

**CALENDAR \* PICKS OF THE WEEK, June 10 - 16, 2005**

video

**HOWARD ZINN , S21, DANGEROUS LIVING**

First Run Features recently released a trio of progressively minded documentaries that speak powerfully to the issues and lives they seek to illuminate. Directors Deb Ellis and Denis Mueller's celebratory biography *Howard Zinn: You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train* (2004) situates Zinn as the real progressive deal long before Michael Moore took activism big time. Narrated by Matt Damon, largely in Zinn's own words, the film attests to the accomplishments of a life spent speaking truth to power, even while suggesting that, from the civil rights movement to the War on Terror, an activist's work is never done. From protesting war to confronting its aftermath, director Rithy Panh's *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003) tells of a death-camp survivor who returns to confront the former guards who tortured him and murdered thousands. Documentary footage, contemporary interviews and readings from "forced confessions" bring a chilling reality to the surreal horrors of the Cambodian genocide. Finally, *Dangerous Living: Coming Out in the Developing World* (2003), directed by John Scagliotti, shares personal stories of love and courage from a half-dozen gays and lesbians struggling against religious and police repression in countries such as Egypt, India, Thailand, Namibia and Honduras. At the center of these frequently heartbreaking testimonies, Scagliotti recounts the 2001 trial in Egypt of 52 men arrested at a gay nightclub for "debauchery" and "contempt of religion." Dubbed the Cairo 52, their case became an international cause célèbre that brought attention to growing anti-gay sentiment in the Middle East and Asia. As the film explores this resurgent intolerance, the homophobic rhetoric on display begins to sound eerily similar to the fulminations of the American far right. Without making direct comment, *Dangerous Living* nevertheless exposes the hypocrisy by which the Bush administration calls for global freedom and democracy while entertaining its own brand of homespun bigotry.

—Paul Malcolm