

TORONTOIST

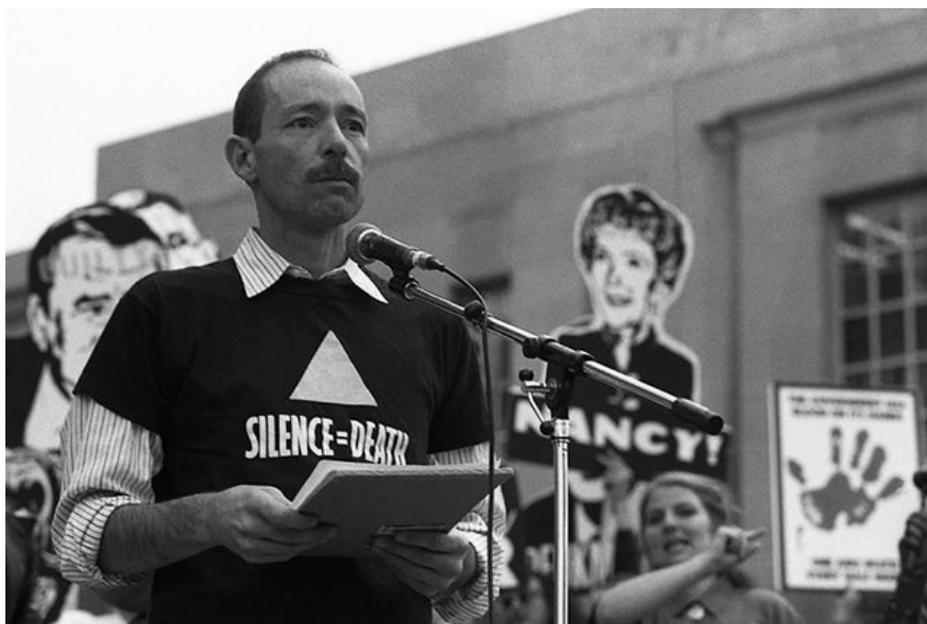


Inside Out Festival 2012

MAY 22, 2012 AT 9:00 AM

Our picks from the 22nd instalment of Toronto's annual LGBT film festival.

BY JULIAN CARRINGTON



Vito's Vito Russo speaks at ACT UP's FDA demonstration in 1988. Image courtesy of the Inside Out Festival.

Inside Out LGBT Film Festival

TIFF Bell Lightbox (350 King Street West)

May 17-27, various times

Single tickets \$6-\$10

LGBT-positive Torontonians had two causes for celebration on Thursday: following the mayor's **belated-but-welcome gesture of support**, the evening also marked the beginning of the 2012 edition of the **Inside Out Festival**. Running through May 27 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, Inside Out's 22nd instalment continues the festival's proud tradition of showcasing diverse, queer-focused films and videos from Canada and around the world. We've had the chance to sample several of the fest's 175-plus selections, and we bring you our highlights below.

Our first recommendation, Jeffrey Schwarz's *Vito* (★★★★☆, May 26, 7 p.m.), revisits a period during which desperate activism was very much a domestic reality. Schwarz's doc is a biography of Vito Russo (1946-1990), who was a prominent figure in both the gay liberation movement, and in the early stages of the fight against AIDS. He was similarly active on the cultural front, as the author of *The Celluloid Closet*—the definitive text on the history of LGBT representation in the movies. His charisma, influence, and capacity to inspire make Russo an ideal subject, and Schwarz delivers the tribute he deserves. *Vito* is simultaneously a warm, intimate portrait, and a compelling primer on the key campaigns of Russo's day.

For a more exhaustive treatment of similar subject matter, we also recommend Jim Hubbard's *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP* (★★★★☆, May 25, 5:15 p.m.). Hubbard picks up where *Vito* leaves off, marshalling a remarkable quantity of archival material to document the rise of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. From the group's early protests of Wall Street and at the FDA (where Vito Russo was a central participant), to its provocative demonstrations against New York's Catholic Archdiocese and the first Bush administration, *United in Anger* is replete with compelling footage from the front lines.

Rounding out our recommendations is Oliver Hermanus's sophomore feature *Beauty* (★★★★☆, May 23, 9:30 p.m.), South Africa's Best Foreign Language Oscar submission and winner of the Queer Palm at Cannes in 2011. An excellent Dean Lotz plays Francois, a closeted, self-loathing Afrikaner who is slowly consumed by an infatuation with his friend's torturously handsome son (model Charlie Keegan). As in his debut, *Shirley Adams* (a highlight of last fall's *imagineNATIVE film festival*), Hermanus crafts a finely-honed sense of foreboding to compliment his lead's tortured performance, and undergirds the drama with a potent socio-ethnic subtext.

For tickets and a full schedule of Inside Out screenings and events, visit the festival's [website](#).
