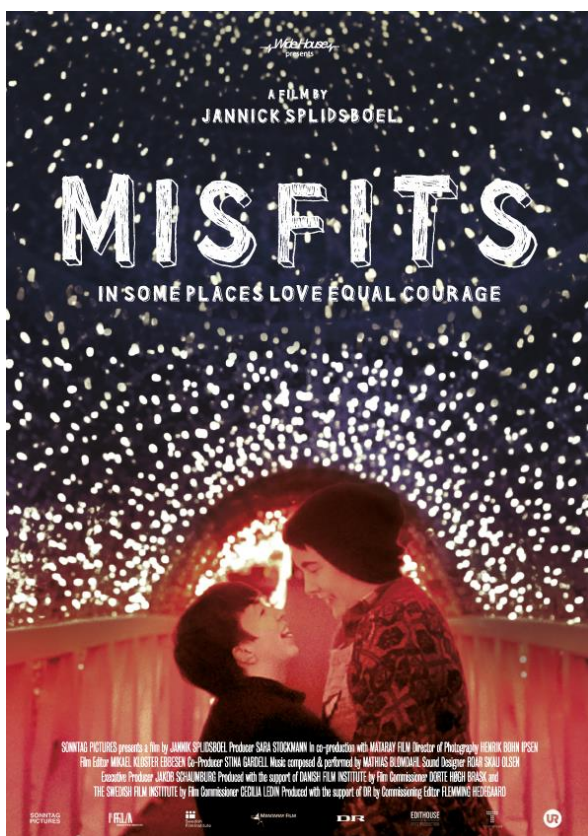




Presents

# Misfits

*In some places love equals courage*



In Tulsa, Oklahoma, a tiny youth center called OpenArms Youth Project is squeezed in between two of the city's two thousand churches. The center welcomes young LGBT kids between thirteen and nineteen, who have decided to come out in a very religious society. But the prize for being yourself is high – and you end up becoming a MISFIT. While the general public opinion towards gays in the USA is slowly changing, this coming-of-age story closely follows the three young protagonists as they struggle to achieve a sense of self in a community that still widely condemns homosexuality.

**MISFITS** is a film about being yourself, even though that choice may cause great personal costs. The three characters in the film, **Larissa**, **Benny** and **"D"**, all go to the center where they find love and support to confront the daily drama they are living because of their sexuality.

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## About the characters:



**LARISSA (17)** has had some tough years, both at home and in school, since she came out as a lesbian. She is leaving home in order to avoid the many confrontations and fights. Because of all the problems, Larissa has had too much absence and is now working hard to get back on track in a new school in order to pass her final exams.

**BENNY (19)** was bullied by his dad and his older brother **Gage**, when he was younger. When you feel isolated in a place where you were supposed to be feeling the most secure, it's natural that you start dreaming about distant and unattainable places, where you will be loved no matter who you are. But as he's getting older Benny realizes that you can't dream all the time and that you have to confront reality.

**"D" (16)** has been abused for the most of his young life and one day, when he was thirteen, his mother dumped him at his (unknown) father's place in Tulsa. D's father turned out to be both caring and surprisingly open to the fact that his son calls himself "Pansexual". Finally, at home and in the center, D finds help and support to start shaping his own life.

## Director's intention

by Jannik Splidsboel



"MISFITS" is a personal film.

I've gone through what the characters are going through in the film, and a lot of thoughts and doubts go through your head, before you choose to be open. Unfortunately homophobia is a growing factor, like in Russia, where just speaking about "different" sexualities can get you in prison, and still in too many countries being a homosexual is punished by death.

So in that respect being gay in Tulsa, Oklahoma, seems pretty harmless.

But the state of Oklahoma has one of the highest suicide rates among teenagers in the US and parents can still disown their son or daughter because of a different sexuality.

The only abnormal with our main characters is in fact that they are completely normal. They are, like most teenagers, full of identity problems, big dreams and small conflicts that seem irresolvable.

But on top of that the kids in the film, have one extra obstacle: they must defend their sexuality in an age, where the hormones are blooming and they really just want to jump into life, no matter what others think about their choice of a boy- or girlfriend.

In their own words the kids talk about highly personal arguments that are considered taboo, and by letting us into their world, they also involve their families, school and friends.

By getting love and support in the youth center the kids find the courage to be themselves, and it's that same feeling I would like to pass on to the audience.

Larissa, Benny, "D" and all the other kids shouldn't spend all that energy fighting for acceptance, when they could use it on so many other things.

## THEME AND CULTURAL CONTEXT



Americans' view on homosexuals is changing and people younger than 30 years old in particular drive this change.

According to Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press 70% of Americans between the age of 18 and 32 support gay marriage, while generations older than this are still more cautious.

But while societal views about homosexuality have shifted dramatically over the past decade, highly religious Americans believe more likely than other groups that homosexuality should be discouraged rather than accepted by society.

The percentage of Oklahomans affiliated with Evangelical Protestantism is more than twice the national average – tied with Arkansas for the largest percentage of any state.

78% of white evangelical Protestants view homosexual behaviour as a sin.

About half of all GLBT adults in The States have a religious affiliation including a sizable minority of all GLBTs (17%) who have a religious affiliation and also find religion to be a very important factor in their lives<sup>1</sup>.

It is within this cultural framework, driven by the teenager's will and need to change, the documentary MISFITS takes its' beginning.

## NARATIVE STRUCTURE



MISFITS has a story-driven and character-driven structure. We have followed our three protagonists for two years, in terms of creating a strong coming-of-age story, where the empowerment of the characters is in focus.

Our three protagonists are facing challenges and resistance both internally and externally in the process of coming out as homosexual.

Internal: the fear of being excluded from their families and the community.

External: Physical and mental abuse by schoolmates and family. People confronting them in public.

The narrative drive in the story is our character's ability to confront and going up against the inner and external resistance, wanting to move ahead. The three characters all have a strong will to change their life-situations and the film documents their journey with all the ups and downs.

## VISUAL APPROACH



MISFITS is a mix of dynamic cinema verité footage and intimate interviews/testimonials with a strong cinematic visual identity.

Tulsa is full of cinematic references and parallels to David Lynch, and Harmony Korine's visual universe come to mind immediately when entering Tulsa. The town is extremely visual, appearing at the same time safe and spooky, making you feel both claustrophobic and at home with all its small houses and big churches.

The church is always present in Tulsa – every street corner has its own church. This presence will be clear in our recordings, visually underlining the presence of the religious upbringing in the everyday life of the three teenagers.

### Director's Bio:

Director Jannik Splidsboel (DK) has done a variety of character driven documentary films with strong social and personal issues. Currently he is working on his first feature film "Between Here & Now" produced by 41Shadows, along side two documentary projects. Jannik's previous documentary film "How Are You" featuring the famous art duo Elmgreen & Dragset, world premiered at The Berlinale in 2011, where it won a nomination. Since the premiere, "How Are You" has been invited to more than 300 festivals worldwide.

**Producer:**

Producer Sara Stockmann (DK) is the producer behind several strong international features documentary with great global social-political impact and distribution results: The Cannes-winner/Emmy-winner 'Armadillo' created a heated public debate in Europe in 2009/2010 in connection to the intervention of NATO and the allied forces in the Afghan civil war.

The film was pre-sold/co-produced with 16 countries and was broadcasted at TV-stations like ZDF/ARTE, Channel 4 (UK), SVT, NRK, POV/PBS(US) and many others.

In 2010 she produced the IDFA-nominee for best documentary 2012 'Mercy Mercy: The portrait of a true adoption' which after the international broadcast in Europe forced the political system in Denmark and other European countries to revise its procedures in order to guarantee that corruption and unethical adoption processes were stopped.

**Cinematographer:** Henrik Bohn Ibsen (DK). One of Denmark's most experienced feature documentary film photographer with a strong credit on many international documentaries successes: 'My Afghanistan: Life in the Forbidden Zone', 'Mercy Mercy: a portrait of a True Adoption', 'Afghan Justice'.

**SONNTAG PICTURES Company profile**

With a great passion for storytelling the company's main focus is on high-end, director-driven documentaries for a broad domestic and international audience. Sonntag Pictures works closely together with Danish film talents Mads Brøgger, Andreas Koefoed, Jeppe Rønde, Christina Rosendahl, Kaspar Astrup Schrøder.

SONNTAG PICTURES is emphasizing projects with a strong international network. SP works closely with the Scandinavian public service broadcasters: TV2 Denmark, Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR) , NRK Norway and SVT Sweden as well as European broadcasters BBC, ZDF/Arte and Dutch VPRO. Projects are funded by Scandinavian film funds, TV and social funds in a close collaboration of co-production.

## Principal Press Quotes

*Jannik Splidspoel's study of LGBT youth in America's Bible Belt is distinguished by tenderness and acute domestic detail.*

**-Variety**

*"Misfits" will be warmly welcomed on the gay fest circuit; where it really belongs, but is less likely to be seen, is the high school classroom.*

**-Variety**

*Larissa (the subject of the doc) is gifted a stray moment of heightened romantic ecstasy: a rapturous kiss with her girlfriend at a fairylightspangled*

*Winter Wonderland park, shot and observed with equal tenderness. It's the cinematic high point of this beautifully composed film, which never leans on careless craft to emphasise its authenticity.*

**-Variety**

*Engaging...offers a wider perspective on life if you're young and different in the*

*American heartland...potent moments of emotional directness.*

**-Screen Daily**

*Visually stylish essay is an intimate portrait piece with a strong undertow of*

*political commitment. Brief running time will limit theatrical prospects, but Misfits*

*is a must for festivals especially with LGBT and youth agendas, and it offers*

*healthy appeal for online and broadcasting buyers.*

**-Screen Daily**

*Thoughtful, inspiring...Misfits is that kind of once-in-a-long-while festival discovery.*

**Huffington Post**

*A lovely, moving documentary.*

**-Take One (UK)**

*Tender and optimistic.*

**-Clap (Italy)**

*An honest and warm documentation about the queer community youth in a devout city in the United States. Honest...made with compassion and care.*

**-Serien Ninja (Germany)**

**Production info**

Genre:	Documentary, Human Interest, Gender & Sexuality
Running time:	58 min /74 min
Countries of production	US, Denmark, Sweden
Shooting language	English
Shooting format	HD
Screen ratio:	Scope. 1:2,35
Sound:	5.1
Screening format	DCP, BLUERAY
Production budget	333,676 EURO
Premiere	March, 2015
Director	Jannik Splidsboel
Producer	Sara Stockmann, Co-producer Stina Gardell
Production company	Sonntag Pictures (Denmark)
Co-production company	Mataray Film (Sweden)
International Sales contact	Wide House

**Credits:**

SONNTAG PICTURES presents.

A film by JANNIK SPLIDSBOEL

Producer SARA STOCKMANN

In coproduction with MATARAY FILM

Director of photography HENRIK BOHN IPSEN Film editor Mikael Kloster Ebbesen

Co-producer STINA GARDELL

Music composed & Performed by MATHIAS BLOMDAHL

Sound Designer ROAR SKAU OLSEN. Executive producer JAKOB SCHAUMBURG.

Produced with the support of DANISH FILM INSTITUTE by Film Commissioner DORTE

HØGH BRASK & THE SWEDISH FILM INSTITUTE by Film Commissioner CECILIA LEDIN.

Produced with the support of DR by Commissioning Editor FLEMMING HEDEGAARD

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