



KYSS MIG / KISS ME / WITH EVERY HEARTBEAT

PRESS KIT

CONTENT

Facts
Distribution
Short synopsis
Long synopsis
Producer's biography
Director's biography
Information about the production company Lebox Produktion AB
Awards
Festivals
Main Cast
Director's comment
Producer's comment
Pictures of director an producer
Art work
Reviews
Interview



FACTS

Original Title: Kyss Mig
Alternative titles: With Every Heartbeat / Kiss Me
Production Year: 2010
Release Year: 2011
Genre: Romance, Drama
Country of origin: Sweden
Language: Swedish
Subtitled versions: English
Dubbed versions: None
Format: 35 mm
Length: 105 min
Director: Alexandra-Therese Keining
Written by: Alexandra-Therese Keining
Based on a story by: Josefine Tengblad & Alexandra-Therese Keining
Producer: Josefine Tengblad
Production Company: Lebox Produktion AB

World sales: The Yellow Affair (www.yellowaffair.com)

DISTRIBUTION

Nordisk Film, Scandinavia
Wolfe, USA & Canada
Shoval, Israel
ABC Distribution, Benelux
Salzgeber & Co, Germany
Rialto, Switzerland
TLA, UK & Ireland
Dissidenz, France

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Mia (Ruth Vega Fernandez) and Frida (Liv Mjönes), both in their thirties, meet each other for the first time at their parents' engagement party. Mia's father, Lasse (Kristen Henriksson), is about to get married to Frida's mother, Elizabeth (Lena Endre), which will make Mia and Frida stepsisters. Lasse's daughter, Mia, has not visited her father in years and arrives with her boyfriend, Tim (Joakim Nätterqvist), with whom she is about to get married. As Mia and Frida get to know one another, strong emotions begin to stir between them. Their relationship will turn everything upside down for everyone close to them with dramatic consequences.



LONG SYNOPSIS

“Kyss mig” is a family-oriented dramedy about finding your true identity. A moving, provoking and sometimes bittersweet tale, told with plenty of wit. The story takes place in present time in Sweden.

The story centers around the main character Mia (30) and the unwanted effects of a torrid love affair which will change her life forever.

It all begins when she returns home to celebrate her father’s birthday with her future husband. There she meets her father’s new wife and family. Mia has not seen her father for years and is not ready at all for the confrontation with the new family.

Trying hard to keep a brave face in front of her family, she is struggling to hide the fact that her marriage is gradually falling apart. Over the next few days, Mia also continues to deny her growing attraction to Frida, her new stepmother’s daughter. For her part, Frida has no wish to break up a committed couple, but has fallen in love with Mia, too. Frida is absolutely charmed by the vivacious and attractive Mia. She feels instant chemistry with her, which she tries to ignore. They’re about to become family and attraction is totally forbidden. Besides, Mia is married and not gay like herself.

Everything changes when Mia suddenly finds herself involved in a secret and intense relationship with Frida. They are careful to hide their love from their parents and Mia’s husband, knowing too well what a scandal it would become, if relieved.

The bubble bursts as they finally get caught. When the true nature of their relationship is discovered, things turn ugly and complicated for everyone involved in the family.

As the facade cracks for real, Mia panics. She denies her strong feelings for Frida and this new person she has become through her love for her, ends the relationship and escapes home to Barcelona with her husband in a deep status of personal and serious denial.

But in the following process, something happens to her. She can’t go back to her old life. Mia begins to confront herself and show her family her true identity, but not without a personal struggle to face herself and her own sexuality.

Then, and only then, will she be able to be true to herself and make the decision of whom she will ultimately find the most happiness with: Tim, her long-time boyfriend, or Frida, whom she has fallen passionately in love with.



PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY

Josefine Tengblad - producer and actor, born 1978, has worked with Lars von Trier's "Dogville" and "Manderlay". She also worked with 23 feature films about the Swedish crime detective "Wallander" based on Henning Mankell's best selling books. 2010 she started her own production company Lebox where she has produced "Kyss mig". Josefine has produced and acted in several theatre productions, and currently she works as an executive producer at the Swedish TV channel TV4 with film and drama.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Alexandra-Therese Keining – director and screenwriter, born 1976, Debuted with the feature film "Hot Dog" (2003) as Sweden's youngest female director and screenwriter. Productions: "Kyss mig" (2011), "Elegia" (2010) and "Hot Dog" (2003) In addition to writer and director Alexandra is also working as a playwright and casting director.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRODUCTION COMPANY LEBOX PRODUKTION AB

Lebox Produktion AB was founded by the Swedish producer Josefine Tengblad in 2010. The ambition of Lebox is to produce film projects with unique ideas with a strong vision. The feature film "Kyss mig" 2011 directed by Alexandra-Therese Keining is the company's first feature film. Lebox is also one of the production companys behind documentary "Kalla Ingenting Försent" by Jan Troell about the swedish poet Jaques Werup.

AWARDS

- Audience award, Vues d'en face, Grenoble
- Audience award, Breakthrough section, AFI Los Angeles FF
- Lorens Award - Göteborg International Film Festival

The producer Josefine Tengblad was awarded Lorenspriset for Kyss mig (Kiss Me) at Göteborg International Film Festival. The prize, which was awarded by Stockholm Postproduction and goes to one of the producers for 2011's Swedish feature films, consists of free development of the winning producer's next feature film. The prize is worth circa 500,000 SEK.

Motivation: "This extremely creative producer has, by starting with her own life experiences and with a passionate conviction and courage, succeeded to engage the director, the actors, and the crew to collaboratively create a touching, dense, and beautiful film. The jury is impressed! The Lorens Award 2012 goes to Josefine Tengblad who receives the award for her work with the film Kiss Me (Kyss mig)."



FESTIVALS

2011

Lübeck: in competition

AFI Los Angeles: Breakthrough section

Camerimage: Feature debuts competition

2012

Palm Springs

Portland

Sydney Mardi Gras

Melbourne Queer

Roze Filmdagen Amsterdam

Febio

Cleveland

London gay

Out in Africa

Artichoke Helsinki

Grenoble vue d'en face

Brisbane Queer

Torino gay

Queer Zagreb

Tel Aviv LGBT

Budapest pride

Viet Pride

Espoo

Tokyo gay

Oslo gay

Zurich

Bologna lesbian

Out On Screen: Vancouver BC

Durango Independent Film Fest, Durango CO

Out on Film, Avondale GA

Boston Gay & Lesbian FF

Connecticut Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

Prairie Pride Film Festival, Lincoln NE

Aiea HI

Q Cinema, Ft Worth TX

Honolulu Rainbow Film Festival

Creative Alliance at The Patterson

ImageOut: Rochester LGBT Film and Video Festival

Out On Screen. Rochester NY

Out Twin Cities Film Fest, Minneapolis MN

North Louisiana Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

Queer City Cinema, Regina SK

Denver Film Society

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Out Film CT

North Louisiana G&L FF

Provincetown International Film Festival

The Center Long Beach

Indiana Cares Campaign

White Sands International Film Festival

OUTFEST

Philadelphia QFest

Teaneck Int'l Film Festival

Arizona International Film Festival

Louisville LGBT Film Festival

Utah Film Center

Hawaii International Film Festival

PUERTO RICO QUEER FILMFEST

THE NEON, Dayton OH

OUT at the Movies, Winston-Salem, NC

Three Dollar Bill Cinema

Brookline, VT

Spokane Film Fest

Tallgrass Film Association, Wichita KS

Sacramento International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

Outflix Film Festival, Memphis TN

Out Twin Cities Film Fest, Minneapolis MN

Philadelphia Cinema Alliance

aGLIFF

Paradise Valley Community College, Phoenix AZ

Long Beach, CA

Fabulous Independent Film Fest, Sarasota FL

Indy Pride, Indianapolis IN

Newfest

The Palm Springs Cultural Center

ATHENA FILM FESTIVAL, Brooklyn NY

Mill Valley Film Festival

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Portland, OR

Long Island Gay and Lesbian Film Festival

Roanoke, VA

image+nation.festival

Fresno LGBT Film Fest

Three Dollar Bill Cinema, Seattle WA

San Francisco, CA

OUTrageous Film Festival, Santa Barbara CA

Women and Hollywood

Cucalorus Film Festival



MAIN CAST

Ruth Vega Fernandez
Liv Mjönes
Krister Henriksson
Lena Endre
Joakim Nätterqvist
Josefine Tengblad
Tom Ljungman

Ruth Vega Fernandez, who plays MIA, was born in 1977. She has in addition to “Kyss mig” appeared in several Swedish films including “Call Girl” by Michael Marcimain and “A Midsommer of Love” by Staffan Lindberg. She has also played roles in TV series such as “Johan Falk”, “Wallander” and “How Soon Is Now”.

Lena Endre, born 1955, plays ELISABETH in “Kyss mig”. She had her breakthrough in Swedish television in the 1980s. Since then she has acted in a number of theatre plays, TV-series and feature films. She has worked with Ingmar Bergman and starred in the Swedish “Girl with the Dragon Tattoo” and “Wallander”-series.

Krister Henriksson, born 1946, portrays the character LASSE in “Kyss mig”. He is best known for playing the lead role in the Swedish series about Kurt Wallander. He has had a flourishing career since 1973 and has besides “Wallander” starred in several Swedish plays, films and TV-series.

Liv Mjönes, FRIDA in “Kyss mig”, was born in 1979. She started her filming career in 2003 with the Swedish comedy “Miffo”. Since then she has starred in television and features along playing in the theatres.



DIRECTOR'S COMMENT

Sexual identity is a rigorous part of us, possibly even bigger than we can ever imagine.

Or perhaps choose to imagine, even. It only goes as far as we want and allow it to, until one day when it makes an individual choice that we can no longer control.

We feel helpless, powerless. We are in love. And in love, there is no control.

Not in the beginning, at least. When the control is lost, the emotional walls inside of us start to break and fall. During this time, we often go through powerful changes, weather we like it or not. "Kyss mig" is just such a story.

A fast-paced introduction is given in the first act of the main characters, their relationship to one another and dramatic motivations for being in the story. The main character Mia is introduced as a strong and independent young woman, secure in the happy relationship with boyfriend Tim, but also caught in a bad relationship with her father Lasse, his new woman Elisabeth and her daughter Frida. Her younger brother Oskar represents the balance in the emotional chaos between his father and older sister.

The engagement party between Lasse and Elisabeth gives an enjoyable shine to the opening sequence as it sets the mood for the first and a good part of the second act. Soon, the dynamics between Frida and Mia will dominate the story, but with three important dramatic storylines; 1) The relationship with Tim 2) The relationship with her father and 3) The relationship between Lasse and Elisabeth.

To fall in love in someone that one is not supposed to feel something for or even fall in love with, is the most horrible state of mind in this story. The first two acts of the film is portraying that same feeling, a state of total confusion and excitement, all mixed into one ambivalent experience. In short, intense drama between few, very skilled, actors.

Most part of act two is set on the ferry to the Danish and idyllic island of Fyn. The new setting is making the sneaking around between Mia and Frida possible and also the secrecy of their affair undiscovered. The character arch of Mia makes a leap, a new personality trait is being exposed and an overall change begins to takes place.

On the island, isolated in a cottage, Mia and Frida discover each others feelings. The following montage which follows must convey a clear and understandable union between the two women. For Mia, this is the time when she rediscovers that hidden part of her sexuality as she understands her true feelings for Frida through their lovemaking. She awakens through Frida and can hardly believe what has happened.

As Mia kisses Frida for the first time, a new path is created in their lives. They have very different understandings about this new path because they don't fight against the same problems and don't posses the same emotional balance. Mia knows that she's betraying Tim while Frida fights the quilt over lying to her mother and Lasse. Here, the scenery consists of a powerful mix between tight dialogues in interiors and wide exteriors in the breathtaking landscape by the coast. Obviously, their relationship intensifies in isolation, which Frida finds very frustrating.

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DIRECTOR'S COMMENT (continuing).

Mia herself is submerging into further bad quilt and yet she can't resist Frida.

As act three begins, the story moves to Stockholm where Mia escapes in panic. Their relationship has now created a split between Lasse and Elisabeth and things will never be the same. Elisabeth has moved out of the house as Lasse's reaction to the discovery shocks and upsets her.

She tries, but soon realizes that the relationship with Tim can't be saved. Love has really hit her, there's no where left to hide. She can't stop thinking about Frida. Though they're far away from each other, Frida and Mia appear in each others life through mental images. Voices, dreams and rapid cuts between their daily lives.

The bittersweet raps around the ending like an emotional filter. Mia has gone through a deep and personal change. She is no longer the same person whom we meet in the beginning of the film. She is now without a safety net and without control over her life. In addition to this, she is well aware of the fact that she has ruined her father's relationship and fled the consequences. The infected relation with Lasse is now an open wound and she must confront it. She finally decides to take action and goes through a painful break-up with Tim.

Dramatic stories and films of this genre usually have a mark of happy endings around them. Not this one. Though, there's a definite ending and a sense of hope for the characters. Their problems will work themselves out, but later in the future and the solutions are not intended for our eyes. If we want them to find happiness, then they will.

So, the last scene begins. Here, subtle hints are given, but very little is concluded. It's up to the audience to interpret the ending and what will happen to Mia and Frida, but as far as the last image of them goes, the future looks very promising...

I wanted to make a drama, a lovestory with a provocative twist and there weren't a lot of them around. I had written a few moody and dark screenplays, and I just felt like I wanted to make a film about love. I was in New York during the spring and I became really inspired for some reason. I knew that I had to make a film about two women falling in love. And unlike most feature films with a lesbian theme, I wanted the story to have a positive vibe to it. Some people did warn me, though, about making this film. I was told that my career would be ruined.

"Kyss mig" is important because we need more mainstream films with lesbian/gay/queer/trans-themes that may be accessed in an easy way, as well. And by a straight audience, too. It is a realistic story with a very simple premise to it. There is really nothing new with the dramatic set-up of "Kyss mig" which is also the point. It was a very long and hard fight from start to end to make the film in Sweden. To let the characters stay they way I had written them. To let the scenes where Mia and Frida express their love not be cut from the film and not be forced to downplay the premise of the film. It's a love story about relations and acceptance, not only between two persons, but also within the dynamics of a family and most importantly, the love for oneself.

Straight people seem to find this film just as entertaining as a gay audience. My intention was to be sincere. And I think that comes across to the audience.

Hopefully, one feels that its told with a genuine voice of trying to show that fragile state of falling in love and the complications within that emotion. Some people just love a happy ending, others don't. Straight or gay.



PRODUCER'S COMMENT

What happens when a grown-up woman is knocked off her feet by a love and passion beyond all senses?

"Kyss mig" is a film about something very simple; it is a story about love. Love for a partner, love for your family but most of all love and respect for yourself. To have the courage to take your own feelings serious and act the way your heart tells you to.

When two people meet and fall in love with each other, things can seem very easy but for our main character, Mia, her life is turned up side down and everyone around her questions not only her choice to leave her boyfriend for someone else, but also who she is and if her feelings are real. All that because her new love is a woman.

My vision with this film is to show Mia and Frida's love for each other in a universal way. I didn't want to make a gayfilm. I wanted to make a film about love. Love that happens to be between two women. Our goal was to make a lovestory that different kinds of people should be able to relate and I am happy to say that it really seems like we succeed in that. Women, men, young, old and from different parts of the world seems to embrace Mia and Frida's destiny and relate it to their own lovelife no matter if they are gay or straight.

I met the director Alexandra-Therese Keining in 2007. Alexandra is born and raised in Sweden but educated in USA and I was interested in working with her since I think she has a unique way of combining the Scandinavian way and the American way of telling a story. The deep and seriousness is combined with the American lightness in her filmmaking, mixed with a lot of irony. She has the ability to tell a story in a way that is very effective and natural.

By the time I met Alexandra I was married to a man but I had just fallen in love with someone else; a woman. I knew I wanted to change my life somehow, but had no idea how to start. I told Alexandra about my situation and she showed me a treatment of 30 pages with a story similar to mine. That was the start of "Kyss mig". My life changed as we did the movie.





Director and writer: Alexandra-Therese Keining



Producer: Josefine Tengblad

REVIEW: TIME OUT ENGLAND

Rating: *****

Kiss Me is the first lesbian themed film to come out of Sweden in almost a decade. Mia (Ruth Vega Fernandez) returns to her father's home with her new fiancé, Tim, to celebrate her father's 60th birthday and announcement that he too is engaged. At the party, she meets her soon-to-be step-family, including free spirited teacher Frida (Liv Mjönes).

Every actor gives a great performance. The leads perfectly express so much through body language alone it becomes easy to forget you're watching a foreign language film. Scenes following the inevitable fall-out are raw and powerful, both from Tim, Mia, and Ruth's parents Lasse and Elisabeth. One particularly powerful technique was the near-silence during kissing and sex scenes – no fake grunting, moaning, or backing track – it could have been painful, but works brilliantly for actors with such great chemistry as these.

The story is a little predictable, within moments you can make a well-informed assumption about where the characters are going to end up. It's not wholly original, British flick Imagine Me & You (starring A Game of Thrones Lena Headey) tells an extremely similar story. There were several points where I had assumed the film was ending, all of which powerful, but I was glad these were false and the director gave us the ending we'd signed up for.

We were moved to tears within five minutes of the film starting, and several more times before the conclusion. A film of little fault.

For pure voyeuristic pleasure, Swedish film 'Kiss Me' is hard to beat. The story is well worn - straight girl falls for sexy lesbian then has to choose between her nice-but-dim fiancé and her alluring female lover - but seldom so stylishly told. The Scandinavians have a knack of combining breathtaking scenery, impeccable interior décor, tasteful music and stunningly gorgeous women to create an atmosphere that oozes class. Add to that some beautifully sensual bedroom scenes and a happy LLGFF audience is guaranteed.

Kiss Me is love triangle where straight girl meets gay girl at an engagement party. Openly-gay Frida shows her attraction to Mia and finds it reciprocated. Mia's boyfriend and business partner, Tim, has just proposed, but Mia, faced with sexual stirrings for another woman, finds it hard to resist her new, amorous friend. An emotional tug-of-war ensues in this elegant, emotional drama.

Kiss Me is thoroughly enjoyable from start to finish.

Modestly introduced to us by director Alexandre-Therese Keining at the LLGFF, the film sets its tone from the very first frame, opening with its soundtrack that accompanies the film perfectly throughout.

Kiss Me is a masterpiece of romantic drama cinema, exquisitely executed by Keining, on a small budget and a shooting schedule of only five and a half weeks.

Whilst the age old storyline follows the pace you might expect from a romantic drama, Kiss Me offers us the best of all the elements and is. It is beautifully shot and there are some fabulous frames using natural light.

It's well cast, all 6 main parts were perfectly played by established and new actors, and the 2 female leads have lesbian girl next door appeal in abundance.

The use of humour throughout the script kept it grounded and very little was lost in translation (my favourite line is 'a vegetarian kebab: a vebab'), and the conversations between the parents on the issues of having gay children and the coming out process gave some real depth to the storyline.

Catch it if you can – Kiss Me is on again on Sunday 1 April (fully booked) - there are often a few tickets available 20 minutes before the show so pop along - it is worth the queue!

REVIEW: CURVE MAGAZINE

This sexy and authentic love story sets a new bar for lesbian films.

What is your favorite lesbian film? *Loving Annabelle*? *But I'm a Cheerleader*? *Heavenly Creatures*? They are all good movies, but there is an unfortunate trope among queer cinema: the gay character dies or is punished by the end of the film, the woman returns to her boyfriend instead of her lesbian lover. Barring that many lesbian films suffer from poor production values or is extraordinarily campy, saccharine or focuses so exclusively on the character sexuality that further character development and plot falls by the wayside. Fortunately, *Kyss Mig (Kiss Me)* is refreshingly free of all of these elements.

This Swedish romantic drama revolves around Frida (Liv Mjönes) and Mia (Ruth Vega Fernandez), both in their thirties, who first meet at their parents' engagement party, making them soon-to-be stepsisters. As the dynamics unfold between the melding families, Mia, who just announced the engagement to her boyfriend Tim, grows more and more fascinated by Frida and her free-spirited nature.

This storyline may sound familiar, but *Kyss Mig* sets the bar for quality queer cinema. That's because the script, cinematography, music, and acting are all exceptionally well done. *Kyss Mig* tears at the rawness of human emotion and portrays love with such authenticity, the love between a parent and a child, the love between a dying relationship and best of all, the love between Mia and Frida. *Kyss Mig* will make you laugh. It will make you cry, and it will warm your heart. Get ready to have a new favorite lesbian movie.

Watch the trailer below and get excited, in more than one way.

REVIEW: AFTER ELLEN

Remember the little lesbian classic *Imagine Me & You*? Of course you do. Now picture it but as its grown up version and you get Alexandra-Therese Keining's stunning *Kyss Mig*. This is the first feature length film since *Show Me Love* to come out of Sweden with a lesbian storyline, if you can believe it!

I shall forward this review by highlighting how tired I am of seeing a woman married or about to get married to a man who catches the eye of an actual lesbian, falls for her, but has to deal with the whole "am I gay, what does this mean" conflict. Tired I tell you. So when I saw the trailer for *Kyss Mig*, I was intrigued but worried. If you were too, read on, as I am about to shatter your doubts.

Here's what you need to know: Mia (Ruth Vega Fernandez) and Tim (Joakim Nätterqvist) are on their way to Mia's estrange father Lasse (Krister Henriksson)'s birthday and engagement party. Elizabeth (Lena Endre), Lasse's bride to be is Frida (Liv Mjönes)'s mother. Not long after joining the party, Mia sets eyes on Frida. In an attempt to get to know one another, Lasse arranges for Mia to spend time with him, Elizabeth and Frida on a remote island. Never the reliable one, Lasse doesn't show and so begins the Mia/Frida love affair.

Now, as I have mentioned, Alexandra-Therese Keining does something with her screenplay that no other lesbian film of this genre had the guts to do thus far: She gives her characters enough depth and reasoning for this whole love affair to not only feel real, but to also keep her audience members (like me) away from sheer annoyance, feeling like this is "one of those films again." The way it stands out is by answering questions and dealing with issues completely and honestly. Tim isn't painted as a bad guy, nor is their relationship particularly bad. Mia is actually bi-sexual and has been in love with a woman before. Her relationship with her dad is flawed, distant but is dealt with realism. Frida has her own relationship to deal with, just as Lasse and Elisabeth struggle with theirs. A real conflict and search for balance is developed in order for Mia and Frida to be together that doesn't solely revolve around being gay or in another relationship. All the characters are three dimensional, truthful and thus all make sense in their choices. Keining hasn't just created a lesbian love story, she's painted a touching family portrait, too.

Kiss Mig is incredibly reminiscent of a number of lesbian films, including *Imagine Me & You* for its subject matter and some of its scenes, *D.E.B.S.* for its ending, *When Night is Falling* for its visually breathtaking cinematography. The casting is spot on, the chemistry between the female leads is electric (and for sure they are both ridiculously good looking!), the music uplifting, and it's funny and heartbreaking enough to make this one of your new favorite movies. I should highlight the sex scenes — tremendous, sensual, stunning and simply sexy! *Kyss Mig* is as honest as it is beautiful. A real tour de lesbian force!

Kyss Mig is doing the festival rounds and will be released through Wolf Video later this year in the US, and through TLA Releasing in the UK on July 23.

REVIEW: INSIDE OUT

Like in *Mulholland Drive*, the first intimate encounter between the two female leads is delicately depicted. Perfused with undeniable eroticism and composed with such seductive elegance, this moment is mediated on absolute and instinctive passion. Framed amongst the forbidden circumstances of their carnal convergence, the kiss, when juxtaposed, enkindles an emotional dialectic of forlorn beauty.

With gorgeously regal cinematography and unequivocally captivating performances, this beauty is deeply embedded into Alexandra-Therese Keining's *Kiss Me*, a classic tale of love destined to become a classic of its own.

The film centers on Mia (Ruth Vega Fernandez), a tightly wound, anal-retentive woman. With her business partner and fiancé Tim (Joakim Nätterqvist), she visits her father (Kristen Henriksson) at his engagement ceremony, where she meets Frida (Liv Mjönes), the free-spirited daughter of his wife-to-be (Lena Endre from the Swedish Millennium Series Trilogy). Initially perplexed by Frida's unabashed transparency, Mia's clandestine intrigue develops into a Sapphic desire.

Although rife with taboo licentiousness, *Kiss Me* never succumbs to its potential for debauchery; this is a story about love, not lust. The film doesn't compromise its deleterious set-up, and, instead, allows itself to delve into its impossibly complex predicament with devastating abandon.

For instance, Mia's fiancé, Tim, is never fabricated to be an outright villain. Although flawed, he is believably so, and never gives Mia any tangible reason for an annulment. She and Tim have built a life together, which she must try and rationalize with her escalating *affaire de Coeur*.

This forces her to make an invidious choice based on whom she loves more instead of anything superficial, which, in return, results in a more profound and emotionally contentious eventuality. Her disquiet self-torment is morbidly fascinating to watch, and as her inner turmoil reaches its pinnacle, the following catharsis is overwhelmingly irresistible.

Ragna Jorming's photography is also outstandingly stunning, giving the viewer a sense of the romanticism and underlying beauty of its narrative. At times sweeping with controlled grace, and at others artfully stochastic with close-up naturalism, the film's technical wonders are to be desired.

But in particular, the acting is singularly the most impressive facet of the film. Although in Swedish with English subtitles, the intricacies of *Kiss Me* can be understood by the performances alone. The entire cast is competently acted, but Fernandez, in particular, stands out with her ability to portray a woman swathed in reluctance, torment, and despair with vivid prowess.

With plentitudes of technical and creative achievements to spare, *Kiss Me* is an undeniably sexy film that succeeds on so many levels.

- Justin Li

REVIEW: PHIL ON FILM

For its release in some international territories, Alexandra-Therese Keining's *Kiss Me* has been renamed *With Every Heartbeat*, after the Robyn track that plays over the opening credits. It's hard to avoid drawing comparisons with Lukas Moodysson's *Fucking Åmål*, which took the much more marketable title *Show Me Love* and, coincidentally, was the last lesbian-themed Swedish film to make waves abroad. Keining's film is reminiscent of Moodysson's in other ways too, with its deft balance of humour and insight, and exemplary collection of ensemble performances. It charts the complicated and awkward romance between Mia (Ruth Vega Fernandez) and Frida (Liv Mjönes) in such an engaging and skilful manner, we don't really mind how rigidly it adheres to genre conventions.

At the start of the film, Mia is ready to marry her longtime boyfriend Tim (Joakim Nätterqvist), announcing her engagement at the party her father is holding to announce his own forthcoming nuptials. This is the first time that Mia has met Frida, her future stepsister, and she can't keep take her eyes off her throughout the evening. When she admonishes Tim for his flirtatious behaviour towards Frida, is it a playful jab, a sign of her own insecurity or a pang of jealousy at his close proximity to this beautiful light-hearted blonde? Keining gets a lot of mileage out of these loaded, surreptitious glances as the closeted and conflicted Mia edges towards a romance with the out Frida, and the emotional waters are muddied further by the fact that Frida is also in a relationship. The smartly balanced screenplay doesn't lose sight of the collateral pain these women will cause by following their hearts.

Kiss Me is a fairly standard and familiar romantic drama but it is elevated above its generic conventions by Ragna Jorming's great eye for composition and use of light, and love scenes that possess an honest sensuality, which is heightened by the tangible chemistry Fernandez and Mjönes share. The film is given an added dimension by the performances from Krister Henriksson and especially Lena Endre as Mia and Frida's parents, both of whom deal with revelations about their daughters' sexuality in different ways. Keining is commendably adept at handling the messy, entangled emotions of her characters, but the ending to the film feels too neat by half; a clichéd finale that might offer a satisfying sense of closure, but feels forced and conventional in a way that so much of this movie doesn't.

REVIEW: BFI'S LONDON LESBIAN & GAY FILM FESTIVAL

Rating: *****

Kiss Me is the first lesbian themed film to come out of Sweden in almost a decade. Mia (Ruth Vega Fernandez) returns to her father's home with her new fiancé, Tim, to celebrate her father's 60th birthday and announcement that he too is engaged. At the party, she meets her soon-to-be step-family, including free spirited teacher Frida (Liv Mjönes).

Every actor gives a great performance. The leads perfectly express so much through body language alone it becomes easy to forget you're watching a foreign language film. Scenes following the inevitable fall-out are raw and powerful, both from Tim, Mia, and Ruth's parents Lasse and Elisabeth. One particularly powerful technique was the near-silence during kissing and sex scenes – no fake grunting, moaning, or backing track – it could have been painful, but works brilliantly for actors with such great chemistry as these.

The story is a little predictable, within moments you can make a well-informed assumption about where the characters are going to end up. It's not wholly original, British flick Imagine Me & You (starring A Game of Thrones Lena Headey) tells an extremely similar story. There were several points where I had assumed the film was ending, all of which powerful, but I was glad these were false and the director gave us the ending we'd signed up for.

We were moved to tears within five minutes of the film starting, and several more times before the conclusion. A film of little fault.

REVIEW: FILM FRACTURE

Writer/director Alexandra-Therese Keining's *With Every Heartbeat* was presented at AFI FEST 2011 as part of the Breakthrough section. Keeping in line with the excellence of Swedish films of the past, and present, Keining presents an intimate portrayal of love being found in the unlikeliest of places and at a time neither person expects--the two people in question just happen to be women, one openly gay and the other engaged to a man. A true triumph for the LGBT cause, the film portrays love as love is in its natural form, disregarding much of what could have been a proclamation for equal rights on gender issues that only makes it a stronger piece of filmmaking in the process.

Mia (Ruth Vega Fernandez) is visiting her father Lasse whom she has not seen in years for his birthday, and engagement party with his soon-to-wife Elisabeth (Lena Endre)--a woman Mia has never met. Along with her, and with happy news of their own, is her fiance Tim (Joakim Nätterqvist). It is during the next few days that Mia will make an unlikely connection with her soon-to-be stepsister Frida, played by the lovely and intoxicating actress Liv Mjönes. Mia finds herself alone with Frida and Elisabeth at their island home, far from Tim and her father. The sexual attraction between Mia and Frida is nearly instant upon meeting, and only grows stronger as they spend more time around one another. The instant feelings are a bit contrived, but as romantic dramas go they are in-line as things happen quicker in the movies when love is concerned. A weekend tryst together leads Mia and Frida on a journey that tears both of their worlds apart, and the fine performances by each actress greatly enhances the flood of emotions transferred onto the viewer. Mia must come to terms with her relationship with Tim, as Frida must decide whether to salvage her own relationship or leave knowing she may never be with Mia, the woman she has hopelessly fallen in love with.

With Every Heartbeat is an honest love story that plays the emotional strings of a romantic drama, even with two women as the leads. The love scenes between them are just as sensual, directed to perfection by Keining as to not overdramatize the situation or cheapen it with conversations on the ways of lovemaking between a woman and a woman. When Mia must make her choice, whether to leave her boyfriend of seven years for a relationship with Frida that will be a new experience for her, as well as in the public eye as Frida wants to rejoice in their love, not hide it from the world, the film excels in showing the complexity of such choices. It is never a question as to whether Mia is gay, or bi-sexual, as this she can accept about herself. It is more about giving up the life she has made, and the one she is comfortable in, in order to embark on something new and wholly different. This is not to say the topic of Mia being bi-sexual is not addressed, it is, and mostly by her father and stepmother. The conversations they have about the situation between Frida and Mia wholly resemble the real moments families encounter when dealing with a child who has made such a choice in their life--if a choice is really possible that is, a statement made in the film that is wonderfully scripted as there is no choice, and no fault either.

While the film has a bit of a too-neat ending, rolling everything up into the hollywood happy-ever-after blanket, it feels right that it should end that way. *With Every Heartbeat* is a romantic drama, and one expects the emotions to be strong, the conflicts great, and the ending to be triumphant for love's sake. *With Every Heartbeat* manages to excel on every level, while also delivering a strong message about the LGBT community--they live, love, feel, experience, and are just like the heterosexuals of the world, and their representation on film needs not be any different.

**INTERVIEW: YAM MAGAZINE
WITH JOSEFIN TENGBLAD AND LIV MJÖNES**

I met Josefin and Liv at Hotel Rival in Stockholm. I was blown away by their beauty. It is one thing to see them on screen, and a whole different thing to meet them in person.

I was curious about Josefin, being both an actress and producer, her résumé speaks for itself. She recently launched Lebox, her own production company, to be able to get *Kyss Mig* out. Liv is pretty new to me, but she is a veteran in the Swedish movie industry. *Kyss Mig* is sure to launch her and Ruth Vega Fernandez into stardom.

The three of us sat down to talk about how the movie was made, what they had to go through, and the hype that has been growing around the movie.

Tell me, what was it like making the film?

Josephine: Oh God what a question! [laughs]

Liv: My process differs quite a lot from you [points at Josephine]. Yours is a much longer process than mine. When I got involved, well then you had been at it for three years already.

That long?

J: It took five years to make the movie. From the time we started until now, it has been five years.

I read about how difficult it was for you to get the film made, but I did not realize that it had taken so long.

J: It takes time to make a movie. All movies take a couple of years to make. In some ways, it's quite a normal process, but it's clearly a long time. Five years is still five years.

So how long did it take to film it all?

J: We had a really hectic schedule. We filmed for six weeks.

[Jaw drops to the floor] What?

J: Which is incredibly little when compared against the standard. Eight weeks is the minimum. But since we were on a low budget, we just had to do it.

The film did not look low-budget at all. I was really taken by the photography, it was very nicely done.

J: Ragna Jorming is a fantastic photographer.

For me it seemed more like a Hollywood production.

L: Nice!

J: We worked very hard to make it appear so. It was the technology companies that went in with their own effort, we could use much more than what we paid for. When working with so little money it's essential that people give of themselves. All the actors did that as well. Everybody that has been involved has done it. You can work in such a short time if you work with professionals.

Liv, this is your first starring role right?

L: Yes it is.

How did you get involved with the project?

L: It was Josephine who called me, asked if I wanted to read the script and do a screen test.

[To Josephine] Did you have an idea of the actors that you wanted to play the roles?

J: Alexandra (the director) and I made a list of our top names that we wanted to screen test for us. Liv was, we knew from the start that she was a strong candidate because of what we had seen her do. Liv is really the best we have in this country right now.

L: Good! [laughs]

J: Yes but it's so nice to be able to say it when you really think so. We made a very intimate audition because I work as an actor myself, so I did the screen test with Liv. It was just me, Alexandra and Liv in a very safe environment at my parents' house [laughs]. Just to make it as stripped down and intimate as possible.

(Continues on next page).

INTERVIEW: YAM MAGAZINE (continuing).

[To Liv] Was it hard to get into the role of Frida?

L: Well, I had one person in mind. I filmed the screen test against Josefin. We had instant chemistry and I thought to myself, "This screen test was fun". It felt so good with Josephine, so I wondered if I could do it with someone else. But it went pretty well with Ruth.

J: We found Frida first and then we looked for Mia. With Ruth, she lived in Paris so we wondered if she could come and screen test for us. We flew her here, they (Liv and Ruth) tested against each other and I just went, "Woah!".

The fact that you had to fight so hard to get the film done — has it scared you from making more movies or given you an appetite for it?

J: Well, the thing about appetite, just that feeling that "everything is possible" – I have that setting in general. There I have gotten an appetite, I feel that everything is possible if you have the heart and believe in it enough. Meanwhile, I am now tired. The thought of doing this kind of project, I don't think that I will make such a project like this again, a project that has been so personal. I am a little beat. But the appetite is there.

Now that you have started Lebox [Lebox.se], have people begun to knock on your door with scripts?

J: Absolutely, very much so.

Has something already captured your interest?

J: Yes. But for me it's about waiting until I find what I'm passionate about. I'm not the type that rushes into things. There is a lot of development to be done, so I'll just let it grow for a bit. Because projects need to do that. Alexandra and I worked on this script for ages until we felt that "now it is ready to fly".

[To Liv] Do you have any future projects?

L: I will be home now for a few months [after just having a child]. I work a lot at the Stockholm City Theater. I also have films that are done and that will soon premiere.

The film has gotten lot of hype before its release, especially internationally — through the sites like AfterEllen.com. What plans are there for the movie? Where will it be shown?

J: The movie is going places, absolutely. It was pretty awesome when I was in Cannes this year; we could not show the movie, but we did screen the trailer. It was amazing how many bids we received, from all over Europe and the USA. The movie will have a festival run. Right now we are at a stage when we are trying to figure out what we should accept. We must wait for the right distributor and the right amount of money. But the movie will travel around the world. That is a fact.

[To Liv] Are you ready for international stardom?

L: I'm not ready but if it comes, bring it on!

INTERVIEW: LESBIAN NEWS

Lip Service: Talking with the writer-director and producer of Kiss Me By John Esther

It is Outfest Film Festival time again. As we have for several years now, LN will once again sponsor a film on the second Friday of the festival (AKA All-Girl Friday). This year LN is pleased to sponsor the Swedish film, Kiss Me (Kyss mig). Screening July 20, 7 p.m., at the DGA in West Hollywood (with a party following the screening nearby), writer-director Alexandra-Therese Keining's film examines how love can come and be undone at the most inconvenient of times.

Mia (Ruth Vega Fernandez) is happily engaged to Tim (Joakim Natterqvist). During a special birthday party for her father, Lasse (Jan Krister Allan Henriksson), Mia meets Frida (Liv Mjönes) and the sparks start to sizzle. Not only do her feelings for Frida conflict with Mia's engagement to Tim, Frida also happens to be the daughter of Elizabeth (Lena Endre), who is engaged to Mia's father. Frida is not so free either as she is already in a relationship with Elin (Josefine Tengblad).

A mature look at love and relationships without resorting to histrionics or despair, Kiss Me is marked by some of the best acting in any film this year.

In this exclusive interview LN caught up with Keining and actor-producer Tengblad to get a few insights into Sweden, filmmaking and lesbianism in the first country in the world to both de-list homosexuality as a disease and recognize same-sex marriages.

Lesbian News: What was your childhood like?

Alexandra-Therese Keining: Me and my older brother were raised by a single mother. My father died when I was just a baby but my mother did a great job taking care of us by herself. I had a very safe childhood, I think. My mother was a painter so creativity was very much part of the household. I remember that I used to think that painting needed such a great deal of patience that I could never do something like that. I was all over the place; I had a hard time settling down and relaxing. Ironic that I ended up as a filmmaker -- the most meticulous job with a great deal of attention to detail! As a kid I wanted to become a journalist and photographer. My mother got very ill and was finally diagnosed with cancer when I was 11. That changed everything. Nothing was safe anymore. She spent a lot of time in the hospital and my grandmother took care of my brother and myself. We moved in with her into her small apartment. She gave me a book with photos by George Hurrell, which I really treasured. The time around the second world war really got to me. The movies, the music, the art. And, of course, my granny's stories from the war! I still have that fascination left; it makes me think that I was born during the wrong decade. I used to dress up all my friends and we had this photo sessions with my first camera, an old Minolta. I think a lot of that creativity and play helped a lot to get me through my mother's death. Movies and writing became a safe haven for me at a very young age.

Josefine Tengblad: I was born in Stockholm. I was brought up in an upperclass area where there were no gay people or people who wanted to work in theater or film.

LN: What were you like as a teenager?

JT: I was very tough and wanted people to treat girls and boys the same. I was frustrated that we were treated differently.

ATK: My interest in old movies and photography made me kind of special as a kid. I stood out, yes but I had a lot of friends. Luckily enough, I was never specially treated because of the hardship at home. But I did feel like school was a great place to go to -- away from the sadness that home reminded me of. I was the Editor-in-Chief of the school paper and had a film club as well where I screened films every Friday. By today's standard I was probably a real geek, ha ha! I do feel that the 1980s in Sweden was a great period of time to grow up in. Very innocent. Today, it's totally a different thing, the opposite of innocence.

LN: When did you know you wanted to become a filmmaker?

ATK: I didn't know that I wanted to become a filmmaker until I moved to Los Angeles right after my graduation. After my mother's death I just wanted to get away. I'd never been to LA before, or America for that matter, but half way around the world seemed like far enough to start over. America was a great shock. LA was fascinating, different and like nothing I'd ever seen -- very unlike Europe and all the places there that I'd been to. I began to study journalism and photography but also took classes in cinematography and the history of cinema. One day, I sat in with a friend of mine at a screenwriting class and that was it. I really just made up my mind, there and then, that I should become a director and screenwriter. When I read a screenplay for the very first time, the words on the page and dialogue, I knew how I wanted to watch them being spoken and framed. I saw it in my head in visualized segments. From that day, I forgot all about my journalistic ambitions. I wanted to become a filmmaker. And LA is the perfect place for such dreams. I felt like every building had a story to tell.

JT: When I was 18. I had already worked a lot in theater and felt I wanted to try film.

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INTERVIEW: LESBIAN NEWS (continuing).

LN: Who were your favorite filmmakers growing up?

JT: Walter Salles, Jan Sverak, Lars Von Trier, Lukas Moodysson.

ATK: Growing up in the 1980's, was a treat for a moviebuff. I still have favorite scenes from classics like Say Anything and Risky Business. I saw everything from Francois Truffaut to E.T. when I grew up.

LN: What was the first film that "blew you away"? Can you tell us why?

JT: The NeverEnding Story (1984). I was six years old and it changed my life. I was so fascinated by the world and the characters. And I think it made me interested in becoming an actress.

ATK: Two of my first very strong memories were from films with Jon Voight: John Schlesinger's Midnight Cowboy and John Boorman's Deliverance. Schlesinger became a favorite as well as Otto Preminger. Then Akira Kurosawa, Hal Hartley, Mike Nichols, Jean-Luc Godard and Todd Haynes. All very different filmmakers but each with their very own personal style that made huge impressions on me as a teenager. Also, since they were all male directors it made me think that directing films was a very manly occupation, a men's club.

LN: It took about a decade between the release of your debut, Hot Dog and the release of Kiss Me. Beyond casting for Wallander, what were you doing during that time?

ATK: I was the youngest female filmmaker to write, direct and produce a feature film in Sweden when I made Hot Dog in 2003. It was low in budget and in shooting days -- a real nightmare! But it was also great fun as well and a splendid way to learn the art of the movie business. I kind of promised myself that I wouldn't make a feature film again until I had the tools and budget to make it exactly as I visualized it. So, I spent the following years behind the scenes. I worked as screenwriter for television, as first assistant director on a couple of films and as a casting director. I was still very much in touch with the business but in more low-key positions. I also spent the time writing on different ideas. A film takes about four to five years to make from idea to finished production. It's a long and tedious process sometimes and one needs to be very certain about what the drive and creative force are for a project. Hot Dog had a low budget because it centered around a sensitive theme. The next film Kiss Me would pretty much fall into the same category!

LN: Why did you want to make Kiss Me?

ATK: I knew I wanted to make a lovestory with a twist and there weren't a lot of them around. I had written a few moody and dark screenplays, and I just felt like I wanted to make a film about love. I was in New York during the spring and I became really inspired for some reason. I knew that I had to make a film about two women falling in love. And that the story should have a positive vibe to it, unlike most lesbian-themed films. There were a lot of challenges in making the film as well. This was the first lesbian film to come out of Sweden in about twelve years! Lots of paranoia and fear! People told me that it would ruin my career and so on. It was hard to find the money for financing it, though it stars some of Sweden's biggest actors. I had a fantastic team and we managed to make a great film with very little money, still the budget was about ten times more than the last film I made. When I talk about the budget in the U.S., people just laugh.

JT: I wanted to do my first feature as a producer. I was married to a man and had fallen in love with a woman. When I met Alexandra, I told her what had happened. After that we started to work on Kyss Mig.

LN: Which character do you identify with the most and why?

JT: With Mia because she is based on my life.

ATK: I probably identify mostly with Frida. People who know me and watch the film tell me that she has a lot of the same characteristics as I have. During the writing process I was told that Frida as a character would have a hard time to awake empathy from the audience. But I think there is a tiny part of me in all of them. An old ex told me that Mia was very much like me on a bad day and Frida reminded my ex of me on a good day, ha ha! Go figure.

LN: How autobiographical is the film?

ATK: The film is not autobiographical, actually. When I finished an early draft of the screenplay, I met the film's producer, Josefine Tengblad, who, just like Mia in the film, had gone through a similar experience. We knew right away that we needed to make this film. Josefine's own struggle was dramatic and heartfelt and I tried to bring that to the film as well, with respect to everyone involved.

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INTERVIEW: LESBIAN NEWS (continuing).

LN: What political or social intentions did you have with this film?

ATK: It was a very long and hard fight from start to end to make the film. To let the characters stay the way I had written them. To let the scenes where Mia and Frida express their love not be cut from the film. To fight to market the film as a lesbian film, not be forced to downplay the premise of the film. It's a love story about relations and acceptance, not only between two persons but also between parents and their children and, most importantly, the love for one's true self. The film grapples with love, betrayal, lesbianism, and relationships. There is really nothing new with the dramatic set-up of Kiss Me, which is also the point. It is a realistic story with a very simple premise to it. The story is important because we need films with lesbian/gay/queer/trans - themes to be accessed in an easy way, as well.

JT: I wanted to do a film that showed what I had experienced. I had the same feelings falling in love with a woman as I did a man. But this time it was stronger than ever and being with a woman was something I really loved and it felt so natural. I wanted to do a movie where the lesbians were natural and to do a story about love.

LN: What was your casting process?

ATK: I screen tested a lot of actresses for the parts of Frida and Mia. The studio behind the film wanted bigger names but I wanted to work with whomever made the character real. Liv Mjöhnes was cast right away. She did one screen test that blew us all away. When she got together with Ruth Vega Fernandez, there was just something really special there. I never work with a casting director. I want to meet the actors myself and throw things at them in a safe environment like my home or someone's apartment. Liv and Ruth are very different, both in personality and in technique. Still, the core in dedication and the passion they bring to their characters seem rare. I asked a lot of them and they were game for every new challenge.

LN: It seems the lovemaking scenes between Mia and Tim are more intimate and co-dependent (trapped) whereas the lovemaking scenes between Mia and Frida are more expressive and individualistic (freer). Can you talk a bit about the way you shot those scenes and why you shot them that way?

ATK: The style and cinematography of those scenes are very different. I wanted a different emotion for the scenes between Mia and Tim. The camera is more distant, the editing is different and the lighting as well. For instance, every scene with Mia and her boyfriend were shot on a rig while most scenes between Mia and Frida (Liv Mjöhnes) were shot with a handheld camera to get a more intimate feeling. The DP, Ragna Jorming and I carefully planned the set up in several technical segments with the actors and then I made up a storyline for them to focus on. I really never wanted them to improvise. Being naked in a bed with someone is hard enough. I wanted the actors to feel as safe as I could. We had plenty of time to shoot these parts, with long hours, so not to stress anyone. The love scenes are to some extent the most important part of the story and they had to be loaded with emotion.

JT: We wanted to show Mia's life with Tim and what happens when she makes love to Frida. This is in a way Mia losing her virginity. It was so important to show that there is a before and after the sex scene with Frida. After that there is no turning back for Mia.

LN: Why did they change on English title from With Every Heartbeat to Kiss Me?

ATK: There was a lot of drama about the title. Kiss Me is apparently short and easy to remember.

JT: It was a deal breaker for the American distributor so I had to say yes even though we like With Every Heartbeat more.

LN: What kind of visibility do lesbians have in Swedish media?

ATK: Personally, I think the lesbian visibility comes and goes in Swedish media. Gay personalities is a different chapter all together. Male gay characters have a bigger part in movies and television than lesbians. Evidently, it took Sweden twelve years to make a film about lesbian love after Show Me Love, which was a really great film. But it was also about teenagers. I think that speaks for itself!

JT: Not so much. You can find it in a some magazines.

LN: What do you think of America's attitudes toward the LGBT community?

JT: It feels as though it is different from state to state. I thought it was more open than it is. I was shocked to hear that you cannot get married in Los Angeles.

(Continues on next page).

INTERVIEW: LESBIAN NEWS (continuing).

LN: What do you do when you are not making films?

ATK: Right now I'm working on my first novel. It is very exciting and the process is very free! I don't have to worry about the costs of settings or locations. If I write a line, the line stays! No thoughts about how it will be shot, spoken or cut.

JT: I love diving. It is my biggest passion.

LN: What social causes are you interested in?

JT: Equal rights. At the moment I am very involved in adoption.

LN: What was the best film you saw last year?

JT: The Tree of Life.

LN: If you could sit down with any five or six dead people for dinner, who would they be and why (no relatives, please).

JT: Michael Jackson, for his talent and for his work for peace. Alfred Hitchcock, for his work and his personality. Marilyn Monroe, a fascinating woman and the biggest star. Adriane Mnouchkine, the wonderful woman that started Teatre du Soleil. Mohammed Ali, the best boxer ever and a wonderful person. Dag Hammarskjöld, for his passion for peace.

ATK: Gertrude Stein, to get writing tips and maybe the truth about Alice B. Toklas. Katherine Hepburn, which was her favorite director and did she ever want to direct? Tamara de Lempicka, how did she cope with being the original creator of cubism -- a style that Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso got credit for? Mother Theresa, for sainthood and passion. Jean Seberg, who or what made her cut the hair? Did she realize the impact it would have? Nina Simone, to tell me all about her intriguing life.

LN: What do you think about LGBT film festivals such as Outfest?

JT: Fantastic. It is so important. I have thought of starting one in Sweden. FANTASTIC!

ATK: Very important and crucial for audiences around the world. It's the most wonderful way to get people together who love film and celebrate the rights of being queer! And most important of all, you get to watch the labors of love from so many talented filmmakers from all over the world. As long as the hardship exists for being gay we should continue to make and screen as many films about the lifestyle as we can.

LN: How do audiences at LGBT respond differently than at non- LGBT film festivals -- if there is a difference?

JT: It is not so different. Maybe people are more happy at LGBT film festivals because we made a film for them.

ATK: I really haven't experienced any difference. I know that straight people find this film just as alluring as a gay audience. My intention was to be sincere. And I think that comes across to the audience. Hopefully, one feels that it's told with a genuine voice of trying to show that fragile state of falling in love and the complications within that emotion. Some people just love [our] happy ending and others don't like it and think it's too Hollywood, straight or gay.

LN: If people like your work how should they approach you?

ATK: People are often very sweet when they come up and want to talk about the film. I've had parents, lovers, siblings, teenagers and older people, both straight and gay, who just want to tell me how the film moved them. That really means a lot.

LN: What do you think about these interviews where you talk about yourself and your work. Does it serve the work? Should the work speak for itself?

JT: That would be best.

ATK: I don't mind doing interviews but I am a private person, so I tend to be pretty low-key about my personal life. The main thing is of course for the work to speak for itself. I am a filmmaker and that is what I like to talk the most about. I really don't see why there should be any interest in me as a private person. I guess I don't find myself that exciting, ha ha!