

LESBIAN DRAMA: STORIES FROM THE TRENCHES

the word on lesbian lifestyle

girlfriends

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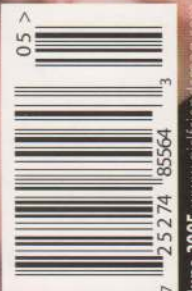
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REVIEWS

'HEDWIG' INCHES FORWARD

by Candace Moore



Six Feet Under
HBO, beginning Monday, June 6,
9:00 p.m.

HBO's award-winning drama about the dysfunctional, funereal Fisher family returns for its fifth and final season this month. Many critics felt that creator Alan Ball's quirky show jumped the shark last season when gay son David Fisher (Michael C. Hall) was abducted and tortured; in the season finale, David confronted his abductor in prison at the urging of Keith (Matthew St. Patrick), David's ex-cop boyfriend. Last season also saw the youngest member of the Fisher family, art student Claire (Lauren Ambrose), briefly exploring her lesbian side with classmate Edie (Mena Suvari); meanwhile big brother Nate (Peter Krause) successfully proposed to longtime love interest Brenda (Rachel Griffiths). Producers promise that this final season will provide some closure for the long-suffering Fishers. —*Malinda Lo*



Cruisin' with Rosie O'Donnell

HBO, Date and Time TBA

In case you missed the maiden voyage of Rosie O'Donnell's R Family Vacations cruise line last July, you can catch a behind-the-scenes look this month on HBO's documentary *Cruisin' with Rosie O'Donnell*. Directed by Emmy Award-nominated Shari Cookson (*Living Dolls: The Making of a Child Beauty Queen*), the doc captures the family-friendly cruise's first trip from New York to the Bahamas. The approximately 500 families who set sail with Rosie enjoyed Broadway entertainment, comedy by Rosie herself, and workshops about gay-family issues. Founded by Rosie's wife, Kelli O'Donnell, and Gregg Kaminsky, R Family gives LGBT families an unprecedented opportunity to vacation together in a comfortable and safe environment. Check your local listings to see when *Cruisin'* lands in your neighborhood. —*Malinda Lo*

Heralding a new era of queer channels, QTN produces John Cameron Mitchell's new feature for the big and small screen.

Q Television leads the pack with the first all-gay network to hit the air. This month's launch of MTV's competing channel, LOGO (which promises twenty-five original pieces of programming) continues a new era where more queer content will broadcast than ever before. But QTN, by coproducing *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* director John Cameron Mitchell's new feature, *Shortbus*, is the first to do something that may mark a trend for queer television makers: creating media outside the flickering box. Alexis Fish, senior executive vice president of QTN, talks about the network's collaboration with Mitchell on his cutting-edge film, due for release in 2006. Fish elaborates on *Shortbus*'s cast of sexually diverse New York characters and the fact that the film even features, gasp, live sex!

Wow, John Cameron Mitchell! Does he act in his new film as he did in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*?

No, he is the director and creator but doesn't act in this one. He was very specific about not getting name actors to play these parts. He held tryouts in New York and encouraged nonactors to apply. He wanted freshness, a sense of authenticity.

Is the network planning on premiering *Shortbus* on Q Television, or is it seeking regular theatrical distribution?

We anticipate playing *Shortbus* at high-profile film festivals at the start of 2006, and distributing it world-wide after that.

So we can expect to see the film at next year's Sundance film festival?

Sundance... we'll see. And *Shortbus* will eventually be broadcast on Q.

Can you give our readers a sneak peek into the individual characters or the plot line of this new release?

The film follows seven characters of various sexualities and genders as they navigate the funny and sad intersections between sex and love in post-9/11 New York City.



CHRIS WAHL/NEWSCOM

Sook-Yin Lee (Sophia) also appeared in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*.

Does *Shortbus* have any lesbian characters?

Let's just say that the film has a wide range of expressions of sexuality and gender. There are female main characters that are open.

Can we expect to see a genderqueer character?

You most definitely will.

What intrigued the network initially about the project?

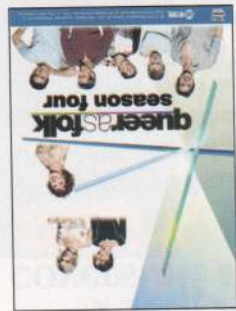
Mitchell is an artist who pushes boundaries. It's a very politically charged film. There's actual sex in it. At Q, we were excited about that, and it was a very conscious decision to be behind Mitchell's work.

The film isn't finished quite yet and so hasn't been rated yet. How explicit is the sex?

Well, it is live sex. The actors are not simulating sex. Q is striving to represent every aspect of our LGBTQ community and expects this film to be a catalyst for a frank, uncensored dialogue. **91**

QUEER AS FOLK:

(Showtime Entertainment, 2004)



This box set offers footage that takes us, with every pun intended, "behind" Babylon—the fictional club that is a magnetic force

field for Pittsburgh's finest Liberty Avenue gay boys

to assert their poles. The show's producers—despite continuing criticism—worsen their depiction of

Folk's token lesbian couple this season. After nine years with Melanie, art curator Lindsay exercises her

"Bette" side and fucks—in high heels, no less—a cocky male artist. This short-lived affair isn't nearly

as offensive as a scene where she begs Mel to pull out the long-stowed-away phallus from their dresser

drawer while thinking of the cigar-munching painter. *Queer as Folk* did cross the pregnant, lesbian, sex

boundary first (although not nearly as provocatively as *The L Word*), but Brian Kinney is, as always, the

reason to watch. Grade: B—Candace Moore

GIRLS ON FILM 3 (Power UP, 2005) is a compilation of lesbian networking association Power UP's grant films over the past three years, and a testimonial to the necessity of organizations like this to financially support and "hook up" queer filmmakers. Teams of mostly lesbian volunteer crews create these film, often with name actors. A-list mentor directors and writers help the grant recipients find their visions, and their low-budget shorts end up with a superb production quality not normally possible for such projects. The compilation revisits shorts from *Girls on Film* and *Girls on Film 2*, including Jamie Babbit's award-winning "Stuck" and Angela Robinson's "D.E.S.S." (the kernel short for the feature-length). Check out *3*'s newbies, such as Colette Burson's "Little Black Boot" (starring *She Hate Me*'s Dania Ramirez), Mary Ann Marino's "Intent," and Buboo Kakati's "Nearly Unadventurous Life of Zoe Galwalder." Grade: A—Candace Moore



By Stefani Barber

LAPOLT'S LAW

The openly gay producer of *Tupac: Resurrection* wants to change the world's mind about hip-hop.

Standing at the intersection of Hollywood and hip-hop, Dina LaPolit is becoming a major power broker with a unique background. Hailing from New Paltz, New York, she studied music in college. But at twenty-seven she switched gears and enrolled in law school; six years later, she opened her own firm and focused on entertainment law. Along the way the out lesbian attorney became involved with the estate of late rapper Tupac Shakur and ended up coproducing the Oscar-nominated documentary *Tupac: Resurrection*. On the phone from West Hollywood, LaPolit shared some of her thoughts about Tupac, hip-hop's alleged homophobia, and this month's opening of the meditation garden at the Tupac Amaru Shakur Center for the Arts.

BROTHER TO BROTHER TO

(Walla Video, 2004) *Brother to Brother* is captivating and full of vitality. Perry (Anthony Mackie), a young black gay artist, takes a surreal journey through the Harlem Renaissance, led by Bruce Nugent (Roger Robinson), a true-life chum of Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Wallace Thurman. Writer-director-producer Rodney Evans's gorgeous film interlaces the trials of Nugent's past with Perry's present tribulations—including a search for self first kindled by watching young Nugent and his fellows launch *Fire!!*, a literary response to societal injustices that marred the 1920s. Nugent's own artistic passion is reignited not simply by Perry's lovelessness—Mackie turns in an astounding performance—but by rediscovering himself through a younger man's eyes. Special features include an interview with Evans, commentary by Evans and Mackie, and eight deleted scenes worth watching. Grade: A—Sarah Dahlen



What drew you to become involved with Tupac Shakur's estate? It was through his mom. We met in 1998, when she was a client of the firm where I used to work. When I met her, she was using this vernacular that only people in recovery programs use, so we bonded over that. She encouraged me to leave and start my own firm. My mom even knew who Afeni was because of the Black Panthers, but not Tupac.

How did it feel being a part of a documentary that was nominated for an Oscar?

It was amazing. I was in France at a conference when I got a phone call from Afeni, who was crying. She called me at 5:30 in the morning her time to tell me we got nominated for the Oscar.

Did you go to the ceremony?

No, Afeni went with her husband, but I went to all the events up to that, including the IDA event. I met the director of *Born into Brothels*, who's totally hot!

How did working on the documentary affect the way you look at Tupac and hip-hop in general?

In the beginning, [those of us who worked on the film] were really brought together because we wanted to fight the perception that there is so much violence in hip-hop. At Sundance, people were surprised to learn that Tupac had studied Shakespeare and ballet and that he read the *New York Times*. He was always fighting for the underdog. We recently got a letter from a prominent photographer, a gay guy, who said that Tupac was the barometer he used to measure all other people.

Did your sexuality ever come into the picture when working with the project?

No, there was a lesbian in the Panthers with Afeni, so it was no big deal to her. Their big issue is that I'm single. They are a community of family and tightness.

Tell me more about the meditation garden opening in June in Atlanta.

It's part of the Tupac Amaru Center for the Arts (www.tastf.org). Arts saved Tupac from a life of crime and drugs, so Afeni really wants to have an arts school for the children of the community.



LaPolit

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INSIDE GIRLFRIENDS

ANH DAO KOI BE



Contributing editor Ann Rostow (left) and I spoke at the Women and Media Conference in Boston in March.

Take Pride

Back in 1991, my mother, Erin—who now serves as our publisher here at *Girlfriends*—went to her first gay Pride. Mom, my then lover, and I marched with our signs (“I Love My Girlfriend’s Mom!”) in the Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays contingent. We had a great day: the fog was offshore, the drag queens glamorous, the Dykes on Bikes sexy. I noticed that Mom was busy with thoughts in her head, but we were all having such a good time that I didn’t pay much attention.

It was only after we came home that Mom confessed she’d been terrified. She knew logically that she needn’t have been—it was San Francisco, after all—but she really had been afraid that we’d be hissed at, spat on, and pelted with rocks.

At the time, I teased her for her naïveté, but thinking back later, I learned two lessons. First, my, how things have changed since Mom came of age. After all, I was one of only a handful of lesbians she’d ever known; the first were the deeply closeted women of an opposing team in her bowling league when I was a baby. The second lesson I learned was, my, how so, so lucky I am to have grown up in a so-called blue state. I’d begun to take it all for granted.

Karen Opp’s “Red-State Pride” in this issue reminded me of those lessons. As Opp describes, the dykes who co-organize Pride parades in the heartland often confront the kind of challenges my mother feared we’d face that June day in 1991. But these lavender activists in red states also enjoy the pleasures of unity and camaraderie that come from being a minority within a minority (a sexual one within a political one).

Opp’s story reminded me of how important it is to reflect on the real meaning of the event. We have tons of great Pride-related content in this issue (including a recipe for a perfect Pride picnic like the one Mom and I enjoyed at her first Pride). I hope all of it reminds you that it’s not just about the party, but about self-confidence, empowerment, and a refusal to back down to red neighbors, be they next door or in the next state.

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the word on lesbian lifestyle

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