

Best of Cincinnati for November 18, 2009 December 15, 2006

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★ INLAWS & OUTLAWS

Documentary

Unrated

Directed by: Drew Emery

“What does marriage mean today?” a man asks late in director Drew Emery’s *Inlaws and Outlaws*. It’s a question this timely, often affecting documentary investigates with subtlety and insight. Of course, answers vary depending who’s asked: everyone from school children to aged gay couples deliver their thoughts and experiences on the slowly evolving “human custom,” as one perceptive kid calls it. The loose, fairly straightforward narrative intertwines a parade of face-the-camera interviews with couples — both gay and straight — who talk about how expectations and “that’s-the-way-it’s-always-been-done” perceptions affect how one feels about relationships. And while Emery is clearly interested in exploring the topic of gay marriage, he never reveals his hand one way or the other, instead letting his subjects put a human face on a topic that has been distorted by hot-button politics and religious stringencies. Largely filmed in what looks like someone’s swankified garage, Emery intersperses his core group of a dozen or so interviewees with performances by a cabaret singer whose song choices intend to complement the subject at hand. It’s an unnecessary intrusion in an otherwise heartfelt and surprisingly tender story of people struggling with the minefield that is contemporary intimacy, no matter the gender, race or socioeconomic background of those involved. Presented by Equality Ohio Education Fund and Cincinnati PFLAG, *Inlaws and Outlaws*’ free, one-time screening is 7 p.m. Thursday at UC’s MainStreet Cinema. -- Jason Gargano

Citybeat Grade: B