

# Gilbert's Wildboy helps liberate audiences

by Michael R. Mackie

"If it were not for the art and artists of Buddies and Bad Times Theatre, transsexuals, leather dykes, drag queens...then all we would be left with is *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Brady Bunch*, and *Father Knows Best*." — Performer Kate Bornstein addressing an anti-censorship rally in Toronto, July '92.

Buddies, dedicated to new and innovative and/or lesbian Canadian work, opened its 14th season with *The Investigation Into the Strange Case of the Wildboy*, a play written and directed by the "bad boy" of Toronto's theatre scene, Sky Gilbert.

*Wildboy* (which ran from Sept. 23 to Oct. 11) told the story of a "perverse" youth (Shaun O'Mara) who is found in the woods. He is then made to enter "civilized" life by two battling doctors—one straight (Andrew Scorer) and one gay (Darren O'Donnell), and to learn the joys of etiquette and chastity.

Gilbert, a former York student

theatre

The Investigation into the Strange Case of the Wildboy Buddies in Bad Times Theatre Sky Gilbert, Artistic Director

(sometime between 1970 to 1975 — he couldn't remember), explains how *Wildboy* grew out of and expands on his earlier play *In Which Piers Pasolini Sees His Death in the Face of a Young Boy*, which also centered on O'Donnell and O'Mara. Both plays break down the "fourth wall" — that wall which is the audience; the audience is actively involved.

In *Wildboy*, the set demands interplay between the stage and the viewer. Action spontaneously erupts all around the theatre — even the set movers are characters in the play.

The audience is encouraged to move to an adjoining room where an orgy scene takes place.

"During the orgy, people are shocked but are grateful they can choose not to view it," said Gilbert.

Gilbert added "the sucking-off



Buddies in Bad Times Theatre attempted to break down the fourth wall between the audience and the action of the play.

scene was really liberating" for the primarily white, gay, male audience. They identified strongly with the exposure of a hypocrisy when the

wildboy performed fellatio on a "straight" male character (Max Hancock) who gave in and enjoyed it.

Afterall, the theme of Buddies' 1992-93 season is that of *consent*, of saying "yes" — to risk, to sex, and to pleasure.

And pleasure, my dear congregation, has been a concept that *we do not approve of*.

"Judeo-Christian culture is repressive," Gilbert says, "but what makes sex so exciting is the idea of sin, or transgressing."

"Love and sex. How do they relate? Sex or love. In an anti-sexual society, they are hard to reconcile. I'm writing about sex, positively about sex, raising questions while not necessarily answering them. Sex is the metaphor of most of my work."

Gilbert said we live in a repressed era, with AIDS and conservatism, but predicts "wildness will return at the turn of the century."

Buddies' next play, *A Long, Long Way to Paradise*, written by Marcy Rogers (a Punk Marlboro production), opens Oct. 15 and runs until the first of November.

## Queer imagery finds its way into the mainstream film market

by Lilac Caña

Love between women is a subject that seems to have become cinematically topical. When a world-renowned event such as the recent Toronto International Film Festival of Festivals offers an unprecedented number of films with strong Queer imagery — specifically, of the Lesbian variety, it's evident the audience

film

Films with Lesbian and Gay imagery at Toronto's Festival of Festivals 1992

(the cultural society) is ready to see itself in a larger frame. Film being more about life and not "larger than life."

That Festival artistic directors saw fit to present a variety of works which dealt openly with a subject many still

regard as risky, (or at worst — irrelevant) is thrilling. Judging from the lineups for Monika Treut's *Female Misbehaviour* (Germany/USA, 1992), Laurie Colbert and Dominique Cardona's *Thank God I'm a Lesbian* (Canada, 1992), and *Forbidden Love* (Canada, 1992), by Aerlyn Weissman and Lynne Fernie,

Toronto filmgoers — both male and female — were more than ready to view the "Lesbian life" in its different levels and manifestations.

Like all bodies of work dealing with hot subjects, some were effective in their treatment of nuances and in their sensitivity; others were exploitative and damaging (or just boring). *Forbidden Love*, *Thank God I'm a Lesbian*, and *Female Misbehaviour* were enjoyable. Others, like the juicy gem of a short from English director Cheryl Farthing, *Rosebud* (1991), and *Crush* (1992), Canadian/New Zealander Alison Maclean's first feature film, were beautifully original and challenging, respectively.

*Rosebud* sexily traced a young artist's gradual embrace of her own repressed desires, through her voyeuristic relationship with the lesbian couple living next door. All of

14 gorgeous minutes, *Rosebud* charmed with visual allusions to Renaissance paintings and a glimpse of London's lesbian bar scene. *Crush*, "definitely not a love story," unfolded as a complex blend of humorous perversity within an unusual social context. Particularly striking were the panoramic sweeps of New Zealand's haunting landscape.

Two films to look out for (among the many I didn't actually get to see, but about which I heard nothing but ecstatic acclaim): *Orlando* (Great Britain, 1992) by Sally Potter — based on Virginia Woolf's novel, and Barbara Hammer's *Nitrate Kisses*, a film which explores the largely undocumented history of lesbian and gay culture in modern North America.


Films to avoid: *Inside Monkey Zetterland* — Jefery Levy's over-hip L.A. chronic-urban-malaise genre flick, in which gay and lesbian char-

acters and issues are so fluff they only deserve to be caricatured. And *Claire of the Moon* (by Nicole Conn), in which "an unlikely couple is trapped together as roommates in Cabin #4 at the Arcadia Women's Writers Retreat." There may have been a happy erotic ending, but *Desert Hearts* this is not. Both films are from the States.

So where and when would one expect to find these lesbi-friendly films, now that the brief ten-day fest is over? Some are available on video at the National Film Board's film/video library. Others will be included in this spring's Lesbian And Gay Film festival. Some might make it to revue theatres. It's discouraging that mainstream audiences may never get to see these entertaining, informative films in a commercial feature length format. But many are worth seeking out.



In *Rosebud*, a young artist uncovers new desires after getting off on watching a lesbian couple do it.



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