

Jimmy is tickled Pienk

By  Daniel Dercksen

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Jimmy in Pienk is a delightfully charming Afrikaans film that shows the true colours of a new South Africa. Being different has never felt so right in this honest and passionate heartfelt film.



It tells the funny and touching story of Jimmy Bester, a rugged seventh-generation mielie farmer who can give an accurate five-day weather forecast, simply by sniffing the wind, and lives out his creative impulses by shearing sheep on the neighbouring farms, something he has to hide from his father who believes that "men are not creative".

When Jimmy's father suddenly dies in a freak accident, he is confronted by two menacing (and comedic) loan sharks who come to collect what his father owes. When a distraught Jimmy discovers that his father had a twin brother who was exiled from the farm for being gay and is now a multi-billionaire and hair product tycoon based in Cape Town, Jimmy gathers the courage to leave his home and travel to Cape Town to seek help from his uncle. Fred's revenge on a family that spurned him results in him convincing Jimmy to enter his reality TV show, "SA's Next Super Stylist". If Jimmy wins the competition, he can take home the prize money

and save his family. Under the fabulous tutelage of Bunny, his gay hair guru, Jimmy sets out to master the art of hairdressing and becoming a metro-sexual man.

It's a man's world...

Written and directed by Hanneke Schutte, it is great to see how a woman can reshape a man's world. Schutte, who was the South African winner of the Jameson First Shot competition with her short film Saving Norman (which she also directed in Los Angeles and starred Willem Dafoe), is clearly heading for a successful career in filmmaking with her visual sensibility and the humorous social satire of Jimmy in Pienk - she also co-scripted the forthcoming Bakgat 3.

Sharleen Surtie Richards narrates Jimmy in Pienk, representing the world Jimmy grew up in; she also personifies conservative aunties and elements in South Africa who might feel uncomfortable with the flamboyant and outrageously camp antics of the over-the-top gay characters, cunningly influencing the audience's journey into the gay lifestyle that Jimmy encounters.

What further contributes to straighten out homophobic animosity is Louw Venter's outstanding performance as the "boer-verine" who is plunged into an unfamiliar alien world; Venter's natural response and interaction is comforting and shows how important it is not to judge a book by its cover.

As camp as a row of pink tents

Terence Bridgett is as camp as a row of pink tents in the role of Bunny, an ambitious and raging hairstylist who is representative of all the gay stereotypes he's ever been exposed to. It is amazing how Schutte grounds both Jimmy and Bunny, allowing their romance to be an honest and heartfelt clash between diverse worlds that results in a realisation of how important it is to embrace the differences that separates.

Just as Jimmy poignantly shows Bunny the importance of being true to oneself, so does Bunny allow us to realise that there is more to being gay than meets the eye. Tinarie van Wyk Loots shines in the role of the impulsive, unconventional, free-spirited and quirky Rita, a militant PETA member and fruitarian who steals Jimmy's heart. The chemistry between Venter and Van Wyk Louw is electrifying; it's a tender romance that has its heart in the right place. Equally brilliant is Gys de

Villiers (as you have never



seen him before) in the dual role of Jimmy's rugged mielie farmer dad, and his gay twin Fredrique, the owner of a South African hair empire (think Paul Mitchell), very much "a gay man trapped in a farmer's body" who longs for the uncomplicated life on the farm. Fredrique's partner Gigi, an uber chic, aloof and gay man who symbolises everything Fredrique is trying to escape from and is caught up in the world of glitz and glamour, is brought to life with style and flair by Gérard Rudolf.

Two idiots from hell

The comic relief in Jimmy in Pienk is provided by two idiots from hell: David Isaacs is superb as the loan shark Spanner, a part-time Hoover salesman and contract pet killer whose years of steroid abuse has left him with a serious case of 'roid rage. Garth Collins is equally brilliant as Spanner's partner in crime, a muscled villain who lives out his military fantasies through paintball when he's not napping. Quanita Adams is out of this world as the eccentric psychic Medea Moon, who's passionate and larger than life.

In a South Africa where it is vital to bridge the great divide between different cultures, issues of sexual preferences, freedom of expression and the celebration of being true to who we are in this world, Jimmy In Pienk succeeds triumphantly. We need South African films that not only create an awareness of how absurd the war zone between diverse cultures is, but how important it is to make the most of celebrating our humanness.

Jimmy in Pienk is a proudly South African film proving that local is indeed lekker; subtitled in English, it fittingly follows in the tradition of Afrikaans films like Roepman and Skoonheid, peeling away the layers of conservative fundamentalism that eradicates the foundation of our Rainbow Nation. Jimmy might be an outsider struggling to find his place in the world, but he's a proud spokesman for a world where children still climb trees and pampered pooches are set free out of handbags to roam freely.

Viva Jimmy, our new khaki-wearing super-hero who deserves a medal for changing our world.

Behind the scenes

Jimmy in Pienk is "subversive in an interesting way", said producer Zaheer Goodman-Bhyat. "It's a classic fish-out-of-water tale that promotes the ideas of diversity and open mindedness by placing a conservative character in a situation where he must adapt and grow to survive. Of course, if that was the end of the story it would be dull. What's special about this one is that it's done in an entertaining way."

Jimmy in Pienk was shot on location in Cape Town and surrounds, including locations on a farm outside Philadelphia, a house in Constantia and a hair salon in De Waterkant. It was shot over a period of five weeks by up-and-coming director of photography (DOP) Jacques Koudstaal on a RED Epic camera.

"Film casting is about finding people who are instantly believable as their characters, especially in minor roles. It's a combination of matching the right talent to pull off the material with a level of celebrity that will support the film. It's a delicate process that we manage very carefully internally and with the assistance of casting directors. The casting took a fair amount of time, but we eventually found exactly what we were looking for in each character. We had a lot of comedians and other funny people on set. Terence Bridgett was hilarious and fantastic in his role as Bunny. Louw Venter was phenomenal - easy to work with and very funny as a person. He was also on a very strict diet and gym regime to bulk up for the role as he wanted to really look the part of a farmer and sound like a farmer. He grew a massive beard as well, and it was successful, because at one point he was mistaken for a real farmer."

Read more at www.writingstudio.co.za/page4761.html

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za
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