as part of the "Gender Outside the Lines" short films program.

"We Are Dad"

Having been born without the parenting gene, I have little interest in documentaries about queer couples who choose to raise children. But I can appreciate a good one, and Michel Horvath's "We Are Dad" is one of the better ones on the subject.



Switching gears: "100% Woman" follows the ups and downs of Michelle Dumaresq, a transgender professional downhill mountain bike racer.

Cathedral |
join UC

DOSSIER
top marriaq

Maxey enci

Name cha
Social S

Promine
jc

Side 2

Spending

UTA studer

VIEWPI

Alaska's
gay
receive ;
othe

Bush pick
impeccat
for Sup

Embattled
'I wish |

Halloweer
to streets i

MCC chan

Steven Lofton and Roger Croteau — one of three couples rejected by the Florida Supreme Court in their attempt to overturn the state's law against gay adoption — make excellent poster boys for the cause.

Together nearly two decades, they met in nursing school and were working in pediatric AIDS at Jackson Memorial Hospital when their first foster child came along. Frank was soon followed by Tracy and later by Ginger and Bert. As the children were HIV-positive and considered undesirable for adoption, the state had no problem with leaving them with Steven and Roger indefinitely.

The problem arose when Bert seroreverted. Suddenly, the men who had raised him most of his life weren't good enough anymore, and the legal battles began.

The film ends optimistically with the ACLU hoping this case will get Florida's adoption law before the U.S. Supreme Court. Unfortunately, the court dashed that hope in January of this year. Updates can be found at LetHimStay.com.

Grade: B

Nov. 7 at 7:05 p.m. Screened as part of the "We Are Family" short films program.

"Almost Normal"

Writer-director Marc Moody had a cute idea, assembling parts of other movies ("Back to the Future" and "The Wizard of Oz" are acknowledged, presumably making it a homage to them; "Big," "Peggy Sue Got Married" and others are not, making it plagiarism or at least petty theft). But his execution is a bit off in just about every way, leaving the movie almost good.

Most of the actors are called on to play the same characters at two different ages, 22 years apart, and most can't quite pull off either extreme. They look too old for high school, too young for 40 (and don't get me started on the actress playing the mother!). If they were good enough, we wouldn't mind — it's a comic fantasy after all — but there's no one in the cast I'd miss if I never saw any of them again.

Brad Jenkins (J. Andrew Keitch) is depressed: "I just turned 40. I'm gay. I'm still single. You do the math."

A co-worker tries to fix him up with a guy who is his own fantasy but no one else's. A student who seems to be flirting actually wants to hook Brad up with his father.

In the midst of all this, Brad's best friend, Julie (Joan Lauckner), who's married to his brother, persuades him to come home for his parents' 45th anniversary. There he goes off the wagon, confides to Julie, "I just wish that I was normal," and wrecks a car.

If you want to play along with the script, the car crash appears to send Brad through a time warp to an alternate universe. He's back in high school, but this time, being gay is the norm. And the few heterosexuals who come out of the closet are ostracized and sometimes beaten (straight-bashed?).

to appe:

NA

Report proi

United |
court oust

Brad attracts the romantic attention of Roland (Tim Hammer), the jock he had a crush on the first time around. Things couldn't be more perfect, except — well, Julie's the new girl in school, and Brad gets a funny feeling around her. Whatever the norm is, he's going to be queer.

Brad attempts to return to the present by wrecking the same car in the same place. When that doesn't work, it looks like he'll be stuck in the past forever — like a "Ground Hog Day" that lasts 22 years.

Like most high school movies, "Almost Normal" climaxes at the big dance. But Lincoln High has a Blue Jean Ball instead of a prom. The scene outside the school, the last before cutting back to the present, is the worst in the film. Things happen for no reason and there are several "reaction shots" of people who should be reacting but aren't.

The Nebraska setting is novel, but aside from maybe two brief bits of scenery, the picture could have been shot anywhere. A Carter poster suggests we're in the late '70s but the budget doesn't allow for period songs, and few visual elements are very time-specific.

Except for some R-rated language, the movie is rather PG. There's kissing, but nothing more. And the actors are allowed their modesty, even in shower scenes.

In the period Brad goes back to, a movie like "Almost Normal" might have found an audience because there was a hunger for anything queer. Today, we've got options and have hopefully raised our standards. But there's always someone trying to get by simply by playing the gay card.

Grade: C

Nov. 6 at 12:30 p.m.

"Eighteen"

If you want to see a Canadian drama about a straight teenage runaway, a gay hustler and an incident in World War II, you haven't many options.

Although he doesn't look 18, Paul Anthony's strong lead performance goes a long way toward overcoming the film's weaknesses — including an overly pat, moralistic (yet moving) ending.

After his brother dies in a car crash, Pip (Anthony), a smartass but the kind some people find charming, leaves home to live on the street. He shares a hotel room (platonically) with Clark (Clarence Sponagle), a hustler who matches his fear of intimacy. Pip gets into a relationship with Jenny (Carly Pope), a young social worker, while Clark is wooed by a convenience store clerk.

On his eighteenth birthday, Pip receives an audiotape his grandfather (voice of Ian McKellen) left to be given him on that day — telling how he turned 18 during World War II and bonded with a fallen comrade. The flashbacks are spaced throughout the film, as if it takes

over two months for Pip to listen to the whole tape.
 Writer-director Richard Bell has bitten off more than he can chew, but “Eighteen” is worth seeing in spite of its flaws.
 Grade: C+
 Nov. 8 at 8:50 p.m.

QUEER CLIPS

“Dorian Blues”

Tennyson Bardwell’s sweet gay memoir doesn’t break any new ground in telling a familiar story, but it maintains your interest and sympathy all the way.

Michael McMillian is your guide through five years in the life of Dorian Lagatos. He’s the perfect protagonist, sharing Dorian’s highs, lows and “gift for melancholy” without becoming whiny or grating. Semi-cute in a Topher Grace-ish way, he’s practically the whole movie and not a bad guy to spend 88 minutes with.

The key relationships in the film are Dorian’s adversarial one with his father (Steven Charles Fletcher) and a more positive one with Nicky (Lea Coco), his macho younger brother. Nicky’s the first one Dorian comes out to when he realizes, as a high school senior, that he’s gay. Nicky responds by being understanding and protective.

The usual bases are covered: a therapist followed by a priest; trying to go straight followed by self-acceptance; high school followed by college; first lust, first love, first heartbreak — all the things most of us went through, with minor variations.

Bardwell’s gentle style provides chuckles instead of belly laughs and lumps in the throat rather than tears. Dorian may have the blues but fuschia is really his color.
 — Steve Warren

Grade: C+

Opens today exclusively at Landmark’s Inwood Theatre.

“Jarhead”

One soldier’s 1991 Gulf War experience gets the silver-screen treatment in “Jarhead.” After being humiliated by a deliciously evil drill sergeant, 20-year-old Anthony Swofford (Jake Gyllenhaal) and his fellow marines are shipped off to the hot, sweaty deserts of Saudi Arabia. Trained to fight and kill, the soldiers get increasingly aggressive while waiting to “get some.” But when they finally do see action, it’s not what they expected (or us — once the war hits, the film slows down). A “Full Metal Jacket” for the Gulf War generation, director Sam Mendes (“American Beauty”) adapts Swofford’s 2003 memoir, and the film boasts many memorable passages and imagery — some visceral, some sad, some humorously homoerotic (a scene where the shirtless soldiers pretend to gang bang each other for a visiting news crew). For Gyllenhaal fans, this is a sizzling

appetizer for “Brokeback Mountain” (you’ll love him in his Xmas G-string!), while Peter Sarsgaard, Jamie Foxx and Lucas Black also shine as fellow Marines. War continues to be hell — and strong cinema.

— Lawrence Ferber

Grade: B

Opens today in wide release.



Copyright 2005 © By Dallas Voice. All Rights Reserved. Terms and Conditions of Use