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Metaphorically Speaking

Intern's Pick



The Sensei (Heitmann Entertainment): In this day and age, documentaries are a dime a dozen. Between the popularity of reality TV and YouTube's garden of endless voyeuristic delights, what's real is what's really hot. But sometimes a good old-fashioned story tells a tale that's far more powerful. This is the case with *The Sensei*, a film written and directed by and starring **Diana Lee Inosanto** (above), a martial arts expert and former stunt double for Sarah Michelle Geller on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. This tale of self-acceptance and self-defense set in the '80s hits all the predictable notes, but the historical detail and the poignancy of the vignettes are astounding. It's easy to forget the panic and bigotry that were prevalent in the early years of the AIDS epidemic, and, for those who didn't experience it, and therefore do not know there was a time when all homosexuals were considered to be diseased, this movie is like a kick to the gut. [Ainsley Drew]

TV's gone meta with queer topics. **By Candace Moore**



An awkward smooch for Louis-Dreyfus and Sykes on *The New Adventures of Old Christine*

Alan Ball respins the queer-as-monster allegory to argue for both "vampire" and gay rights, *Old Christine* takes the plunge with another woman to sing the praises of homo-social love and *The L Word* gazes into its own navel once again.

True Blood (HBO): *Six Feet Under*'s mastermind producer Alan Ball brings us a new romantic horror serial that is distinctly imagined and convincingly acted, despite the fact that its story line is a bit of a *Buffy* rip-off. There's only one gay character, but fears of vampires work as a not-so-subtle metaphor for discrimination against other groups. It's been two years since the invention of synthetic blood allowed vampires to integrate with humans rather than snacking on them. Vamps have since "come out of the coffins," but not everyone's convinced. The opening credits invoke a climate of racism and homophobia using documentary-style footage, such as a sign that reads "God Hates Fangs." Members of the American Vampire League and religious leaders argue on the news. Vampires are ghettoized and have their own clubs where specialty sex workers "service" masochistic humans with vamp fetishes. The show revolves around Sookie (Anna Paquin), a

telepath who wants nothing more than for her small Louisiana town to shut up. When a polite Civil War veteran re-vamps and takes up residence in his abandoned family home, Sookie finds herself drawn to his non-sanguine looks and gentle thoughts. With the string of murders of women who associate with vampires mounting, the townspeople don't exactly take kindly to Sookie's new suitor. Her own brother spouts hateful epithets. But since the murdered women are strangled, not drained, the killings look more like hate crimes than the work of vampires.

The New Adventures of Old Christine (CBS): This season's premiere of Julia Louis-Dreyfus' post-*Seinfeld* star vehicle featured a surprise wedding between JLD's Christine, a neurotic divorcee, and her blunt business partner Barb (played by the hilarious lesbian comic Wanda Sykes). Christine's proposal to her best friend—intended to help her from being deported—seemed like a harmless reference to California's legalization of gay marriage. However, Christine and Barb did really tie the knot. While theirs is not a sexual relationship, the liberal-hearted but often politically incorrect show ultimately uses the idea of gay marriage to

CLIFF LIPSON (OLD CHRISTINE)

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CATHY DEBUONO (TOUCH), C. LEWIS STUDIO (WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS?)

Q+A

Traci Dinwiddie



Dinwiddie (right) with Nekar Zadegan in *The Touch*

Mega-talented and easy on the eyes, Traci Dinwiddie spans a wealth of lesbian fantasies as she shares the screen with Demi Moore in *Mr. Brooks* and takes on the role of the lesbian poet Renée Vivien in Jane Clark's *The Touch*. We caught the starlet after the inaugural Mixed Roots Film and Literary Festival in Los Angeles.

Did you audition to be Renée Vivien?

Not quite. I felt strongly attracted and connected to the role of Kérin.

What happened?

I showed up dressed in my beautiful Turkish threads and a sharpened Turkish accent. The director took a good look at me and said, "Honey, you're white!" I told her I was of Syrian and Cherokee Indian decent. I thought I had an ethnic look—you know, bushy black eyebrows. [Laughs] Jane said, "Let me see you for Renée." So I came back the next day to audition for the role of Renée Vivien in an old tuxedo and a completely different vibe.

What does it feel like to get cast as the white woman?

Quite honestly, I am used to it.

How do you deal with stereotyping?

Well, for me, this is about storytelling. Film and television are the modern fire circle. Back in the day people sat around fires, told stories and got to drift off... or learn a valuable lesson. My duty as an actress is to serve the story. If I am discouraged by the lack of well-developed roles for women or mixed-race people, I can always write and produce my own stuff. [Tania Hammidi]

argue for the legalization of other alternative kinship formations. What's striking is that rather than being played like a *Chuck and Larry*-style joke, the episode veered more toward the sentimental, highlighting the ways in which the two women already served as each other's family. Christine effuses, "Our marriage would be fun—we'd hang out, we'd eat, we'd pee in front of each other...You are really the most wonderful person I know...If you leave the country, who am I going to raise Richie with?" Since the premiere, the gals faced life-changing antigay discrimination and their new union comes up in nearly every episode and is rife with possibilities. Perhaps Christine will have some more new adventures?

The L Word: Season Five (Showtime): *The L Word* has always been particularly good at making fun of overused lesbian tropes. Now on DVD, season five kicks off with down-on-her-luck heiress Helena trapped in a campy rendition of *Caged*. The producers of *The L Word* also recycle more material for die-hard

fans to enjoy through Jenny's film adaptation of *Les Girls*, her novel based on the events of the serial's premiere season. But this reflexivity doesn't take itself too seriously; we're meant to take pleasure in an alternate universe (portrayed as more "commercial") where Nina (i.e., Tina) acts overly predatory with Jesse (i.e., Jenny), when we know damn well Tina only has eyes for Bette. When Jenny loses her director's reins on the film due to a double-crossing personal assistant, *Les Girls* takes an unfortunately straight turn. *The L Word* seems to be making a claim for its own "authenticity," relevance and good taste, compared to an imagined sister script run amok. Season five also sees Bette and Tina rekindle, thus reviving those rampantly hot sex scenes. Again, this choice plays to what the message board scribbles have been begging for. It's admirable how much *The L Word* openly fondles itself and foregrounds its malleability as fiction—it's so bad, it's good. Someone definitely studied postmodernism in college. ■

Read all about season six at curvemag.com

DVD Picks



Where the Water Meets the Sky (Camfed)

Twenty-three women from a village in Zambia are given a chance to speak their minds. They tackle topics ranging from orphaned children to female prostitution to HIV while emphasizing the importance of self-expression, community leadership and education. It's a strong story of hope and self-empowerment.

[Fernanda Silva]



The Amazing Truth About Queen Raquela (Poppoli Pictures)

This documentary tells the story of Raquela, a Filipino trans woman who dreams of marrying a man and living in the West. Transgender people in the Philippines often end up living on the fringes of society, stuck in low-paying jobs or prostitution. But Raquela's gumption is captivating and will keep you watching till the end. [Arisa White]



Who Does She Think She Is? (Mystic Artists Films)

A sentiment I'm sure some of us are familiar with. This documentary from director Pamela Tanner Boll shows the experience of several women who share the struggle of trying to be who they are as artists while dealing with the preconceived notions of what it is to be a woman and a mother. It's an eye-opening and empowering film. [Rachel Lastra]



here! With Josh and Sara (here! TV)

Josh and Sara are here on here! This is a radio talk show brought to the small screen. It's not a new concept, but Josh and Sara have taken the format and made it LGBT-friendly. Sarah's a cute Jersey girl who loves lesbian activists and authors. The pair are sweet, adorable and genuine, and do well at showcasing their guests and their smarts. [RL]

CATHY DEBUONO (TOUCH), C. LEWIS STUDIO (WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS?)

CLIFF LIPSON (OLD CHRISTINE)