

Feast not fast

Belly up to the film fest's pink buffet

TICKET GUIDE

Shane Smith

THE TORONTO International Film Festival has always offered treats for lesbian and gay viewers. The silver anniversary 2000 fest, which starts today and runs till Sun, Sep 16, is shaping up to be one of the pinkest yet, with homo films from Spain, Thailand, France, USA, Argentina, Australia, Germany, Japan and, of course, Canada.

If you haven't gotten your act together in advance and bought a festival pass, don't despair. Single tickets are on sale now at the public box office and, if a screening is sold out, there are always empty seats available at the last minute that can be snagged by trying your luck in the rush line.

One of the highlights of any film festival is the oft-overlooked short film. Check out these.

Local director Robert Kennedy returns to the festival (after the surreal brilliance of *Hi, I'm Steve*) with the hilarious **Dinky Menace**. Donning an Andy Warhol wig, Kennedy plays Irving Spek, the super-8 auteur behind the "classics" *Melt* and *A Time To Recycle*. As Spek battles to retain his (highly suspect) artistic integrity, Kennedy skewers the film biz, biting the hand that feeds with raucous abandon. (Mon, Sep 11 at 6:30pm at the Royal Ontario Museum at 100 Queen's Park; Sep 12 at 10am at the Varsity at 55 Bloor St W.)

Looking like lost footage from an Eisenstein masterpiece, **Lode** (which translates as *Film*) pays homage to silent films with its melodramatic score and scratchy black and white images. As two burly men work together in an abandoned mine, their relationship moves from one of companionship to combat. Is it a lovers' quarrel? A family feud? Or just another day at the office? What-

ever it is, it's fascinating (and homoerotic) viewing. (Sun, Sep 10 at 3:30pm and Sep 11 at 7pm at the Varsity.)

Janis Cole's **Bowie: One In A Million** is a compelling, personal film about her friend Kathy Bowie, killed by her husband George Jackson in an incident of domestic abuse. Using photos of the happy-go-lucky Bowie, Cole powerfully illustrates the justice system's failure to deal with violence against women, making her point with intelligence and clarity. (Sat, Sep 9 at 3:30pm at the ROM; Sep 10 at 6:30pm at the Varsity.)

Trying to get over a broken heart? Director Midi Onodera and



TAKE-OUT. Starring Gianpaolo Venuta and Daniel MacIvor.

her smart, funny Basement Girl are here to help. Embracing pop culture icons — from Mary Tyler Moore and the Bionic Woman to Princess Di and La Streisand — our heroine works through being dumped by donning her pajamas, stocking up on the junk food and basking in the warm glow of her television set. (Wed, Sep 13 at 6:30pm at the ROM; Sep 14 at 10am at the Varsity.)

Screening in the same program is **Passengers**, a beautifully constructed film about childhood memories, family and the things we wish we said. Returning from her fathers' funeral, Rachel (Stephanie Morgenstern) remembers the times they spent together, while trying to explain to her girlfriend (Valerie Buhagier) why she couldn't come out to him. It's the first dramatic outing from local director Francine Zuckerman.

From Montreal and director Jean-François Monette comes

Take-Out, an edgy, unpredictable coming-out story. Sixteen-year-old Rory is a chicken delivery boy (get it?) with a crush on one of his customers, an older man (Daniel MacIvor). As Rory comes to terms with being gay, his fantasies are fueled by the erotic overtones of everything from the school locker-room to horse-play with his best friend. Great acting and a unique visual style make *Take-Out* a tasty treat. (Thu, Sep 14 at 6:30pm at the ROM; Sep 15 at 10am at the Varsity.)

Sea In The Blood is local videomaker Richard Fung's stirring tribute to both his sister Nanette and his partner Tim McCaskell. Fung discovers a kind of beauty in illness as he remembers Nan's battle with Beta Thalassemia, a rare blood disease, and Tim's diagnosis with HIV. Eliciting candid comments from his family (his mother recounts how angry she was at Richard for extending his European vacation while Nan was dying) and using home movies and old photos, Fung has created an eloquent and visually stunning biographical work. (Sep 9 at 3:30pm at the ROM; Sep 10 at 6:30pm at the Varsity.)

The Academy Award-winning directors of *Common Threads: Stories From The Quilt* and *The Celluloid Closet*, return to the festival with the Rupert Everett-narrated **Paragraph 175**, a fascinating portrait of gay men living under the Nazi regime. Amazing archival footage and photos illustrate the often horrific recollections of the men (and one woman) interviewed. (Sat, Sep 9 at 12:30pm at the Uptown at 764 Yonge St; Sep 16 at 1:30pm at the Varsity.)

John Malkovich plays legendary gay filmmaker FW Murnau in **Shadow Of The Vampire**. Set during the making of his vampire classic *Nosferatu*, this fictional take on real life is uneven in acting and tone, veering uncomfortably



PASSENGERS. Starring Valerie Buhagier and Stephanie Morgenstern.

between comedy and thriller. But it remains interesting to watch thanks to the eerie performance of Willem Dafoe as the "actor" playing *Nosferatu*. Unlike *Gods And Monsters*, this is no examination of the filmmaker's sexuality and its influence on his work — Murnau's gayness is only hinted at — and the characters remain resolutely one-dimensional, much like the melodramatic actors in Murnau's film. (Sun, Sep 10 at 7pm at the Elgin at 189 Yonge St; Sep 12 at 9am at the Uptown.)

You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll want to dance! Set against the backdrop of the 1984 British miners strike, **Billy Elliot** is the story of a working class boy who discovers that he loves ballet dancing more than boxing. Billy's cross-dressing gay best friend has to be one of the most sympathetic and real portraits of a gay youth ever seen on the big screen, and is just one highlight of a film filled with vivid characters and hilarious dialogue. (Mon, Sep 11 at 6pm at the Varsity; Sep 13 at 9:45am at the Uptown.)

In **Krampack** (Spanish slang for masturbation), teenage friends Dani and Nico, alone for the summer in a coastal town, are determined to lose their virginity. Nico secures a couple of local girls he deems fit for the job, but Dani only has eyes for his "krampack" partner Nico. With outstanding performances from a youthful cast, and a

refreshingly open approach to teen sexuality, drugs and alcohol, this award-winner at Cannes is probably too frank for release in North America, so catch it while you can. (Sat, Sep 9 at 3:15pm at the Varsity 8; Sep 10 at 11:45am at the Cumberland at 159 Cumberland St.)

Charlie restlessly roams the streets of Manhattan late at night, seeking, searching — but for what? Sex? Revenge? Redemption? This mystery is at the heart of **Urbania**, a riveting, unpredictable film about love, friendship and urban



KRAMPACK. Directed by Cesc Gay.

myths, with a cast that includes Alan Cumming and Matt Keelslar. When Charlie meets a handsome, dangerous stranger, the pieces of the puzzle fall into place, setting the scene for a series of surprisingly sexy — and disturbing — encounters. (Thu, Sep 7 at 9:15pm at the Varsity; Sep 9 at 3:30pm at the Cumberland.)

Against the backdrop of the city-in-transition that is modern-day Berlin, two men and a woman experiment with their sexuality by forming a romantic triangle in

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