



DOCUMENTARY CULTURE

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FOCUS ON FESTIVALS

Vancouver Queer Film Festival Goes Out and Proud with Sex-Positive Line-up

Fest offers a Drag Race icon, Sunset Blvd's queer legacy, and all kinds of kinks

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published August 12th, 2021 [Comments](#)

imitating-life. Moreover, the film unpacks the brilliance of Swanson's performance and shows how she inhabited Norma Desmond so well that she knew the role to be her ticket to enduring success.

Director Jeffrey Schwartz illustrates this sentiment by uncovering the hidden history of a ill-fated *Sunset Boulevard* musical, developed by Swanson with writers Dickson Hughes and Richard Stapley, which predated the Tony-winning Andrew Lloyd Webber sensation. But as the film draws upon rare archival accounts of the play's development, and intimate confessionals with Hughes, Stapley, and their closest peers, *Boulevard* reveals how Swanson hued a bit too closely to character and sparked a love triangle by insinuating herself within the relationship of the two writers. *Boulevard* is, on one hand, an insightful study of one of Hollywood's greatest classics and its enduring queer legacy, but also a touching study of forbidden love in 1950s' Hollywood.

Raw! Uncut! Video!

Dir. Alex Clausen, Ryan A. White

Screens: Aug. 12 to 22

A very different kind of film-on-film story appears in *Raw! Uncut! Video!* This zany doc unpacks the history of gay porn pioneer Palm Drive Video. The doc's a love story of leather daddies and acquired tastes as it introduces audiences to Jack Fritscher and Mark Henry, the husbands who founded PDV when they realised the potential for exploring kinks beyond the pages of queer magazines by giving readers full-frontal realizations of their deepest desires. This judgment-free film offers a smorgasbord of vintage smut as it chronicles PDV's homegrown productions that favoured solo males, often hairy and flabby ones, in ecstasy involving anything from leather, whips, bondage, concrete, hammers—you name it! The film doesn't revel in the kinks to titillate, but rather to argue for the positive aspects of pornography that are often overwhelmed by censorship and (often valid) fears of exploitation. Directors Clausen and White situate PDV within the exploding AIDS epidemic and argue that porn provided a form of safe sex—and an educational guide for safe solo acts—at a time when gay sex was shrouded in fear and uncertainty. There are also some truly hilarious accounts of the tricks of the trade from the models both gay and straight who bared their bods to the world. But there are also some things in this documentary that you just can't unsee ... whatever works!