



7:30 pm **SURGE OF POWER**
Special Q&A to follow with Writer/Producer/Star Vincent J. Roth.

CINEMA

BY GENE HETZEL

From a darker realm to one more occupied by Spandex, another film set to play at the festival provides a comedic caveat to the GLBT lifestyle and the superhero obsession sweeping Hollywood at the moment. In a very "up, out and away" tone, *Surge of Power: the Stuff of Heroes* (April 17, 7:30 pm.) tells the story of a gay comic fan who discovers he has developed superpowers after reading a magical comic at a convention. Using a shock fashion reminiscent of '70s superhero films and some of the more

campy, cult science fiction movies of the past, the film attempts to capture the twirl of this blue leather-clad wonder as he goes at odds with an evil super villain, the Metal Master (who bears a strange resemblance to Superman's Zod) and other foul miscreants. Hate crimes and bank robberies and fear, Oh, my!

Taking a genre already rife with homoerotic flavor (the Ambiguously Gay Duo anyone?), *Surge of Power* employs many humorous gay-themed anecdotes to press its tightly packed, yet wholesome point. Can Surge (as he is known) throw a ball? Should he wear a cape? Can he succeed at hooking up with the Young Man he keeps saving? Vincent J. Roth, writer and star of

the film, promises to answer all these questions and more with a film sense that never strays far from its dual focus.

"I think it bleeds obvious that I really love superheroes and comics, and as a gay man, I really saw an opening for a gay superhero to finally make it to the big screen," says Roth. "I wanted to capture the essence of what I thought would be fun for everyone to enjoy, gay and lesbian or otherwise, and from previous screenings' reactions, I think I've succeeded."

Roth notes that he made every attempt to make the film palatable to all audiences, toning out a lot of the overt sexuality in the film, an affinity for taste he shares with Schickner. "Anyone can go rent a porno if that want to see dirty stuff. I wanted to present a family film where the character was very comfortable with himself, and therefore wouldn't need to flaunt that aspect of himself. I think part of what can gain GLBT filmmaking a larger foothold in popular culture will be a subtly that doesn't turn off other audiences. How many 'straight' people watch *Queer as Folk* as opposed to *Will and Grace*? I'll let others conquer stuff like the first one does, and find my place closer to the other's sense of fun."

Very much in keeping with its roots, *Surge of Power* is rife with different comic hero nods, including the inclusion of a number of celebrities from the sci-fi and comic world, such as Lou Ferrigno (TV's *Hulk*) and Nichelle Nichols (*Star Trek's* Ohura). "It's interesting, Nichelle told

us a story while we were filming about when she was considering quitting the show and how she confided that to Martin Luther King. She said he urged her not to do it, told her that even if she 'was just answering phones' that she was presenting an important positive role model and example of an African-American woman. That's kind of what I'm shooting for here, in a fun way, someone who is a hero to his people."

Several of the films being screened during the festival, including the above, will have their writers and producers on hand to discuss their work. **CIN**

7:30 PM: **SURGE OF POWER** (Surge of Power Enterprises) 35mm /98 minutes, Special Q&A to follow with writer/producer/star Vincent J. Roth.

DIRECTOR: Mike Donahue

SCREENPLAY: Vincent J. Roth

CAST: Alan Mills, Tom Tangen, Vincent J. Roth, Lou Ferrigno, Butc Patrick, Marty Krofft, Lisa Loring

SYNOPSIS: Through a freak accident, comic book addict Gavin Lucas acquires super powers & Surge of Power, the first gay superhero, is born.