

Film Notes

By Sal Creber

Cherub

2024 | 73mins

Director: Devin Shears

Starring: Benjamin Turnbull.

Set in the year 2000, *Cherub* tells the story of Harvey (Benjamin Turnbull), a fat, quiet man, as he attempts to navigate his way through life while feeling invisible, lonely, and not particularly worthy of love. An almost dialogue-free film (bar two very gently spoken lines) *Cherub* is a kind, gentle portrait of its protagonist, following him as he goes to work, visits a sick, elderly man in hospital, and daydreams about finally finding human connection.

Harvey's life begins to change, however, when he visits a local pornography store and discovers, tucked inside a rack of gay men's magazines 'Cherub: a club for big men and their admirers'. It is implied up to this point that Harvey is straight, and he reacts to this discovery with equal parts excitement and fear. What follows is Harvey's discovery of the gay 'bear' and 'chub' subcultures, both of which focus on the love and admiration of 'big men'. While he is still unsure of himself, he takes a monumental step and submits a mostly nude photograph of himself to the magazine for their competition of 'Cherub of the Month' – the winner of this competition gets their photograph printed in a full page spread in the next month's issue.

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Plus **Pegs & Bacon (2025)**

Sarah Nicola Mason | 9mins

Before the screening of *Cherub* is Sarah Nicola Mason's *Pegs & Bacon*, a short documentary that focuses on the life of May, the 84-year-old keeper of a small farm shop in a peaceful Yorkshire village along the Pennine Way. A steadfast, kindly presence regardless of what the world may bring her way, May has created a safe space for her community over the course of more than 50 years.

Harvey's quest for self-love and self-discovery is one that many viewers have found relatable, particularly as fat, queer bodies are rarely treated with the kindness and thoughtfulness shown in *Cherub*. When he sees his image printed in the magazine he is understandably nervous, but this slowly transforms into a peaceful sense of self-acceptance that is lovely to experience alongside him.

Shot on a shoestring budget, Devin Shears' feature length debut has received a lot of praise from the LGBTQ+ community and beyond, and has been nominated for the Grand Prize at the Jeonju International Film Festival in Korea.

'The editing is exquisite, incorporating stylistic, in-between scene vignettes that focus on microscopic elements bursting with vibrant colors.'

- Tim Basaraba

Excellent

Fair

Poor



What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

Please detach this from your Film Note and drop it into the box or hand it in at the end of the screening. Thank you!

Did You Know?

- Created as Shears’ thesis in Film Studies at York University, Toronto.
- Cherub was made on a budget of just \$10,000.
- This was lead actor Benjamin Turnbull’s first feature film; he usually works in hospitality.

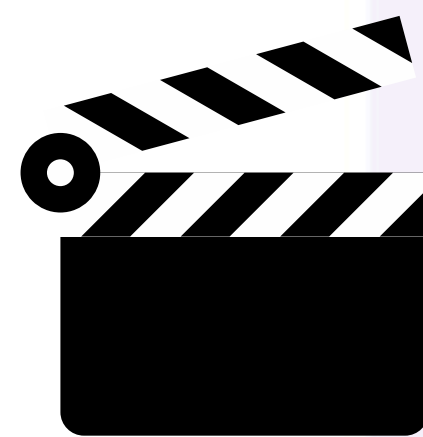
Continue Your Journey...

If you enjoyed this film, you might like:



Sequin in a Blue Room (2019)

An Australian indie queer coming-of-age film. It deals with sexuality, desire, emotional vulnerability, identity, and uses strong visual storytelling.



Minyan (2020)

A gay teenager coming of age in a restrictive family/community environment. There’s emotional weight, identity, and navigating visibility.

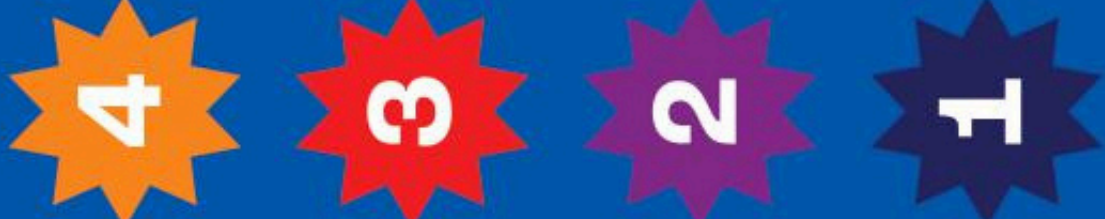
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We really value your opinion and your answers are really helpful to help us understand our audiences, improve the festival and apply for funding.



Excellent

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