



The 30 Best LGBTQI American Documentaries

**Special LGBTQI Outwatch/SDFP Presentation:
The 30 Best American LGBTQI Documentaries
Sponsored by Sonoma County Pride**

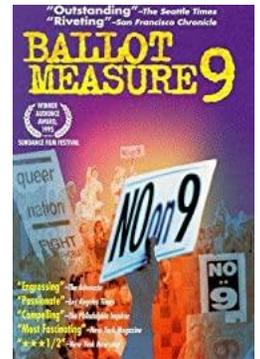
Local cinephiles/filmmakers Gary Carnivele and Jane Winslow present and discuss OUTwatch's newly minted "30 Best American LGBTQIA Documentaries." The duo examines films about LGBTQIA history and issues, activism, gender studies, as well as profiles of noteworthy individual. They will also explore queer documentary style and take a closer look at the work of 3 pivotal auteurs: Barbara Hammer, Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman. The conversation concludes with a discussion of films being co-presented by OUTwatch at SDFP 2021.



The 30 Best LGBTQI American Documentaries

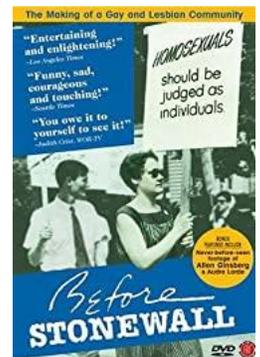
Ballot Measure 9

Ballot Measure 9 was an anti-gay amendment proposed to Oregon voters in 1992 by a conservative group. This documentary goes behind the scenes of the fight to stop Measure 9. It contains portions of anti-gay videos as well as news clips and interviews with the people who successfully fought passage of Measure 9.
1995 Director: Heather MacDonald. 72 min.



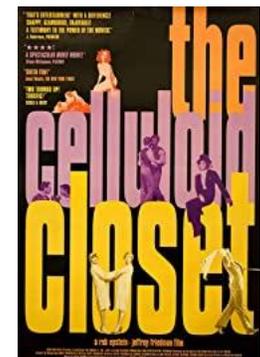
Before Stonewall

New York City's Stonewall Inn Riot is regarded by many as the site of gay and lesbian liberation started on June 27-28, 1969. This documentary uses extensive archival film, movie clips and personal recollections to construct an audiovisual history of the gay community before the Stonewall riots.
1984 Directors: Greta Schiller, Robert Rosenberg 87 min.



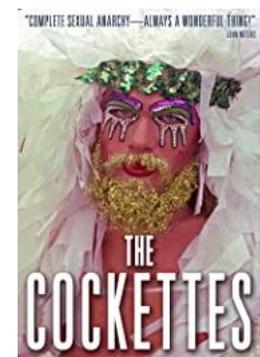
The Celluloid Closet

A documentary surveying the various Hollywood screen depictions of homosexuals and the attitudes behind them throughout the history of North American film. Based on the book of the same name by gay film historian and critic Vito Russo.
1996 Directors: Rob Epstein; Jeffrey Friedman 107 min.



The Cockettes

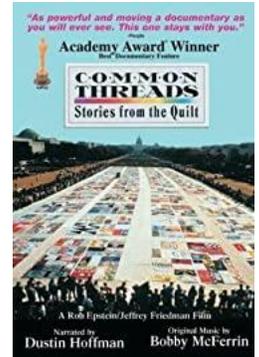
On New Year's Eve, 1969, a flamboyant ragtag troupe of genderbending hippies took the stage of San Francisco's Palace Theater and The Cockettes were born. For the next 2 1/2 years, these talented performers created 20 shows and many underground films.
2002. Directors: Bill weber; David Weissman. 100 min.



Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt

This film recounts the lives and deaths of various victims of AIDS who are commemorated in the AIDS quilt. It is a massive cloth collecting each piece as a memorial for each victim of the disease to both show the death toll and to show the humanity of the victims to those who would rather demonize them.

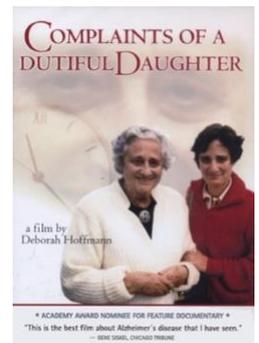
1989. Directors: Rob Epstein; Jeffrey Friedman. 102 min.



Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter

An exploration of the tenacity of love and the meaning of memory, Hoffmann chronicles her growing understanding of her elderly mother's struggle with Alzheimer's disease with witty confessional-style narration. The film examines a timely subject: as Americans live longer, more and more people are faced with the life-altering challenge of caring for an elderly parent.

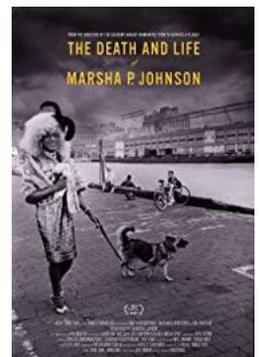
1995. Director: Deborah Hoffman. 44 min.



The Death and Life of Marsha P Johnson

Victoria Cruz investigates the mysterious 1992 death of black gay rights activist and Stonewall veteran, Marsha P. Johnson. Using archival interviews with Johnson, and new interviews with Johnson's family, friends and fellow activists.

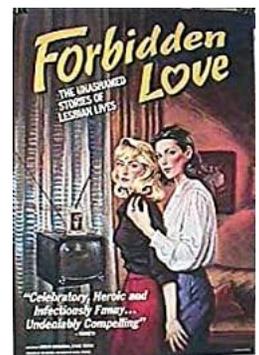
2017 Director: David France. 107 min.



Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives

Ten women talk about being lesbian in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s: discovering the pulp fiction of the day about women in love, their own first affairs, the pain of breaking up, frequenting gay bars, facing police raids, men's responses, and the etiquette of butch and femme roles.

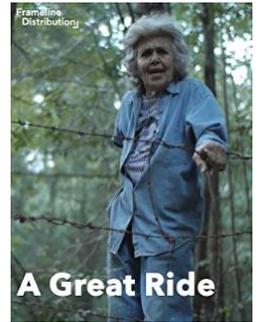
1992. Directors: Lynne Ferbie; Aerlyn Weissman. 85 min.



A Great Ride

A documentary about lesbians aging with dynamism and zest for life. Sally Gearhart, 80-plus retired women's studies professor and activist, lives in a rustic cabin nestled in the Northern California woods. Although surrounded by the beauty of nature, she also faces several challenges to her independence.

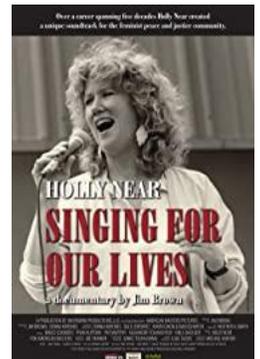
2018. Directors: Deborah Craig; Veronica Duport Deliz. 33 min.



Holly Near: Singing for Our Lives

A documentary revisiting the career of a feisty activist musician, who never quite achieved the same recognition as her similar contemporaries Joan Baez and Joni Mitchell.

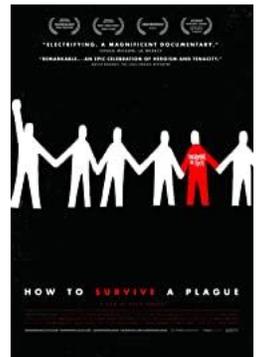
2018. Director: Jim Brown. 63 min.



How to Survive a Plague

In the early years of the AIDS epidemic, the disease was considered a death sentence affecting communities, like the LGBT ones, whom many in power felt deserved it. This film tells the story of how militant activists like ACT-UP and TAG pushed for a meaningful response to this serious public health problem.

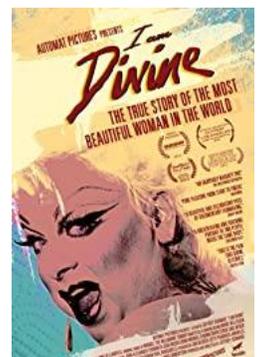
2012 Director: David France. 100 min.



I Am Divine

The story of Divine, aka Harris Glenn Milstead, from his humble beginnings as an overweight, teased Baltimore youth to an internationally recognized drag superstar through his collaboration with filmmaker John Waters. Spitting in the face of the status quos of body image, gender identity, sexuality, and preconceived notions of beauty.

2014. Director: Jeffrey Schwartz. 90 min.



Intersexion

This groundbreaking film sets out to "de-mystify" intersex, looking "beyond the shame and secrecy that defines many intersex births". Interviewing intersex people around the world, the film explores how they "navigate their way through childhood, adolescence, relationships and adulthood, when they don't fit the binary model of a solely male and female world."

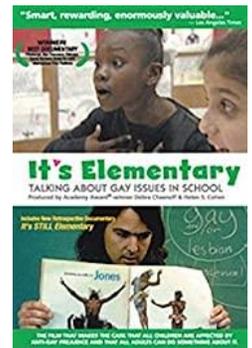
2012 Director: Grant Lahood. 68 min.



It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School

The groundbreaking film that addresses anti-gay prejudice by providing adults with practical lessons on how to talk with children about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people. Part of The Respect for All Project.

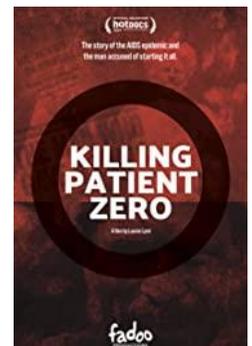
1996. Directors: Debra Chasnoff; Helen Cohen. 80 min.



Killing Patient Zero

Gaetan Dugas was openly gay. In early 1980s he contracted what was termed "gay cancer". He provided blood samples and 72 names of his former sex partners. Dugas was demonized for his promiscuity and wrongfully identified as patient zero by the media, including San Francisco journalist Randy Shilts.

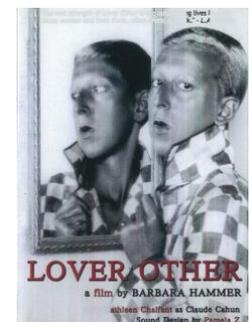
2019. Director: Laurie Lynd. 100 min.



Lover Other: The Story of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore

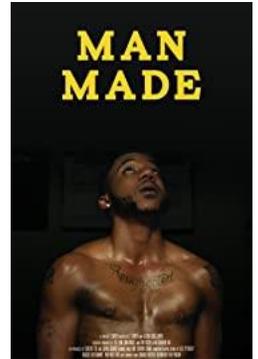
French Surrealist lesbian sisters, Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore collaborate creating gender-bending photographs, collages, and writing. During the WWII Nazi occupation they perform heroic and imaginative acts of Resistance are captured, imprisoned, and sentenced to death.

2018. Director: Barbara Hammer. 55 min.



Man Made

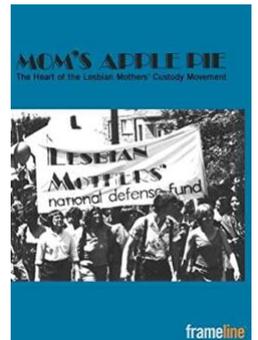
This documentary explores the world of transgender bodybuilding, tracking the path of four hopefuls as they prepare for the Trans FitCon competition in Atlanta, Georgia. 2018. Director: T. Cooper. 93 min.



Mom's Apple Pie: The Heart of the Lesbian Mother's Custody Movement

While the fight for LGBTQ Civil Rights movement was gaining momentum, the 1970s witnessed horrific custody battles for lesbian mothers. *Mom's Apple Pie: The Heart of the Lesbian Mothers' Custody Movement* revisits the early tumultuous years of the lesbian custody movement through the stories of five lesbian mothers and their four children.

2006. Directors: Jody Laine; Shan Ottey; Shad Reinstein. 61 min.



No Secret Anymore: The Times of Del Martin & Phyllis Lyon

No Secret Anymore shows Del and Phyllis creating coalitions that took on the prevailing belief that lesbians were illegal, immoral and sick. Phyllis and Del did the groundbreaking work on lesbian mothers, sex education, family violence, and more. Always working both from within and outside the institutions they sought to change, Del and Phyllis were able to advance the rights of LGBT folks.

2003. Director: Joan E. Biren. 57 min.



Paris Is Burning

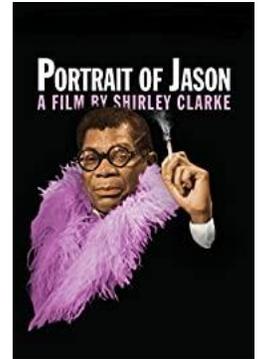
A chronicle of New York's drag scene in the 1980s, focusing on balls, voguing and the ambitions and dreams of those who gave the era its warmth and vitality. 1991 Director: Jeannie Livingston. 71 min.



Portrait of Jason

The highlights of a 12-hour interview with Aaron Payne, alias Jason Holliday, a former houseboy, would-be cabaret performer, and self-proclaimed hustler who, while drinking and smoking cigarettes and pot, tells stories and observations of what it was like to be black and gay in 1960s America.

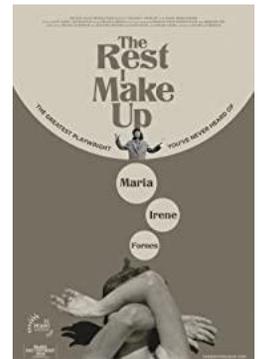
1967. Director: Shirley Clarke. 105 min.



The Rest I Make Up

Cuban-American playwright Maria Irene Fornes created astonishing worlds onstage. When she stops writing due to dementia, a friendship with a young writer reignites her visionary creative spirit, triggering a film collaboration that picks up where the pen left off.

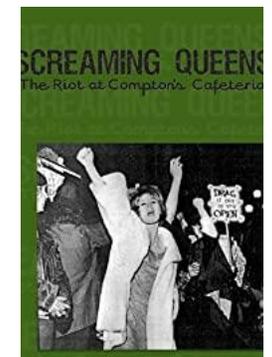
2018. Director: Michelle Memran. 79 min.



Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria

Documentary about transgender women and drag queens who fought police harassment at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco's Tenderloin in 1966, three years before the famous riot at Stonewall Inn bar in NYC.

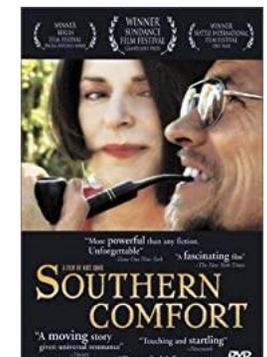
2005. Directors: Victor Silverman; Susan Stryker. 57 min.



Southern Comfort

Southern Comfort documents the final year in the life of Robert Eads, a transgender man. Eads, diagnosed with ovarian cancer, was turned down for treatment by two dozen doctors out of fear of treating him. By the time Eads received treatment, the cancer was too advanced to save his life.

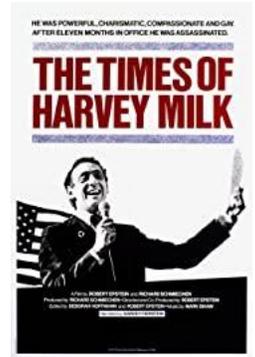
2002. Director: Kate Davis. 90 min.



The Times of Harvey Milk

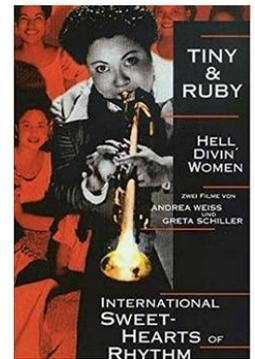
San Francisco Board of Supervisors Harvey Milk and SF Mayor George Moscone were assassinated by recently resigned Supervisor Dan White on November 27th, 1978. Milk's life, his successful efforts to politically represent SF's LGBT community, and the city's reaction to the assassinations are documented with news film and personal recollections.

1984. Director: Robert Epstein. 90 min.



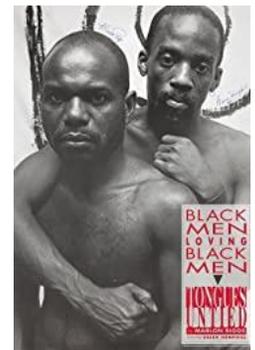
Tiny and Ruby: Hell Drivin' Women

This profile of legendary jazz trumpeter Tiny Davis and her partner of over 40 years, drummer-pianist Ruby Lucas weaves together rare jazz recordings, live performances, vintage photographs, and narrative poetry by Cheryl Clarke. Tiny's contribution to jazz history is documented and the 78-year-old demonstrates that her chops and humor are both intact. 1996. Director: Greta Schiller. 28 min.



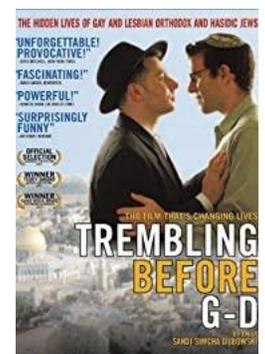
Tongues Untied

Marlon Riggs, with assistance from other gay Black men, especially poet Essex Hemphill, celebrates Black men loving Black men as a revolutionary act. The film intercuts footage of Hemphill reciting his poetry, Riggs telling the story of his growing up, scenes of men in social intercourse and dance, and various comic riffs. 1988. Director Marlon Riggs. 55 min.



Trembling Before G-D

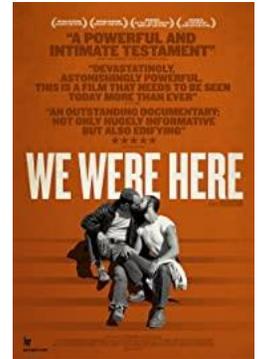
Built around intimately-told personal stories of Hasidic and Orthodox Jews who are gay or lesbian, the film portrays a group of people who face a profound dilemma - how to reconcile their passionate love of Judaism and the Divine with the drastic Biblical prohibitions that forbids homosexuality. 2001 Director: Sandi Simcha Dubowski. 94 min.



We Were Here

A deep and reflective look back at the arrival and impact of AIDS in San Francisco, and how the City's inhabitants dealt with that unprecedented calamity. It explores what was not so easy to discern in the midst of it all - the parallel histories of suffering and loss; community coalescence and empowerment.

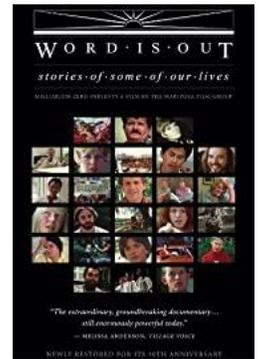
2011. Directors: David Weissman; Bill Weber. 90 min.



Word is Out

26 men and women of various backgrounds, ages, and races talk about being gay. Their stories are arranged in loose chronology: early years, fitting in (which for some meant marriage), disclosing their sexuality, establishing adult identities, and reflecting on how things have changed and how things should be. All see social progress as they reflect.

1979. Directors: Nancy Adair; Peter Adair; Andrew Brown; Rob Epstein; Lucy Massie Phenix; Veronica Selver. 164 min.



Most titles are available for purchase. Many titles are available on DVD through Sonoma County Public Libraries. Some are available from Netflix, Amazon Prime, and other streaming services.