

FLORENT: QUEEN OF THE MEAT MARKET

DIRECTED BY: DAVID SIGAL

**Winner of Best Feature Film Award & Best Film made in New York at the NYC FOOD FILM FESTIVAL.
Official Selection Outfest 2010.**

Let Julianne Moore, Isaac Mizrahi, Diane Von Furstenberg, Michael Musto and other famous (and infamous) faces take you on a fantastic voyage to New York City's legendary Florent diner.

For 23 years, the all-night eatery in the city's Meat Packing District was prime stomping ground for a surprising mix of A-list celebrities, tourists, families and club kids, and it played an important role in LGBT activism and culture. This wildly entertaining documentary chronicles the history and final days of this outrageous icon!

With: Florent Morellet, Julianne Moore, Diane Von Furstenberg, Isaac Mizrahi, Christo & Jeanne-Claude, Michael Musto, Fank DeCaro, Jackie Hoffman, Spencer Tunick, Maira Kalman, Murray Hill, Tigger!, Dirty Martini, Worl Famous *Bob*, Sean Strub, Penny Arcade, Lucy Sexton, Richard Move, Sylvia Miles, Cathay Che, Nora Burns, Mike Albo, David Ilku, Joey Arias, Basil Twist, Julie Atlas Muz, Lance Horne.

About the Director: David Sigal is a co-producer of FAIR GAME, starring Sean Penn and Naomi Watts, which debuted in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2010. His documentary, FLORENT: QUEEN OF THE MEAT MARKET, which Sigal directed, shot and produced, premiered in June 2010 at the New York Food Film Festival. A rough cut of the film won the Audience Award at the Newfest film festival. Sigal had his feature directorial debut with THE LOOK, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2003. *Variety* called it “a vibrant canvass” with “flashiness and fun.” He is a graduate of New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, where he won the Technicolor Award for cinematography.

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Florent: Queen of the Meat Market

(Documentary)

By **RONNIE SCHEIB**

A Magic Lantern production. Produced by Trevor Laurence, David Sigal, Laura Van Schendel. Executive producer, Nick Quested. Directed by David Sigal.

With: Florent Morellet, Julianne Moore, Isaac Mizrahi, Diane von Furstenberg, Christo, Jeanne-Claude, Michael Musto, Spencer Tunick, Robin Byrd, Joseph Arias.

Though it premiered June 24 at the New York Food Film Festival, "Florent: Queen of the Meat Market" has little to do with food. Rather, David Sigal's docu is a paean to French expat and gay activist Florent Morellet and the restaurant he established in Gotham's decidedly unglamorous Meatpacking District. A unique haven defined not by exclusivity but by its wholehearted embrace of diversity, Florent's became a fabled hangout for locals, hookers, families, celebrities, performance artists, club boys and blue-haired old ladies. Exuberant pic will wow gay markets but could expand further, Morellet's appeal being as broad-based as his clientele.

When Sigal started shooting in January 2008, little did he imagine he would be chronicling the last days of a 25-year-old Greenwich Village institution. Florent's forced closure (caused by an astronomical rent increase) lends a nostalgic conclusiveness to the anecdotes offered by those who frequented the venue, drawn to the warm informality of Morellet and his enlightened wait staff throughout its quarter-century history. (Morellet's ingenious five-week countdown to eviction, each week dedicated to one of the Kubler-Ross stages of grief, also supplies Sigal with a perfect story arc.)

Serving customers 24/7 at cheap prices, the welcoming Gansevoort Street bistro quickly became a neighborhood fixture after its 1985 opening, garnering publicity and rave reviews that jeopardized the eatery's casual, offbeat atmosphere. Longtime staffers recall Morellet's various stratagems to discourage yuppie patrons and ensure that regulars would not be displaced by affluent trend-followers.

Not that Florent's lacked beautiful people. Sigal taps Julianne Moore to talk about her first visit, when she ducked in for a costume change and was instantly smitten. Isaac Mizrahi likens the experience of going into Florent's to the surreal feeling of entering a dream. As one staffer remarks, where else would Police Commissioner Ray Kelly be addressed by his waiter as "honey?" Christo and Jeanne-Claude tout the restaurant's artwork (detailed maps of imaginary lands), while longtime friend Diane von Furstenberg applauds Morellet's affable activism.

Community organizers recount how, when developers sought to tear down the meat market's distinctive if inelegant architecture, Morellet led an improbable but successful crusade to have it granted landmark status. But it was the AIDS crisis that truly galvanized Morellet, who poured the same impassioned energy

into fighting the pandemic that he brought to running his chowhouse. When he discovered that he himself was HIV-positive, he posted his T-count on the menu board, alongside the witticism du jour. Sigal includes homemovie footage of Morellet beamingly leading the 2006 Gay Pride Parade.

Sigal understandably emphasizes the visually flamboyant, such as Morellet's penchant for dressing up like Marie Antoinette on Bastille Day, or the sight of outrageous performance artists like Dirty Martini, Penny Arcade, Murray Hill or the Dueling Bankheads entertaining diners from tables or countertops.

Camera (color, HD), Sigal; editor, Trevor Laurence; music, Ezekiel Honig; music supervisor, Bill Coleman; sound, Mike Poppleton. Reviewed at Tribeca Cinemas, June 16, 2010. (In Outfest.) Running time: 89 MIN.