

Citizen Jojo

BY GREGG SHAPIRO

Now on DVD and blu-ray with a wealth of bonus material, Oscar-winning doc *Citizenfour* (Anchor Bay / TWC / Radius), the third part of filmmaker Laura Poitras's post 9/11 trilogy, is a real-life thriller. The story of the U.S. government's "war on whistleblowers," it begins in 2012 when gay journalist Glenn Greenwald, of Salon.com and *The Guardian*, is contacted by an anonymous source. That source turns out to be none other than 29-year-old NSA contractor Edward Snowden.

From the encrypted emails about NSA surveillance to the news that everyone in the country is being spied on with the compliance of the largest telecom companies in the U.S. and the fact that the rest of the world's privacy is being treated even worse, *Citizenfour* is a perfect illustration of the domino effect. There's a lot of technical information in the movie that runs the risk of blending together. Terms such as "metadata in aggregate," "linkability," and "crypto-mathematics" might be lost on the average viewer. What saves it is the combination of the human elements and heart-pounding suspense.

First and foremost is Snowden's motivation for going public with the story; how the State's power against people's ability to meaningfully oppose that power was threatened. He saw the promise of the Obama administration betrayed while advancing things that were promised to be curtailed, including the use of drones. The changes in the way the internet went from being free and unrestrained to the expectation of being watched and the limiting of boundaries of intellectual exploration also disturbed Snowden.

Willing to risk his relationship with his girlfriend, as well as imprisonment, to prevent the curtailment of his intellectual freedom and that of others, Snowden makes it clear he doesn't see what he was doing as self-sacrifice, rather he felt he could contribute to

the good of others. Additionally, director Poitras, who co-directed the queer 2003 doc *Flag Wars*, focuses on the openly gay Greenwald, as well as queer journalist/hacker Jacob Applebaum, making this already fascinating story of increased interest to LGBT viewers. A second DVD of special features deleted scenes, Q&A footage with Poitras and Dennis Lin, and much more.

Finally making its way to DVD, the Clive Barker-produced LGBT film fest selection *Jojo Baby: Without the Mask* (MVD Visual) is a doc about legendary club kid and doll-maker Jojo Baby, co-directed by Dana Buning and Mark Danforth. Well-loved in the art world and nightclub scene, Jojo Baby credits both his late mother (who taught him to sew by hand) and the late Greer Lankton (a trans artist who worked with Jim Henson on *Sesame Street*) with teaching him his craft. In fact, it was Lankton who discouraged Jojo from attending art school.

Jojo's dolls – consisting of wood, wire, human teeth and hair, and glass eyes – are on display in both his gallery and apartment. Working on multiple projects simultaneously, Jojo is also known for transforming himself into works of art. In addition to his assortment of tattoos, Jojo prides himself on his costumes as well as his skills with make-up, something he credits to attending Mary Kay parties. When dressed up, Jojo states that he feels more confident, has more energy, and feels more in control.

While the filmmakers incorporate interviews with several people close to Jojo, including his brother Jay Jay and best friend Sal-E, Jojo Baby is the primary focus and the one who tells his story the best. Jojo, who has a penchant for "rough trade" (although he quotes Boy George in regards to sex, saying "I'd rather have a cup of tea"), talks openly about his relationship troubles as well as his health issues, including his HIV-positive status and bout with testicular cancer, as well as his Roman Catholic background and time in seminary. The DVD doesn't contain any bonus material to speak of. ▼



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