

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.