

Hot or not

What to see and what to skip at Hot Docs 2008

HOT DOCS

Festival runs April 17-27 at these venues:

- Al Green Theatre (Bloor JCC), 750 Spadina Av.
- Bloor Cinema, 506 Bloor W.
- Cumberland Cinemas, 159 Cumberland
- Innis Town Hall, 2 Sussex
- Isabel Bader Theatre, 93 Charles W.
- ROM Theatre, 100 Queen's Park
- Royal Cinema, 608 College
- Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge

Individual screenings \$10 (before 6pm)/\$12 (after 6pm)/\$5 (after 11pm). Festival pass: \$90-\$160. Tickets available at The Documentary Box Office, 87 Avenue, 416 637-5150. Go to www.hotdocs.ca for complete schedule.

REVIEWS BY JASON ANDERSON, CHANDLER LEVACK, ADAM NAYMAN

BE LIKE OTHERS ****

Directed by Tanaz Eshaghian. 74 min. Apr 21, 7:15pm, Isabel Bader; Apr 24, 4:15pm, Cumberland.

"Because [the Quran] does not specifically say that a sex change is a sin, we cannot call it a sin," says a Muslim cleric by way of explaining why sex changes were officially sanctioned in Iran — a country where homosexuality is not merely stigmatized, but considered grounds for execution. *Be Like Others* probes the fallout of this fatwa, foregrounding the experiences of several young men in various stages of gender-reassignment. Formally polished and emotionally raw, Tanaz Eshaghian's film puts the lie to Western notions of Iran as a

homogenous society while tallying up the physical, emotional, and spiritual costs of this particular sort of "fitting in." **AN**

BEAUTIFUL LOSERS ****

Directed by Aaron Rose, Joshua Leonard. 80 mins. Apr 19, 7pm, Cumberland; Apr 21, 1:30pm, Cumberland.

It's easy to dismiss *Beautiful Losers* as the product of hipsters trying to make art — until you scratch beneath the sensuous surface imagery of LA skateboarders and Harmony Korine tap dancing for spare change. Aaron Rose — owner of New York's Alleged Gallery — cultivated a community of freaks in the mid-'90s, artists who gleaned from folk traditions, graffiti and punk rock to express their own isolation and repressed anxiety. With sumptuous cinematography showcasing the gorgeous line art of Margaret Kilgallen, Ed Templeton, and Barry McGee — often transposed onto an inner city billboard or train compartment — *Beautiful Losers* flips a defiant middle finger to any art-school vernacular. **CL**

DANCE WITH A SERIAL KILLER ****

Directed by Nigel Williams. 72 min. April 20, 9:30pm, ROM; April 23, 11:30am, ROM.

In this real-life police procedural, the investigation of the 1989 death of a woman on a beach in Brittany eventually leads to the capture of Francis Heaulmes, a transient responsible for at least 40 murders all over France. "I think he came very close to getting away with it," says Jean François Abgrall, the detective who put it all together. Indeed, it's hard to believe that Heaulmes' crimes would ever have been linked if not for the determination of the coolly methodical Abgrall, as well as a few convenient plot twists that would strain viewers' credulity if this chilling story weren't true. **JA**

EMOTICONS ****

Directed by Heddy Honigmann. 53 min. Apr 18, 7:15pm, ROM; Apr 19, noon, ROM.

Last year, Heddy Honigmann received Hot Docs' Outstanding Achievement Award in recognition of her career accomplishments, and *Emoticons* is a typically fine piece of work. It focuses on six teenaged girls in the Netherlands whose lives revolve around some form of online social networking; under Honigmann's patient and empathetic gaze, they reveal the reasons for their detachment. Anyone expecting a portrait of "lost souls" may be surprised: by tracing the line from electronic congress to flesh-and-blood interaction, *Emoticons* reveals itself as a film about the joy of being found. **AN**

HOLD ME TIGHT, LET ME GO ****

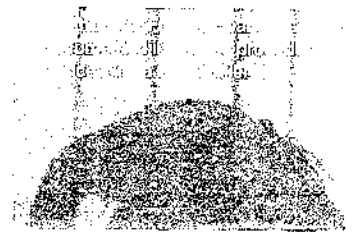
Directed by Kim Longinotto. 100 min. April 19, 9:15pm, Isabel Bader; April 27, 3:30pm, Bloor.

The latest by one of Britain's best documentary filmmakers is a typically intimate and powerful work about an extraordinary school in Oxford for emotionally troubled children. Apt to cuss out, spit on and punch their teachers — who display a restraint that can only be considered uncanny — these kids obviously have a lot of issues to work out. Patient and perceptive, *Hold Me Tight, Let Me Go* illustrates the daunting complexity of each subject's situation while bringing troubling issues of parenting and pedagogy directly to the fore. **JA**

THE RISE AND FALL OF GRUMPY BURGER ****

Directed by Matt Gallagher. 84 min. April 20, 7pm, Royal; April 23, 11:59pm, Bloor.

A not-so-epic tale of ambition, schlock and all-beef patties, Matt Gallagher's very funny portrait of a filmmaker pal seems tailor-made



for cult status. Windsor, Ontario's very own Roger Corman, Marshall Sfalcin is happy to fill his no-budget, Z-grade productions with cardboard monsters and topless girls. No wonder things go awry when he tries to go legit with a movie about his grandfather's restaurant, which may have beaten McDonald's to the concept of fast food. When not stirring up battles in his family, Sfalcin ridicules Gallagher's own efforts to turn this moviemaker's life into a movie (and a great one at that). **JA**

SONG SUNG BLUE ****

Directed by Greg Kohs. 87 mins. April 18, 9pm, Bloor; April 20, 7:15pm, ROM.

As American gothic as it gets in Milwaukee, husband and wife performance duo Lightning & Thunder endure car crashes, hospitalization and a slowing appreciation for their schmaltzy Neil Diamond covers en route to a surefire comeback. Greg Kohs captures subjects — now paunchy and despondent, clad in sequined vests adorned with stars and stripes — mired in bitter realism, testing the limits of unconditional love. This documentary is filled with poignant moments, the best of which involve an onstage duet with Eddie Vedder and a chain-smoking nuclear family squabbling over skillet at Denny's. Overwrought and unbearably sentimental, *Song Sung Blue* is as heart-rending as Diamond's guiltiest pleasures. **CL**

TRIAGE: DR. JAMES ORBINSKI'S HUMANITARIAN DILEMMA ****

Directed by Patrick Reed. 88 min. April 22, 9:15pm, Bloor; April 27, 7:15pm, Bloor.

A first-hand witness to some of the worst horrors in recent human history, Dr. James Orbin ski admits that he feels "nearly uncontrollable rage" at the people who allowed it all to happen, whether the perpetrators were Somali warlords, Hutu hate-mongers or indifferent