

‘The Whistle’ collects and preserves a little known piece of LGBTQ, Latinx history

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A scene from the documentary, “The Whistle,” which was filmed in Albuquerque. (Courtesy of StormMiguel Florez)

When StormMiguel Florez had the world premiere of the documentary, “The Whistle,” at the KiMo Theater in 2019 – it was a milestone.

After all, Florez had spent years working on the film.

Florez is about to hit another milestone with the documentary as it premieres on New Mexico PBS at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 21.

“To have a wider audience see the film is amazing,” he says. “It’s important to understand how the community has grown.”

“The Whistle” tells the story of a group of predominantly Latina lesbians who came out as youth in the ’70s and ’80s in Albuquerque, and the secret code they used to find each other and build community.

The film collects and preserves a little known piece of LGBTQ and Latinx history, and explores the resiliency of queer communities during that time.

Florez, who is a trans man, is an Albuquerque native who came out as a teenage lesbian in the '80s and returned to Albuquerque from San Francisco to make the film.

In search of the origin of a secret lesbian code he had learned as a teenager – the “dyke whistle” – he uncovered the humorous, heart-breaking and oft-forgotten stories of the local LGBTQ community.

The film made its run on the festival circuit and had success.



Albuquerque native StormMiguel Florez's documentary, “The Whistle,” will be broadcast on New Mexico PBS on Thursday, April 21. (Courtesy of StormMiguel Florez)

“I did a lot of online panels for the film,” he says. “We also got to broadcast on public television in Mexico. The film resonates with a lot of people. It's a story that is unique and universal at the same time.”

Being able to broadcast on New Mexico PBS has always been one of Florez's goals.

“I want New Mexicans to know about this story,” he says. “It did give people a sense of community. I decided to centralize the whistle because it is unique to New Mexico. The film needed to be about our community.”

Florez is also proud that the film gives a glimpse into life before technology took over.

“It’s healing for LGBTQ to reminisce about that time,” he says. “There’s been a lot of excitement. There’s been plenty of positive feedback and New Mexico continues to be excited about the journey of the film.”

He is grateful to have the opportunity to meet many of the people who came out a decade before he did.

“These women paved the way so that my peers and I had a celebratory culture to come out into,” he says. “I think our support network and particular culture were pretty unique for LGBTQ youth in the ’70s and ’80s, especially outside of urban areas like New York and San Francisco.”

Florez hopes that other PBS stations across the country will pick up “The Whistle.”

“I know there are all sorts of avenues,” Florez says. “Being on PBS is the most accessible avenue. I hope that as the journey continues for the film, audiences will embrace it and find their story within it.”

ON TV

“The Whistle” which is directed by StormMiguel Florez will air at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 21, on New Mexico PBS, channel 5.1.

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