

## **PREMIERES**

### **BLUSH (BARASH)**

Michal Vinik

Israel | 2015 | 84:00

In Michal Vinik's debut feature, 17-year-old Naama Barash (Sivan Shimon), a typically detached teen, is underwhelmed by her glum friends, boring school and hostile family. When she encounters the new girl on the scene, a devilish blond named Dana Hershko, the self-assured wild child helps Naama escape her mundane suburban life through recreational drugs, hitchhiking to gay bars in Tel Aviv, and sexual awakening.

At first glance, this sweet sapphic coming-of-age story follows the usual suspects: first love, heartbreak and self-discovery. But the subtext shows the prejudices and political strife that exist in contemporary Israel. Naama's sister Liora, AWOL from the Israeli army and running away with her Palestinian boyfriend, and their overbearing, sexist father refusing to cooperate with the Arab police to find her, paint a more serious subplot of a society that not only excludes anyone who is different but also ultimately creates a new generation of rebels.

### **BURN BURN BURN**

Chanya Button

UK | 2015 | 106:00

#### **North American Premiere**

It is clear from the outset that Burn Burn Burn is not your typical buddy road trip comedy. Gal pals Seph (Downton Abbey star Laura Carmichael) and Alex (Chloe Pirrie) embark on a journey across the UK with their acerbic and demanding friend Dan in tow—except Dan is not as much a back-seat driver as he is a passive occupant of a Tupperware container in the glove compartment.

Dan has recently passed away from cancer and his last wish was to have his two friends scatter his ashes in the places to which he was emotionally attached. What might seem like a straightforward request is an opportunity for self-discovery for Alex and Seph, who, in addition to dealing with their grief over Dan's passing, are each dealing with drama in their personal lives. (Alex walked in on her girlfriend cheating and Seph hates her job and her boyfriend.) Instead of facing their problems, the road trip offers a well-timed opportunity to avoid them.

This debut feature from director Chanya Button expertly balances laughter and tears in its female-centric exploration of how grief and loss impact our lives and our relationships. Amazing British comic talent (Sally Phillips, Alice Lowe, Alison Steadman) contribute entertaining cameos, but the trio of leads are the true driving force in this life-affirming journey of self-discovery and friendship.

Official Selection, 2015 BFI London Film Festival Director in attendance

## **ESTEROS**

Papu Curotto

Argentina/Brazil | 2016 | 82:00

### **World Premiere**

Papu Curotto's poetic debut feature focuses on Matias and Jeronimo, who spend childhood summers together in the Argentine wetlands of Esteros until Matias' father moves his family to Brazil to take on a new job.

The friends are reunited by chance as adults when Matias returns to his hometown to celebrate the graduation of his girlfriend's cousin and Jeronimo is recommended as a makeup artist to help with preparations for a costume party. As the two men tentatively reconnect, the unresolved tensions of their youth rise to the surface, which is shown through vivid flashbacks to a particularly formative summer.

On pilgrimage to Esteros so that Jeronimo can deliver some items to his parents and Matias can reconnect with the landscape he has held so dear, the friends are compelled to confront their past and face the uncertainty that results.

Spanish with English Subtitles Director in attendance

## **I LOVE YOU BOTH**

Doug Archibald

USA | 2016 | 90:00

### **International Premiere**

Twins Donny and Krystal (played by real-life siblings Doug and Kristin Archibald) are stuck. Both are monstrously unhappy with their careers, Doug a failed pianist whose manager may be going senile, and Krystal, who works in her father's office where she is bullied by a mean girl co-worker.

Additionally, Krystal is not over her ex-boyfriend (who still works at her office), and Doug is unhappily single. Things start to look up, however, when the two of them meet a charming, good-looking man. The catch? It's the same guy. The twins have an instant rapport with easygoing Andy (Lucas Neff) but when they both begin to date him they are forced to look at how codependent their sibling relationship really is.

With a funny, touching script written by the Archibald siblings, I Love You Both uses the natural comic chemistry between brother and sister to build a story about familial bonds and examine how what at first seems comforting can quickly turn into something much more restrictive.

Guests in attendance

## **JONATHAN**

Piotr J. Lewandowski

Germany | 2016 | 99:00

### **Canadian Premiere**

Twenty-three-year-old Jonathan has sacrificed his young adulthood to work on the family farm with his Aunt Martha and take care of his terminally ill father Burghardt.

Looking after his father is an everyday struggle for Jonathan, one that never seems to end. The strain of his responsibilities, coupled with his father's detached and erratic behaviour, have left Jonathan emotionally volatile and struggling to cope. When Burghardt's condition deteriorates, Martha hires Anka, a nurse, to help care for him, and Jonathan begins to fall for her. While their relationship ourishes, Burghardt's emotional distance from his family reveals a devastating secret, one that will come to light with the arrival of Burghardt's old friend, Ron. All at once, the facade of cherished family beliefs crumbles and the father-son relationship is tested further.

Jonathan is a visually sumptuous debut from director Lewandowski, the sweeping cinematography rich in poetic flourishes in an emotionally charged drama that reveals the redemptive power of forgiveness and of letting go before it is too late.

German with English subtitles  
Official Selection, 2016 Berlin International Film Festival

## **LIEBMANN**

Jules Herrmann  
Germany | 2016 | 82:00

### **Canadian Premiere**

Liebmann is a visually evocative, subtly emotive story of a man who must face the ghosts of his past before he can start a new life and engage in the possibility of true happiness.

Eager to leave behind his past in Germany, teacher Antek Liebmann rents a quaint house in the bucolic French countryside and takes a job in the town's antique shop. The tranquil setting initially appears to be perfect for blending in and disappearing, but life in the rural enclave isn't quite so simple.

Local hunters are a little trigger-happy, and if that doesn't make the forest dangerous enough, apparently there is a serial killer stalking victims in the woods. And then there are the neighbours: single mother Geneviève, who is very welcoming, perhaps a little too much so, especially considering Liebmann seems more intrigued by the scruffy and sweet Sébastien, a customer at the antique shop.

No one realizes that Antek has left behind a terrible secret in his own country. The discovery of a mysterious artists' residency on the edge of town and the arrival of an unexpected visitor from Germany help Liebmann face his past and offer a way out of the darkness.

French and German with English subtitles  
Official Selection, 2016 Berlin International Film Festival Director in attendance

## **LITTLE MEN**

Ira Sachs  
USA | 2016 | 85:00

### **Canadian Premiere**

Director Ira Sachs (*Keep the Lights On*, *Love is Strange*) returns to *Inside Out* with another intimate character study set in New York City, this time trading the long-term gay relationship in *Love is Strange* for the budding friendship between two teenage boys.

Jake (Theo Taplitz) is a quiet, sensitive junior high school student who dreams of being an artist. His family moves from Manhattan to Brooklyn after his parents (Greg Kinnear and Jennifer Ehle) inherit his recently deceased grandfather's brownstone. Jake immediately befriends Tony,

a local boy his own age, who is popular, athletic, and a natural-born ham. The two 13-year-olds quickly bond over their shared love of art and computer games and spend their days together exploring the city and dreaming of attending the LaGuardia High School for the Performing Arts.

The problem is that Tony's mother, Leonor (Paulina Garcia), runs a not-entirely-successful dressmaking business out of the brownstone's first-floor storefront and when a rent dispute develops between Jake and Tony's parents, the teens' friendship is put in peril.

*Little Men* is a piercing examination of gentrification as well as a subtle yet powerful exploration of family, friendship and the life-changing impact both can have on our future.

Director in attendance

### **LOEV**

Sudhanshu Saria  
India | 2015 | 92:00

### **Canadian Premiere**

In 2013, India's Supreme Court recriminalized homosexuality, forcing Sudhanshu Saria's debut feature, *Loev*, to be filmed in absolute secrecy. The film is as defiant a political act as it is a thoughtful exploration of enduring, but conflicted, passion.

When Wall Street dealmaker Jai returns home to Mumbai for a business trip, he invites his old friend Sahil to join him for the weekend. Sahil drops everything, including his boyfriend Alex, without hesitation. Their long overdue trip takes them from the soaring heights of the Indian countryside to the extravagant lifestyle of Mumbai's elite. Their seemingly perfect weekend getaway is soon challenged, as the pains of their past hurtle toward the uncomfortable truths of their present.

*Loev* is nothing short of revolutionary. Saria has rightfully solidified the film's place in the history of gay Indian cinema, while creating a quiet, complex story of shared histories and unfulfilled desire.

English and Hindi with English subtitles  
Official Selection, 2016 SXSW Film Festival Director in attendance

### **Spa Night**

Andrew Ahn  
USA | 2016 | 93:00

### **Canadian Premiere**

In his deeply authentic directorial debut, Andrew Ahn skilfully navigates the immigrant experience, charting the hopes and traditions of a Korean-American family against personal desires and the economic realities of American life.

David Cho, a second-generation Korean-American teenager, is a painfully quiet but devoted son who works in his parent's restaurant and accompanies them to the Korean spa for steam baths and scrubs. David's sexuality is burgeoning, but hidden.

When his parents are forced to close their restaurant, they become more focused on their dreams for David. They want him to attend USC to guarantee a prosperous future for himself. They take on menial labour to make ends meet and to pay for David's expensive SAT courses. David quietly rejects his parent's help and seeks instead to support his family. When he takes a job at the Korean spa, he is confronted with an underground world of forbidden thrills and gay hookups, forced to reconcile his sexuality against his parent's dream of a better life.

Spa Night is a breathtakingly honest depiction of the Korean-American experience, with finely drawn characters that are at once relatable and profound.

English and Korean with English subtitles  
Official Selection, 2016 Sundance Film Festival Director in attendance

### **Take Me For a Ride**

Micaela Rueda  
Ecuador | 2016 | 67:00

High school can be horrible, especially when your classmates make you feel like a freak. But sometimes that pain only means that finding the person who gets you is all the sweeter.

Loner Sara is in her last year of high school and is miserable. She is shunned by the girls in her class for being "weird" and spends her lunches smoking in a hiding place behind the school. That is, until the new girl, Andrea, invades her hideout one day. Andrea and Sara fall for each other instantly, bonding over their love of books and solitude. Things might actually start to look up for Sara, but then the world intrudes and threatens their happiness. Can their love survive homophobic classmates and parents?

Take Me For a Ride is the sweet, sensual story of two outsiders finding love and fighting to keep it.

Spanish with English subtitles  
Official Selection, 2016 SXSW Film Festival