

Chi Chi LaRue: Sex Becomes Her



Chi Chi LaRue Sex Becomes Her

Review By Yale Alexander

You know how drag queens are (I know I do), you gotta pronounce their names correctly. So before we go any further, it is pronounced “Shee-Shee”, not “Chee-Chee” (LaRue is just like you’d expect). However her name is pronounced, Chi Chi LaRue is best known as the best-known director of gay porn films. Documentary director Mike Aho has chosen to immortalize Ms. LaRue in his film “Sex Becomes Her”. While Ms. LaRue is certainly an interesting subject, it’s unfortunate that she didn’t direct this film as well.

“Sex Becomes Her” might have been just another re-telling of the “small town fat, gay kid moves to the big city and makes good as drag queen” story. However, to most gay men, the subject matter becomes much more interesting when they find out there’ll be footage of naked porn stars working. Intertwining the various storylines makes for very entertaining subject matter, but Mr. Aho

has squished it all into a badly edited, choppy, ass-kissing love letter to Ms. LaRue. I’m not questioning Mr. Aho’s adoration, but happy testimonials from friends and co-workers, mixed with unsexy backstage glances at the making of porn films, does not make a tasty cocktail.

Chi Chi (aka Larry) rightfully comes off as a larger-than-life (get it?) character. Unfortunately, everyone confessing how sweet and wonderful she is, doesn’t really jibe with the screaming dominatrix of a director telling the camera how she’d “rather be anyplace but here” (referring to the film’s set). We are also treated to the information that Ms. La Rue was the first porn director to introduce drag queens into a gay porn film. Why thank you Ms. LaRue!

Much is made of the Chi Chi’s schizophrenic nature. She confidently directs her films dressed in sloppy male clothes, but she really comes to life only when she is in full drag attire. Ms. LaRue

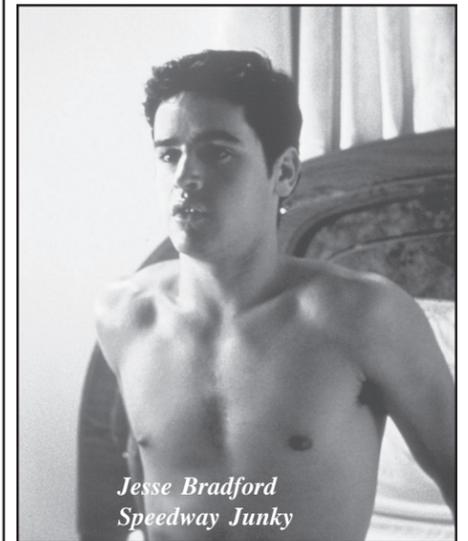
has cleverly, and very successfully used her drag persona to promote her films around the country. However, if there is room in the late Divine’s grave to roll, she surely is, as Ms. LaRue has pretty much lifted her look and act.

Most of the film is at least interesting to watch, if you can follow the cuts. Of course, there are naked men having sex throughout, and the sad visit to Larry’s hometown of Hibbing, MN, does take us a long way in understanding today’s Chi Chi. In a nutshell, Larry was a fat, gay kid, growing up in a small, bigoted town. His only sexual outlets were porn magazines and films. Fortunately for him, his obsession translated into a successful career. The character of Chi Chi, originally a second job for Larry, blended into his porn career. It turns out that gay boys enjoy Chi Chi, and the positive response convinced Larry’s bosses that it was OK to mix the two. If only the film was this concise.

Quite seriously, though, whatever anyone’s opinion of porn or drag queens isn’t the point here. There’s a compelling story in the glaring irony of an outcast from two cultures, straight and gay, making good by selling fantasies that would surely exclude him. Despite Mr. Aho’s inept filmmaking, the undeniable image of Chi Chi LaRue as the sometimes glamorous outcast, directing (literally from a remote monitor) a scene that she could never be a part of, burns through the glitter. Ms. LaRue deserves a better film.

Speedway Junky is a Wreck

By Yale Alexander

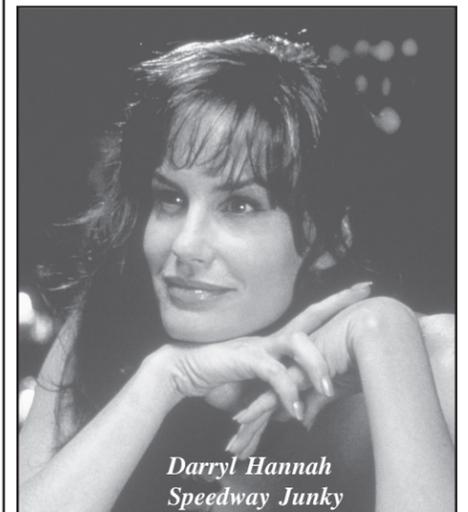


Jesse Bradford
Speedway Junky

I’m upset. I want to know why the best movies about gays, as well as movies we consider “gay”, are made by straight men in Hollywood. “Thelma and Louise”, “The Birdcage”, even “Priscilla, Queen of the Desert” were all made by straight people. Therefore, I get very annoyed when I see three movies about gay subjects, made by three gay directors, for the Third Annual Miami Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, and none of them are worth recommending.

In this particular case, I am referring to the mess know as “Speedway Junky”. It’s biggest claim to fame is that one of the stars is Jonathan Taylor Thomas, who was the most obnoxious of Tim Allen’s three sons on “Home Improvement”. I imagine Mr. Thomas was seeking to get some acting credibility by appearing in this ‘edgy’ movie about street hustlers in Las Vegas. Try again Jonathan.

This film is an overly obvious collection of gay cliches including: the femme hustler attracted to the “straight” guy, the “bi” hustler (Mr. Thomas), who explains that he really likes women, but does guys for the money, drag queen thieves, etc. We’ve seen this story a hundred times before (“Hustler White”, for instance), and every one was more interesting than this. Oh no, not the downward spiral of the “lost boys” again! If there is any worthwhile element in this film, it is, surprisingly, the performance of Darryl Hannah, as the junkie mother of the femme hustler. Her role is very small, but she does give an interesting performance which doesn’t rely at all on her looks. As good as she is, though, it ain’t enough to recommend this film.



Darryl Hannah
Speedway Junky

The worst offense committed by Nickolas Perry, the director, is that he is rehashing the oldest, tired, and most negative cliches about gays, and throwing them back at us in a gay film festival, of all places. I know, personally, that there are an unlimited number of fascinating stories to be told about gay life. I want to know why gay directors don’t know the same thing.

Chi Chi La Rue Opens Up

By Yale Alexander

Chi-Chi LaRue is arguably the most successful director of gay porn films. She is the subject of the documentary, “Sex Becomes Her: The True Life Story of Chi Chi LaRue” which is being presented as part of The Miami Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. I asked Ms. LaRue a few questions to get her side of the story.

Yale Alexander: In the documentary you say that, to you, the talent, i.e. the actors, are first and foremost. What do you mean by that?

Chi Chi LaRue: It’s true. I enjoy great relationships with all the actors I work with. Some of them have become my best friends, others have remained just acquaintances, but I insist on everyone being treated as equals. They’re doing a job for me, and I treat them with respect.

YA: Is becoming attracted to the guys a problem for you?

CCL: Well, I have a tendency to have my favorites, my ‘reliables’, but then I lose my attraction. They end up just being guys I work with.

YA: You’re best known for your work with Falcon Studios, whose image is primarily the “blonde, smooth, muscular” type. In the film, you talk about how you like all types of men, but that isn’t really obvious in the Falcon movies.

CCL: In the past, that might have been true, but in the last few years, if you look at my work for them, you’ll see the difference. There are five black guys in my latest Falcon movie. The image has changed in the newer movies. Now, it’s more about darker, hairier, ethnic guys. You have to realize who the market is. The men who actually buy the videos are older guys who want to see younger guys. I’ve just started my own production company, “Rascal Video”, so I can make the movies that I want to make.

YA: I understand you have a web site also...

CCL: Yes, I do. I actually have two, but they’re a little more interesting than your average web site. There’s ChiChiLaRue.com, which is more about me, and then I have LiveandRaw.com. On that one, you can actually watch live sex scenes, for about \$29.95 a month.

YA: In your movies, like most gay porn, you insist on using condoms, but there is other activity going on that’s considered “risky”. How do you draw the line?

CCL: Look, anyone agreeing to do a porn film should be aware there’s a risk. Although, the risk is much greater for other STDs other than HIV. It’s the performers’ decision to either do, or not do movies. I think it’s part of their job to look over what they’re putting in their mouth or ass. We take the most precautions we can. I think the performers can feel secure that they’re not going to leave my set with something.

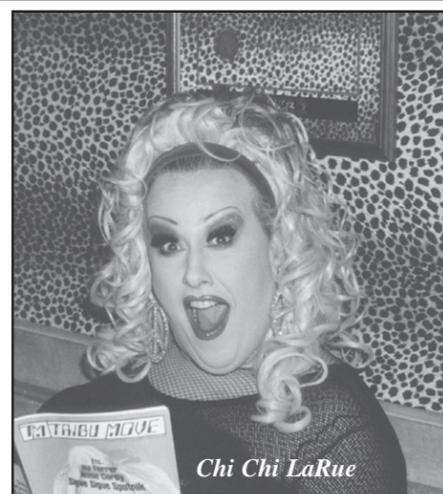
YA: What about the inherent “disposability” of porn performers? Isn’t a short “shelf-life” for most of them?

CCL: I don’t know about other directors, but I’m not so quick to “dispose of” my actors. I don’t think about “shelf-life”. For instance, I’ve been working with Logan Reed for seven years. I tend to work with people who do good work for me for as long as I can.

YA: But what if someone gains weight, or isn’t as hot as they used to be?

CCL: Well, I know how difficult it is to take criticism about your appearance. I’ve taken plenty of shit as a fat drag queen myself. But when it comes to casting, the guys still have to be hot. If someone shows up overweight, I just have to say, “I’m sorry, but this is a fat drag queen telling you that you need to get back in shape.” Personally, I’m not comfortable with my body in front of a camera. I know I wouldn’t do it.

YA: The documentary shows what a close relationship you have with many of



Chi Chi LaRue

your cast and crew. I noticed your make-up guy is kind of your right hand, so to speak...

CCL: Oh yes, I’ve worked with Vince for a long time, he is one of my closest friends. In a crisis, he’s the first person I turn to. I can always count on him for an honest response.

YA: But despite your friendships, you’re definitely known as being tough on the set. Do you think you use fear to manipulate people?

CCL: I don’t know how to answer that. I know I can be awful sometimes, but I’m not happy about that. I’m the worst with the people I’m closest to. I don’t want to be mean, but on a set someone’s got to be in control, and that’s me.

YA: Has seeing so many men having so much sex affected your own sex drive?

CCL: To be honest, my drive isn’t that great. I have to be very attracted to someone to be interested in them sexually. I get a lot of attention when I’m in drag, but if someone approaches me when I’m out of drag, I feel weird. I guess it’s because then I don’t understand their attraction.

YA: Aside from what we’ve discussed, what do you do for fun in your personal life?

CCL: I collect Barbies! I have over 250 of them. I also love to travel. I go to Paris every year. I’m also addicted to talk shows. So are my friends. I particularly love Sally Jesse Raphael