



INTERNATIONAL

LAIFF REVIEW: HOMETOWN PROUD

November 8, 2020, by John Higgins

Fifty-one miles north of Dayton, Ohio is a little village by the name of Botkins (Pop: 1,164). It's a community of communities in a place and state where, according to locals, there are no towns, only cities and villages – and the motto is 'Where the waters divide and the People unite'.

It is the heart of a new hour-long documentary, **HOMETOWN PROUD**, which focuses on both the history and some of the LGBTQ+ individuals who attend the annual Summer festival known as Carousel, in particular Archer Altstaetter who left the town after graduation to pursue a career in dance and returns to perform at the pageant with a Country-Pop-Techno combo that was conceived at a local music production facility.

His connection to the village is significant, given that his family (several brothers and sisters also feature in the documentary) bought a number of properties and businesses that helped the place evolve into the community that it has become to this day, as well as being a rarity in that there aren't any traffic lights.

The village does have a lot of history so we learn, with it existing for about 12,000 years according to local historians, but its heart does seem to be based on the sort of mentality that inspired the original 1984 version of **FOOTLOOSE**, when Kevin Bacon's outside Ren McCormack had to battle John Lithgow's oppressive Reverend Moore and the townsfolk to be able the dance, whilst romancing his daughter Ariel (Lori Singer)

There is an element of homophobia around, particularly towards some of the younger inhabitants when it comes to the age-old tradition of prom, when they have their shared bond and want to go as a couple, but then the High School representative announces them as friends on the night itself.

The essence of the film is Archer's desire to have a float in the annual parade whilst proclaiming his pride in his hometown, even though it is clear that he hasn't been authorised to do so and we watch the overall preparations of the event which falls on the same weekend as the Annual Pride celebrations.

HOMETOWN PROUD does provide an insight into how a small community can be affected, but it is sad that in the twenty-first century the initiative to provide gender equality and gender neutrality in these enlightening woke times that are emerging is falling short of where it needs to be. One hopes that films like this will at least provide a step towards what everybody, regardless of their nature or genetic design, will embrace on an equal footing.

Link to review online: <https://www.filmandtvnow.com/laiiff-review-hometown-proud/>

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