

STARRING ARI DAMASCO & JERRY CARLTON / WITH OLGA SANCHEZ, TIM BLOUGH, DAN VHAY, GENNA MCCALLISTER,
NEIL GREEN & MISS PRYS / WRITTEN BY EM WEINSTEIN / PRODUCED BY ALIX MASTERS, RACHEL SHUEY,
CLAIRE TUFT / IN ASSOCIATION WITH VALIANT PICTURES / EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY DISTRACTED GLOBE FOUNDATION
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY ALEXA WOLF / EDITED BY LIZZY GRAHAM
DIRECTED BY EM WEINSTEIN

IN FRANCE MICHELLE IS A MAN'S NAME

A FILM BY EM WEINSTEIN



IN FRANCE MICHELLE IS A MAN'S NAME
was made by a group of trans, female, and queer filmmakers and completed in 2020. Set against the backdrop of the American West, this 12-minute film explores fatherhood, rituals of male bonding, and what it means to identify as a trans man in contemporary America. The film premiered at Outfest in August, 2020 and won the Grand Jury Prize. It has since played at AFI Fest, Newfest, and the New Orleans Film Festival.



SYNOPSIS

Michael, a young trans man, returns home to the rural American West after years of estrangement from his parents. *In France Michelle is a Man's Name* explores trans identity, masculinity, and the prices we're willing to pay for acceptance.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

As a nonbinary filmmaker who spent their childhood traveling between my mother's apartment in liberal New York City and my father's wheat farm in conservative rural Oregon, I've always stood on a border of two Americas. Last year, I gathered a team of queer and trans filmmakers and brought them to the arid landscape of the American West to make a film about a white cis father and his biracial trans son navigating their relationship. How can these two men, with vastly different experiences of American identity, find love and compassion for each other? How does the complex nature of masculinity impact how a father communicates with his son? How do they hurt each other? How can they continue to love each other?

—Em Weinstein



ABOUT THE WRITER/DIRECTOR



Em Weinstein is a writer and director for stage and screen. Em's award-winning short film CANDACE played at festivals worldwide including Mill Valley Film Festival, Outfest, Montclair Film Festival, Rhode Island International Film Festival and the American Pavilion Emerging LGBTQ Filmmakers Showcase at the Cannes Film Festival, where it won Best Film. While getting their MFA at Yale School of Drama, Em directed numerous plays such as the first workshop production of *SLAVE PLAY* by Jeremy O. Harris, and *ARDEN*, an original immersive musical. Em has written, directed and developed work with companies such as Rattlestick Theater, Shakespeare & Company, Two River Theater, New York Theater Workshop, Working Theater, New Georges and the Museum of Ice Cream. Em was the 2019-2020 Artistic Fellow at Rattlestick Theater and is part of the AFI Directing Workshop for Women Class of 2021. Em is developing an hour-long pilot for Imagine Entertainment and is a Staff Writer for Amazon Tevelision's *A League of Their Own* series. Em is nonbinary and uses they/them pronouns. www.emweinstein.com.

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READ - 30 JUNE 2020 - BY EM WEINSTEIN & ARI DAMASCO

IMAGINING NEW MASCULINITIES

Filmmakers Em Weinstein and Ari Damasco dig into how their short film, "In France Michelle Is a Man's Name," unpacks the concept of masculinity and questions the trans-masculine experience with a story about fatherhood.



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Em Weinstein: When we first started daydreaming about making a film about the trans-masculine experience, we spoke a lot about our childhoods. I think the public is pretty used to hearing trans adults reflect that they've known since birth or early childhood that they were "born in the wrong body," but for a lot of us it was way more complicated than that. I'd love to start by talking about the way you perceived gender, in particular masculinity, as a child.

Ari Damasco: When I was a kid, my gender kept me from doing a lot of things like being allowed outdoors alone, or playing soccer, or even just wearing pants. For the longest time that was the biggest fight with my mom: she would insist on dressing me up in all these cute little dresses, very feminine, very much the doll that she'd always dreamed of having. Do you remember John Travolta's character from *Grease*?

EW: Danny Zuko!

AD: Danny Zuko! I convinced my mom to buy me a little pack of white shirts, undershirts. And I would wear them under my clothes and as soon as I would get to kindergarten, I'd take off whatever I was wearing, and roll up my little white t-shirt at the sleeves like Danny Zuko. I thought I was the coolest.

EW: You were! I grew up in a very different landscape in many ways had a lot of freedom and privilege in expressing my gender identity. I was allowed to wear boys clothes and baseball hats every day and play baseball even though I was really bad at it.

AD: But you looked cute in the hats!

EW: Exactly! My mom always said: "You can be a girl and wear all these clothes and it doesn't really matter," even though in other moments it was a big fight for me to put on a dress. I always wanted to be a boy, but I never really understood— I still don't understand—if that was because of something inherent in the way I perceived my gender, or if I just I liked the clothes and the freedom and the power that comes with masculinity. It's a mix of both probably.

AD: For me, masculinity was this thing that felt close, but also far away. It was the antithesis to what my mom wanted me to be. Masculinity was associated with violence, with freedom. It was largely defined by my dad, who I love dearly, but who was very much a troubled man when I was younger. I find that my experience of gender now that I'm 30 and I'm more comfortable with my gender expression is almost a pendulum. It really varies day by day. When I first started taking hormones, there was this excitement about swinging that pendulum all the way to masculinity. Like setting it to 12 on a 10-point scale. In understanding our own genders we find this promise of legacy, of carrying on in the footsteps of the people who came before us in these rituals that are gender-based. I grew up with some really shitty examples of men and I knew I never wanted to be that way. I think that kept me from totally going off the rails because I at least had a model of what I didn't want to replicate.

READ MORE AT:

<https://freethework.com/article/imagining-new-masculinities-by-em-weinstein-and-ari-damasco-directors-writers/>



FILMMAKER FOCUS: EM WEINSTEIN

Writer-director Em Weinstein's short film *In France Michelle Is a Man's Name* premiered in August at the Outfest Los Angeles Film Festival, where it was awarded the Grand Jury Prize, U.S. Narrative Short. Shot on location in Oregon, the film focuses on Michael (Ari Damasco), a young trans man who returns to his rural home and attempts to reconnect with his mother and father (Olga Sanchez and Jerry Carlton, respectively). Following an uneasy dinner, Michael joins his dad for a drive, but their early bonding soon gives way to a chasm of misunderstanding.

Sponsored by Panavision and Light Iron, the Grand Jury Prize was accompanied by a grant for a Panavision camera package and Light Iron finishing services that Weinstein can use on their next project. "Finding out about the award was such an amazing gift," Weinstein shares. "It felt like this incredible affirmation that this movie had been seen and that it had had an impact, which is all we really wanted when we made it."

Panavision recently spoke with Weinstein about the film, their inspirations, and what might be next for the writer-director.

Panavision: At what point did you know you wanted to make a career of telling stories as a writer and director?

Em Weinstein: My mom is a playwright and an actor, and I grew up watching her work and sitting in her greenrooms in little downtown New York theater spaces. I had thought I wanted to be an actor, but when I was 10 years old, I had surgery for a brain tumor and was bedridden and in a wheelchair for many months. I started to write from my bed, and I wrote my first play, a comedy called *A Fly in My Soup*. It was not good. [Laughs.] But from then on I knew I wanted to be a writer and director, and I've been aiming for this ever since.

Film came to me only recently. I was in grad school for theater directing at Yale School of Drama, which is a very theater-focused directing program, and I found myself hungry to tell stories in different ways and to reach audiences I felt my plays weren't reaching. So I made my first short when I was at grad school and have been focused on filmmaking as well as theater since then. *In France Michelle Is a Man's Name* felt like my first major foray into cinematic storytelling because it is so visual and has so few words. It felt like I wasn't using the same toolkit as I did as a theater director.

READ MORE AT:

<https://www.panavision.com/filmmaker-focus-em-weinstein>



TALENT DIVERSITY FOCUS

Em Weinstein's queer homecoming

by LINDA CODEGA on 2nd OCTOBER 2020

We talk to emerging director **Em Weinstein** about their recent win at Outfest, how to disrupt the gender binaries in film, how to make festivals more approachable, and what it will take to make storytelling more inclusive.

Even though there's been exceptional breakthroughs in filmmaking for the queer and trans community, disrupting the gender binary is still an immense task.

"There's more and more space opening up for queer stories," **Em Weinstein** says. They're a young film director with a pair of short films under their belt, one of which just snagged one of the top honors at **LA's Outfest**, "now we just have to make sure that door stays open."

Weinstein's work, while not exclusively queer, tends to focus on queer themes and stories. They see the way forward through a holistic approach; it's not enough to hire a single diverse person to be in front of the camera. To combat tokenism, and be truly inclusive, Weinstein says that we need to get folks behind the camera, in front of it, and in charge of the story itself.

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With trans directors there are always questions surrounding how and why someone is being shown on camera. Bodies, specifically, are often at the forefront of trans stories, whether trans people want them to be or not.

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READ MORE AT:

<https://www.shots.net/news/view/em-weinsteins-queer-homecoming>



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Outfest Announces 2020 Winners and Surprise 'Encore Week'

U.S. Narrative Shorts Jury



Grand Jury Prize, U.S. Narrative Short

In France Michelle is a Man's Name (pictured), directed by Em Weinstein. This award is sponsored by Panavision and Iron Works providing an \$80,000 camera and post-production package to the filmmaker towards their next project.

READ MORE AT:

<https://www.advocate.com/film/2020/8/31/outfest-announces-2020-winners-and-surprise-encore-week>



LOCAL NEWS

Short film shot entirely in the Pacific Northwest wins Grand Jury Prize at LGBTQ film festival

"In France Michelle is a Man's Name" tells the story of a young transgender man named Michael, as he visits his estranged parents in Oregon.



PORTLAND, Oregon — UPDATE: "In France Michelle is a Man's Name" won the Grand Jury Prize for U.S. Narrative Short at Outfest! The festival winners were announced on Monday, as was the news that the Outfest Now app is hosting an "[Encore Week](#)." Viewers can stream a selection of this year's films through Monday, September 7. "In France Michelle is a Man's Name" is included in this encore screening.

READ MORE AT:

<https://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/short-film-shot-entirely-in-the-pacific-northwest-premiering-at-lgbtq-film-festival/283-9895f77b-ef78-4ac3-9a59-100d45b72a06>

An Oregon-Shot Short About a Transgender Man's Homecoming Debuts This Week at Los Angeles' Outfest

"In France Michelle Is a Man's Name" parses the "very vast gap" between acceptance from a parent versus being truly seen.



TRUCK YEAH: Filmmakers had a tricky time finding this pickup for a specific scene in rural Oregon last year.

In France Michelle Is a Man's Name opens on a butt. Seen via sustained tracking shot, it's a butt of unremarkable shape—attached to a trucker, resting in denim—walking a pair of legs into a gas station restroom.

"[That] was based on the Western shot of the guy with the holster, but...you don't realize you're just staring at Clint Eastwood's ass the whole time," says writer-director Em Weinstein, who filmed their sophomore short in The Dalles, Tygh Valley, Dufur and Portland last September and will see it premiere at Los Angeles' Outfest on Aug. 27.

Once in the restroom, the trucker squares up to a urinal, and there's a brief but banal moment of frontal nudity. Meanwhile, our protagonist Michael (Ari Damasco), a transgender man, exits the restroom, walking past the trucker, and the actual plot begins. Whose body the audience saw right there says a great deal.

"It's not that I wanted to objectify [the truck driver] but just turn the gaze around a bit," Weinstein says. "This is also a body in the way all these other bodies are."

Simultaneously, Weinstein subverts expectations, demystifies a politicized space and waves the audience along toward the more important parts of this character study—Michael revisiting his childhood home in the rural West.

"I think one of the peculiarities about being a cis male person, or a masculine person in the world, even myself, is you're so rarely...objectified," says Weinstein, who was raised half their childhood in The Dalles, writes and directs theater in New York City, and identifies as nonbinary.

READ MORE AT:

<https://www.wweek.com/arts/2020/08/26/an-oregon-shot-short-about-a-transgender-mans-homecoming-debuts-this-week-at-los-angeles-outfest/>



For more information please visit:
www.infrancefilm.com