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Little Men - Review

Following on from the critical **success** of his wonderful 2014 picture *Love Is Strange*, director Ira Sachs explores some of the same themes in *Little Men*, displaying much of the same emotional **acuity** and **awareness**. While that film focused on a **couple** who had been **together** for some 39 years, the two

central protagonists here - the little men of the film's title - are Jake and Tony, two 13-year-old boys who become fast friends as the story opens.

Set in Brooklyn during the **summer** holiday, cinematographer Óscar Durán doesn't **seek** to idealise or dress up the city, but it resonates with a strong sense of place nonetheless. While Jake and Tony (played by the terrific young actors Theo Taplitz and Michael Barbieri) **forge** a simple, strong connection - they play video games, hang out and



share their **dreams** of becoming an artist and an actor respectively - their parents are **embroiled** in what Tony disparagingly refers to as a 'business matter'.

That **business** matter centres on the fact that Jake's **grandfather** leased out his property to Tony's mother. The story opens on his death, and the reverting of ownership to Jake's **aunt** and father, Brian. The **rising** prices that are part and parcel of gentrification, plus the fact that Brian's career as a



struggling actor isn't making any money, means that the rent for the property must be raised.

Sachs provides each character with their own believable motivations, and never shies away from the bitterness that such tussles can result in. The performances are uniformly remarkable: Alfred Molina, who starred in Love Is Strange, has a small but important part to play here, while Greg Kinnear, Jennifer Ehle and especially the Chilean actress Paulina

García are superb in their roles. *Little Men is* funny, honest in its depiction of friendship; **subtle** and quietly, genuinely moving, it's another triumph for one of cinema's most empathetic, **brave** directors.





