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Happy 75th birthday, Mr. Marcus!



B.A.R. leather columnist Marcus Hernandez marks milestone. See [Out There](#) column.

Proudly gay, proudly heroic

DVD

Homemade 'Surge of Power' stars a gay superhero

by David Alexander Nahmod

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Mickey & Judy would be proud of Vincent and Victor. That would be Vincent J. Roth and Victor Stone, co-producers of the new film *Surge of Power*. The two longtime friends, both lifelong fans of comic book superheroes, decided to "put on a show" and make a superhero movie of their own, one that they could relate to as gay men.



Surge (Vincent J. Roth) makes an appearance at a recent World-Con comics conference. Photo: Courtesy SurgeofPower.org

With a little money and a lot of spunk, they got their film made. *Surge of Power* is now available on DVD via Ariztical Films after playing at several film festivals, including Frameline. Their baby also enjoyed a brief theatrical release in select cities.

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One aspect of *Surge of Power* that's refreshing is that none of the characters announce they're gay, they just are. No one in the film discusses their sexuality, they simply live it, quietly but openly, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, which of course it is.

Roth, the film's writer and star, plays a likable comic book geek named Gavin, who dreams of life as a superhero. When Gavin catches evil Hector (John T. Venturini) stealing equipment from the lab where they both work, the ensuing fight causes an explosion. Both men find themselves endowed with superpowers! Gavin becomes Surge, a force for good. Hector becomes s Metal Master, a psychotic maniac only Lex Luthor could love!



Surge's very first heroic act is to thwart an anti-gay hate crime. The nameless young man he saves, played by the adorable Joey Bourgeois, soon becomes Surge's very own Lois Lane.

The film is filled with charming references to the comic books Roth and Stone grew up with, and features cameos by the television icons of their youth. The nameless young man is seen with his elderly Aunt Lois, played by no less than Noel Neill, who portrayed the famed girl reporter on the 1950s TV series *Adventures of Superman*. Now in her 80s and fresh off a cameo in Bryan Singer's *Superman Returns* (2006), Neill remains as perky and lovable as she was a half-century ago.

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Roth, who makes his acting debut here, said he didn't feel like he was really acting in a movie until the day he worked with *Star Trek* legend Nichelle Nichols (Lt. Uhura), who also accepted a small role in the film. Nichols' character, a ghostly, long-retired superhero named Omen, is a charmer. Her appearance stands out as *Surge of Power's* best scene. Bathed in light, Omen appears in a flowing diaphanous gown to offer Surge some much needed advice on how to deal with his newfound abilities. Still stunningly beautiful, Nichols brings an almost Shakespearian quality to her role.

Obviously shot on an ultra-low budget, *Surge of Power* becomes immensely likable due to the very attractive Roth (who looks good in shorts) and in part to the love that obviously went into the production. After shooting, Roth and Stone took their film to a special-effects house, where impressive flying and other effects were added.

The movie has a clever framing device. The opening scene was shot at the San Diego Comic Con, where a young man buys issue #1 of the fictitious *Surge Comics*. As he begins to read, comic book pages come to life, and the viewer is drawn to Big City, where we meet the daydreaming Gavin.

The film returns to the "real world" of the Comic Con several times, and the viewer is treated to cameos by such notables as Rose Marie (*Dick Van Dyke Show*), Butch Patrick (Eddie Munster) and staunch gay-rights advocate Allison Arnglim (*Little House on the Prairie*). They and others are all seen reading *Surge Comics #1*.

Surge of Power is highly recommended. It's not likely you'll see a film with more heart this year. www.surgeofpower.org

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