

PRESS KIT

Event or series name:

Masc: Trans Men, Butch Dykes and Gender-nonconforming Heroes in Cinema

Date(s):

Aug. 19–25, 2023

Location:

[Billy Wilder Theater](#)

10899 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90024
Located inside the Hammer Museum

Admission fee:

Free

Web page:

<https://cinema.ucla.edu/events/2023/masc>

Short program film notes:

Part of the Outfest UCLA Legacy Project Screening Series, the UCLA Film & Television Archive presents:

Masc spotlights a rich tapestry of stories of the courageous lives of trans men, butch lesbians, gender outlaws, and gender non-conforming rebels. This program—co-curated by writer-archivist-filmmaker Jenni Olson and film critic Caden Mark Gardner—surveys six decades of cinema history in search of authentic, complex representations of masculine identity that exist outside the realm of cisheteronormative masculinity. Featuring tales of youth and adulthood, of obstacles and allies, this series presents multifaceted narratives of unforgettable subjects and characters.

- Aug. 19, 7:30 p.m.

No Ordinary Man (2020)

Trans jazz musician Billy Tipton lived in stealth for much of his life. After his 1989 death from health complications, his trans identity was revealed and a tabloid media circus against him and his family followed. Filmmakers Chase Joynt, Aisling Chin-Yee and Amos Mac return to Tipton's story, enlisting transmasculine performers as well as trans historians to rehabilitate and reconsider Tipton's life story and critique how the mainstream media often misunderstands trans masculinity.

Chavela (2017)

A tremendous portrait of legendary Costa Rican-Mexican lesbian singer Chavela Vargas. The world-famous performer was a gun-toting, tequila-loving, macho butch rumored to have had dalliances with Frida Kahlo and Ava Gardner. From being the toast of Mexico City in the 1960s and '70s to falling into obscurity in the 1980s, the film follows her return to the world stage as muse to Pedro Almodóvar — culminating

in her Lifetime Achievement Award at the Grammys in 2007. Friends, colleagues and ex-lovers discuss her legacy and the film is packed with amazing archival material. A joy to watch from first frame to last.

- Aug. 20, 7:00 p.m.

[Southern Comfort](#) (2001)

This acclaimed documentary follows the story of Robert Eads, a trans man dying of ovarian cancer. While indisputably a victim of systemic transphobia and medical malfeasance from the American healthcare system, Eads' status as a trans elder among his chosen family shows him as the beating heart of an incredibly warm and life-affirming community. *Southern Comfort*, named for the then Atlanta-based national trans conference, presents the common struggles and common understandings among trans men in the 1990s with clear-eyed empathy by filmmaker Kate Davis.

[Vera](#) (Brazil, 1986)

Based on the life of Brazilian poet Anderson Bigode Herzer who committed suicide at the age of 20, this intense drama tells the story of Bauer (Ana Beatriz Nogueira), a transman who navigates a difficult life in an orphanage before finding love with a young librarian, Clara (Aida Leiner). A sympathetic professor sees his talent as a poet, but Bauer (the film's title is his deadname) is mostly alone and misunderstood — proclaiming: "I'm not what everyone thinks I am. You hear me? I'm different. I'm something else." One of the earliest portrayals in cinema of a transmasculine character.

- Aug. 21, 7:30 p.m.

[Maggots and Men](#) (2009)

A work that conjures the old Soviet film technique and similar pastiche works by Guy Maddin, Cary Cronenwett's spirited revisionist period film places trans masculine bodies at the radical heart of the 1921 Kronstadt Rebellion. Creatively reimagining the uprising, the story contrasts a performative theater troupe that narrates moments of the story with scenes of the rebellion against the autocracy of the Bolshevik Party. Featuring the largest cast of trans actors in a film, *Maggots and Men* plays with cinema and history to tell a gender defiant story that is both playful and subversive.

[Pariah](#) (2011)

Dee Rees' tender feature debut is a rich and vulnerable queer coming of age story about an African-American butch lesbian having to face familial homophobia and the realization that the people she loves can hurt and disappoint her. Alike is a promising poet and good student who is hiding her sexual identity from her parents. When she is forced to make friends with a girl from church, she develops a serious crush that feels like the beginning of her sexual awakening and her first taste of true love. Adapted from her award-winning short, Rees' film deftly and compassionately captures the fraught and transformative experience of a gender non-conforming adolescence.

- Aug. 24, 7:30 p.m.

[Masc—The Shorts + The Aggressives](#)

Bookended by the uplifting Pixar-esque children's film *Pete*, star-studded heart-wrenching drama *Vamanos* and quirky comedy *Monsieur le Butch* — this celebration of gender non-conforming heroes also showcases a powerful batch of cinematic rarities starring the butch dykes and transmasc pioneers of the early 1990s who blazed the trail for us today (plus a rare 1960s butch home movie treat!). Followed by

an onstage discussion with series co-curator Jenni Olson in conversation with special guests discussing the complex history of butch and transmasculine representation on screen.

[Pete](#) (2022)

A heartwarming animated short about gender identity, Little League baseball, the people who inspire change by being themselves, and the superheroes who allow that change to happen.

7 mins. Director: Bret Parker

[Adventures with Tony](#) (1960s)

A remarkable fragment of home movie footage featuring a young butch dyke on vacation with her father in New Jersey. A rarity from the Jenni Olson Queer Film Collection at the Harvard Film Archive.

1 min. Director: unknown

[Stafford's Story](#) (1992)

Stafford's Story tells about an encounter at a sex club. New digital scan by UCLA Film & Television Archive as part of the Outfest UCLA Legacy Project.

3 mins. Director: Susan Muska

[Max](#) (U.S/Germany, 1992)

Pioneering transman Max Wolf Valerio talks about his life and the experience of transitioning in this groundbreaking short, one of the first portraits of a trans man on film.

20 mins. Director: Monika Treut

[Ifé](#) (1993)

Ifé follows a day in the life of a Black French lesbian in San Francisco.

5 mins. Director: Lenn Keller

[Trans](#) (1994)

A playful portrait of trans man Henry. New digital scan by UCLA Film & Television Archive as part of the Outfest UCLA Legacy Project.

10 mins. Director: Sophie Constantinou

[Sometimes](#) (1994)

A concise poetic summary of butch identity — an early short by acclaimed essay filmmaker and Masc series co-curator Jenni Olson.

1 min. Director: Jenni Olson

[Vámonos](#) (2015)

Vico Ortiz (*Our Flag Means Death*) and Jessica Camacho (*All Rise, The Flash, Watchmen*) co-star in this beautiful story about what it looks like to show up as an ally for our gender non-conforming loved ones.

13 mins. Director: Marvin Lemus

[Monsieur le Butch](#) (2022)

When Jude ends up unexpectedly living at home in their 30s, they must deal with a lovingly opinionated Jewish mother who doesn't quite get the whole "trans thing."

12 mins. Director: Jude Dry

[The Aggressives](#) (2005)

Shot over the course of 1997-2004, this documentary is an incredible snapshot of a vibrant array of butches, studs, and masc folks of color from the New York City ballroom and nightlife scene who are claiming their own space and identity. The film offers profiles of six 'Aggressives' or 'AGs', including trans actor and activist Marquise Vilson, on them and as they speak about their lives, it becomes clear where language fails to fully capture each individual's lived experience and nuanced gender identity.

- Aug. 25, 7:30 p.m.

[Lifetime Guarantee: Phranc's Adventure in Plastic](#) (2001)

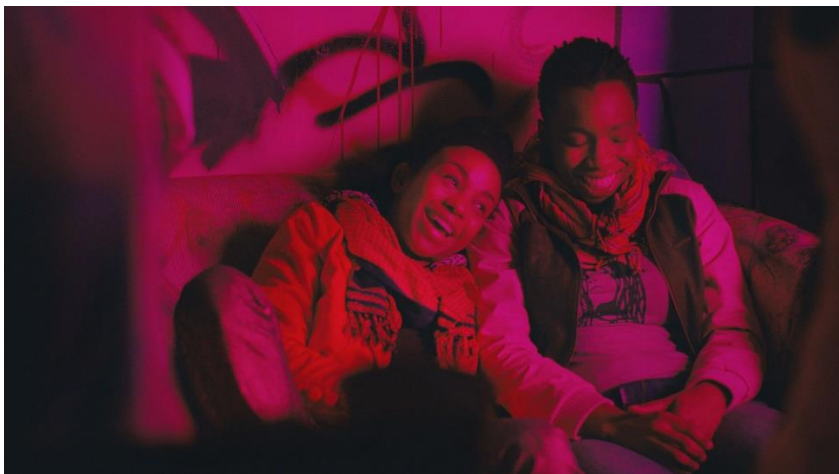
Virtually unseen for the past 20 years, this heartwarming documentary about legendary Jewish butch lesbian folk singer Phranc is an irresistible portrait of a gender non-conforming hero navigating a world of Southern California straight lady homemakers while working her way to the top as a Tupperware salesperson. The film earned acclaim and awards on the film festival circuit, including Audience Awards at Outfest and SXSW and a rave review in Variety describing Phranc as a "1950s sitcom-dad-styled androgyne hawking kitchenware to housewives."

[Shinjuku Boys](#) (U.K., 1995)

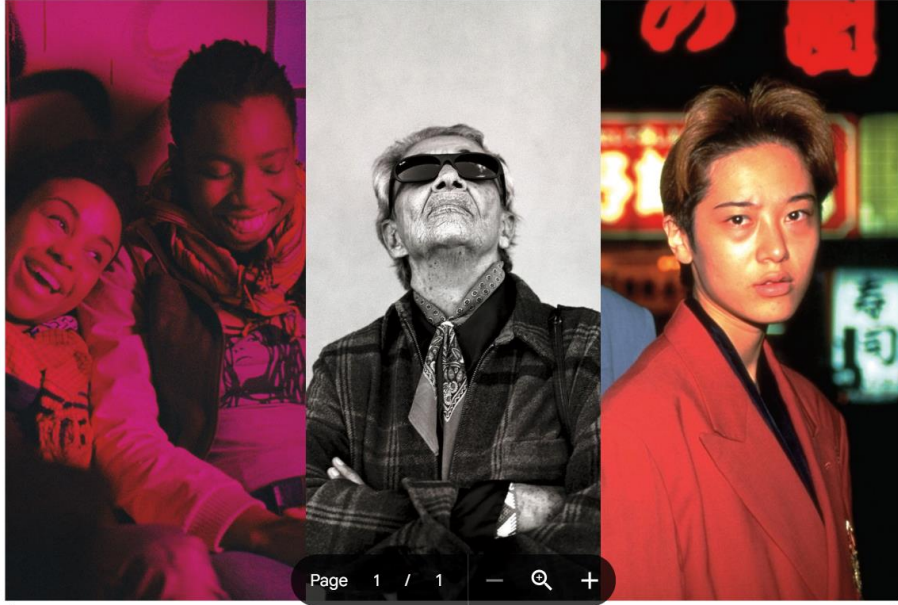
An amazing mid-1990s snapshot of AFAB (assigned female at birth) gender identity in Japan. Tatsu, Gaish and Kazuki pass as men and work as hosts at Tokyo's New Marilyn Club, a nightspot where straight women spend time with the charming onabe (an expansive term that can encompass both butch lesbians and trans men). Tatsu is a trans man who lives with his girlfriend, Tomoe. Gaish is a tough-talking "in-between" heartbreaker with a string of girlfriends. And Kazuki lives with Kumi, a trans woman nightclub dancer. The suave trio speak frankly to the camera about sex, queerness, trans identity and masculinity.

Made possible by the Archive and The Andrew J. Kuehn Jr. Foundation

Images:



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A vertical promotional poster for the MASC screening series. It features three film stills: a man in sunglasses (Chavela), a couple embracing (Pariah), and a man in a red jacket (Shinjuku Boys). The central text reads: 'PART OF THE OUTFEST UCLA LEGACY PROJECT SCREENING SERIES UCLA FILM & TELEVISION ARCHIVE PRESENTS MASC TRANS MEN, BUTCH DYKES AND GENDER-NONCONFORMING HEROES IN CINEMA'. Below this, it says 'FILMMAKERS IN PERSON! AUG. 19-25 | FREE BILLY WILDER THEATER AT THE HAMMER MUSEUM CINEMA.UCLA.EDU/MASC'. At the bottom, it says 'MADE POSSIBLE BY THE ANDREW J. KUEHN JR. FOUNDATION'. The film titles and dates are listed at the bottom of each still: 'CHAVELA (2017) AUG. 19', 'PARIAH (2011) AUG. 21', and 'SHINJUKU BOYS (U.K., 1995) AUG. 25'.

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