

Montreal's celluloid closet opens

Culture

Montreal's 11th gay and lesbian film and video festival gets its corporate funding

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PLACE PUBLIQUE

Those involved in social justice groups know that involvement here in Montreal is not as great as it is in other parts of the country. That's because before any issue is tackled, language divides the ranks. Despite this handicap, though, concerned volunteers for Image & Nation, the gay and lesbian film festival, continue to chip away at their little corner of injustice.

The festival is in its 11th year. Yet, this is the first year it has acquired a corporate sponsor, Bell Mobility. While happy to have their corporate sponsor, Elana Wright, festival volunteer, noted that Toronto's gay and lesbian film festival has had many corporate sponsors for several years now. "They have a more vocal community in Toronto. Here, there seems to be a much more low-key approach to tolerance," said Wright.

Gaining a voice, in whatever key, is what the festival is all about. In the wonderful documentary co-directed by Patricia Kearns and Deborah Van Slet, *Choir Girls*, a choir member puts it this way, "As a female in a society which didn't consider women to be equal, I felt the need to find my voice, somehow. So, I took singing lessons to develop courage."

Other filmmakers and

videographers continue pushing against the envelope of society's limitations in such shorts as *Violent* by Concordia student Atiq Siddiqi. Jean Genet's ideas on identity formation echo in *Violent*, a confrontational video and slide essay. The narrator of this piece puts prejudice square in the lap of those who practice it when he states, "This is your vocabulary for my gestures, illustrated. If I'm queer, it's only because you choose to perceive me this way."

Oral, by Montrealer Colleen Ayoup, juxtaposes the expectations mothers have of their daughters. In a darkened apartment the answering machine takes a message from the mother. She's just heard from her son that her daughter is living with someone. The mother wants to know all about this man, and what his credentials are because there's nothing that will make a woman happier than a man with good credentials. As the mother's disembodied voice fills the daughter's space, the camera wanders aimlessly through the apartment highlighting female images.

Ayoup's personal video and Siddiqi's more public one reflect the filmmakers' own level of identity acceptance, so their work is likely to appeal to those who are, themselves, dealing with such issues.

Beyond navel-gazing is the 16-minute documentary *Rat*



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Club by Alain Mongeau which might be the first gay video in the history of the Quebec. And, Esther Valiquette reflects upon the origins of life through the heretical psalm *Extenderis* in a video of the same name.

Next, you can follow the lead of one festival organizer who takes a break from such cerebral fare by immersing herself in a good old Hollywood

film. *Relax ... It's Just Sex* by P.J. Castellana stars Jennifer Tilly and is billed as an hysterical look at relationships today. Bill Condon's *Gods & Monsters* premieres at the festival and it's a fictional account of Hollywood's only openly gay director of the 1930s. (He directed *Frankenstein*, *The Bride of Frankenstein*, and *The Invisible Man*.)

And, to top it all off, catch one of the nightly parties. All are open to the public.

The film festival runs from 24 Sept to 4 Oct with three venues, J.A. de Sève theatre at Concordia, the Parisien, and the NFB cinema. Tickets go on sale 19 Sept at 3 p.m. at Drugstore, 1364 St. Catherine East. Call 285-4467 for info. f