

q film: 2012 MQFF

THE MELBOURNE QUEER FILM FESTIVAL RETURNS WITH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL FAVOURITES FROM CHAZ BONO TO IRANIAN LESBIANS & BANNED THAI TRANS 15 – 25 MARCH 2012

The feature length doco telling the story of Chaz Bono's transition from a woman to a man, *Becoming Chaz* will be one of the highly anticipated films at the 2012 Melbourne Queer Film Festival (MQFF). The US doco by Fenton Bailey & Randy Barbato is a raw and honest, documentary which outlines the transition of pop legends Sonny and Cher's daughter Chastity Bono to self assured, confident and male Chaz – a journey of identity and self-discovery that has lasted most of his life.

One of the largest queer film festivals in the world, the MQFF screens challenging and entertaining queer-themed films at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image and Greater Union. With the 2012 MQFF program showcasing the best of the best from the international festival circuit as well as its fair share of local films, here is the first sneak peak of highlights.

Straight from international film festivals around the globe comes; *Gun Hill Road* by first time filmmaker Rashaad Ernesto Green (USA) which left Sundance audiences claiming it a film not to be missed. After three years in prison, Enrique returns home to the Bronx to find the world he knew has changed. His wife struggles to hide an emotional affair, and his teenage son, who now identifies as Vanessa, explores a sexual transformation well beyond Enrique's grasp and understanding; Sundance award winner *Circumstance* (dir. Maryam Keshavarz, France/USA/Iran) follows a wealthy Iranian family who struggle to contain their teenager's growing sexual rebellion; *August* (dir. Eldar Rappaport, USA) stars Australian actor Murray Bartlett, in a smoldering love triangle that explores trust, love and lust; and in equal measures hilarious, sad and incisively witty, *Cloudburst* is the new feature by Canadian filmmaker Thom Fitzgerald which features the extraordinary talents of Olympia Dukakis (*Steel Magnolias*, *Moonstruck*) and Brenda Fricker (*My Left Foot*, *A Time To Kill*) as lesbian couple in the twilight of their lives.

In addition to *Becoming Chaz*, documentary highlights include; *We Were Here* by David Weissman which is short listed for the 2012 Academy Awards for Best Documentary. It is the first documentary to take a deep and reflective look back at the arrival and impact of HIV/AIDS in San Francisco; and *The Advocate* for Fagdom directed by French filmmaker Angélique Bosio, the documentary celebrates the extreme sexuality, perversions and political ideology represented in filmmaking that has often offended. Fascinating behind-the-scenes footage of filmmakers at work are woven with interviews with some of the biggest names in queerness including John Waters, Harmony Korine, Gus Van Sant and the Bruce La Bruce.

Other Festival highlights include; a film twice banned in Thailand, *Insects in the Backyard* (dir. Thanwarin Sukhphisit) – about two teenagers who are being brought up by their 'big sister' Tanya, a Hollywood obsessed transwoman. Despite the dysfunction of the trio, the film is a fascinating exploration of the complex problems that come from sexual identity within a family unit.

The story of Vito Russo is explored in *Vito* by Jeffrey Schwartz (USA). New York City's answer to Harvey Milk, Vito devoted his life after the Stonewall riots of 1969 to fighting for the rights of GLBT people and their positive representation in the media, especially films. His landmark book *The Celluloid Closet* shone a light on how homosexuals have been portrayed by Hollywood since the earliest films, and is still influential today.

Meanwhile *Leave It on the Floor* (dir. Sheldon Larry) will get audiences dancing in the cinema – this audacious, raunchy and big-hearted musical (with songs by Beyoncé's music director Kim Burse and choreography by Beyoncé's dance master Frank Gatson Jr.), will take audiences into the fabulously funky world of voguing. It's Paris is Burning for the Gen Y era with contemporary downtown L.A. the setting.

This is just a sneak preview of what's to come in 2012, the full program will be announced on Wednesday 22 February. Program and ticketing information will be available at www.mqff.com.au Don't miss out on your favourite films – Become an MQFF Member! Membership gets you discount tickets, priority bookings and more! To join go to www.mqff.com.au/membership

