

ADAM

DIRECTED BY RHYS ERNST

2019 / 95 mins. / U.S.A. / English / Comedy, Drama

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SYNOPSIS

Awkward, self-conscious Adam Freeman (Nicholas Alexander) has just finished his junior year of high school in 2006. When his cool older sister Casey (Margaret Qualley) suggests he visit her in New York for the summer, Adam has visions of meeting a girl and finally gaining some actual life experience. The fantasy doesn't materialize exactly as expected. Casey has enthusiastically embraced life amidst Brooklyn's young LGBTQ community and invites Adam to tag along with her to queer bars, marriage equality rallies and other happenings. When Adam falls at first sight for Gillian (Bobbi Salvör Menuez), a smart, beautiful young woman in this new crowd, she mistakenly assumes he is trans. Flummoxed and enamored, he haplessly goes along with her assumption, resulting in an increasingly complex comedy – and tragedy - of errors he's ill-equipped to navigate.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The directorial feature debut of filmmaker Rhys Ernst (producer and director of “Transparent,” director of the shorts “We’ve Been Around,” THE THING and SHE GONE ROGUE), ADAM is a warmly funny, subversive and unique take on the coming-of-age narrative that turns the paradigm of the lonely outsider on its head. Set in 2006 and adapted by Ariel Schrag (“The L Word”) from her acclaimed 2014 novel, ADAM unfolds inside an entirely queer milieu as it tells the story of an inexperienced, straight teenage boy who tumbles down an identity rabbit hole when he meets the girl of his dreams. With a generous spirit, ADAM offers a rare insider’s look at a singular world at a singular time, capturing the energy, love, camaraderie and messiness of Brooklyn’s queer/trans subculture as it comes into its social and political own. Featuring a diverse, vibrant ensemble cast of trans, queer and cis actors, ADAM deftly balances farcical elements and genuine emotion as it tells a universal story of emotional growth, outsidership, privilege and community. Rhys Ernst’s directorial debut marks the arrival of a bold new trans voice in American independent cinema.

Schrag has been exploring the complexities of queer life since her teens, when she chronicled her Berkeley, California high school years in a series of frank, funny autobiographical comic books “Awkward,” “Definition,” “Potential” and “Likewise.” She moved away from autobiography with “Adam,” but drew deeply from her life as part of Brooklyn’s queer community in the early-to-mid 2000s. Trans people were becoming more visible within the larger queer community, which led to broad re-thinking of issues of gender, identity and sexuality. As Schrag describes it, “In 2000, I knew no out trans people. By 2003, at least ten of my good friends were transitioning, and I had dated and partnered with several trans people. By 2006, even though there were way more out trans people, and people at some stage of their transition, the queer community was still learning how to think and talk about what being trans meant -- at least in comparison to the language and understanding we take for granted today. Everyone was figuring it out together.”

And they were figuring it out while they were in their 20s, before they had settled into adulthood. “It was that free-flying period of figuring stuff out. My friends and I did activism such as protesting the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival’s trans-exclusionary policies and at night we went out to clubs and had a ton of fun,” she remembers. “Like with any politically minded group, there was infighting and hypocrisy but also love and community. Because our world would seem so absurd to me sometimes, I thought it would be revealing to look at that world through the eyes of an outsider.”

That outsider became her protagonist, Adam Freeman, a gawky Berkeley teenager who has just finished his junior year of high school in 2006. When his cool lesbian sister Casey suggests he visit her in New York for the summer, Adam has visions of meeting a girl and finally gaining some actual life experience. The fantasy doesn't materialize exactly as expected. Casey has enthusiastically embraced life amidst Brooklyn's young LGBTQ crowd and invites Adam to tag along with her to queer bars, marriage equality rallies and other happenings. When Adam falls at first sight for Gillian, a smart, beautiful young woman in this new crowd, she mistakenly assumes he is trans. Flummoxed and enamored, he haplessly goes along with her assumption, resulting in an increasingly complex comedy – and tragedy - of errors he's ill-equipped to navigate.

“Adam” plays with the classic narrative of gender reversal and mistaken identity, taking it into fresh territory with a queer setting and an unexpected denouement. “It’s a plot that’s hundreds of years old,” Schrag notes, citing YENTL and “Twelfth Night” as examples. “A character meets somebody, they like them, they let them believe they’re something they’re not, the lie goes on and then the person finds out, there’s an explosion and then there’s a reckoning. I wanted to subvert that and do certain things differently.”

Producer Howard Gertler was a longtime fan of Schrag’s work and read “Adam” as soon as it was published in 2014. “I tore through the book in a weekend,” Gertler remembers. “It was hilarious and incisive, uncomfortable and frank, written from an insider’s perspective about a world I had lived and worked in and had never seen onscreen. It was a world that was constantly under creation by the people living in it, where you could fall in love, figure out who you were, live creatively and find your tribe. It was also a scene that has its own hierarchies, bad behavior and proverbial Mean Girls. And the misfit in this world, for a change, the one struggling to figure out their own identity, is the cis-het teenager dropped into the middle of it.”

Gertler and Schrag have known each other for many years and he quickly let her know that he wanted to develop “Adam” as a feature. Not long after he started looking for potential partners, he ran into producer/screenwriter James Schamus, who had recently ended his tenure as CEO of Focus Features. Schamus hadn’t formulated any plans yet but knew at some point he wanted to return to making films with first and second-time directors, as he had in the early 90s with filmmakers Ang Lee, Todd Haynes and Tom Kalin, among others.

As Schamus tells it, “When Howard mentioned he was trying to garner interest in ADAM, I almost fell over; I actually had the book on my nightstand, as both my daughters and my spouse had just read and loved it. My whole family have been Ariel

Schrag fans since “Potential” and my spouse Nancy Kricorian shares a book editor with her at Houghton. So some months later, when I had set up my little company, Symbolic Exchange, the first call I made was to Howard to see if ADAM was still in need of a home.”

While Schrag got to work on the screenplay, Gertler and Schamus began the search for a director. In the early stages of the film’s development, they worked with an acclaimed queer director but scheduling conflicts ultimately prevented them from moving forward together. By the time they began a new directors list in 2017, the number of working trans filmmakers had grown. Among them was Rhys Ernst, whose work dealing with trans identity includes the collaborative photography series “Relationship,” short films and, most prominently, the television series “Transparent.”

Gertler and Schamus had admired “Relationship,” which debuted at the 2014 Whitney Biennial. And they were further impressed when they screened his short narrative films THE THING and SHE GONE ROGUE, along with his collection of trans history documentary shorts called WE’VE BEEN AROUND. “We absolutely fell in love with all of Rhys’ films -- they’re empathetic, wry, emotionally insightful and magical,” Gertler comments. “The doc shorts especially illuminated his way, both while shooting and in editorial, of creating characters who pop on the screen. They had everything we wanted ADAM to have and be.”

When they contacted Ernst in May 2017, they had no idea that Ernst, too, had lived in Bushwick in 2006 and had been part of the world ADAM depicts. And though Ernst was very fond of Schrag’s work as a cartoonist and had heard of her novel, he hadn’t read it and knew nothing about its setting. “When I read the script I was surprised to see so many places and scenes and moments that I was familiar with from living in Bushwick at that time,” he recalls. “There were other funny overlaps, too. I’d recently made a short documentary about Camp Trans, a real place in trans history that is in the screenplay. And when I was in my early teens in the late 90s, I’d go to New York to visit my older sister, who went to Sarah Lawrence. My sister was straight but all her friends were lesbians and they would sneak me into gay bars.”

Beyond his personal connection to the material, ADAM spoke to Ernst’s belief in the relevance of trans stories and his commitment to telling those stories in the context of larger narratives. “I’m interested in new strategies in trans storytelling and ADAM is really different,” he comments. “I think trans stories are important for everyone because they are about gender freedom. All people are in some kind of gender box, whether it’s women or men, in how they’re treated and taught to act and so on. I thought it was so fascinating to see a cisgender, straight white 17-year-old boy try to

step out of that box. Adam quite literally has to walk a mile in the shoes of a trans person. And he is transformed by this.”

Once Ernst came on board, he and Schrag went through the screenplay together, sharing ideas and making changes and additions to the script. The ADAM planned for 2019 would necessarily be different than the “Adam” published in 2014 and conceived in 2007. The screenplay’s tone had to reflect today’s understanding of queer lives while maintaining the integrity of the narrative.

“We knew the story and its premise were provocative,” remarks Gertler. “We were mindful of reviews by trans literary critics, which were largely positive, but some raised issues that we thought through and addressed. While preserving our characters’ complexities and flaws, Ariel and Rhys helped guide changes and clarifications from the book to screen to make our trans-affirming perspective crystal-clear.”

Schrag found it a rewarding collaboration. “Rhys and I share an experience and a language and we’re both devoted to telling complex stories about what it means to be queer. That means taking risks and being ready to engage in difficult conversations. I loved going over the script with Rhys and making the best movie version of this story we could.”

The film’s period setting was every bit as critical as its cultural milieu. “2006 was a very particular year,” Ernst observes. “It was a year before smartphones. The internet wasn’t the thing that it is now, when people can easily clue into various identity subgenres and so on. At that time, trans was very nascent outside of its own little pool and had only recently begun to cross over to the cisgender lesbian/queer world. There was debate about using the words ‘lesbian’ and ‘queer.’ For some people, if you called yourself a lesbian that could mean you wouldn’t date trans men or you didn’t recognize trans identity. Identity labels were a lot more rigid than they are now.”

The strict rules about nomenclature are certainly baffling to Adam, who had no idea anything existed beyond lesbian and gay. He’s surprised to find that his lesbian sister has a mad crush on a boy who also happens to be named Casey. Surprise turns to confusion when he learns that Boy Casey is a trans man, a concept that is completely unfamiliar to him. Which would have been true for much of the straight population, Schrag points out. “In 2006, most people who weren’t part of a queer subculture had barely heard of trans people,” she comments. “When Adam allows people to assume that he’s a trans man, his misdeed is very specific to that time. Because he had never heard of trans people before, he doesn’t understand all the reasons why what he is doing is wrong. In faulty, teenager logic, he tries to convince himself that if, as his sister

tells him, trans men *are* men, then cis men could also be trans men. It's ridiculous and offensive, but he's too ignorant to know better."

Ernst and Schrag also delved deeper into Gillian's psyche and how her relationship with Adam fits into her evolving sense of self. Gillian became a national news story as a small-town high school student who fought to bring her girlfriend to their prom and has previously only dated women. Though it is Adam who makes the initial, exceedingly clumsy approach, it is Gillian who gives their first encounter oxygen with her clearly signaled interest. "It was very important that Gillian be a participant in what becomes their mutual deception," Ernst observes. "Gillian is the one to make the assumption that Adam is trans. Because she came out as a lesbian when she was so young and so publicly, it's like she's painted herself into this corner as far as who she is. I think she's realizing that that label may no longer be complete for her and that she's ready to try something bold. And that's when she meets Adam."

To Schrag, bringing Adam and Gillian's relationship into a more equal balance was a critical adjustment. "The movie is about Adam evolving and realizing his privileged place in the world, but it's also about Gillian realizing the complexity of her own sexuality," she remarks.

ADAM doesn't water down or excuse its characters' failings and trespasses, but it is compassionate as well as truthful. Adam makes terrible decisions and perpetuates a lie that dooms his first love affair. Casey's desire to be seen and accepted by the rock stars of the queer scene causes her experience hurt and inflict in roughly equal measure. "Almost all the characters in the film are trying to figure out who they are," Ernst says. "Obviously Adam is trying to figure out who he is and trying on this identity of a trans man, sort of by accident. But Casey and her friends are also trying to figure out who they are and where they belong. I think that's emblematic of that period of life, when you're in your early 20s."

As spring turned to summer 2017, pre-production on ADAM picked up steam and the cast began to come together. There had never been any question that trans actors would play the film's trans roles, and it turned out to be an easy goal to achieve. "It's funny because the common sentiment in Hollywood is that trans roles are hard to cast," observes Ernst. "But in the case of this film, the hardest role to cast by far was Adam. We had to find somebody who could not only emotionally carry the character, but would also be believable as a 17-year-old boy who is perceived as trans."

The filmmakers had a limited window of time to cast the lead role: if ADAM was to be made in 2017, production had to be completed before New York trees lost their summer

leaves. The search took months and extended across the country and into Europe, encompassing dozens of auditions and hundreds of videotape submissions. It was getting down to the wire when the filmmakers got an audition tape from Nicholas Alexander, a young Floridian who has been acting professionally since childhood. "The stars aligned when we found Nick," says Ernst. "Like Adam, Nick is an open-minded, good-natured person. He's a lot more emotionally intelligent than Adam, of course! He just nailed Adam's tone: sort of hapless but sweet. He understood Adam as this regular, dorky teenage boy who's trying to find his place."

As he finishes his junior year in high school, Adam doesn't feel particularly connected to anyone in his, with the exception of his older sister Casey. He's become the odd man out in his longtime circle of friends, who are mainly concerned with partying and sex. His mother is doting and concerned, but she doesn't exactly boost his self-confidence. Going to New York is a chance to put all that behind him. When he meets Gillian, he is amazed by her evident delight with him.

As Alexander describes it, Gillian's attention catches Adam flat-footed. "The way I see it, Adam's been like a ghost at high school. He has friends; he's not unpopular but no one's gone out of their way for him," Alexander remarks. "Out of nowhere this person comes along who's beautiful and smart and it's like 'Whoa! Why are you interested in me?!' Adam sees this glimmer of hope and he just jumps on it, without thinking. He doesn't correct Gillian when she says she's open to dating a trans guy. And that's the start of the big lie."

Adam agonizes over the lie, but in the tradition of the narrative genre, the deceit snowballs as his romance with Gillian deepens. He earnestly applies himself to inhabiting the persona of a trans man, consulting thick books and online videos to prepare himself for questions he knows will come. In short order, Adam finds himself not only dating Gillian but also going out with her and her lesbian friends to restaurants, gay bars and a nightclub's wild S&M-themed sex party.

Alexander sought to play the film's comedy while conveying his character's inner life and vulnerability. "The comedy is there but I wanted to pull out the struggle and sadness and hurt that's in Adam," he explains. "I think everyone can relate to the idea of trying so hard to impress someone that you stop being yourself."

To play Gillian, Ernst turned to Bobbi Menezes, who had acted on an episode of "Transparent" and had a recurring role on "I Love Dick." Like the character in the book, Menezes is a natural redhead, a happy coincidence. "When Bobbi read, the character

came alive at that moment,” recalls Ernst. “Bobbi is very familiar with the queer world personally and brought so much intelligence and depth to the role.

Menuetz found the themes and ideas embedded in ADAM were hugely appealing. As Gillian and Adam’s relationship crosses the boundary into the physical, Adam has to figure out how to keep his genitalia hidden when they’re having sex. He draws on what he has learned about how trans individuals deal with their bodies. “It’s such a ‘walk in my shoes’ moment,” they comment. “This boy who was probably very set in his gender and his sexual orientation is suddenly, inadvertently, having a queer experience. Adam is using queer prosthetics and is having queer sex. It’s an interesting idea to think about and is such a twist on the coming-of-age story about a young boy becoming a man.”

Moreover, it is Gillian who advances each stage of their relationship. “I really appreciate seeing a queer femme who’s the emotional top in this situation, you might say,” Menuetz comments. “Gillian does radiate a kind of confidence. She lives in New York, she’s young, she’s having fun. She sees that Adam is shy so she figures she has to be forward. She’s very much driving the ship.”

One of the first actors to join the cast was Margaret Qualley. Though Casey has always been open with Adam, she’s kept her sexuality hidden from her parents. Now that she’s on the opposite coast, she’s reveling in her moment and falling in love every other minute. “I love that Casey’s unabashedly jumping from romance to romance,” comments Ernst. “She messes up a lot but she’s a really fun character. When I saw a tape of Margaret’s reading I was like, ‘Perfect.’ I didn’t see anyone else in the role.”

“Casey has freedom for the first time ever,” Qualley remarks. “After hiding part of herself for so long, she’s reveling in the fact that she can be proud and bring every bit of herself into the open. She does become more grounded over the course of the film. I think it was important for her to bring Adam into her life in this way because she hasn’t had that relationship with her parents. It means a lot to her to for Adam to see her in her element and be proud of her.”

As Adam tries to navigate his first relationship, he turns for advice and dating tips to the only man in the apartment, Ethan. Approachable and unpretentious, Ethan lends Adam clothes, shows him how to spiff himself up and offers encouragement. He’s the kind of smart, cool, attractive guy that Adam would like to be and Adam positively basks in his friendship. Ethan is a trans man who is perceived as cis and generally decides for himself when and to whom he will disclose his gender identity.

Ernst notes that Adam's friendship with Ethan is ultimately as influential and transformative as his relationship with Gillian. When he was casting the role, someone in the LGBT community suggested he look at trans activist Leo Sheng, who has emerged as an important voice in the community through the Instagram account he launched in high school. "Ethan is so central to the story and is such a winning, magnetic and understated character," the director says. "Leo and I had a conversation on Skype and he read a scene with one of his moms. It was clear there was something there and felt like we should meet. So we flew him out and then we knew. It was Leo's first time acting and he was just amazing."

Sheng ended up postponing his first semester of graduate school to take part in ADAM. "I think it's really important for trans folks to take control of our own narratives and express our journey through our perspective," Sheng comments. "And I thought the way Ethan was written in the book and the movie was very interesting. Even though he hasn't disclosed to everyone in his life, there is a confidence to him. He knows who he is. I could relate to a few of his experiences, and I think there are folks who have similar journeys. So I wanted to bring that and value that."

Chloe Levine ("The OA") completed the principal cast as June, who is hopelessly in love with Casey. June isn't thrilled when Adam shows up in Bushwick, but in the end it's June who goes to comfort the teenager when his relationship with Gillian crumbles. "June really leads with her heart, which is what drew me to her," says Levine. "She goes from being completely in love, to heartbroken, and then the end of the film finds her at a point of peace with herself. She's gained confidence in herself and consoles Adam because she understands exactly what he is going through."

The role required a particular skill set, which Levine possessed. Explains Ernst, "June is onscreen a lot, but she's a quiet person. Chloe is captivating to watch and can do so much while doing so little."

ADAM began production in September 2017 and shot for five weeks in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Staten Island.

Graphic novels were very much on Ernst's mind as he developed his ideas for ADAM's visual aesthetic. The form is Schrag's primary medium, of course; the work of graphic novelists Daniel Clowes and Adrien Tomine also informed Ernst's choices. "I wanted the film to have a playful, youthful comic book sensibility without being stilted," Ernst explains. "I wanted the landscapes to have a wink of humor but at the same time I wanted everything to feel real and kind of gritty."

New York City emerged as a stylistic touchstone in the approach he devised with director of photography Shawn Peters (“Random Acts of Flyness”). Explains Ernst, “There’s a funny duality between the promise of New York City as the fantasy of ‘I’ve made it!’ and the reality, which is rats running across the sidewalk and garbage trucks outside your window at 7am. That became a theme for us: finding out that things are not what people expected. That was the way in which we approached filming spaces. And Shawn’s amazing. He understood the sensibility I was talking about right away and he had a real sensitivity to the world and the characters. And he was excited to make bold choices.”

Rats may not be hard to find in New York City, but other aspects of recreating the city were not easy at all. Though eleven years isn’t a particularly long time chronologically, development and the pace of gentrification complicated the task of preparing the film’s 30-odd locations. Production designer Nora Mendis and her team had their hands full, Ernst recalls. “It doesn’t sound like a huge challenge, necessarily, to do a 2006 period piece in New York City. But the characters go to a lot of places, bopping around all over the city. So Nora’s team and the art department faced a major task because there have been so many changes in the city, including subtle ones. Just to go into a restaurant today and make it work for that era required a lot of thought and legwork.”

Several locations in the film were taken from real life, notably The Hole, the legendary underground club that provides Adam with his first eye-opening experience of twenty-something queer/lesbian/trans nightlife. Ernst went every Friday night when he lived in Bushwick and remembered the space in vivid detail. Knowing how important The Hole was to so many people, Ernst was determined to find a credible stand-in for the long-gone club. “For a young person who was new in New York City, going to The Hole was a formative experience,” he explains. “And it’s the type of place that just doesn’t exist in Manhattan anymore, in terms of the space itself; high ceilings; the fact that it was dingy and covered in graffiti and looked old and fucked-up. It was a challenge, but we finally found a club in Bushwick that worked.” They not only found a suitable space; thanks to the connections of the film’s line producer, Charlie Dibe, the sequence features the actual video projections the club used for their flagship lesbian party.

Ernst, who studied music and played in bands in his 20s, also had clear ideas about how he wanted to approach the score and source music for ADAM. Working with award-winning composer and music producer Jay Wadley (INDIGNATION, “The OA”), Ernst was able to achieve what he was after: a score that reflected the characters’ tastes in music – punk, postpunk, experimental, feminist -- and also complemented the action onscreen. “Jay is very interesting because he has a modern classical background but he also has a contemporary music background. He totally got the musical references I was

going for and could play all the instruments involved. He brought in so many lovely touches, like the bossa nova-style theme he wrote for a scene with Adam and Ethan at the Film Forum. It was written to sound like a film score that would be playing before a movie starts and is reprised in a later scene with Adam and Ethan.”

For source music, Ernst called on his memories of mid-2000s bands that he and his friends listened to and music that would play at clubs. He went a different route for the music heard during the main title sequence, as Adam travels into Brooklyn for the first time – it’s set to “Let Us Dance,” a synthesizer track by Beverly Glenn-Copeland, a trans composer, multi-instrumentalist and classical singer. Glenn-Copeland has been recording since the 1960s but his solo music went largely unnoticed until his 1986 New Age album “Keyboard Fantasies” was re-released in 2017. “Glenn-Copeland’s music is so amazing and moving,” Ernst remarks. “I became completely obsessed with it around the time I was working on the film. Even though the song isn’t part of that world or story, I was excited to use the music of an under-recognized trans artist.”

Glenn-Copeland’s late-life recognition is another sign of how much the landscape has changed in recent years for LGBTQ artists and LGBTQ-themed work across television, film, music, photography and fine art. In early 2006, when ADAM takes place, Schamus and Ang Lee were busy doing interviews and traveling in connection with BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN, which had been nominated for a host of awards. “There was one thing that always bugged us,” Schamus recalls. “Many straight people, who loved the film, would say things like ‘It’s not a gay movie, it’s universal!’ And Ang and I would be, like: ‘People, it’s universal *because* it’s gay!’ ADAM just takes that idea and runs with it farther than we could have imagined 12 years ago.”

Creating that universal, accessible movie was perhaps the ultimate priority for Ernst. “I wanted to hold both audiences equally,” he says. “An insider audience that knows these worlds, a queer and trans familiar audience; and then a straight, cis-gender outsider audience who might not know anything about these worlds.”

CAST & CREW BIOGRAPHIES

RHYS ERNST (Director) is a filmmaker and artist. He is a Producer and Director on Amazon's "Transparent" and created the title sequence for the series. He was nominated for a 2015 Emmy Award for directing and producing the webseries "Transparent: This Is Me," which won a Special Recognition GLAAD Award. In 2016 he teamed up with Focus Features to create the online series, "We've Been Around." In addition to the 2014 Whitney Biennial, Ernst has shown work at Sundance, Oberhausen, and The Hammer Museum; he has won awards at Outfest, Chicago International Film Festival and the LA Transgender Film Festival; and he was a Point Scholar, a Project Involve Fellow, and was awarded with the 2015 Point Foundation Horizon Award and the ACLU Liberty Award for his work on transgender representation in the media. His feature film, *Adam*, produced by James Schamus and Howard Gertler, premieres at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival.

ARIEL SCHRAG (Screenwriter) was born in Berkeley, California. She is the author of the novel *Adam*, and the graphic memoirs *Awkward*, *Definition*, *Potential*, *Likewise*, and *Part of It*. *Potential* was nominated for an Eisner Award and *Likewise* was nominated for a Lambda Literary Award. *Adam* was made into a feature film directed by Rhys Ernst and produced by James Schamus's Symbolic Exchange. Schrag wrote the screenplay. She was a writer for HBO series "Vinyl" and "How To Make It In America" and for the Showtime series "The L Word." She has written comics and articles for *The New York Times Book Review*, *Cosmopolitan*, *New York Magazine*, *USA Today*, and more. Her original art has showed in galleries across the United States, Europe, and Canada. Schrag graduated from Columbia University in 2003 with a degree in English Literature. She teaches the course Graphic Novel Workshop in the writing department at The New School and has also taught classes at Brown University, New York University, Butler University, and Williams College. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

HOWARD GERTLER (Producer)'s credits include David France's *How to Survive a Plague*, which premiered in competition at Sundance 2012 and was released by IFC Films/Sundance Selects; in addition to an Academy Award nomination, the film collected New York Film Critics' Circle, Peabody, IFP Gotham, IDA and GLAAD Media Awards. He's both an IFP/Gotham and Film Independent Spirit Award winner, the latter of which he won for producing John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus*, which premiered in the official selection in Cannes. With See-Saw Films, he produced Mitchell's adaptation of Neil Gaiman's *How to Talk to Girls at Parties*, released by A24. Upcoming projects include Rhys Ernst's debut feature *Adam*, produced with James Schamus, John Cameron Mitchell and Bryan Weller's scripted musical podcast *Anthem*, and Nicole Newnham and Jim LeBrecht's documentary *Crip Camp*.

JAMES SCHAMUS (Producer) is an award-winning screenwriter (*The Ice Storm*), producer (*Brokeback Mountain*), and former CEO of Focus Features (*Dallas Buyers Club*, *Lost in Translation*, *Milk*, *The Pianist*). His feature directorial debut, an adaptation of Philip Roth's *Indignation*, starring Logan Lerman, Sarah Gadon, and Tracy Letts, premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival and the Berlin Film Festival, and was released by Roadside Attractions. Schamus' New York based production company, Symbolic Exchange, produced Kitty Green's acclaimed feature documentary *Casting JonBenet* which had its world premiere at Sundance and launched on Netflix in 2017, and Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire's *A Prayer Before Dawn* which premiered in Cannes 2017 and was released summer 2018 by A24. Recent projects include Rhys Ernst's comedy *Adam*, and Noble Jones's *The Tomorrow Man*, starring John Lithgow and Blythe Danner. Both titles are premiering at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. Symbolic Exchange is currently in post-production on Andrew Ahn's *Driveways*, starring Hong Chau and Brian Dennehy. Schamus is also Professor of Professional Practice in Columbia University's School of the Arts, where he teaches film history and theory.

NICHOLAS ALEXANDER ("Adam") stars as the titular character in *Adam*. He was recently seen in New Line Cinema's film *Fist Fight* opposite Charlie Day, Christine Hendricks, and Ice Cube. His film credits also include *I Love You Phillip Morris*. On television, Nicholas has appeared on NBC's "Good Girls," The CW's "The Originals," HBO's "Ballers," ABC's "Nashville," and Netflix's "Bloodline."

BOBBI SALVÖR MENEZ ("Gillian") can next be seen in the independent feature film *Adam* which is set to premiere at Sundance 2019, and in a supporting role in the upcoming David Robert Mitchell film *Under the Silver Lake* opposite Andrew Garfield. Bobbi can most recently be seen in Jill Soloway's Amazon series "I Love Dick" alongside Kevin Bacon and Kathryn Hahn. Bobbi's film credits notably include a supporting role in Focus Features' *Nocturnal Animals*, written and directed by Tom Ford; and in a supporting role in Elizabeth Woods' directorial debut *White Girl* which premiered at Sundance.

MARGARET QUALLEY ("Casey") is currently in production on the eight-episode limited FX series, "Fosse/Verdon," in which she will play the role of Ann Reinking, alongside Sam Rockwell and Michelle Williams. Upcoming, Qualley will star in two films premiering at Sundance this month: Rashid Johnson and A24's *Native Son*, and Rhys Ernst's *Adam*. In February, Qualley will star in Tim Sutton's gritty indie thriller *Donnybrook* alongside Jamie Bell, Frank Grillo, and James Badge Dale. Later this year, Qualley will appear in Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon A Time in Hollywood*, alongside Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt, Lena Dunham and Margot Robbie. Last year, Qualley completed production on

Benedict Andrews' independent feature *Against All Enemies*, in which she will star alongside Kristen Stewart, Vince Vaughn and Jack O'Connell. In 2017, Qualley starred in Margaret Betts's *Novitiate*, opposite Melissa Leo and Julianne Nicholson; The film premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival and was released by Sony Pictures Classics that fall. Also in 2017, Qualley received widespread acclaim as the star of Kenzo Perfume's new campaign directed by Spike Jonze, which was named one of the best ads of 2016 by AdWeek Magazine. Qualley's break out role was starring opposite Ryan Gosling and Russell Crowe in *The Nice Guys* for Warner Bros, producer Joel Silver, and director Shane Black. Her first remarkable turn came when she played as 'Jill Garvey' on the critically acclaimed HBO series "The Leftovers." She made her feature film debut in Gia Coppola's independent drama, *Palo Alto*, starring Emma Roberts and James Franco, and can also be seen as the female lead of Adam Wingard's Netflix feature *Death Note* and Jonathan Helpert's Netflix feature, *IO*.

LEO SHENG ("Ethan") was born in Hunan, China, and raised by two moms in Michigan. At 12, he came out as trans and began working to increase visibility and promote inclusive practices. As a trans man of color, his primary aim has been to bring awareness to the experiences many trans people of color face, particularly Black and Brown trans women and femmes. He's used his online platforms as a tool of dialogue and activism. He studied at the University of Michigan where he graduated in 2017. During his time at Michigan, Leo wrote and directed two student films, both of which were shown at the Michigan Theater. His Instagram is @isupersheng.

CHLOË LEVINE ("June") is an accomplished young actress and filmmaker who has shown her impressive versatility in film and on television. Chloë will next be seen in Rhys Ernst's *Adam*, marking her Sundance Film Festival debut. Recently, Levine received critical acclaim for her performances in *The Ranger*, which premiered at South by Southwest, and *The Transfiguration*, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival. Upcoming films include *Alaska*, *Antarctica* and *Froth and Bubble*, for which she will also produce, *Savage Youth* and *Ask for Jane*. Marking her role as a director and writer, her short film *Dragon* won the 2014 Tribeca Film Institute "Our City, My Story" Award for Best Experimental Short. Other acting credits include the first season of Netflix's *The OA*, Netflix/Marvel's *The Defenders*, CBS' *Bull*, HBO's *The Deuce*, USA Network's *Mr. Robot*, *King Jack*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and won the Audience Award, *Good Bones* and *Sugar*. For her film debut, Levine portrayed "Sunday Wilson" in 2011's *Innocence*. Levine resides in New York.

Meridian Entertainment presents

A Symbolic Exchange / Little Punk Production

ADAM

Nicholas Alexander

Bobbi Salvör Menuez

Leo Sheng

Chloë Levine

and Margaret Qualley

Colton Ryan

Dana Aliya Levinson

Maxton Miles Baeza

Ana Gasteyer

Mj Rodriguez

Casting by

Allison Estrin, CSA

Henry Russell Bergstein, CSA

Music Supervisor

Michael Hill

Original Music by

Jay Wadley

Costume Designer

Olga Mill

Production Designer
Nora Mendis

Editor
Joe Murphy

Director of Photography
Shawn Peters

Associate Producers
Emma Shan Wang
Jacob Xiaofeng Li

Executive Producers
Jennifer Wenjie Dong
Figo Li

Executive Producers
Charlie Dibe
Avy Eschenasy
Joe Pirro

Produced by
Howard Gertler, p.g.a.
James Schamus, p.g.a.

Based on the book by
Ariel Schrag

Screenplay by
Ariel Schrag

Directed by
Rhys Ernst

CAST

Adam.....NICHOLAS ALEXANDER
Gillian.....BOBBI SALVÖR MENUEZ
Casey.....MARGARET QUALLEY
Ethan.....LEO SHENG
June.....CHLOË LEVINE
Brad.....COLTON RYAN
Boy Casey.....MAXTON MILES BAEZA
Hazel.....DANA ALIYA LEVINSON
Jackie.....ALISHA B. WOODS
Schuyler.....JARI JONES
Nadia.....RACHEL BURKHARDT
Claire.....KATIE LYNN ESSWEIN
Kelsey.....GRACIE LAWRENCE
Sandy.....HALEY MURPHY
Mom.....ANA GASTEYER
Kris.....MAY HONG
Patty.....PAIGE GILBERT
Jules.....JULIA WELDON
Calypso.....SAMANTHA SHERMAN
Carlisle.....THEO GERMAINE
Kate.....MELANIE HINKLE
Lauren.....CAROLINE LYONS
Bound Bouncer...YVA LAS VEGASS
Bound Emcee.....ASHLIE ATKINSON
Lionel.....JAC BERNHARD
Riverrun.....MARS HOBRECKER
Blaise.....LOREN BARR
Jordan.....LEO SHERMAN
Alyssa.....HAYLEY HUNTLEY
Emma.....MJ RODRIGUEZ
Newscaster.....NANCY GILES