

Gay Film Fest Here

by La Jaunessee Jordan

Reeling '99, the 19th Chicago Lesbian and Gay International Film Festival, is Nov. 5-18 at two theatres and offers several films featuring African-Americans. There is a short film that features Alfre Woodard and Robin Givens, another with Black lesbian comic Karen Williams and a night of films co-presented by Affinity, Chicago Black Lesbians and Gays and other local organizations.

The opening night reception is Nov. 5, 6 p.m. at the Music Box Theatre, 3733 N. Southport. The opening night film is *Bedrooms and Hallways*, which was made by former Chicagoan Rose Troche, who also made *Go Fish*. The opening night film and reception are \$15. Admission for other films is \$6 - \$7. Call (312) 409-4919. There are a lot more gay films of interest; see OUTLINES or the Festival schedule for more details.

Gay Black Female

Gay Black Female, a film by Stephanie Wynne, will be a part of *Girl Shorts* night which will feature several films from five to 30 minutes each. In *Gay Black Female* the main character is Jadah, who has been said to look like pop diva Toni Braxton. Jadah is busy with the personal ads in GBF MAGAZINE and then gets busy with dating. In the beginning, Ernie (Ernestine) gets pissed because Jadah did not like the way Ernie sounded on the phone. Throughout the film Ernie drinks, curses and practices with her knife as she repeatedly talks about what she is going to do to Jadah because of their phone conversation. I got a peek at the other films offered on this night. Go see *Girl Shorts* but get your popcorn and talk with friends as others view *Gay Black Female*. [Shows 9:15 p.m., Friday, Nov. 12, at Village Theatre.]

—Laf

A Luv Tale

A Luv Tale is an Afro-lesbian centric story of seduction and romance. *A Luv Tale* ends with a

twist that makes the journey worth the trip. Taylor the fashion photographer has a crush on Candice Montgomery a magazine publisher and Taylor's boss. The publisher's boyfriend is a loser. Candice's failed relationship makes the older woman a susceptible target to the charms of Taylor.

Taylor's circle of friends' snappy commentary on the romantic entanglement keeps the proceedings fierce. Each sister is a believable non-stereotypical character in a world where men are on the periphery. These gals definitely aren't "Memorex."



Supertstars in the short 'Secrets' and Gina Ravera and Angela Means in 'A Luv Tale.'

They're live!

Filmmaker Sierra Smith serves up a plausible urban universe of sophisticated variations on who are the modern Black women. *A Luv Tale* will make you grin. It's a keeper.

A Luv Tale is being co-presented by Affinity Community Services, Amigas Latinas, Chicago Black Lesbians and Gays, Women in the Director's Chair, and Women of All Colors Together. [*A Luv Tale* screens at 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 13 at the Village Theatre. A short film will also be shown, Sheryl Lee Ralph's *Secrets*, starring Ralph, Alfre Woodard, Robin Givens and Tina Lifford as friends, and one who reveals a secret.]

—Robert Schultz

My Femme Divine

Clips from a discussion group, one of femmes and the other of butches, are among the more fascinating the elements in *My Femme Divine*. Whether *My Femme Divine* is a harbinger of, as one woman claimed, a butch-

femme renaissance, or the latest documentation of a culture that never left, this film makes this gay man reevaluate the relationship between the feminine and the masculine. Femme tops and butch bottoms challenge our expectations and limitations in this seamless blend of the filmmaker's recreated relationship with a femme and these issues. Imagery, dialogue, and a religious/psychological discussion fuse exploring how opposites have a bit of the essence of its opposite within in itself. Hey! Isn't this that yin and yang thing?



Karen Everett has created a piece that works. What works is that discussion groups are ethnically diverse and it balances the jaunts into Mormon theology. Everett works the line between levity and seriousness as we move towards understanding what makes these relationships function. The forward pace keeps the momentum rolling. Not every filmmaker is as successful as Everett is in blending text and image to illustrate their world-view.

If you find the discussion of gender expression in the lesbian context critical to working through your issues about roles, gender, love and romance run, don't walk to see this film. You might wish that you could see this film twice. [*My Femme Divine* screens Tuesday, Nov. 16, 7 p.m. at the Village.]

—Robert Schultz

The Man who Drove with Mandela

What an engaging history les-

son! *The Man Who Drove with Mandela* looks at the life of the openly gay anti-apartheid freedom fighter Cecil Williams. The collection of interviews, historical footage, and recreation of Williams' words by the actor Corin Redgrave provides a partial explanation of why the South African constitution is progressive when it comes to the issue of homosexuality. Cecil Williams was a theatrical director who was active in the fight against apartheid along with a group of other progressive South African whites. A young Nelson Mandela posed as Williams' chauffeur as the two together traveled South Africa as Mandela organized against apartheid. Their road trip ended with Mandela's 1962 arrest. The documentary opens with Mandela revisiting the spot where the police put an end to their ruse.

The Man Who Drove with Mandela is full of moments that provide a context for understanding South Africa. William's white and Black contemporaries, who are still alive, give you insight to the man. From the interviews you get an understanding of the risks taken by whites who shared Williams' political views. Apartheid's oppression that sought to control the minutia of Black's daily life is recalled vividly. Snippets of the era's gay life in Johannesburg tumble out throughout the fascinating story. Lastly, contemporary South African history, particularly its role in World War II, and the internal politics in the wake of that history are succinctly and clearly presented.

The film is a superbly executed and powerful example of the documentary form. Williams' life and contributions are given due credit. Entertainment and educational values are balanced. Williams' courage to live as a gay man who lived his convictions makes him a true international gay hero. *The Man Who Drove with Mandela* assures that acknowledgment of his contributions will endure. [*The Man Who Drove with Mandela* will be shown Sunday, Nov. 7 at 4:30 p.m. at the Music Box.]

—Robert Schultz