



Red Without Blue

(Documentary)

By [JOE LEYDON](#)

Winner of the audience award for documentary at the 2007 Slamdance Film Festival, "Red Without Blue" is an understated but compassionate account of twin brothers who struggle to define themselves in terms of individuality and sexual identity. Pic is a natural for multiple exposures on the global fest circuit, and likely will click with simpatico viewers through pubcasting and cable showcases.

Early during their formative years in Missoula, Mont., Mark and Alex Farley realized they were "different." They came out of the closet while still in their teens -- much to the dismay of their parents, who divorced when the boys were 11 -- and had to endure the cruelties of taunting classmates and sexual predators. Filmmakers Brooke Sebold, Benita Sills and Todd Sills follow the now-twentysomething siblings over a three-year period, recording their journeys in new directions: Mark, an art student, begins his first serious romance; Alex, a transsexual who prefers to be called Clair, considers sexual reassignment surgery.

Along the way, the brothers describe childhood traumas great and small -- at one point, they say they very nearly carried out a suicide pact -- while re-establishing ties with their parents. They also must acknowledge the frays in their fraternal bonds. Mark admits he can't help viewing Alex/Clair's planned sex change as yet another sign that his twin "didn't want to be like me."

For all its candor and blunt speaking, "Red Without Blue" leaves the audience with a sense that some elements of this family saga are being withheld from closer scrutiny. Indeed, the pic drops teasing hints that Jenny, the mother of the siblings, is dealing with her own unresolved issues of guilt and sexual identity. At one point, she makes passing reference to a steamy post-divorce affair that greatly distracted her from her needy young children. At another point, she talks about her long-term cohabitation with a "very close" but purportedly platonic female friend. They may share the same bed, Jenny admits, but she insists, perhaps a tad too defensively: "We're not gay!"

Notable tech values include deft use of stylized 8mm sequences as visual punctuation.

Camera (color, DV 8mm-to-DV), Sebold, Todd Sills; editors, Sebold, Benita Sills; music, Peter Surla, Bexar Bexar; sound, Paul Zahnley. Reviewed on DVD, Houston, Jan. 26, 2007. (In Slamdance Film Festival -- competing.) Running time: 74 MIN.