

The Sex Issue

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THE LESBIAN MAGAZINE

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

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Bound-Up Pleasures

Films to tickle your fancy. **By Candace Moore**



This month's film picks run the gamut of sexy queer relationships. Lesbian love in Taiwan, intergenerational dominant-submissive role-play and a 1950s starlet dabbling in fetishism make for stimulating viewing.

Drifting Flowers (Wolfe Releasing): Taiwanese director Zero Chou's latest feature offers a triptych of lesbian love stories that loosely connect over long or disjointed periods of time. Like her festival fave *Spider Lilies*, *Drifting Flowers* is visually lovely, yet better described as "moody" than "floral." In the first and longest segment, we are introduced to the positively charming accordion player Diego (Chao Yi-lan), a strapping young butch who wins a blind lounge singer's heart with her attentiveness. Things are hunky-dory until the singer's 8-year-old sister is taken into foster care because of her older sister's queer lifestyle. Part two brings us new characters: Lily, an elderly woman with Alzheimer's (played by the renowned Lu Yi-ching), who mistakes her gay male husband, Yen (theirs is a marriage of convenience), for her dead butch lover, Ocean. Recently dumped, Yen moves in with and takes care of his old friend, while Lily tends to his AIDS symptoms and confusedly has him dress in drag, lest people catch on that they're a "couple," which makes for equally sad and humorous moments. Segment three links Lily's and Diego's

stories with a flashback to the two as teens exploring their sexualities together. Diego's preference for binding over bras is somewhat accepted by her mom, but not by the rest of her family; she takes solace in Lily, an upbeat and rebellious cabaret performer. This film takes narrative untangling and trust in Chou's lead, but fine acting and compelling characters keep *Drifting Flowers* afloat. (wolfereleasing.com)

Punish Me (Picture This! Entertainment): From Angelina Maccarone, the director of two of the finest lesbian-themed films of the last three years (*Vivere* and *Unveiled*), comes this endearing sadomasochistic work from 2006, now available on DVD. An intelligent rendering of a dominant-submissive relationship between a 50-year-old female probation officer and a 16-year-old boy, this film is just as queer and provocative as the rest of Maccarone's oeuvre, even if it doesn't portray a romance between women. Jan (Kostja Ullmann), the teenager, stalks Elsa (Maren Kroymann) relentlessly and begs her to do what she will with him; she takes him to an empty building, pulls down his briefs and swats his ass till he moans. They meet for such trysts repeatedly but never have traditional sex. In cool black and white, with deep shadows, Maccarone captures the preciousness and

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Editor's Pick



Weeds (Showtime): Having just wrapped (rolled?) its fourth season with the mother of all cliffhangers, Showtime has announced that its Golden Globe-winning show *Weeds* is coming back for two more seasons—but not before you'll have a chance to beg, borrow or steal the DVDs (we don't really recommend that last one) and get yourself caught up on one of the most wonderfully dysfunctional comedies on cable. With the stock market in crisis, the globe heating up and the world on the brink of a different calamity every day, it could be just the escapist fix your funny bone needs. **Still not convinced? Check out "Top 10 Reasons You Should Be Watching Weeds" at curvemag.com and let us persuade you.**

[RACHEL SHATTO]

precariousness of the "different love" that blossoms between a stern, exasperated woman and a breathtaking, naughty boy. This is a quiet and exacting film, full of tiny details and subtle emotions; its poetry feels intensely personal. Scenes of Elsa's after care, cradling the often sobbing, smitten boy to her chest, are the most tender, and especially so in a role-reversal scene where Jan holds and pets Elsa after she falls deep into top drop. Brace yourself, though, for what ensues when the couple's taboo secret is leaked to the outside world. (picturethishomevideo.com)

The Bettie Page Collection (Cult Epics): Including a documentary on the erotic photographer Bunny Yeager and a bountiful assortment of the legendary Bettie Page's burlesque films, *Striporama* (1953), *Varietease* (1954) and *Teaserama* (1955), this three-DVD boxed set comes with a vintage treat in the form of a two-hour retrospective of Irving Klaw's 1950s bondage, fetish and spanking videos featuring Page along with other sultry models. As the collection's narrator informs us, Klaw started as a star photographer and expanded his business to include filming S/M scenes when male fans begged to see their favorite starlets all tied up. (Perhaps they desperately wanted to feel like they could "have" these famous women.) While manufactured for male consumption, these short films from 1951 to '56, which prominently feature Page's smiley, sexually curious expressions and uncomfortably high heels, offer many pleasures to happily perverse dykes. What's striking is that there are no men in the picture, so all the rope play, leather corset tying, body manipulation, gagging, collaring and slaps to the behind are administered to women by women. The lingerie, makeup, thigh-high tights and garters show the models' strict adherence to the gendered costumes of the time, yet today, such getups have become classics of femme fetish wear and arguably queer the objectification they might have once represented. Imaginative viewers can enjoy this collection against the grain, reading lesbian desire and femme sub and domme identities into these cinematic artifacts of exploitation. (cultepics.com) ■

Q+A

Tabatha Coffey & Dee Adames

They are the darlings of Bravo TV: sexy lesbian hairdressers whose take-no-prisoners approach to work has made them fan favorites. Dee Adames, a 37-year-old from Miami, took home \$100,000 as this season's winner of *Shear Genius* and now she's launching her own salon, South Miami's Dee & L Hair Studio. Meanwhile, Tabatha Coffey, the bold and unabashed star of *Tabatha's Salon Takeover*, has used her decades of work experience to help struggling salon owners turn their businesses around—all the while running her own salon, Industrie Hair Gurus, in Ridgewood, N.J., and seeing clients at the Warren-Tricomi salon in West Hollywood.



You've both given a little more visibility to lesbians in the hairstyling industry.

Dee: I didn't know that Tabatha was gay. I had no clue. She never mentioned it throughout any of the shows, so it was a shocker to me as well.

Are there more lesbians than we would think in the industry?

Tabatha: I think there are more gay women in every industry than anyone would imagine. It's something I never really thought about, because it's who I am.

Dee: Maybe after Sally Hershberger also has been out and has been an influential hairdresser, maybe that's kind of encouraging young hairdressers, young lesbian women coming into the industry.

Did you ever question whether to be out on the job or not?

Dee: No, I am very open and my mother accepts me and that's all that matters to me. Anybody who sits in my chair realizes that it's not about the sexuality or gender. It's just about the passion that I have for what I do.

Tabatha: It's never been a question for me. You know, I'm a gay woman. I'm a hairdresser. It's just all part and parcel. It's who I am, so, to me, I'm out, I'm open. I guess you like it or you don't like it depending on what your stance is. But I don't think that me being gay affects my hairdressing ability, obviously, and me being a hairdresser doesn't affect me being a gay woman. I think it's the level of people's comfort.

Has cutting hair changed your life?

Dee: Oh, cutting hair has changed my life tremendously. I now love what I do. It has been able to provide for me and my family, my mother, help her to pay her rent. Simple things like that. But it also has helped me to travel and see things, just because once you love what you do, you don't work a day in your life and you get rewarded for it. I live a much happier life because I'm fulfilled with what I do.



Tabatha: I'm really lucky. I've been hairdressing now for 26 years and every morning when I get up and go to work I absolutely love what I do, and not many people can say that. We all have bad days and that's OK, that's part of life, but I have never grown bored of it. It still gives me a thrill. I still love it when the client is really happy and walks out feeling great, looking beautiful and loves what I've done, and that has never ever gone away. And the fact that I've been lucky enough to be able to travel all over the world, work with other people in my profession and even now, you know, showcase hairdressers as a true profession on television means a lot to me.

Do you think there's such a thing as lesbian hair, or a lesbian aesthetic?

Dee: Yeah there is, definitely...lesbian women come to me because, first of all, I don't have any fear of going short, of cutting short hair. And we definitely have signature looks as far as, you know,

very also lesbi consi to res perce daily their maint How ist th looks Dee: [What disco Dee: T that w didn't I defini maybe inside l Tabatha Anythi would p ple look look at I have, seriousl it as a li would p grow to and I ha Hallmar [DIANE ANDE

Film still from *The Bettie Page Collection*

