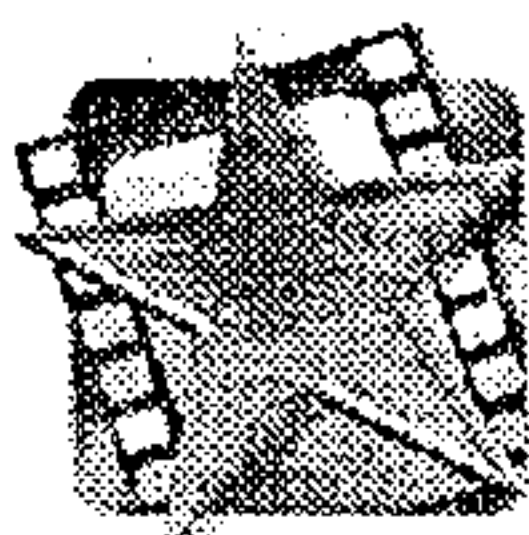


NEW TIMES

L O S A N G E L E S

Film



Film Bites

Film capsules are written by David Ehrenstein, Bill Gallo, Andy Klein, M.V. Moorhead, Jean Oppenheimer, Luke Y. Thompson, Gregory Weinkauff, and Robert Wilonsky.

The Man Who Drove With Mandela Those expecting any new insights about Nelson Mandela may be disappointed by this film, which kicks off Laemmle Theaters' new documentary series. Though the title doesn't hint at it, this film actually deals with what it has meant throughout the century to be gay in South Africa, through the eyes and words of a teacher and theater director named Cecil Williams. An unlikely hero, perhaps, by contemporary American standards, since he is both flamboyantly gay and proudly communist, Williams (as portrayed here by Corin Redgrave; the real Williams died in 1979) comes out of the closet during the rise of fascism and becomes increasingly involved in the antiapartheid movement. Ultimately he becomes friends with Mandela and is in the car with Mandela when the two are arrested. Escaping with a sentence of house arrest, Williams finally calls in a favor from a former student and escapes to England. Director Greta Schiller (*Paris Was a Woman*) effectively mixes documentary and reenactment footage, although it's hard to know just how accurate Redgrave's performance as Williams is, since we never hear the real Williams and the monologues are merely "based on Williams' own writings." We also never learn what Mandela thought of homosexuality, though perhaps the fact that South Africa has become the first country to constitutionally grant full rights to gays speaks for itself. (L.Y.T.) Now playing.