

# Unhinging Closets

Editor's Pick



## MOTHER KNOWS BEST

The two funniest queer films out right now aren't exactly what you'd call lesbian, but no doubt many dykes—especially moms—will love *Ready? OK!* (now on DVD at *Wolfe Video*) and *Breakfast With Scot* (playing on *here! TV*). In *Ready?*, single mom Andrea is struggling to understand her preteen son Josh's obsession with dolls, dresses and cheerleading. Josh (played by the adorable Lurie Poston) is fine with who he is, and Mom (with help from a gay neighbor) has to learn how to let Josh break all the gender rules the world has in store for him. In *Breakfast With Scot*, Eric (a pitch-perfect role for Tom Cavanagh from *Eli Stone*), a gay but oh-so-butch former hockey player, and his partner became parents to a very flamboyant young boy and struggle—in the funniest way possible—to “straighten” him out. In the process, Eric learns a lot about himself. Both movies are hilariously heartwarming, feel-good comedies that are sweet but never saccharine. **[Diane Anderson-Minshall]**

Community takes center stage this month. **By Candace Moore**



Allison Pill and Emile Hirsch in *Milk*

In these two touching films, queer heroes improve their communities, themselves and others.

***Milk* (Focus/Universal):** Gus Van Sant's biopic of San Francisco's slain supervisor Harvey Milk intersperses a hand-held, grainy look with televised footage and a meditative steadicam. This mixing of aesthetics works to evocatively capture Milk's private life and public speeches, along with the élan of queer parties, the righteous anger of civil rights marches and the macho violence of police brutality in the Castro district of 1970s San Francisco. Offering a nostalgic elegy to the first gay man elected to public office, Van Sant ends his film with documents of the real Harvey Milk and his team of activists. These serve as proof of Van Sant's own meticulousness in matching the spirit of the characters and the times. The film focuses on Milk's rise to power, his optimism and political fervor and his assassination. The cast is superb: Sean Penn transforms into sparkly-eyed Milk, Emile Hirsch makes an adorable Cleve Jones and we sense Dan White's slow-rising boil, expertly channeled through Josh Brolin. Admittedly, *Milk* congratulates itself a bit for its own project.

Without taking the film literally as history, we need to constantly educate ourselves about the past and archive our own lives as they happen. Every queer person worth her salt should see this film at least once.

***The World Unseen* (Regent Releasing):** Shamim Sarif's '50s period piece reflects on the impossibility of heterosexuals, as well as lesbians, of different ethnicities loving openly in apartheid-era South Africa. When Miriam (Lisa Ray), her traditionally minded husband and their children move to a plot of land near Cape Town, they encounter Amina (Sheetal Sheth), an iconoclast who prefers trousers to dresses. Amina runs the Location Café, where she serves blacks, whites and Indians equally, to the local authorities' chagrin; the cops constantly come by to smash something, bully somebody or try to shut her business down. While Miriam's husband is out cheating on her, Amina teaches her how to drive, and how to refuse her husband's domination without fear. A rich exploration of bigotry of all kinds, this film puts characters of different belief systems into dialogue with one another. Sarif's second

PHIL BRAY (MILK), OPPOSITE PAGE: 3D MAGIC FACTORY (BUDDY G)

# Q+A

## Margaux Towne-Colley

After their son Grayson's birth, Margaux Towne-Colley and her partner Donna searched for children's stories reflecting their family's lifestyle. They found several books, including *Heather Has Two Mommies*, but weren't satisfied. Where were the children's TV shows starring LGBT families? They decided to "take the next step," as Towne-Colley puts it, and create one. With help from collaborators including illustrator Pascale Lafond, the 3D Magic Factory and Curt Bright and the String Beans (who composed a catchy theme song), *Buddy G*, an adorable animation that's also educational, starring Buddy G, his friend Owen, his moms and his talking gadget, Socrates, was born.

### What are your plans for future episodes of *Buddy G*?

We based [the first episode] on our little family, our little life.... As we expand, the cast of characters will expand also, and so we'll have

two-dad families and different races.

### Did you face any setbacks while working on this project?

We were working on a pretty tight time-frame. Other than that, I always tell Donna that even if it doesn't go anywhere or do anything, it's been such a fun, good adventure for our family that it was all worthwhile.

### What challenges have you and Donna overcome as lesbian parents?

When we decided we were going to do this and we wanted to get pregnant, we were investigating where to go. A place I'd found out about was in Kansas City, which is only a couple of hours from here. When I called to get some basic information, the woman said, "What about your husband?" And I said, "Oh, no, it's not a husband." And she's like, "I'm sorry, we can't help you...we only help married couples." It really felt like somebody had kicked me in the stomach.

### What has been the response to *Buddy G*?



### Who have you heard from?

We get just tons of letters, handwritten notes, email, even a couple of calls from people—parents saying how much their kids like it, even some of the kids liking it. The only people who have criticized it, that I can think of, are people in the animation world. Nothing like a professional company, just the hobbyists who go online. Bulldog Books in Australia contacted us and we sent them 50 DVDs. We've had tons of calls from Argentina and Italy, and people are wanting us...to dub [the episodes].

### Are there plans to televise the show?

Some gay and lesbian networks have expressed a little bit of interest. There's a chance that it may end up on TV. I don't think Nickelodeon's going to be calling us. **[Kate Goldsworthy]**

feature, *I Can't Think Straight*, which stars the same actresses, centers on a Palestinian and a British woman of Indian descent who fall in love in London. Based on her track record, Sarif seems particularly astute at intelligently and sweetly portraying lesbian love in various cultural environments. Her third film, *Despite the Falling Snow*, described as an "epic love story from 1950s Soviet Russia," is currently in the planning stages at Sarif's own Enlightenment Productions. ■



Sheetal Sheth and Lisa Ray in *The World Unseen*

## DVD Picks



### *Stealth* (Water Bearer Films)

Directed by and starring Lionel Baier, playing a character called Lionel Baier, this quirky Swiss drama is an extraordinary feat of queer postmodern navel-gazing. After sleeping with an illegal (female) Polish au pair, gay boy Lionel suffers an early-life crisis, leaves his boyfriend and drives to Poland with his sister in tow to uncover a lost Polish ancestor. One for the indie fans. **[Rachel Beebe]**



### *Drifting Flowers* (Wolfe Video)

Zero Chou (*Spider Lilies*) brings another triptych of three queer vignettes from differing time periods. A blind singer falls in love with her band's butchy accordion player, an older woman has a great BFF and another struggles with gender identity issues. Less political than *If These Walls Could Talk 2*, but with enough oomph to make it a multiple award winner. **[Diane Anderson-Minshall]**



### *Tru Loved* (here! TV)

A teen girl is moved from San Francisco to a conservative suburb by her lesbian moms. Her only friendship, with a closeted athlete, is strained when she starts a gay-straight alliance. Great cast includes Jane Lynch, Cynda Williams, Alec Mapa, Jasmine Guy and Alexandra Paul and even though Roger Ebert thought it was implausible, the queer 14-year-old I watched it with loved it. **[DAM]**



### *Saving Marriage* (here! TV)

As the first state to legalize same-sex marriage, Massachusetts set the example for the fight for civil equality in the United States. *Saving Marriage* follows that legislative battle through the stories of several of the activists who helped win the right to marry. It's a moving and empowering film that conveys the full measure of what that landmark decision meant. **[RB]**