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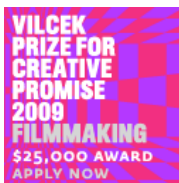
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FILMMAKER BLOG

Monday, June 09, 2008

NEWFEST 2008: HERE, QUEER, IN ITS 20TH YEAR

From NewFest's opening night Gala film "Tru Loved" (right to left) Producer, **Antonio Brown**; Actor, **Tye Olson**; Actor, **Najarra Townsend**; Director, **Stewart Wade**



We're here. We're Queer (or at least by association). Let's go to the movies. As of this Thursday, June 5th NewFest, New York's premier LGBT film festival has begun, and it

will be rolling out gay-oriented flicks through Sunday, June 15th. This being its 20th anniversary year, the festival has seen a great deal of change in virtually all of its essential elements: filmmaking, New York City, and gay culture – and the films of NewFest class of 2008 reflect this change like a drag queen to a make-up mirror.

The four themes of the festival this year are *The Early Years of AIDS*, *Activism/Repression*, *Parenthood*, and *African American Images* and nearly all of the films seem to fit neatly into one or more of these categories. "These themes come up organically from submissions," NewFest's Artistic Director **Basil Tsiokos** tells me, "We don't seek out films that fit into pre-conceived categories." Thus moviegoers this year can expect a number of poignant looks at past and present, where gay culture and filmmaking in general have been, and where they are going. New Yorkers looking to revel in the nostalgia of gay New York of yesterday can look to *The Universe of Keith Haring* or *SqueezeBox!* both of which recently screened at the Tribeca film festival. Those looking for innovative filmmakers that stand up to any audience of progressive cinephiles should head to *Japan Japan* an Israeli film that mixes kaleidoscope imagery with understated, impressive acting and a fresh style of filmmaking. Those looking to understand where gay culture is going can look to films like *Bi the Way* an honest and intelligent documentary that seeks to understand trends in bisexuality in America.

Regardless of all the changes that have gone on over the past 20 years, it is clear from the general feel in the air at Thursday's opening night Gala screening of *Tru Loved*, a glossy LA centric crowd pleaser, that NewFest has been bringing crowds back for 20 years not just because they find films that will succeed outside of an insular LGBT film festival circuit, but because they continue to nurture a New York audience that seeks to understand a little more of themselves and others, and while they're doing it, like Cyndi Lauper says, they "just wanna have fun!"

posted by Conor Fetting-Smith @ 6/09/2008 11:09:00 PM

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SPRING 2008

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