

By KEVIN THOMAS
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Outfest, the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, which opens tonight with a premiere gala and the documentary "The Eyes of Tammy Faye" at the newly air-conditioned Orpheum, 842 S. Broadway, has an especially strong lineup this year.

With each passing year, the festival attracts an increasingly large straight audience, with good reason: On the one hand, there are more mainstream gay films with solid crossover appeal, and on the other, gay cinema remains venturesome in styles and themes. The key venue remains the Directors Guild of America, 7920 Sunset Blvd., with additional screenings at the nearby Sunset 5, 8000 Sunset Blvd., and special events throughout the area.

At least six films screening in the first week—the festival wraps up July 17—can be recommended wholeheartedly. (Key lesbian films seem to be clustered during the closing weekend.) Max Mitchell's "Get Your Stuff" (DGA 2, Wednesday at 5 p.m.) is a sure-fire broad-appeal comedy in which a Beverly Hills couple, Phil (Cameron Watson) and Eric (Anthony Meindl), have everything: a solid, six-year relationship, a luxurious home, good looks, trim physiques, lots of friends—but want children. The film takes off when a pair of brothers (Grady Hutt, Blyan Barbosa,) are dumped on the couple temporarily, followed shortly by their alcoholic floozy mother (Elaine Hendrix). In deftly adapting his play, Mitchell strikes a good balance between the serious and the comic, and performances are sharp all around, especially by Gloria Carter, a seen-it-all adoption case-worker.

Germany's Jochen Hick, an Outfest perennial, returns with his most accomplished film yet, "No One Sleeps" (DGA 1, Monday at 7:15 p.m.), a complex, provocative and sexy thriller that finds a young German graduate student (Stefan Hein) coming to San Francisco to continue his late father's quest for crucial data in support of the theory that the AIDS virus is the product of a U.S. government experiment gone awry. "No One Sleeps," for which "Turandot" serves as a key motif, is a search for self-discovery, a tempestuous love story and a mystery, presented against a non-tourist view of the city and featuring actors

Outfest Is Outdoing Itself

This year's Gay and Lesbian Film Festival boasts an excellent roster of films, including tonight's opener, "The Eyes of Tammy Faye."



Anthony Meindl, left, and Cameron Watson star in "Get Your Stuff."

who seem real rather than glamorous; the engaging Hein is strongly supported by Jim Thalman and Irit Levi, who looks more like a librarian than the shrewd, tenacious cop she is.

Jon Shear's "Urbania" (DGA 1, Sunday at 6 p.m.) is an edgy portrait of a good-looking young New York professional (Dan Futterman, excellent) who is nonetheless clearly disturbed and struggling to keep up appearances. An inspired, intricate flashback structure in the telling of his story generates suspense and adds tremendously to the film's impact. This is a splendid example of sophisticated, edgy, New York filmmaking, with stylish, moody camera work by Shane Kelly.

A significant documentary, Laurie Collyer's compelling "Nuyorican Dream" (DGA 2, Saturday at 2:15 p.m.), introduces Robert Torres, a 30-year-old gay man, a dedicated teacher with a tasteful Greenwich Village apartment and a family wracked by drugs and poverty but held together by deep bonds of love established by their steadfast mother, Marta. Torres, the eldest of five children, was able to comprehend from an early age how a heritage of colonialism, racism, economic deprivation, inferior education, lack of birth control and aversion to abortion have conspired to keep Puerto Ricans a permanent underclass; drugs are a constant temptation for both escape from chronic despair and the promise of quick money. Torres pins all his hopes on his youngest sister, while the survival of his brother and two other sisters is ever open to question.

Documentaries on Hustlers, Playwright

Another key documentary is Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato's "101 Rent Boys" (DGA 1, Saturday at 9:30 p.m.), by the makers of "The Eyes of Tammy Faye," a comprehensive survey of male hustlers that ranges from handsome, muscled professionals—at least three are porn stars—to street types ravaged by drugs or disease or who are otherwise disturbed; how these lost young men attract any customers is a mystery.

Mei-Juin Chen's "The Worlds of Mei LanFang" (DGA 2, Tuesday at 7 p.m.), yet another fine documentary, is a long overdue study of the world-renowned star and playwright of the Peking Opera, celebrated for his portrayals of a wide range of women. He did not regard himself as a female impersonator