

2017 NCGLFF FEATURES SYNOPSES

AFTER LOUIE

(US, 101 min)

After Louie explores the contradictions of modern gay life and history through Sam, a man desperate to understand how he and his community got to where they are today. As an AIDS activist and member of ACT UP in the 1980s and 90s, Sam witnessed the deaths of too many friends and lovers. Battle-wounded and struggling with survivor's guilt, Sam now resents the complacency of his former comrades and derides what he sees as the younger generation's indifference to the politics of sex, and of death. An unexpected intimacy with a much younger man challenges his understanding of contemporary gay life. Through this unconventional romance, he is forced to deal with the trauma that so informs his past, their present, and an unknown future.

APRICOT GROVES

(Armenia, 80 min)

In light of cultural and familial obligations, to what lengths will someone go for the person they love? The characters in *Apricot Groves* wrestle with their identities against a backdrop of religious and societal oppression. Aram, an Iranian-Armenian youth who immigrated to the US as a young child, returns to Armenia for the first time to ask for the hand in marriage of an Armenian girlfriend Aram met in the US. Together, Aram and his older brother, Vartan, must shoulder all the details for the traditional ritual themselves, because they have no surviving male relatives. Aram discovers many cultural, religious, and national differences on the one-day trip, but harder obstacles lie ahead. Yet, there are more stops and rituals for the two brothers as they hit the road towards the Iranian border, and the film skillfully layers subtle hints among their words, looks, and deeds. With a striking, openhearted perspective, *Apricot Groves* proves that, when it comes to love, there are no borders. A beautiful story of identity, family, faith, brotherhood, and love, this debut feature was written and directed by Tehran-based Pouria Heidary Oureh.

In Armenian and Persian with English subtitles

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: TODRICK HALL

(US, 101 min)

American Idol and YouTube sensation Tодrick Hall launches his most ambitious project yet: the full-scale original musical, *Straight Outta Oz*. From a small town in Texas to big-time show business, comes an inspiring documentary of the redemptive power of art. We watch him struggle to write songs about growing up gay and black in small-town Texas, his difficult relationship with his mom, and the harsh realities of trying to make it in show business.

CAT SKIN

(UK, 97 min)

17-year-old Cat is a shy and troubled photography student. Her life is illuminated when her voyeuristic nature behind the camera lens sparks a chance encounter with a beautiful music student named April. Their relationship blossoms, while circumstances threaten to keep them apart. April's mother Sally struggles to come to terms with her daughter's involvement with Cat, while April's former lover is unable to deal with rejection. Spiraling tensions will lead to tragic events that will impact the lives of both Cat and April.

CENTER OF MY WORLD

(Germany/Austria, 115 min)

After a summer away at camp, Phil returns home to find that his mother, Glass, and twin sister, Dianne, aren't speaking to one another. Not willing to confront his family during the last of the summer holidays, Phil escapes to hang out with his best friend, eating ice cream and playing dress-up. As the school year begins, a new student arrives --the handsome and mysterious Nicholas. Smitten, Phil watches his crush as he runs around the track after school, and is thrilled when Nicholas returns his feelings. However, when first love's volatility comes to light, Phil realizes that he must deal with the problems of his past, in order to deal with the issues of his present.

In German with English subtitles

THE DEATH AND LIFE OF MARSHA P. JOHNSON

(US, 105 min)

Marsha P. Johnson was a pioneering LGBT+ rights campaigner in New York City from the 1960s onwards. She was a key figure in the 1969 Stonewall riots, and was known for her kindness and charitable nature as much as she was known for her striking drag looks. Along with her friend Sylvia Rivera, Johnson formed Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.), later becoming an AIDS activist who was fundamental in the early years of ACT UP. Marsha died in 1992 at the age of 46. Her body was found floating in New York's Hudson River. While Marsha's death was ruled a suicide, her friends have been trying to re-open the case to discover the truth behind Marsha's death. The film follows Victoria Cruz, a victim's rights advocate as she campaigns to have Marsha's case examined more closely.

DICKINSON AVENUE: THE (MOSTLY) TRUE STORY OF THE PADDOCK CLUB

(US, 90 min)

The Paddock Club was the first place in eastern NC where LGBT people could be themselves. Whether it was hosting a small gathering of friends, or a Broadway-sized drag pageant; for 30 years it was home to a lot of people, and they always thought it would be there. Opened in 1973, it survived the brutal homophobia of the south, the AIDS crisis, the gay-coming-of-age that was the 90s, and when it finally closed in December of 2003, it was one of the longest-running, continually-operating LGBT businesses in America. Through pictures, home movies, and stories told by the people who lived them, Dickinson Avenue pieces together 40 years of LGBT history in Eastern NC, as well as takes its audience behind the scenes of the longest-running comedy drag pageant in the country, The Miss Dickinson Avenue Pageant (which originated at The Paddock in 1983). The patrons and staff of The Paddock wove the tapestry that made up the story of The Paddock. This is their story.

THE FABULOUS ALLAN CARR

(US, 90 min)

With a career spanning three decades, Allan Carr was a one-of-a-kind Hollywood power player. An ambitious and innovative producer, manager, party planner, and marketer, Carr built his grandiose reputation with a calculated flair for the hustle that earned him a fortune from the 1978 mega-hit musical *Grease* and the 1983 Broadway smash *La Cage aux Folles*. Born in 1937, Carr was seduced by Hollywood and dreamed of reaching its upper echelon. He helped launch the careers of Olivia Newton-John and Michelle Pfeiffer. Carr's most spectacular film debacle was the 1980 homoerotic disco camp-fest *Can't Stop the Music*, starring Caitlyn Jenner, Valerie Perrine, and the Village People. Director Jeffrey Schwarz (*I Am Divine*, *Tab Hunter Confidential*) is the perfect choice to immortalize Carr's flamboyant, fairytale life. He's gathered warm and witty remembrances from many of Carr's friends and colleagues, including Bruce Vilanch, Lorna Luft, Marlo Thomas, and Steve Guttenberg.

GLORIA AND GRACE

(Brazil, 94 min)

Grace is a massage therapist who and a single mother of two children: Moreno and Papoula. On a visit to the doctor, Grace is diagnosed with a brain aneurism that may rupture at any moment. Desperately worried about who will take care of her kids in the event of her death, she decides to seek out her estranged brother, Luiz Carlos, whom she has not seen in over 15 years. When they meet, however, Luiz Carlos has become Gloria, a beautiful and successful transgender woman, who owns a restaurant and brags about her independence. At first, Gloria is unwilling to reconnect with her family; but as she becomes more guilt-laden, she accepts Grace's invitation to meet her niece and nephew and eventually realizes that, maybe, she can find fulfillment in being a mother.

In Portuguese with English subtitles

Opening Night Film!

HELLO AGAIN

(US, 105 min)

Where does sex end and love begin? When do fantasy and reality diverge? Bringing together stars of stage and screen, Tom Gustafson (*Were the World Mine*) brings us the highly anticipated gender-bending film adaptation of Michael LaChiusa's 1994 musical, *Hello Again*, inspired by Arthur Schnitzler's landmark play *Der Reigen* and Max Ophüls's subsequent Oscar-nominated film, *La Ronde*. Here, the time-hopping daisy chain of musical bed-hopping begins with the always wonderful Martha Plimpton, who leads a star-studded cast that also includes Cheyenne Jackson, T.R. Knight, Rumer Willis, Jenna Ushkowitz, and the most lauded performer on Broadway, six-time Tony winner Audra McDonald.

HELLO CUPID: FARRAH

(US, 71 min)

Here is a story about a queer young black girl exploring her options. Farrah has lived most of her life as a passive, shy, and awkward young woman who has yet to lose her virginity. Feeling frustrated with not being in control of her own life, she jumps into the online dating world. Soon she is exploring her desires and attractions that she used to hold as a secret, and there's no turning back now. This exciting production by Black&Sexy TV is a collaborative directorial effort between Numa Perrier, Dennis Dortch & Tina Cerin.

HOOKED

(US, 90 min)

In the United States, 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. With a fervent sense of humanity, Instagram star Max Emerson (aka maxisms on Instagram) dives head first into the subject in his poignant, yet hopeful, debut feature. Jack is a homeless eighteen-year-old prostitute with a smart mouth and impulsive tendencies. He battles through a violent world of reckless "johns" between New York City and Miami, desperately seeking the means to a better life for him and his boyfriend Tom. He spends most of his time in a world of often abusive, but affluent, eccentrics. His only ally is his boyfriend Tom. They live together in a shelter, but their safety there is compromised by the threat of Tom's father finding them. Jack sees an opportunity to make a better life for himself and Tom by taking a trip to Miami with a "john" named Ken. At first, Ken appears more honest and caring than the usual john, even winning Jack's trust...until Jack finds him on a Skype call with his never-mentioned wife. His faith in humanity smashed yet-again, Jack steals Ken's drugs and handgun. He eventually embarks on a drug- binge and encounters the slimiest characters Miami has to offer, falling deeper into the hole than he started.

KEPT BOY

(US, 89 min)

Interior designer/reality show star Farleigh Knock has a knack for keeping beautiful things around his home--- like Dennis. So when Fairleigh gives him an ultimatum for his 30th birthday to get a job or get out, Dennis goes from Kept Boy to Lost Man. Based on a novel by Robert Rodi, who specializes in gay satires on queer archetypes, George Bamber directs this dark gay comedy that shows life with a sugar daddy is bittersweet and poses the question, what is love and what is the price to keep it?

Free Family Film!

THE LAND BEFORE TIME

(1988, G, 70 min)

A group of orphaned dinosaurs, led by young brontosaurus Littlefoot, set out on a journey to the legendary Great Valley in this animated children's adventure. The group of ancient beasts faces countless challenges along the way, including vicious predators and harsh nature.

A MILLION HAPPY NOWS

(US, 80 min)

All the world's a soap opera, and all the men and women merely players, even daytime diva Lainey Allen (Crystal Chappell). She has enjoyed two decades of stardom (and won a Daytime Emmy Award) and has a blissful relationship with her beautiful partner, Eva (Jessica Leccia). But now Lainey is having difficulty remembering her lines---both on set and off. Are the florid writing and torrid story arcs to blame---or is it something else? She decides to retire, and she and Eva move to a little house perched on a bluff overlooking the ocean. But without the distractions of work, it soon becomes apparent that something is not quite right. A visit to the doctor confirms it: Lainey is suffering from early-onset Alzheimer's disease.

THE NEW 30

(US, 90 min)

Set in Los Angeles, *The New 30* is dramedy about a diverse group of gay friends discovering life in their 40's isn't quite what they imagined. By the time they hit their 40s, Elliot and his friends thought they'd have everything figured out...only to realize that your 40s are just as crazy, challenging, and unpredictable as life in your 30s! There's a lot of drama amongst these folks, but there's also a lot of comedy. A witty and funny combination of *Sex in the City* and *Thirtysomething*, many of the issues these guys face are relatable regardless if you're gay or not. Because 40 is the new 30!

PUSHING DEAD

(US, 110 min)

The words AIDS and comedy are rarely used together, but *Pushing Dead* is a film in which it is appropriate. When a struggling writer, HIV positive for 20+ years, accidentally deposits a \$100 birthday check, he is dropped from his health plan for earning too much. In this new era of sort-of universal care, can he take on a helpless bureaucracy or come up with \$3000 a month to buy meds on his own? He quietly panics that any disruption to his pharmaceutical regimen can have disastrous consequences for his health, but while he navigates the labyrinthine world of modern healthcare, the other people in his life suffer from their own personal trials and tribulations. Starring James Roday, Tom Riley, and Danny Glover.

RUSSIAN DOLL

(US, 83 min)

Russian Doll is a female-driven, sexy, edgy crime thriller. The story begins when a young woman discovers a murder plot and calls 911. But moments into the phone call, she is attacked and abducted. The investigation into her disappearance leads Police Detective Viola Ames to interrogate the cast and crew of a local theater company. What Viola doesn't know is that one of the people she questions is days from committing a long-planned murder. Meanwhile, Viola meets a beautiful woman named Faith who unexpectedly provides a vital clue to the case, and who also forces Viola to confront the grief she has suppressed from her wife's death of almost two years ago. It's a story filled with passion, violence, and suspense, where everyone is hiding something.

SENSITIVITY TRAINING

(US, 86 min)

Meet Serena. The scientist prefers germs over people and being right over being liked. When one of Serena's jealous outbursts toward a successful colleague turns serious, her university provides an ultimatum: turn that attitude around or your research lab is toast. Now meet Caroline, the bubbly positivity coach whose sweetness could rival a ray of sunshine dipped in unicorn dust. Tired of her normal gig as a sexual harassment trainer teaching remorseless men why they shouldn't pinch their coworkers' butts, Caroline jumps at the chance to help soften Serena's abrasive edges. It's a good thing she's up for the challenge, because it's going to take a whole lot of safe space, late-night glasses of wine, and basic instruction on the importance of being nice to get to the heart of Serena's brash personality and quick temper. When a surprise visit from her teenage half-brother Ethan leads her to confront her past, Serena finds herself on the verge of both a scientific discovery and a personal breakthrough.

Women's Centerpiece Film!

SIGNATURE MOVE

(US, 80 min)

In wrestling, the right signature move can take years to develop. And thirty-something Zaynab---a closeted, Muslim lawyer who takes up wrestling---quickly learns that she lacks the right technique and experience...on and off the mat. Working in the heart of Chicago's Pakistani community, Zaynab wears the mask of an obedient daughter to her endearing but conservative mother, all the while hiding that she's a lesbian. As the pressure of keeping her sexuality a secret starts to wear on her, Zaynab meets Alma, a free-spirited Chicana---a woman who is more experienced in love and used to living her life out loud and unashamed. As their relationship progresses and they are confronted with their differences, these polar opposites are challenged to find cultural middle ground before realizing that there's no one right way to live your own truth. *Signature Move* is an honest and funny look at how modern romance can arise from a path steeped in tradition.

SOMETHING LIKE SUMMER

(US, 115 min)

Something Like Summer follows the course of true love over the span of a dozen years, from awkward adolescence through challenging adulthood. Ben Bentley, a talented singer, pines for athletic yet secretive Tim Wyman, then meets his true love, Jace Holden. With Tim and Jace in open war to win his affection, Ben has to face up to the realities of adulthood, his continued fear to fight for his own happiness, and the challenge of surviving his most heartbreaking loss. The film features seven musical performances, including original music by the musical director of *The Book of Mormon* on Broadway. Based on the novel by Lambda Literary Award winner Jay Bell. Shot on location in Portland, Oregon.

Men's Centerpiece Film!

A VERY SORDID WEDDING

(US, 109 min)

It's 2015, seventeen years after family matriarch Peggy tripped over G.W.'s wooden legs in *Sordid Lives*, and life has moved into the present for the residents of Winters, Texas. In the wake of the Supreme Court decision in favor of marriage equality, the Sordid saga continues. An anniversary memorial service is being planned in honor of Peggy at the bar while the Southside Baptist Church is planning an "Anti-Equality Rally" to protest the advancement of same-sex marriage. Both events are to take place on the same night, so the beloved cast of colorful characters are all on a collision course for shenanigans and fireworks at the church and everyone's favorite bar on the big night. Along the way a bisexual serial killer shows up, a drag queen country medley gets performed and a beauty salon versus the bigots battle turns getting your hair done into the front lines of the equality battle. Friendships are tested and families are reunited as fear and bigotry are confronted with acceptance and understanding on the way to a surprise wedding with (almost) everyone in attendance.