

LGBT Films

FROM A TO Z

AMERICAN PRIMITIVE (USA)

DIRECTOR GWEN WYNNE

ANNENBERG THEATER: Saturday, January 10, 7:00 pm;
CAMELOT THEATRES-1: Tuesday, January 13, 1:30 pm

If you were to see the title, *American Primitive*, on a movie theater marquee with no prior knowledge of what the film is about, you might pass it up as a documentary about folk art; a he-man, testosterone-laden sequel to *Dances with Wolves*; or an homage to Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver for her collection of poems by the same name. Don't. It's none of the above.

While the film does touch on the craft of rustic, handmade early American furniture and art, the story centers on Madeline (skillfully portrayed by newcomer Danielle Savre), a teenage girl who, along with her younger sister Daisy, learns that her father is gay when he and another man open a furniture shop on Cape Cod. Written and directed by Gwen Wynne (see interview page 52), *American Primitive* is a beautifully crafted, character-driven film inspired by true events. Essentially autobiographical, Wynne chose to tell her story in a fictionalized format influenced by Ingmar Bergman, Francois Truffaut and Tennessee Williams.

Harry, flawlessly played by Tate Donovan, is a reserved Brit, recently widowed, who has found love

in the arms of Mr. Gibbs (Adam Pascal), who has come into Madeline and Daisy's lives presumably as a business partner and just happens to be living in the same house—different bedrooms, of course.

The time is 1973 and the gay rights movement was just awakening from homophobic slumber. Harry is rightly terrified that if anyone were to discover his sexuality, he could lose his girls. Under the transparent veil of feigned heterosexuality—even as far as going on a date with an attractive young reporter (played by Stacey Dash) while Mr. Gibbs entertains his in-laws with Broadway tunes—Harry tries to shield his daughters from the truth. He is 'outed' when Madeleine secretly spies him dancing with Mr. Gibbs in a gay club she and her friends have snuck into.

Featuring a brilliant cast that includes teen favorite Josh Peck, Susan Anspach and openly gay character actor Anne Ramsay, this is a powerful, vibrant film that captures the homophobia—both external and internal—of that era, set against the backdrop of small-town America.

On the heels of the passage of Proposition 8, *American Primitive* bravely illustrates the imperative necessity of marriage equality and the abolishment of fear-fueled prejudice that keeps us hidden, even in our own homes. It is an important piece of work that will help shed light on one of the preem-

inent issues of our time: the place of family and same-sex relationships in our culture.

—Mona de Crinis

BABY LOVE (France)

DIRECTOR VINCENT GARENQ

CAMELOT THEATRES-1: Tuesday, January 13, 7:30 pm;
Friday, January 16, 10:30 am

A lively and frothy portrait of one gay man's quest to become a father against all odds. This romantic comedy explores the ironic twist of French law in which gay adoptions remain illegal while same-sex unions are readily sanctioned. Featuring a stellar cast including Lambert Wilson as the pediatrician who desperately wants to have a son.

BE LIKE OTHERS (Canada/Iran/UK/USA)

DIRECTOR TANAZ ESHAGHIAN

REGAL PALM SPRINGS-1: Wednesday, January 14,
3:30 pm; Thursday, January 15, 9:30 am

This remarkable documentary chronicles the lives of a handful of men and one woman who undergo sex change operations in Iran—a country where homosexuality is a capital crime, still punishable by death by stoning.



(Above left to right) *American Primitive* (USA), *Be Like Others* (Canadian/Iran/UK/USA), *Chef's Special* (Spain)