

Teddy Hugger

Directed & Written by Maya Peters

Produced by Timothy Wang

Starring Maddy Jakes & Harrison Yu

Critical Analysis

★★★★★

After having tea and biscuits with her imaginative but much more embodied companion, a wide-eyed *Teddy Hugger* optimistically shines behold our young protagonist in a world of pure escapism.

Teddy Hugger, written and directed by Maya Peter is pure escape, which she has often highlighted as a strength of her works.

Peters, a former model and actress, has beautifully articulated her desire to shatter social norms and barriers via her artistry. Her previous film, *Wo Ai Ni Mama*, was lauded for its LGBTQ strong quality and loving showcasing of sexual orientation and proper awareness, and Peter's newest film, which features a wide range of dance and hidden subtexts, is sure to be an eye-opening experience for both fans of her previous work and those who haven't seen it yet.



When a young girl overhears her parents arguing, a situation that Peters says she experienced as a child, she retreats to her closet, where she discovers a magical realm inhabited by a life-sized teddy bear, and where she may forget about the bitterness of her parents' disagreement.

Actors Maddy Jakes and Harrison Yu dance their way to the next scene's build, which draws attention by their polished performances and refined physicality.

Possibly the most prominent issue for our team was the transitioning self and our inner and exterior fragility. While *Teddy Hugger* is a narrative about coming of age, how much of the world are we ready to reveal?

This is a particularly open-ended discussion since our subject's world, which is filled with pure fantasy and retreat, appears to be virtually the exact antithesis of her world. One that begins in a more gloomy manner, with less illumination and an image of an old photograph depicting the passage of time.

Her empty and soon shattered tea glass is literally at the breaking point, and when her patience has been stretched to the limit, she finds herself attempting to put the pieces back together, something that only Teddy has been able to teach her how to do.

Teddy is there to warn her that not everything can be repaired after she nearly felt absolved to return to that spot in her closet. It is not her place as a child to attempt to mend an

unhappy marriage or any other situation that might be bothering her. Teddy dances her to a better place once more, and as he unwraps the ribbon around his neck, he presents it to our hero, who ties it around her hair like a brand new present.

She's now been re-wrapped in such a way that she feels safe enough to return to her world. Teddy has loaned his fictitious protected armor bow to our hero, who will re-enter society.

Later on, our protagonist, now older and clutching a box labeled "Toys for the Baby," is storing things away in a closet that looks just like the one she previously found herself in, only to find Teddy. She beams at her long-forgotten friend who helped her so much and puts the bowtie around his neck again, knowing he will one day aid another child in need. She's matured, and he's done his part.

It appears that director Maya Peters provides something of an education for those of us who tend to overlook or dismiss pure escapism as a natural byproduct of our everyday lives. It's quite simple to forget the imagined or real companions who helped shape who we are as adults and how we arrived at this point in our lives.

Peters acknowledges that she is aware of the fact that children exhibit the rich inner world we all have in us and that arguments and arguing are that silly thing that adults do, saying that she is aware of the fact that children bring the imagination children are able to bring to the table. She is well aware of how easily we dismiss children's skills and how we

must appreciate the importance of creativity at such a young age.

Another crucial final subject in *Teddy Hugger* is loneliness as a destructive force toward hope. Despite the fact that our hero is alone for much of the whole film, she is smart and understands how to make things work for her environment even when she is isolated. Even if we did know the specifics of her parents' fight, it wouldn't change the fact that she gets the most out of life when she's with herself, which is a strength she clearly values and hopes her heirs would, too, should they come across Teddy as an asset. Movies like "Teddy Hugger" are great for bringing us back to our childhood selves, when our imaginations were boundless and the world was ours to discover.



F I L M F E S T I V A L

