

GIANT LITTLE ONES

[dir. Keith Behrman, 2018 – 93 mins]

It's hard to tell, at the time, what moments will matter most in your life. Which end-of-the-world humiliations will fade, which moments of neglect will change everything. Keith Behrman's *Giant Little Ones* navigates these moments in the rapidly shifting adolescence of Franky Winter (Josh Wiggins), whose life gets upended on his 17th birthday. Examining the adolescent shift from childhood to adulthood, *Giant Little Ones* is as much about Franky as it is about his place in the world around him.

Living in Anywhere, Suburbia (the film was shot in Saul St Marie), Franky navigates the relationships around him like he does his bike ride to school: with little thought. The families he knows are all affluent and safe, and the world has little which is a threat to him. He meets up with his long-time best friend Ballas (Darren Mann) in the morning before school after Ballas sneaks out on his girlfriend, is advised by his friend Mouse (Niamh Wilson) that "girls want it as much as you do," and pays little attention to the bullying that Natasha (Taylor Hickson), Ballas' sister, receives, only glancing at the word "SLUT" written on her locker. He moves through the crowded hallways of his high school, passing by people who have passed by him for years.

Franky is on the verge of a lot: his 17th birthday, losing his virginity, falling directly into adulthood. Still, he clings to his childhood, rough-housing with Ballas in the backyard instead of making out with a girl, getting too drunk at his birthday party, secretly relieved when his crush has to leave before they do the deed. The world changes quickly though, and an innocuous run to get slushies at the local convenience store leads to Ballas and Franky getting harassed by a passing car, leading to them fleeing into the empty alleys around them. This is a threat easily out-manuevered by the two, and they sail through the night on their bikes, setting off flare guns into the sky, with the film's electronic soundtrack mimicking their beating hearts.

What Franky's heart desires though, remains unclear, especially when he and Ballas wake up in bed together the next morning. The fallout is swift with rumours quickly spreading and Franky becoming ostracized from the life he knew before.

Rather than a rote coming of age film, *Giant Little Ones* is less about who Franky is, but who everyone around him is. Isolated, he realizes that the world is not what he thought it was. The episodes of homophobia on his swim team that he'd earlier ignored suddenly affect him directly. His life-long friends reject him. He rebuffs well-intentioned support from Mouse, insisting he "isn't queer." His resentments about his parents' (Mario Bello and Kyle MacLachlan) divorce become all the more fraught: his father left his mother after realizing later in life he was gay, and the parallel stings.

The support Franky receives isn't always clear cut: for all of people's openness, there is always personal histories and resentments in the way. But through his turmoil Franky learns about care. People around him begin to open up – Mouse about their interest in transitioning, reconnecting with his father and learning about his late in life sexual-awakening, and in one of the strongest moments of the film, Natasha opening up about a past trauma.

Through Guy Godfree's fluid camerawork and tenderness with the subject matter, we follow Franky as he passes through these moments into a world more complicated and richer than he could have known before. Though what Franky wants is something that can always change, how he acts in the world is what matters. The moments the film lingers on are the long night bike rides through empty streets of summer, always moving, always changing; nothing ever stays the same.