



FOR RELEASE: MARCH 31, 2017

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NATIONAL POETRY MONTH GIVES VOICE TO “GUYS READING POEMS”

MINDBENDER FEATURE FILM SET TO DEBUT THEATRICALY APRIL 28th

The neo-noir mindbender feature film “Guys Reading Poems” will open theatrically on April 28th at the Arena Cinemalounge in Los Angeles during National Poetry Month, after its yearlong festival run.

“Guys Reading Poems” follows an avant-garde painter (Patricia Velasquez, “The Mummy,”) whose sanity dissipates when she’s abandoned by her handsome lothario husband (Alexander Dreymon, “The Last Kingdom”) for his stunningly beautiful mistress (Lydia Hearst, “South of Hell”). In a feature debut performance, Luke Judy plays the resourceful child who creatively uses poetry to survive when his disturbed mother locks him in a puppet box, then transforms the child’s makeshift prison into an art installation. The supporting cast includes Rex Lee (“Entourage” and “Young and Hungry”), Christos Vasilopoulos (“Banshee”), Blake Sheldon and Jerod Meagher. The film features 32 poems as a framing device for this narrative about this artistic but damaged family, including poetry from West Hollywood poet laureate Steven Reigns, as well as classic pieces from LGBT poets Walt Whitman, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Thomas Gray, among others.

According to director Hunter Lee Hughes, the film is “designed as a dream with the dreamer slowly waking up” and is largely based on public domain poetry he discovered in his late grandmother’s collection. He says, “My grandmother marked up her poetry books, underlining some phrases, making notes in the margin. Each poem I found became a little hint about her and I became fascinated with the idea that poems could be psychological clues to the inner life of a protagonist.”

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“Guys Reading Poems” world premiered at the 21st annual Palm Beach International Film Festival and went on to screen at Dances With Films, qFLIX Philadelphia (Centerpiece Selection), D.C. Independent Film Festival and was awarded the “Audience Award for Best Feature/Drama” at the 25th annual Woods Hole Film Festival, the “Creativity in Drama” award at the 36th annual Breckenridge Film Festival and won “Best in Fest” at the South Texas Underground Film Festival. Early praise for the film includes a rave review from the *GayEssential*, where Alexander Ryll called it, “a gripping mindbender that compels the viewer to gasp both in terror and awe” while Ernest Owens of *Philadelphia Magazine* describes the film as, “a visual poetic experience and jaw-dropping black-and-white thriller.”

“Guys Reading Poems” is the feature directorial debut of Hunter Lee Hughes, who previously wrote and directed the LGBT internet television series “Dumbass Filmmakers!” and authored two queer plays, “Fate of the Monarchs” (Critic’s Pick, “Backstage West”) and “The Sermons of John Bradley” as well as the gay dark short film “Winner Takes All.” Michael Marius Pessah served as the film’s cinematographer, after earning the prestigious “Five in Focus” award for his work on “Joshua Tree 1951: A Portrait of James Dean.” Shpetim Zero created haute couture designs for the film and Joachim Horsley composed the original score.

“Guys Reading Poems” will debut on Friday, April 28th at Arena Cinemalounge (arenascreen.com) with exact screening times TBD. As part of National Poetry Month, “Guys Reading Poems” will also host its monthly open mic night at Shaky Alibi (8401 Beverly Boulevard) on Thursday, April 6th at 7:00 p.m. Readers may secure a spot in the lineup by texting “RSVP” to 424.34.POEMS. For news and upcoming announcements related to “Guys Reading Poems,” please visit: guysreadingpoems.com or <https://vimeo.com/167839352> for trailer.

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