

Document Citation

Title	Stronger gay, lesbian fest builds its international diversity
Author(s)	Kevin Thomas
Source	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>
Date	1990 Jul 06
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Paris is burning, Livingston, Jennie, 1990

SPECIAL SCREENINGS

Stronger Gay, Lesbian Fest Builds Its International Diversity

By KEVIN THOMAS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The eighth annual Los Angeles International Gay & Lesbian Film and Video Festival (beginning today at the Directors Guild) becomes stronger and more diversified each year, growing and expanding in its attempt to illuminate us about the work being done internationally on gay themes.

The opening-night film (7:30 p.m.), like many films emerging from the liberated Eastern Bloc countries, is an eye-opener. In "Coming Out," an East German film that premiered in Berlin last fall, director Heiner Carow and writer Wolfram Witt tell a heart-rending, quietly powerful story about a young East Berlin school-teacher (Mathias Freihof) struggling to balance his private life with his professional ambitions.

Although the film is specific in its criticism of repressive East German attitudes toward homosexuality, it is universal in its dealing with the process of coming out and the courage and responsibility it entails to one's self and others. ("Coming Out" screens again at 9:30 in Theater I.)

There couldn't be a greater contrast between the traditional realistic style of "Coming Out" and Eric de Kuyper's "Pink Ulysses" (Saturday, 7 p.m.), a Dutch recasting of the Odyssey as a campy but genuinely imaginative erotic fantasy that's a kind of blend of Kenneth Anger and Leni Riefenstahl. De Kuyper includes clips ranging from a vintage Athletic



A contestant dresses up for a costume ball in "Paris Is Burning."

Model Guild wrestling match to glimpses of performance of "Swan Lake," "The Magic Flute" and other operas. The sound track is equally diverse, with passages from classical music, Monteverdi especially, but also a song from Zarah Leander, the star of kitschy Nazi-era musicals.

The festival has brought back its 1985 closing-night film, top Hungarian director Karoly Makk's "Another Way" (Saturday, 7:30 p.m.), which serves as a kind of lesbian companion film to "Coming Out." It centers on the impact of a scrappy, idealistic young journalist

(Jadwiga Jankowska-Cieslak), a scruffy gamin type of integrity and intelligence, upon an elegant blond journalist (Grazina Szaplowska), older, established and married. "Another Way" is less didactic and more subtle than "Coming Out"—but then Makk is a veteran world-class filmmaker. "Another Way" is extremely courageous and, as it turns out, prophetic about the state of freedom of expression in Hungary; once again, the status of gays is revealing about the larger political situation of the society in which they live.

Sure to be a festival hit, Jennie Livingstone's "Paris Is Burning" (Saturday, 9:30 p.m.) is a dynamite documentary, focusing on impoverished New York gay blacks and Latinos who look for meaning in their often desperate lives by participating in gala costume balls, by forming gangs, which they call "houses"—as in fashion houses—and by establishing their own words, customs and rituals—one that has surfaced into the mainstream is "vogueing."

The balls have evolved from drags that once copied Vegas shows in costuming to include such diverse attire as regulation Marine uniforms and impeccable Wall Street business suits. The contestants, however, tend to emulate images from the media—e.g., Joan Collins is a favorite model—to the extent that too few recognize their own creativity and originality. Another first-rate documentary, Stuart Marshall's "Comrades in Arms" (Sunday, 7:30 p.m.) chronicles the experiences of British gays and lesbians during World War II.

For full schedule—there are 28 programs alone during the opening weekend of the festival—which runs through July 12: (213) 650-5140.