



OUT RUN

A Documentary Film by S. Leo Chiang & Johnny Symons

Duration: 75 minutes

Full Frame Documentary Film Festival (April 2016) – World Premiere

For more info, please visit: www.outrunmovie.com

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SYNOPSIS

SHORTER (30 Words):

Mobilizing working-class transgender hairdressers and beauty queens, the dynamic leaders of the world's only LGBT political party wage a historic quest to elect a trans woman to the Philippine Congress.

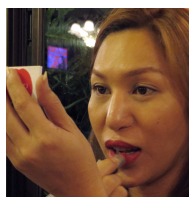
LONGER (166 Words):

As leader of the world's only LGBT political party, Bemz Benedito dreams of being the first transgender woman in the Philippine Congress. But in a predominantly Catholic nation, rallying for LGBT representation in the halls of Congress is not an easy feat. Bemz and her eclectic team of queer political warriors must rethink traditional campaign strategies to amass support from unlikely places. Taking their equality campaign to small-town hair salons and regional beauty pageants, the activists mobilize working-class trans hairdressers and beauty queens to join the fight against their main political opponent, a homophobic evangelical preacher, and prove to the Filipino electorate that it's time to take the rights of LGBT people seriously. But as outsiders trying to get inside the system, will they have to compromise their political ideals in order to win? Culminating on election day, OUT RUN provides a unique look into the challenges LGBT people face as they transition into the mainstream and fight for dignity, legitimacy, and acceptance across the globe.

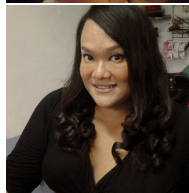
OUR CHARACTERS



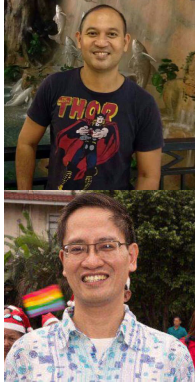
Bemz Benedito runs for Congress as the lead nominee for Ladlad, the only LGBT political party in the world. A longtime activist and a transgender woman, she is known in the community as Sinta Ng Pilipinong LGBT, or “The Beloved of LGBT Filipinos.”



Santy Layno, a former TV producer and sex worker, is one of the key coordinators of Ladlad's campaign. She is passionate about transgender rights and infamous for the impossibly short shorts she wears on the campaign trail.



Bhuta Adelante runs a hair salon and serves as a Kagawad (Ward Councilor) in the massive working-class tenement where she lives in Manila. She leads an LGBT group to support Ladlad and fight against a local homophobic evangelist Congressman, Benny Abante.



Raymond Alikpala spent years in the Catholic seminary before coming out and writing a book about his closeted gay life. Now an attorney, he is a political novice running for a seat in Congress as a part of the Ladlad Party.

Danton Remoto is a respected writer, university professor, and a colorful TV personality. He led the LGBT community in the founding of Ladlad and is also a Ladlad nominee for Congress.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

In the past decade, the LGBT rights movement has become an increasingly international phenomenon. Media outlets have reported extensively on the steady advancement of LGBT rights in Western Europe and North America, where marriage equality and gay adoption have quickly become the norm. Concurrently, there has been increasing attention paid to the rapidly deteriorating situation for LGBTs in Russia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa, where political repression, hate crimes, and state-sanctioned violence are on the rise. But there's been scant coverage of those countries that have historically acknowledged the existence of homosexuality and gender variance but where traditional and religious resistance impedes widespread acceptance of LGBT people, such as the Philippines. We were inspired to create *OUT RUN* to document the historic emergence of the only LGBT political party in the world, to trace its monumental effort to fight for a political voice and community dignity, and to witness the risks and compromises it must face in the process.

Our approach in *OUT RUN* was to use observational storytelling to provide a fresh and contemporary take on human rights activism, including a focus on the transgender leaders who are rising up to claim their own futures, unwilling to accept the narrow confines to which they have been traditionally relegated. Each of the film's transgender protagonists embodies and articulates their gender identity differently, complicating pervasive stereotypes and challenging viewers to see beyond their anatomical makeup. Their serious drive for social and political change is countered by their sense of humor, the unique and colorful Filipino LGBT culture, and the pageantry and festivity of the transgender community.

Ultimately, we hope the film reveals the complexities of modern constructions of sexual life in the Philippines, and, by extension, in other countries where indigenous and globalized ideas about gender and sexuality co-exist and compete. By focusing on political transformation in a country where religious beliefs, cultural values, and democratic progress often conflict, we hope to cast light on the emerging future of the LGBT equality movement around the globe.



SCREENINGS:

Full Frame Documentary Film Festival (April 2016) – *World Premiere*
 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival (April 2016) – *Winner: Best Cinematography*
 Inside Out Toronto LGBT Film Festival (May/June 2016) – *International Premiere*
 Sheffield Doc/Fest (June 2016) – *European Premiere*
 Frameline San Francisco International LGBTQ Film Festival (June 2016)
 Damn These Heels LGBT Film Festival (July 2016)
 EBS International Documentary Festival (August 2016) – *Asian Premiere*
 Scottish Queer International Film Festival (September/October 2016)
 Cinema Queer Stockholm (September/October 2016)
 Milwaukee LGBT Film/Video Festival (October 2016)
 TWIST Seattle Queer Film Festival (October 2016) – *Centerpiece Documentary*
 Seoul Pride Film Festival (October 2016)
 United Nations Association Film Festival (October 2016)
 Taiwan International Queer Film Festival (October 2016)
 NewFest New York LGBT Film Festival (October 2016)
 Gender Bender Festival Bologna (October/November 2016)
 Festival MIX Brazil (November 2016)
 Hawaii International Film Festival (November 2016)
 &PROUD Yangon LGBT Film Festival (January 2017) – *Opening Night Film*
 Roze Filmdagen: Amsterdam LGBTQ Film Festival (February 2017)
 Mardi Gras Film Festival (February 2017)
 OutFest Fusion (March 2017)
 Brisbane Queer Film Festival (March 2017)
 Melbourne Queer Film Festival (March 2017)
 BFI Flare (March 2017)
 Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival (March 2017)
 Melbourne Queer Film Festival (March 2017)
 USF Human Rights Film Festival (March 2017)
 People’s History Museum Manchester (March 2017)
 Cleveland International Film Festival (April 2017)
 Wicked Queer Boston Film Festival (April 2017)
 Hanoi Queer Film Festival (April 2017)
 Fairy Tales Film Festival (May 2017)
 Workers Unite Film Festival (May 2017)
 GAZE International LGBT Film Festival Dublin (August 2017)
 TranScreen: Amsterdam Transgender Film Festival (September 2017)
 Amnesty International Hong Kong (September 2017)

US Public Television Broadcast Premiere: WORLD Channel / DocWorld (May 28, 2017)

KEY PERSONNEL



S. LEO CHIANG – Director/Producer/Cinematographer

S. Leo Chiang is a documentarian based in San Francisco and Taipei. His Emmy-nominated film, *A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES*, about the transformation of the Vietnamese American community in post-Katrina New Orleans, picked up eight film festival awards and aired on Independent Lens series in the US. His most recent documentary, *MR. CAO GOES TO WASHINGTON*, won the Inspiration Award at the 2012 Full Frame

Documentary Film Festival. His other films include *TO YOU SWEETHEART*, *ALOHA* (PBS broadcast 2006) and *ONE + ONE* (CINE Golden Eagle Award 2002). Leo received his MFA in film production from University of Southern California. He is currently the co-chair of New Day Films, the American social-issue documentary distribution co-operative.



JOHNNY SYMONS – Director/Producer/Sound

Johnny Symons is a Bay Area documentary filmmaker focusing on LGBT cultural and political issues. His feature documentary *DADDY & PAPA* premiered at Sundance, broadcast on PBS' Independent Lens, and was nominated for a national Emmy® for Best Documentary. His film *BEYOND CONCEPTION* premiered at the Florida Film Festival and broadcast on Discovery Channel. *ASK NOT* won four festival awards, aired on

PBS' Independent Lens and screened on Capitol Hill for members of Congress. He co-produced the Academy Award® nominated *LONG NIGHT'S JOURNEY INTO DAY*, which won the Sundance Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary. Johnny graduated with honors from Brown University and has a master's in documentary production from Stanford. He is Assistant Professor in the School of Cinema at San Francisco State University, where he is Coordinator of the Documentary Program and Director of the Queer Cinema Institute. Johnny was a 2013 Fellow in the Sundance Institute's Documentary Film Program.

EVA MOSS – Co-Producer

Eva Moss is a jack of many trades: a freelance director, producer, DP, editor and audience engager for every type of media imaginable, including feature films, web and branding videos, social issue documentaries, and interactive video websites. Her multitasking abilities are currently focused on creating micro-docs for small businesses and non-profits, writing a narrative feature, directing a narrative web series, and editing & engaging audiences with the lighthearted topic of the aftermath of Guantanamo. Feature documentaries include Emmy® Nominated *A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES* (Associate Producer), *STATE OF GRACE* (Co-Producer), *OUT RUN* (Co-Producer), *ASK NOT* (Associate Producer), and *MR. CAO GOES TO WASHINGTON* (Associate Producer).

BRITTNEY SHEPHERD – Co-Producer

Brittney Shepherd is a newly Texas-based documentary and narrative filmmaker. Her films have screened at festivals around the world, and she has also produced numerous hours of quality programming for public and cable television for outlets such as the Smithsonian Channel, ESPN, CNBC, and PBS's award-winning series INDEPENDENT LENS. She produced the upcoming children's adventure film INTO THE WHO KNOWS!, co-produced the PBS documentary A FRAGILE TRUST, and is the co-creator of the PBS news game DECISIONS ON DEADLINE. Other credits include co-producing OUT RUN, and associate producing A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES and MR. CAO GOES TO WASHINGTON.

RYAN WHITE – Associate Producer

Ryan White's award-winning documentaries have screened around the world. He spent four years in Hanoi, Vietnam working as Film Advisor for the World Wildlife Fund's Greater Mekong Program, then he relocated to Bangkok, Thailand, where he produced and directed two documentary features, CAMP UNITY and MONDO BANANA. Other documentary credits include producing THE ORGANIC LIFE and associate producing OUT RUN. He's currently finalizing post-production on his next documentary feature – DIRT MCCOMBER: LAST OF THE MOHICANS.

TINA NGUYEN – Editor

Tina Nguyen is a documentary editor recently relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area. Her credits include the feature documentary FED UP which premiered at Sundance and was theatrically released in 2014. She edited and co-produced SEEKING ASIAN FEMALE which premiered at SXSW in 2012 and was broadcasted by PBS as part of the Independent Lens showcase in 2013. Her recent credits include the documentaries OFF THE MENU: ASIAN AMERICA which aired on PBS in 2015 and BREATHIN': THE EDDY ZHENG STORY.

J. CHRISTIAN JENSEN – Editor

J. Christian Jensen is an Oscar® Nominated filmmaker and educator whose storytelling explores the tensions between political ideology, science, religion, modernization and traditional values. He seeks out intimate, human stories that provide insight into larger social movements and institutions. Jensen is based in the San Francisco Bay Area.

NATHAN HALPERN – Composer

Nathan Halpern is a Brooklyn-based composer, recently named as one of *Indiewire's* "Composers to Watch." His score for RICH HILL, winner of the Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary, was praised as "one of the best non-fiction scores we've heard in years" (*Indiewire*). Recent film scores include THE LOVERS AND THE DESPOT and HOOLIGAN SPARROW, both of which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. He composed the score for The Emmy and Peabody Award-winning MARINA ABRAMOVIC: THE ARTIST IS PRESENT. Other recent credits include THE WITNESS, the Emmy-nominated POISONER'S HANDBOOK, and the Emmy-nominated ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN REVISITED. Upcoming film scores include Amanda Sharp's STICKY NOTES and Tracy Droz Tragos's ABORTION: STORIES WOMEN TELL, premiering at the 2016 Tribeca Film Festival.

CHRIS RUGGIERO – Composer

Chris Ruggiero began his composing career in the late 1990s writing television themes for MTV. His music currently appears in over 100 series including The Voice, Pawn Stars, and American Pickers, and his commercial credits include music for brands such as Coke, HSN, Imodium, Dewars, and Liberty Mutual. Ruggiero has composed music for documentaries including HOOLIGAN SPARROW, which debuted at Sundance 2016 and Ivy Meeropol's INDIAN POINT, which premiered at the 2015 Tribeca Film Festival. Upcoming scores include the documentaries WHAT WAS OURS and CLOSE TO THE FIRE. Ruggiero is a partner in Gold Coast Recorders, a recording studio located in Bridgeport Connecticut, and he lectures on semiotics, film, and sound at the University of Bridgeport.

CREDITS

S. Leo Chiang, Johnny Symons

Eva Moss, Brittney Shepherd

Joanna Sokolowski, Daniela Flori Goodfellow

Ryan White

Tina Nguyen, J. Christian Jensen

Nathan Halpern, Chris Ruggiero

Director/Producers

Co-Producers

Production Managers

Associate Producer

Editors

Composers

FUNDING SUPPORT

Funding for Out Run was provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)

Executive Producer for ITVS

Sally Jo Fifer

Supported by Tribeca All Access

This film was supported by a grant from the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program with additional support from the Sundance Institute/Time Warner Foundation, Inc. Fellowship Program.

This film was supported by a grant from the Arcus Foundation Initiative at Sundance Institute.

This project was supported by Office of Research, SFSU. Award #ST638

Additional Funding provided by:
Center for Asian American Media
Documentary Film Institute, SFSU
Lucius & Eva Eastman Fund
Frameline Completion Fund
Sue Levin
Northwestern University
Kenneth Rainin Foundation
San Francisco State University
Randall L. & Margaret Whittington

Out Run is a co-production of Walking Iris Media, Persistent Films LLC and the Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).
Out Run is produced by Walking Iris Media and Persistent Films LLC, which are solely responsible for its content.
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PRESS

['Die Beautiful' Goes to Amsterdam](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer (February 25, 2017)

[Professor Johnny Symons' Out Run Inspires at International Film Fests](#)

SF State News (December 21, 2016)

[Reviews From 2016 United Nations Association Film Festival](#)

Beyond Chron (October 25, 2016)

[Films: TWIST features focus on queer APIs](#)

International Examiner (October 12, 2016)

[Damn These Heels Film Review: OUT RUN](#)

SLUG Magazine (July 13, 2016)

[FRAMELINE 2016: 10 Films to see at 'King of Queer' film festivals](#)

San Jose Mercury News (June 8, 2016)

[Docs about LGBT Women in Asia, Uganda and Rural Canada play at Toronto's Inside Out Film Festival](#)

After Ellen (May 20, 2016)

[Directors Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons Talk Screening LGBT Doc *Out Run* in Boycott State North Carolina](#)

Filmmaker Magazine (April 19, 2016)

[Full Frame '16: Eight highlights from the Durham doc fest](#)

Real Screen (April 6, 2016)

[Four Full Frame Films Highlight the Heteronormative Pressures LGBTQ People Face Around the World](#)

Indy Week (April 6, 2016)

[Ang Llad party brings beauty parlours and gay pageants out to vote in Philippines](#)

The Guardian (May 12, 2013)



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'Die Beautiful' goes to Amsterdam

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 12:20 AM February 25, 2017



Paolo Ballesteros in "Die Beautiful"

After winning prizes in the Tokyo, Metro Manila and Kerala fests, Jun Robles Lana's "Die Beautiful" heads to Amsterdam, for De Roze Filmdagen (Pink Film Days Festival), set from March 9 to 19, in the Netherlands.

The Filipino movie is vying for the best feature film and audience choice awards in the LGBTQ fest.

The fest's website describes "Die Beautiful" as an "unexpectedly big and majestic movie."

Also part of De Roze is S. Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons' "uplifting" documentary "Out Run," which focuses on Ladlad, "the world's only political party entirely devoted to the LGBT community."

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According to the fest's site, the docu centers on Ladlad's "charismatic transgender leader Bemz Benedito [who] is running for Congress."

The site points out that the Philippines, which is a predominantly Catholic country, has a "complicated relationship with LGBT issues... [Members] of the [community] are tolerated as long as they don't cross certain societal boundaries."






The docu, however, will inspire viewers to "cheer on the scrappy underdogs" as they campaign for their rights.

Both "Die Beautiful" and "Out Run" are featured in the Asian Perspectives section. —**BAYANI SAN DIEGO JR.**



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Professor Johnny Symons' 'Out Run' inspires at international film fests

By Gospel Cruz | Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2016



Activist Santy Layno leads a procession waving the pride flag, 2012. Photo credit: Dondi Tawatao.

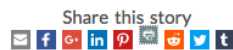
"A working-class citizen becoming a political leader for the people" may sound like an overdone movie plot, but "a middle-class transgender woman running for Congress as head of the world's first LGBT political party" is real life. In their newest film, "Out Run", Cinema Assistant Professor Johnny Symons and S. Leo Chiang document the journey of Bemz Benedito, the first trans woman to run for congress in the Philippines as the face of an LGBT political party, Ladlad — a Tagalog word which translates to "come out" or "unfurl," as with a cape.

"Out Run" is traveling and garnering buzz on the international film festival circuit with screenings in Hawaii, Sweden, Taiwan, Australia, Scotland, New York and more; it won Best Cinematography at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival.

"An artistic political doc, 'Out Run' is both riveting and familiar, as the leaders (including Bemz Benedito, a trans woman who serves as the face of the party) deftly employ campaign strategies that include everything from transforming beauty parlors into headquarters to forming alliances on the local level — even if it means supporting other candidates in quid pro quo moves," Filmmaker Magazine writes.

Because the Philippines is a country with Catholic roots touching centuries-old soil, many there see the acceptance of LGBT individuals as going against the moral grain. "Out Run" follows the individuals who are trying to turn that tide; during filming in 2013, the members of the party included Benedito, Raymond Alikpala and Danton Remoto, along with supporters Santy Layno and Bhuta Adelante. Although visibility of the LGBT community is more prominent in the Philippines than in the United States, it does not necessarily translate to more progressive outcomes.

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REVIEWS FROM 2016 UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION FILM FESTIVAL ([HTTP://WWW.BEYONDCHRON.ORG/REVIEWS-2016-UNITED-NATIONS-ASSOCIATION-FILM-FESTIVAL/](http://www.beyondchron.org/reviews-2016-united-nations-association-film-festival/))

by Peter Wong
(<http://www.beyondchron.org/author/peter/>) on October 25, 2016



Screening as part of this year's United Nations Association Film Festival (hereafter UNAFF), Kelly Amis' short "Code Oakland" shows how a trio of Oakland-based social entrepreneurs respond to Silicon Valley's eying of Oaktown.

The three people profiled (Katimah Priforce of Qeyno Labs, Kimberly Bryant of Black Girls Code, and Van Jones of #YesWeCode) sponsor hackathons. These events teach the attending youth of color how to create useful apps for their daily lives. Hackathons deliver to these youth both important job skills and the self-confidence to consider tech careers. The mother

of one future hacker even drove her child from New York City to Baton Rouge to participate in one such event.

Of the film's subjects, Priforce's life story is particularly memorable. He was a foster kid who held a hunger strike at age eight for access to more books. That led to an eventual life-changing encounter with a Buddhist nun and a mission to open up the world to poor youth.

Amis' short will inspire viewers to want to help expand the work of the film's entrepreneurs.

Also inspiring is S. Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons' documentary "Out Run." The Philippines' Ladlad Partylist is the world's only LGBT political party. Ladlad candidates Bemz, Raymond, and Danton hope to be elected to the Philippine National Congress so they can have laws passed protecting the Philippine LGBT community's rights.

Chiang and Symons capture the Philippine political and social realities the candidates fight against. Limited campaign finances rules out TV advertising or vote buying. Ladlad lacks resources to campaign on all 7,100 Philippine islands. Cries of "bakla" (the local equivalent of "faggot") start up the minute LGBTs stray out of their social ghetto.

But the Ladlad candidates' biggest challenge is defeating homophobic current incumbent Reverend Benny Abante. He both openly believes in gay conversion "therapy" and saddles his few gay political supporters with the group acronym AIDS.

The filmmakers honestly depict the difficulty of the Ladlad candidates' decisions and the mistakes that they make. The viewer ends up appreciating Bemz, Raymond, and Danton's efforts to make a difference in this heavily Catholic country.

Belisario Franca's "Boy 23" relates a horrifying tale of elite fascism and 20th century slavery. Members of Brazil's powerful Rocha Miranda family made fifty black orphanage boys dehumanized slaves on their Santa Albertina farm. The Rocha Mirandas were Integralists, a Nazi-lite ideology promoting bigotry towards blacks and mestizos.

Historian Sidney's efforts to find evidence for this forgotten tale lead him to Aloisio Silva and Argemiro Santos. Silva's and Santos' accounts, a highlight of the film, chills the viewer with tales of names replaced by numbers and emotional trauma that literally lasts decades.

Despite its recounted horrors, Franca keeps a matter-of-fact tone to the film. Maybe a stronger air of encouraging viewers to reach for the torches and pitchforks would have given "Boy 23" a stronger emotional impact.

The shocking must-see of this year's UNAFF is Hemal Trivedi and Mohammed Naqvi's "Among The Believers." It's a look inside the world of the Red Mosque, a Pakistani madrassa chain dedicated to turning out radicalized students of Islam.

Heading the Red Mosque is central subject firebrand imam Abdul Aziz Ghazi, an open ISIS supporter and Taliban ally. He's very open about his ultimate goal of turning Pakistan into a showcase for implemented strict shariah law. The confidence he displays onscreen is that of a man willing to play the long game to implement his dream.

Footage of the Red Mosque's education turns St. Francis Xavier's famed quote into "Give me the child until he is seven, and I'll give you a jihadist." Indeed, that's pretty much what happens to teen subject Talha. Born into a moderate Muslim family, the Red Mosque's education inspires him to become a jihadi preacher.

What makes "Among The Believers" superior to Faux News' Islamophobic half-truths is the context it provides for why Ghazi's brand of Islam has flourished. Ghazi's exploiting the failures of Pakistan's secular government (e.g. political and judicial corruption) doesn't sound all that different from similar pronouncements from America's Religious Right. The Red Mosque madrassas offer their poor students food, clothing, housing, and medical care...for free. Finally, the GOP's Saint Ronald of Reagan had a hand in militarizing Islamic jihadists.

The educational efforts of Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy and the story of ex-Red Mosque student Zarina shows that Ghazi and his believers definitely don't speak for all Muslims. It is in Dr. Hoodbhoy's successes and setbacks that hope for the future can be found.

Feriel Ben Mahmoud's informative documentary "Feminists, Insha'allah!: The Story of Arab Feminism" shows that promoting women's rights in the Arab world involves far more than opposing polygamy and the wearing of the veil. It also means avoiding political co-optation by Western colonialists.

Pan-Arab nationalism with its emphasis on turning Arab countries into modern states provided an opening for the emancipation of women. But not every Arab state displayed the will to emancipate of Tunisia's president Habib Bourguiba. Ben Mahmoud explains how pan-Arabic defeat in the Six Day War and the Gulf Arab states' ultra-monetarist oil wealth prosperity unfortunately rationalized Arab nations' regression of women's rights.

The shade of early Arab feminist Tahar Haddad would not be depressed by "Feminists, Insha'allah!" Ben Mahmoud

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Films: TWIST features focus on queer APIs, *Mekong* a violent flick

by YAYOI LENA WINFREY | OCTOBER 12, 2016 | 0

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Along with a new name—TWIST—The Seattle Gay & Lesbian Film Festival is also showing off several documentaries featuring Asians and Asian Americans.



Out Run is a beautifully photographed Filipino film about the only LGBT political party in the world. Determined to enact laws protecting queers in her country, transgender Bemz Benedito runs for a Congressional seat under the Ang Ladlad Partylist banner. Hoping she can help stop current, legally sanctioned discriminatory practices, she campaigns hard. Alas, the Philippines is a Catholic-majority nation and a hard-sell when it comes to accepting alternative lifestyles. Still, with her team of working-class activists including hair stylists and drag queens, the charismatic Benedito sets out to transform the country.

Founded in 2003, Ladlad, which means, "come out," has been struggling for a Congressional voice ever since. Yet, the participants, wearing pink shirts and grasping pink balloons, are energized and optimistic they will succeed. In the streets, they stop to chat with ordinary citizens attempting to pry a vote from them. Alas, not everyone is receptive. One team member, Attorney Raymond Alkpala, displays painstaking restraint as a woman tells him to pray hard that God will make him heterosexual.

Tears and fears abound among Ladlad's supporters while their primary opponent, an evangelic, spews anti-gay rhetoric. But Benedito's team is organized and focused. Targeting hair salons and beauty competitions in smaller towns, they march adjacent to a pink-tinged Manila skyline that appears to glow with encouragement for their cause.



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Damn These Heels Film Review: Out Run

By Kathy Zhou [kathy@slugmag.com]

Posted July 13, 2016 in [Movie Reviews](#)

Tags: [Damn These Heels! Film Festival](#)

Out Run

Damn These Heels Film Festival

Directors: S. Leo Chiang, Johnny Symons

In the wake of North Carolina's "bathroom bill" and Utah's history-making nomination of Democrat **Misty K. Snow** as Senate nominee, *Out Run* is one of the timeliest documentaries being shown at this year's *Damn These Heels Film Festival*. Set in the Philippines, this political doc follows the Ladlad Party—the only LGBT political party in the world—and its monumental, grassroots effort to obtain a seat in the Philippine Congress. The face of the Ladlad party, **Bemz Benedito**, is a passionate activist and transgender woman—the sweetheart of LGBT Filipinos.

In the observational documentary, the Ladlad Party—which overwhelmingly represents the poor LGBT communities of the Philippines—enthusiastically makes its way to hair salons, beauty pageants and awareness marches, led by Ladlad nominees and campaign coordinators such as the immensely likable

Santy Layno and **Bhuta Adelante**. Directors S. Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons' deft observational storytelling offer viewers glimpses into the lives of their primary characters: the working-class tenements, trans women's explanations of their gender identities, the grandiose beauty pageants that are safe havens for so many, the news coverage after a transgender woman was beaten to death for using a women's restroom.

In the face of institutionalized poverty, daily discrimination and a predominantly Catholic nation, Ladlad's is a daunting task. Despite the seemingly increased visibility of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals in the Philippines, the Philippines has yet to have a Gender Recognition Law—Benedito, for example, still has to carry identification that lists her gender as "male." Unlike the U.S. gay rights movement's push for same-sex marriage, Ladlad's primary platform is passage of an anti-discrimination bill to guarantee equal rights for LGBTs in employment and housing. There's also Ladlad's somewhat political rival, the anti-LGBT preacher and politician **Benny Abante**, whose title for his group of LGBT supporters, when shortened to an acronym, reads "AIDS."

Most notably, *Out Run* astutely captures the ins and outs of running a campaign and a political party. There's the tireless grassroots mobilization and activism, Benedito's grace and careful optimism as a nominee, and the enthusiastic parades and rallies in support of Ladlad and LGBT rights. However, *Out Run* also unblinkingly captures the compromises and controversies surrounding the political party. While the Ladlad nominees view their political alliances and concessions as necessary strategies to win a seat in Congress, many of their potential constituents disagree. Some LGBT Filipinos felt that instead of a transgender woman, a more "straight-acting," cisgender gay man would have made for a more unifying primary nominee, while others decried Ladlad's decision to not advocate for same-sex marriage in their platform, viewing it as a sign that the party was already making compromises. In a few short scenes, a journalist from *The Guardian* questions the Ladlad nominees about their decision to create several alliances with local government heads and officials, implying that Ladlad was forming too many pacts early on.

Each detail in *Out Run* is integral to capturing the immense responsibility taken on by the world's only LGBT political party in their fight to make the concept of LGBTQ equality a reality in the Philippines. By following the narrative of Ladlad, as well as the moving and relatable stories of the diverse individuals who make up the party, *Out Run* illuminates the complexities of LGBTQ lives and identities and how they interact with political movements, cultural norms and global progress toward—or away from—LGBTQ equality. —*Kathy Zhou*

For screening times and more information about the *2016 Damn These Heels LGBT Film Festival*, visit utahfilmcenter.org/dth2016.

Read more *Damn These Heels* film reviews [here](#).

Frameline 2016: 10 films to see at 'King of Queer' film festivals

By Randy Myers, San Jose Mercury News Correspondent
The Mercury News

Posted: Wed Jun 08 13:00:00 MDT 2016

Frameline rolls out the rainbow-colored carpet June 16 for its program of 155 movies and shorts, which reflect the lives, achievements and concerns of the LGBTQ community. In its 40th year, the self-described King of Queer film festivals is also broadening its East Bay reach by adding more screenings at Oakland's Piedmont Theater and Berkeley's Elmwood.

Swedish filmmaker Sara Jordeno's energetic documentary "Kiki" kicks off the 11-day festival, whisking audiences off on a tour of the New York Kiki scene, where LGBTQ youths of color express themselves through dance, fashion and lively conversation. "Kiki" also screens June 24 at the Piedmont.

As is a long-standing Frameline tradition, the Bay Area will be well-represented in front of and behind cameras. That's true of its closing night film, "Looking," a wrapup of the woefully neglected HBO series about the relationships of a group of gay men that was filmed throughout the Bay Area and canceled after two seasons. It receives a world premiere June 26 at the Castro Theater in San Francisco.

Some but not all of the films with Bay Area connections include: Oakland residents and San Francisco Chronicle journalists Tim Hussin's and Eric Brethauer's "Last Men Standing," based on that publication's moving multimedia portraits of eight longtime AIDS survivors -- some of whom are East Bay residents; Oakland director Shaleece Haas' "Real Boy," a documentary charting a 19-year-old musician's journey as a transgender man; and Berkeley director Jeff Schlags' short "Wig and a Prayer: The Peaches Christ Story." Also, Oakland's Miss Major Griffen-Gracy makes an appearance in the documentary "The Trans List."

Of course, there's much more worth seeing. Here are 10 recommendations.

"AWOL": Deb Shoval's knowing drama -- born out of her award-winning, same-titled short -- shines a somber light on a tempestuous relationship between the sullen high-school grad Joey (Lola Kirke of "Mozart in the Jungle") and the flirty, married Rayna (Breedea Wool). This rural Pennsylvania affair comes with many strings attached, the strands of which unravel painfully. (June 22, Castro; June 25, Piedmont)

"Being 17": Acclaimed French filmmaker Andre ("Wild Reeds") Techine breathes new life into the venerable, if often rote, male coming-out flick. His observant tale set amid the breathtaking French Pyrenees finds two teen adversaries chipping away at their hatred and exposing a sexual attraction underneath. Techine adds class to this well-worn genre by crafting a drama rich in meaning and character depth. As the flawed young men, Corentin Fila and Kacey Mottet are flinty and ever so real. (June 21: Castro)

"Southwest of Salem: The Story of the San Antonio Four": Horrific accusations that four Latina lesbian friends in 1994 sexually preyed upon two girls in San Antonio sent shock waves through Texas. Falsely imprisoned and rumored to have been part of a cult, the resilient quartet found redemption through the Innocence Project (made familiar to the public through the "Serial" podcast). Their horrific journey to hell and (almost) back will shock and outrage. (June 20, Castro; June 23, the Piedmont)

"Girls Lost": Seductive Gothic visuals and a focused metaphorical vision distinguish this surreal Brothers Grimm-like fantasy centered around three bullied teenage girls who temporarily transform themselves into boys via a magical plant. Director Alexandra-Therese Keining shows great confidence and ambition, and her talented young cast helps turn this into an atmospheric drama that provocatively illustrates what it feels like to be born the wrong sex. (June 18: The Victoria in S.F.; June 25: the Piedmont)

"Paris 05:59": Theo & Hugo:" About five minutes into this award-winner, you can't help but question the intentions of filmmakers Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau. Is it their goal to shock and arouse with that explicit 18-minute opening

sex club orgy scene? Of course. But that sex is vitally important to their bold narrative. "Paris: 05:59" depicts how a magnetic sexual attraction between two young men (the impressive duo of Geoffrey Couet and Francois Nambot) dramatically accelerates and evolves. (June 23, The Castro)

"Pushing Dead": The callousness of health care insurers and the lack of acceptance for being HIV-positive confront a San Francisco writer/bouncer (James Roday of TV's "Psych") dealing with San Francisco's changing ideology. This entertaining, surprisingly humorous feature debut from Tom E. Brown gets a boost from crafty screenwriting and a charismatic cast that includes Danny Glover, Robin Weigert, Khandi Alexander and Tom Riley. (June 18, The Castro; June 21, the Elmwood)

"Akron": A tragic childhood event threatens the intensifying relationship between two college freshmen in this heartfelt feature debut from Sasha King and Brian O'Donnell. The two leads -- Matthew Frias and Edmund Donovan -- are not only likable but have great chemistry. "Akron" stumbles a few times, especially with a clumsy narrative development near the end, but it's still quite a find. (June 17, the Castro; June 25, The Victoria)

"Spa Night": A caring, closeted young man in Los Angeles juggles family and cultural traditions as he seeks his own liberation and sexual satisfaction while working at a spa. Curious about what goes on between other men in the sauna, he eventually gives in to his desires in Andrew Ahn's impressive first but slow-paced feature debut. As the confused David, Joe Seo justly received a breakthrough award at this year's Sundance Film Festival. (June 23, The Castro)

"Political Animals": The contributions of four "out-and-proud" California lesbian lawmakers -- Sheila Kuehl, Carole Migden, Jackie Goldberg and Christine Kehoe -- as they further LGBTQ rights is the focus of this by-the-book, but engrossing documentary. Directors Jonah Markowitz and Tracy Ware toggle between interviews with this quartet and testimony on state Assembly floors. (June 19, Castro; June 20, Elmwood)

"Out Run": Oakland director Johnny ("Daddy & Papa") Symons teams with San Francisco-based filmmaker S. Leo Chiang for an eye-opener of a documentary chronicling how the only LGBTQ political party in the world tried to land three congressional seats in the 2013 Philippines election. "Out Run" candidly peers into a campaign that had the most noble of intentions but struggled to appeal to mainstream voters. (June 19, Castro)

Frameline 40

What: San Francisco International LGBTQ Film Festival

When: June 16-26

Where: Screenings in Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco

Tickets: www.frameline.org/festival

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Docs about LGBT women in Asia, Uganda and rural Canada play at Toronto's Inside Out Film Festival

By [Daniela Costa](#) on May 20, 2016

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Now around for over a quarter of a century, the [Inside Out Toronto LGBT Film Festival](#) is back with its 2016 edition, running from May 26 to June 5. We've already reviewed, and will continue to review, several of the fictional features that are showing at the festival, but we thought we should also share some must-watch documentaries. What follows below is a great batch of Canadian, American and international films.

Re:Orientations (2016) Canada





Filmmaker **Richard Fung** made his first film, *Orientalisms: Lesbian and Gay Asians*, in 1984. This documentary was the first to highlight queer Asians and racialized queers in Canada. Over 30 years later, Richard decided to contact his original subjects, all of whom were people of South, Southeast, or East Asian backgrounds. Sadly, of the original 14, three have since passed away and others could either not be reached or simply refused to participate. But seven of the original subjects did agree to be part of this retrospective, including three queer women.

It truly is a treat to see these women look at old footage of themselves, just as it is a pleasure to watch the original clips if you weren't fortunate enough to watch the 1984 documentary. If you happen to have a special fondness for the city of Toronto, it's just amazing to see clubs and other establishments, once beloved by the gay and lesbian communities, that no longer exist.

Themes like racism and sexism are covered at length in *Re:Orientalisms*. This includes addressing the "now" and "then," which makes obvious that although a lot has changed, some things remain the same. To aid in that conversation, academics, activists and younger queer individuals are featured as well.

***Out Run* (2016) Philippines, USA**



It's amazing to think that this film's international premiere comes just weeks after Liberal Party member **Geraldine Roman** became the **first elected transgender politician** to the Philippine House of Representatives. *Out Run* is about the queer candidates of the Ladlad Party, said to be the only LGBT political party in the world, and their 2013 run for office in the Philippines.

The Ladlad list is made up of three political hopefuls: two gay men and a trans woman. Should any of them get elected, the party's main focus will be on getting an anti-discrimination bill passed. Such a bill would look to serve the entire LGBT community, including lesbian women who are often accused of kidnapping their partners in an effort to separate them.

Not having the funds necessary for a big ad campaign, the three Ladlad candidates travel the country meeting people. Due to their platform and profiles, they're competing for the votes of LGBT people,

who alone could elect them if they all rally behind Ladlad. If they don't, Ladlad will fold, as election rules state that a new party can't run unsuccessfully more than two times in a row (Ladlad had previously not picked up any seats in a 2010 election). But Ladlad's reluctance to push for same-sex marriage could just put support from the LGBT community into question.



Same Difference (2015) USA



You may remember the news reports about a school district in Minnesota with a “no promo homo” policy that saw nine students commit suicide between 2009 and 2011. Gay-straight alliances were quashed, and LGBT teachers were told to stay closeted. And if students were to come out to teachers, the rules dictated they be sent to the school's guidance counselor, as if there were something wrong with them. Add to that a new curriculum that erased LGBT people from history and contemporary discussions and the situation just seemed impossible. *Same Difference* highlights these truths while taking into account the good that came out of these circumstances.

Two stories, in particular, are at the center of *Same Difference*. One focuses on a gay teen who spoke

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Directors Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons Talk Screening LGBT Doc *Out Run* in Boycott State North Carolina



by [Lauren Wissot](#) in [Directors](#), [Festivals & Events](#), [Interviews](#)
Apr 19, 2016

[documentary](#), [Full Frame](#)
[Documentary Film Festival](#), [Out Run](#)

Ironically launching at the stellar Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in Durham, North Carolina right as the anti-LGBTQ HB2 legislation hit the fan, S. Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons's *Out Run* follows the Ladlad Party in the Philippines — the only LGBT political party in the world — in the run-up to what could be a history-making election. An artistic political doc, *Out Run* is both riveting and familiar, as the leaders (including Bemz Benedito, a trans woman who serves as the face of the party) deftly employ campaign strategies that include everything from transforming beauty parlors into headquarters to forming alliances on the local level — even if it means supporting other candidates in quid pro quo moves. The story becomes even more surreal as the Ladlad party goes up against a rival gay organization put together by none other than anti-LGBT preacher and politician Benny Abante, who anointed his group of supporters with the acronym AIDS. In other words, politics as usual. And not.

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Filmmaker spoke with the co-directors shortly after their Full Frame premiere.

Filmmaker: So how did this project come about? Had you known about the Ladlad Party for some time?

Chiang and Symons: We actually didn't begin *Out Run* in the Philippines but in other parts of the world. We were very interested in the LGBT rights movement taking place outside of North America and Europe, and we became particularly intrigued by out LGBT politicians who were taking the bold step of publicly running for office in traditional and conservative countries where they faced significant social, cultural or religious opposition. Initially, we followed a member of parliament in Nepal, who was the first openly LGBT person elected to national office in Asia. Soon after, we began filming a gay man running for Senate in Kenya. Both of these stories eventually fizzled, but by then we had heard about Ladlad and turned our attention to the Philippines. The story there was particularly interesting because the lead candidate was transgender, there was a dynamic campaign team, and because the entire political party was predicated on LGBT issues.

Filmmaker: It seems to me that one of the main differences between the Philippines' fight for LGBTQ rights and our own is who are in the positions of power. A transgender woman is the face of Ladlad in the Philippines, whereas here in the States white men (of means, especially during the darkest days of the AIDS epidemic) largely pushed the gay rights movement forward into the mainstream. Because of this, our agendas have been different. Ladlad prioritizes a Gender Recognition Law, whereas we've passed same-sex marriage. Were you conscious of any of this during production?

Chiang and Symons: The emergence of a transgender woman as the lead candidate of Ladlad was actually quite controversial. Many members of the LGBT community there felt that a "straight-acting," professional, cisgender gay man would have made a stronger primary nominee, and were not as supportive of Ladlad in the election as they might have otherwise been. Although gender nonconforming people are definitely more prevalent and visible in the Philippines than in the US, Bemz' candidacy was largely viewed by the Filipino LGBT community organizers as innovative and somewhat risky rather than indicative of a cultural preference for trans leaders.

Ladlad's main goal is passage of the anti-discrimination bill to help guarantee equal rights for LGBTs in employment and housing. Although they do hope to pass a gender recognition law, this is an effort to emulate legislation that already exists in parts of Europe and the U.S. As the film reveals, Ladlad's decision to not advocate for same-sex marriage in their platform is controversial and is more a function of the party leaders' fear that it will alienate voters than it is a reflection of the extent to which they hope same-sex marriage will become legal.

Filmmaker: One of the scenes that most stuck with me was your interview with the gay supporters of anti-LGBTQ preacher Benny Abante. I assumed they were paid to rally behind him, but the

look of terror on most of those faces — mouthing pro-Benny lines as if from a hostage video — made me wonder if perhaps they were being threatened. Did you ever fear you might have been putting the lives of any of your subjects in danger simply by your camera being there?

Chiang and Symons: Our experience in filming the AIDS group was fairly straightforward. We made contact with the group's leader, and he and the other members spoke freely and were eager to share their views. Benny Abante was not present during most of the conversation and wasn't aware of what they said on camera. Their facial expressions are likely more a function of a lifetime of internalized homophobia and institutionalized poverty and discrimination, which may have influenced their decision to work for Benny rather than for more progressive candidates. Cellphone cameras in the Philippines are ubiquitous; we didn't have the impression that the AIDS group, or any of our other subjects, would suffer as a result of the presence of our camera.

Filmmaker: It's fitting that you had your world premiere at the Full Frame fest in North Carolina, which recently enacted sweeping anti-LGBTQ legislation. As progressive as we think we are in the States, though, we've had not one female president (while over 20 countries from Germany to Liberia are currently run by women), nor have we ever had a transgender person hold higher office. (Contrast that with New Zealand's Georgina Beyer — a former sex worker! — who started serving as a Member of Parliament over a decade and a half ago.) So I'm wondering if shooting your film in the Philippines gave you any insight into America? Did HB2 even strike you as that much of a surprise?

Chiang and Symons: The HB2, or HB1523 in Mississippi, or the new law just passed in Tennessee, did not really surprise us. It's been a few amazing years in terms of LGBTQ rights in the US — doing away with Don't Ask Don't Tell (Johnny's film *Ask Not* examines that law), passing federal marriage equality law, and just the general positive shift of society's attitude towards LGBT individuals (at least the L and G). We can't be surprised by the anti-LGBTQ laws from these relatively more conservative states as a reaction to this positive shift. We struggled with coming to North Carolina to show *Out Run* because of the call for boycott, but ultimately we decided to come. We felt good about sharing a nuanced portrait about LGBTQ people from a different part of the world to those North Carolinians who were interested in learning more. We also want to support Full Frame, which programmed three films about transgender people in this year's festival.

Each of us has spent significant amounts of time in different parts of the world, and in different parts of the US. The way we see it, the US is progressive in many ways and conservative in many others, just like in the Philippines. As you pointed out, the US hasn't even elected its first female president yet, while the Philippines has already elected two women to its highest office. But in the US, many more policies and laws are in place to protect LGBTQ people, both in the government and the private sector (as evidenced by the reaction of companies like PayPal, American Airlines, NBA, etc. condemning HB2). While in the Philippines, people like Bemz and Santy still need to hold IDs and passports

that indicate their gender as “male.” I guess the takeaway for us is that the US and the Philippines are more similar in the level of progressiveness than some may think. No one will bat an eye at a transgender man walking down the street holding hands with his male or female partner in Manila or New York, but transgender women are just as likely to be assaulted for using women’s restrooms in a provincial Filipino town as they are in some less diverse parts of the U.S. There is still work to do in both countries.

Filmmaker: I briefly met Leo after the #DocsSoWhite? Speakeasy Conversation at Full Frame, where he was seated next to Roger Ross Williams. It struck me that *Out Run* and Roger’s 2013 film *God Loves Uganda* were both crafted by directors of color, yet in a way aren’t you as Americans guilty of doing what white directors who tell Asian-American or African-American stories (O.K., Ken Burns) are doing? You guys are San Franciscans, not Filipinos, while Roger, a New Yorker, is not Ugandan. It seems Americans shoot in developing countries all the time. Is this not a form of colonialist filmmaking? Shouldn’t filmmakers living in these places be telling their own stories?

Chiang: The international documentary community should support indigenous filmmakers around the world to tell their own stories, both with funding and, importantly, with recognition – by programming, broadcasting, and publicizing these films. IDFA (IDFA Bertha Fund) and HotDocs (Blue Ice) are good examples of western organizations that invest in documentarians from the developing world. Sundance has been granting and running a yearly workshop in Beijing for local Chinese filmmakers. I applaud these initiatives and would love to see more of them.

For Johnny and I with *Out Run*, we worked with a number of local Filipino filmmakers as our field producers and crew members because we want to do our part to share the resources we get from the west with Filipino documentary communities. I imagine that Roger did the same thing in Uganda. As gay filmmakers, Johnny and I feel the obligation to tell stories of our queer brothers and sisters all over the world. And as a transnational person/dual citizen who was born and raised in Taiwan, I feel comfortable being the conduit of a story from my part of the world.

The question of “who gets to tell the story” is complex. What we touched upon at the #DocsSoWhite? panel is relatively superficial, and certainly referred to more generalizations than to actual complicated situations. We didn’t touch on class issues — that many doc makers do often come from some amount of financial security that they are able to pursue this type of work. And the class issues are certainly alive and well within the communities of color.

I guess I can speak for myself from the #DocsSoWhite? discussion that I don’t believe you have to be from a specific community to tell a story from that community. How boring would it be if Asians can only tell Asian stories, women can only tell women’s stories, and New Yorkers can only tell New York stories, etc.? So few, if any, Asian-American projects get adequate funding and recognition in the documentary world every year,

and I get frustrated when the institutions that support these one or two projects every few years don't work harder to engage with Asian-American filmmakers in key roles. This perpetuates the status quo and also is a bit lazy.

In an ideal world there should be many films from the developing world that get supported, told by both locals and outsiders with rich, diverse perspectives. And there should be many films about the communities of color in the US, told by both filmmakers of color and white filmmakers with rich, diverse perspectives. I want all of us to work towards that.

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Pavle Stanimirovic · 3 days ago

GREAT , all I want is to make it possible to be part of the film making possess is such a blessing . From Rada 2 PRADA .

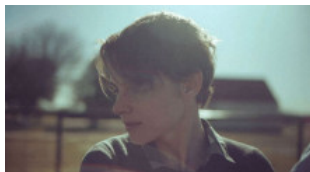
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Full Frame '16: Eight highlights from the Durham doc fest

6 days ago by [Kevin Ritchie](#)

Spring is a busy season on the festival circuit for doc makers, with Tribeca, Hot Docs and Cannes drawing industry and press with the prospects of deal-making.

A few weeks after SXSW and just days before Tribeca, the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival takes over Durham, North Carolina, to offer producers and directors a reprieve from the industry craziness over four days in April.

“Full Frame is a filmmaker’s festival. I want to give filmmakers an opportunity to celebrate their work,” says [Sadie Tillery](#), the festival’s director of programming. “We’ve been conscious about making space for the documentary community to relax, come together and see each other’s films without the marketplace dynamic.”

The 19th annual event, which kicks off on Thursday (April 7) and runs until April 10, will host 13 world premieres, six North American premieres and two U.S. premieres, including [Adam Irving’s *Off the Rails*](#), Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons’ *Out Run* (pictured), James Demo’s *The Peacemaker* and Carrie Lozano and Charlotte Lagarde’s [The Ballad of Fred Hersch](#).

The festival does not have premiere requirements, so half the 93 films screening this year have played at other fests. Those titles include [Weiner](#), [Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You](#), [Author: The JT LeRoy Story](#), [Kate Plays Christine](#), [Unlocking the Cage](#), [Gleason](#) and [Sherpa](#).

There is also a thematic program of classic and contemporary political docs curated by *The September Issue* filmmaker R.J. Cutler, works-in-progress screenings of Jonathan Olshefski’s *The Fury and the Sound* and Matt Yoka’s *Whirlybird* – both recipients of the festivals’ Garrett

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[Johnson](#), who will receive a Tribute Award.

Festival passes normally sell out before the program is announced and films play only once, meaning screenings are generally well-attended. Without intense pressure to sell tickets, programmers are able to look at a broad array of themes and styles – thus specific thematic threads tend not to emerge in the programming.

“We don’t have to stop ourselves to ask ‘Will this draw an audience?’ We can make a decision based on our response to the film, without having to worry about who the market is or where else the film has been,” says Tillery. “That is liberating.”

Ahead of tomorrow’s kick-off, Tillery highlights eight films to look out for at Full Frame this year:



Sadie Tillery

Off the Rails, directed by Adam Irving (world premiere)

“The premise of this film alone is a remarkable story, and it builds through style and personal interviews to become so much more than that. It follows Darius McCollum, a man with Asperger’s syndrome who has commandeered hundreds of trains and buses over the years. By introducing us to McCollum and hearing from him and from his legal team, the film allows us

to consider the shortcomings of our criminal justice system.”

Out Run, directed by Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons (world premiere)

“*Out Run* introduces us to the only LGBT political party in the world, following three candidates who are running for Filipino congress. The characters are unforgettable, and the film navigates the complicated relationship between this primarily Catholic country and its vibrant LGBT community. It’s especially interesting to view *Out Run* alongside any number of the campaign documentaries screening in this year’s thematic program.”

The Peacemaker, directed by James Demo (world premiere)

“I’m so proud to screen this film about Pdraig O’Malley, who has dedicated his life to negotiations in war-torn regions around the world. It balances a character study with observations of powerful work. We come to understand how O’Malley’s personal experiences shape his work and how his work is deeply tied to his private life.”

Following Seas, directed by Tyler J. Kelley and Araby Williams (world premiere)

“This is a remarkable story of a family that sailed around the world. They captured their travels on hand-cranked Bolex cameras and here their footage comes to life alongside their recollections. Interviews with the family, particularly matriarch Nancy Griffith, are woven through their own recordings. I can’t wait to see these images flicker on the big screen. It’s the type of film that brings the past to life.”

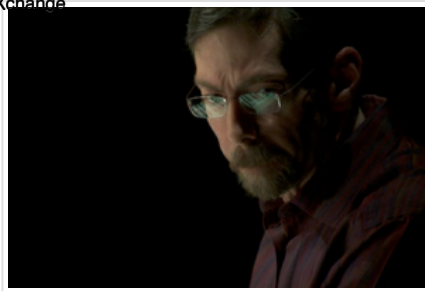
The Ballad of Fred Hersch, directed by Carrie Lozano and [Charlotte Lagarde](#) (world premiere)

“We were deeply moved by this portrait of jazz pianist Fred Hersch. The film looks back at his life and follows him as he composes a piece reflecting on the time he spent in an AIDS-related coma. We witness a renowned artist at work, and have the opportunity to take in his tremendous music.”

Two Trains Runnin’, directed by Sam Pollard (world premiere)

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the festival and we're very proud to host the premiere of his latest feature. *Two Trains Runnin'* tells the story of two groups of young men that went looking for blues musicians Son House and Skip James in 1964, travelling south in the middle of Mississippi Freedom Summer. The film weaves musical performances by Lucinda Williams and Gary Clark Jr. with animations, archival footage and interviews, and takes us to a particular moment in time."



The Ballad of Fred Hersch

Raising Bertie, directed by Margaret Byrne (world premiere)

"It's always special when we're able to feature a film born in North Carolina. This longitudinal film follows three teenagers coming of age in Bertie County, just a couple hours east of Durham. In the tradition of *Hoop Dreams*, we follow their lives over years. The filmmakers and many of the individuals featured in the film will be here for the premiere."

Salero, directed by Mike Plunkett (North American premiere)

"Screening work in a theater is very different from seeing it at home on a television, and *Salero* is proof that documentaries need to be seen in this way. With incredible cinematography, the film introduces us to Moises who works in Bolivia on one of the largest salt flats on the planet. His way of life is documented during a time of transition and the vast landscapes featured in the film, along with the incredible texture of the sound design, allow *Salero* to be both a physical and a psychological portrait."

Tags: [Following Seas](#), [Full Frame Documentary Film Festival](#), [Off the Rails](#), [Out Run](#), [Raising Bertie](#), [Sadie Tillery](#), [Salero](#), [The Ballad of Fred Hersch](#), [The Peacemaker](#), [Two Trains Runnin'](#)

Film » Film Spotlight

April 06, 2016

Four Full Frame Films Highlight the Heteronormative Pressures LGBTQ People Face Around the World

By Brian Howe



Photo courtesy of the filmmakers/Full Frame

Out Run

Recently, **Full Frame** released a **statement against House Bill 2**, the discriminatory legislation barring transgender people from using the public restroom that matches their gender identity. "We are proud to be a part of the documentary community, providing a safe space for myriad perspectives in an effort to cultivate empathy," the statement read in part. The claim has substance: Documentaries, as intimate portraits of specific lives, are uniquely powerful tools against bigotry, which thrives on ignorance and generalization. Four of the most interesting films at this year's festival take up LGBTQ issues. Though each has a different cultural perspective, each finds the same heteronormative pressures around the world.

CALL ME MARIANNA (April 7, 4:10 p.m.)—"Please talk to me like a son," says the mother of a Polish transgender woman seeking gender-affirmation surgery. It's one of many heartbreaking, maddening moments in director Karolina Bielawska's moving documentary about Marianna's struggle for self-actualization, as she batters herself against bureaucracy and prejudice. "It's absolute bliss," Marianna enthuses after her surgery, running on the beach in a swimsuit. It's a hard-won, joyous moment with more adversity in store. Intercutting Marianna's journey with scenes of her rehearsing her story with a community theater group, the film aptly uses music by Antony and the Johnsons to soundtrack the difficult, courageous transformation into oneself.

Mów mi Marianna / Call me Marianna (trailer)



OUT RUN (April 8, 7:10 p.m.)—The world premiere of S. Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons's documentary on Bemz Benedito, who wants to be the first transgender woman in the Congress of the Philippines, illuminates the complex cultural status of LGBTQ people in a Catholic nation where paternalistic prejudice jostles with a rich "bakla" culture and Lladlad, the world's only LGBTQ political party. Grassroots activism and unusual alliances lead up to Election Day in Benedito's race against a homophobic preacher.



Out Run Trailer

Posted by **Out Run**

820 Views



KIKI (April 8, 10:10 p.m.)—In the New York City subculture called Kiki—a crucible of art and activism, and a descendent of the Ballroom scene—different "houses" of young LGBTQ people of color compete in Kiki balls filled with voguing and fashion. Sara Jordenö and Twiggy Pucci Garçon, a Kiki insider, followed seven community members for three years, tracking the struggles with poverty and prejudice—and the beautiful self-expression—that make Kiki, which serves as a family for those who have been shunned in their own, so vibrant and vital.

THE BALLAD OF FRED HERSCH (April 9, 4:10 p.m.)—Fred Hersch is widely regarded as one of the finest jazz pianists and composers alive today. That's remarkable enough for a white man from the Midwest, before you factor in that Hersch is openly gay and HIV positive. Still relatively rare in jazz today, it was positively seismic when Hersch came out in the early nineties. Directors Charlotte Lagarde and Carrie Lozano have crafted an intimate portrait of a remarkable life that shows how even acceptance can be seamed with prejudice. Hersch's mother tells the requisite story of him picking out songs on the piano at a preternatural age; she also recalls her shame at his coming out, which she blithely refers to as "dirty laundry." The film also deals with Hersch's medically induced coma and recovery in the late 2000s, but it's not all hardship. It's also a touching love story featuring Hersch's longtime partner, Scott Morgan. "The first time I met him, the adjective I would use would be radiant," Hersch says. Top it off with plenty of Hersch's radiant musicianship, and this is one not to miss.

This article appeared in print with the headline "LGBTQ Rights Reel."

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