

IN FOCUS: EXPRESS YOURSELF

Arianna

Carlo Lavagna
Italy | 2015 | 84:00

Canadian Premiere

After neglecting their lake house for over 15 years, Arianna and her parents finally visit again for a vacation. Interacting with her old neighbourhood, she reacquaints herself with the once-familiar environment, and uncovers inconsistencies between her supposed past and what she knows now of her adult self.

Reconnecting with her cousin Celeste, Arianna's concern over her stalled maturation and lack of physical sexuality intensifies. To say the least, Celeste's shapely body and sexually liberal lifestyle are widely discordant with Arianna's own experience.

She sets out on an investigation into her childhood, fragments from the past fuelling her courage to explore her body and sexuality. Forced under the microscope of the medical community, she suffers from the pressures of normativity.

In realizing the truth, however, Arianna begins to see her uniqueness as something to be reckoned with. After many social setbacks, can one brave and tender soul make a difference toward creating a world of universal acceptance?

Italian with English subtitles

Girls Lost (Pojkarna)

Alexandra-Therese Keining
Sweden | 2015 | 106:00

Alexandra-Therese Keining (director of the lesbian classic *Kiss Me*) returns with *Girls Lost*, a tender coming-of-age film that is enveloped in super-natural allure. This sumptuous feast will dazzle the senses with striking visuals, a heart-pounding score and piercing social commentary.

Three teenage girls, Kim, Bella and Momo, are social outcasts. Relentlessly bullied by classmates and abandoned by their teachers, they discover a mysterious power that attracts butterflies and smells of vanilla, its black leaves oozing a liquid that the girls daringly drink.

They awaken as boys.

In the strange, fantastical allegory that follows, the girls must reconcile their relationship with one another with the cruel world that surrounds them. *Girls Lost* skilfully fuses fragile social

structures, gender fluidity and a desire for authentic connection in a way that is as insightful as it is enthralling.

Swedish with English subtitles

Official Selection, 2015 Toronto International Film Festival This program is rated 14A

Hunky Dory

Michael Curtis Johnson

USA | 2016 | 88:00

Canadian Premiere

Sidney is a down-on-his-luck Los Angeles drag queen who holds onto his dreams of rock stardom even as he spends his evenings performing to sparse crowds in dive bars, in Michael Curtis Johnson's feature debut.

Sidney's constant search for cash, drugs and sex (with men and women) is interrupted when he finds his 11-year-old son Georgie in his apartment, dropped off by Sidney's ex who has left town without warning or explanation. As Sidney struggles with his unexpected responsibility, he moves between moments of tenderness, tragedy and desperation as he tries to maintain Georgie's vision of his rock star dad.

Featuring compelling performances by co-screenwriter Thomas Pais as Sidney and Edouard Holdener as Georgie, *Hunky Dory* balances intense drama with lighthearted comic moments while exploring a world of unique characters whose relationships defy expectations.

Official Selection, 2016 Slamdance Film Festival

The Same Difference

Nneka Onuora

USA | 2015 | 68:00

Canadian Premiere

Nneka Onuora's striking film debut shines a long overdue spotlight on the unique challenges facing queer people of colour. Exploring the internal homophobia and gender roles that play out within the African-American community, Onuora examines the judgements that stud-on-stud couples, bisexual women and pregnant aggressives face from their peers. Locking down interviews with well-known figures such as Lea Delaria (*Orange is the New Black*) and AzMarie Livingston (*Empire*), the story focuses not only on the debate but also on the people affected. Snoop Pearson, best known for playing a murderer on HBO's *The Wire*, explains the criticism she faced in trying to become more feminine for a role in Spike Lee's movie, *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus*, without losing her lesbian fans and her own masculine identity.

Onuora masterfully examines these taboo issues and ignites a conversation about hypocrisy within the lesbian community.

Director in attendance

Uncle Gloria: One Helluva Ride!

Robyn Symon
USA 2016 75:00

International Premiere

Filed under stranger than fiction, Uncle Gloria: One Helluva Ride! tells the astonishing true story of how a 67-year-old macho owner of a South Florida auto-wrecking company discovers who they really are: a woman named Gloria.

Butch, a womanizer undergoing a nasty second divorce, needs a place to hide. But the last place anyone would think to find him is in a dress, wig and heels, living as a woman. What starts out as a trick to beat the system ends up changing Butch forever.

Featuring risky surgeries, sex work, family dysfunction, activism and falling in love, Gloria's life is one that must be seen to be believed. Hop on board! This is most definitely one helluva ride.