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Author(s)	Steve Seid
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Video

Blood Sisters: Leather, Dykes and Sadomasochism 7:30

Michelle Handelman (U.S., 1995)

Artist in Person

What is acceptable behavior? Does it smell like tanned leather? Handelman's pro-and-con/sensual *Blood Sisters* doesn't describe the bounds of permissible fantasy in the women's leather community, rather it broadens the discussion about private expressions of eroticism, political implications and all. Eight self-described leather dykes tell their stories about participating in a subculture cast off by its own immediate ally, the larger lesbian community. Surrounded by the paraphernalia of S/M ritual, these women collapse the cheap stereotypes used to demonize them. Masters and slaves, tops and bottoms, yes. But Handelman's often humorous work reveals a fluidity to role-playing that is far more complex. This is necessary in a sexual practice that as one woman declares is about "finding your own boundaries." S/M play, slave auctions, activist events, and the International Ms. Leather competition are artfully joined to the interviews, while a soundtrack by SF riotgrrl punk bands Frightwig and Typhoon propels *Blood Sisters* along. The snap of leather whips is one thing; what Handelman is really exploring is the wincing face of power and culture.—Steve Seid

• Photographed by Georgia B. Wright. Music by Coll, Chris and Cosey, Fred Giannelli. With Pat Califia, Donna ShROUT, Skeeter, Queen Cougar and others. (77 mins, Color, 3/4" video, From M and M Productions)