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## film

**The Perfect Storm?**

Hardly...but at least it beats most summer camp movies

**Summer Storm**

Summer camp movies can be lots of fun, but excellence is rarely one of their properties.

Who can forget Bill Murray's "It just doesn't matter" rant in *Meatballs*, or Tatum O'Neal and Kristy McNichol's race to lose their virginity in *Little Darlings*? Not to mention the Camp Crystal Lake carnage in the *Friday the 13th* series.

But let's face it: These flicks would be lucky to get half of a star in a reputable film guide.

Opening April 21 at Hollywood Theatre, the gay German film *Summer Storm* is far better than the aforementioned treasures, but it still proves that summer camp movies are a breeding ground for hackneyed storylines and mediocre acting. It's the perfect film for teen-age queers who are so busy defining their sexual identities that they don't have time to be critical of second-rate filmmaking. More seasoned viewers will probably find the proceedings entertaining but unenlightening.

At least writer/director Marco Kreuzpaintner indulges the prurient interests of gay viewers with some fairly explicit intimate moments, including a meeting of the groins that takes place between two beautiful naked teen-age boys on a raft.

The film opens as two close friends named Tobi (Robert Stadlober) and Achim (Kostja Ullmann) prepare to leave for rowing camp. Tobi has a huge crush on Achim and is encouraged when they jerk off together after some arousing wrestling antics. Still, Achim is hot for his girlfriend, which is bad news because she's coming to camp, too.

At camp Tobi attempts to get it on with his girlfriend, but he's increasingly distracted by Achim and by a team of gay rowers called the Queerstrokes. In the tradition of every gay coming-of-age film ever made, Tobi must decide if he's going to hide his sexuality or be true to himself and come out of the closet.

It might be clichéd, but most of *Summer Storm* rings true. A few scenes, however, send a totally unrealistic message to young viewers. When Achim begins to fight off Tobi's advances, Tobi instantly finds himself in the arms of a hot stud that comes to his rescue. It's a ridiculous fantasy that suggests Tobi doesn't need any time to recover from that wrecking ball known as unrequited love.

—Stephen Blair



*Kinky Boots* is the true story of a sassy drag queen who rescues a struggling shoe factory from financial ruin.

**Kinky Boots**

Opening April 28, the new British comedy *Kinky Boots* desperately wants to take you for a walk on the wild side. But these boots are not made for walking. Well, not to anyone interesting, anyway.

Granted, there's some fun cross-dressing action in a queer cabaret and on a fashion runway, and Chiwetel Ejiofor (*Dirty Pretty Things*) delivers a playful and soulful performance as a drag queen named Lola. But these good bits are squandered by a script that lacks the wit and insight that made drag queen classics like *Torch Song Trilogy* and *Some Like It Hot* so memorable.

In the tradition of *The Full Monty* and *Calendar Girls*, this is a story about quaint British folk who go out on a naughty limb to make money. Like *Calendar Girls*, it's based on real events.

Charlie Price (Joel Edgerton) is an emotionally reserved young man who plans to move to London with his fiancée. His father dies, however, leaving him in charge of a struggling shoe factory in a drab industrial town. The dismal situation starts looking up when Charlie meets a sassy drag queen (Ejiofor) who inspires him to manufacture outrageous stiletto-heeled boots that are strong enough to support big and brawny male transvestites. This just might be the niche market that will save the factory.

Much of the predictable plot centers on the conflict between Lola and Charlie, who's embarrassed to be seen in public with a drag queen. Charlie is a well-mannered and generally kind bloke, but like some of his pig-gish male employees he believes that one can't possibly be a real man and dress in a frock at the same time.

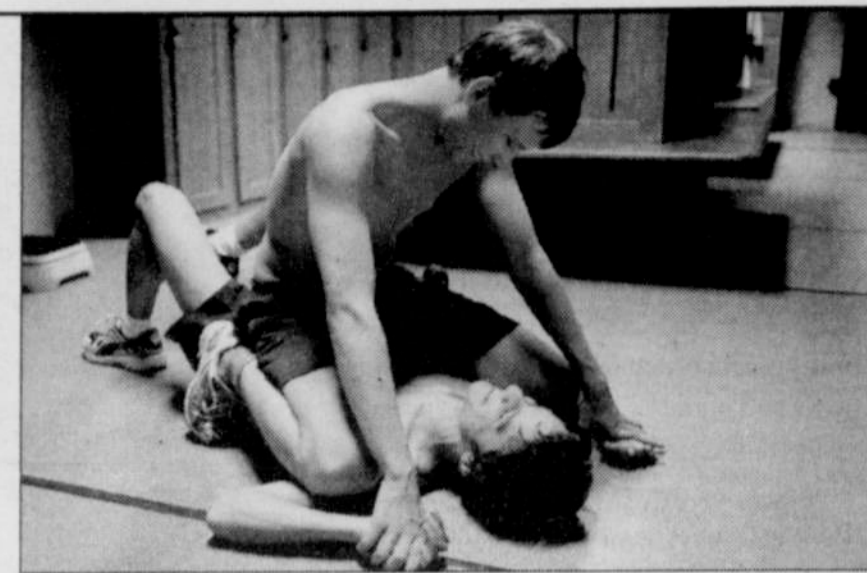
A series of interminable and awkwardly staged scenes proves—surprise, surprise—that Lola has more masculinity in her heavily glossed lips than Charlie has in his whole upright body.

Movies about transvestite footwear don't strut our way every day. It's a shame that director Julian Jarrold and company couldn't find a way to convert this bizarre and endearing premise into a rollicking good time.

—SB

**Adam & Steve**

Craig Chester, an actor once associated with the New Queer Cinema of the 1990s (he had big parts in *Swoon* and *Frisk* and a small one in *I Shot Andy Warhol*), discussed *Adam & Steve* at its 2005 Seattle International Film Festival screening, claiming there have been too many "heavy" gay movies and not enough



Tobi (Robert Stadlober) pins the object of his affection, Achim (Kostja Ullmann), in *Summer Storm*.

"positive" ones. The writer/director/star went on to posit that his new gay romantic comedy was an attempt to remedy this allegedly unbalanced state of affairs. (He somehow must have missed *Jeffrey, Trick, The Broken Hearts Club, Gypsy Boys*, etc., etc.) And then the lights went down.

Chester plays Adam, a lonely ex-Goth and present-day Central Park bird-watching tour guide approaching middle age alone. Gay actor Malcolm Gets (*Caroline in the City*) is Steve, a lonely, insecurely promiscuous ex-modern dancer and present-day successful psychologist. In the late 1980s, Adam and Steve had a horrendously aborted one-night stand involving cocaine cut with baby laxative.

Seven years later, they meet and, without recognizing each other, fall in love. When the reality finally dawns on them, it's enough to threaten their burgeoning romance. In a dovetailing dysfunctional heterosexual storyline, Rhonda (Parker Posey),



Craig Chester (left, with Malcolm Gets) wrote, directed and stars in the gay rom-com *Adam & Steve*.

Adam's aspiring-comedian best friend, and Michael (Chris Kattan), Steve's obnoxious straight-dude roommate, are reluctantly drawn attracted.

Many things in *Adam & Steve* should work: The actors are appealing, and the flashbacks to Chester and the always-game Posey (in a fat suit) in their Goth heyday has hysterical potential, as does the graphically scatological, John Waters-like sex-gone-wrong scene. But the film suffers badly from a desultory amateurishness. It's all anxiety-inducing dead air and clumsy, awkward dialogue. Energy is what activates the charm of unskillful execution, and *Adam & Steve* all too readily succumbs to its own torpor.

Chester's film is hardly addressing any dearth of diverse, interesting, excellent queer film. Ponder for a moment how uniquely, refreshingly queer-positive or queer-centric some of the best post-millennial films—from *8 Women* to *I'm the One That I Want* to *Far from Heaven* to *Bad Education* to *Heights* to *Mulholland Dr.*—have been. In the context of that embarrassment of cinematic riches, *Adam & Steve* is merely an embarrassment.

—Christopher McQuain 10