



Are We Monsters.



The Fragile King.

Could Eastbourne be the Cannes of the British Riviera?

DOMENICO Della Valle and Manfredi Mancuso, the founders of *Crossing The Screen International Film Festival*, have a dream: “We want to transform Eastbourne into the Cannes of the British Riviera!”

By **Melita Cameron-Wood**

This is no mean feat, but the festival, now in its eighth year, has survived numerous setbacks, including the Covid-19 pandemic and a chronic lack of funding.

“After the first edition of the festival in 2016, the main challenge was figuring out how to maintain the event. In the UK, and around the world, many film festivals have a lifespan of three years, after which they die out due to loss of

momentum or funding. To keep a film festival going, there’s the logistical aspect, but you also need that driving force — the belief that it’s going to work.”

This year’s festival, which will be held at *The Grove Theatre* from 3rd to 5th March, bears testament to the pair’s determination. Submissions from all over the world tell unique stories that dive deep into the human condition. One such example is ***Wade or Row***, a short film by Rebecca van der Meulen that focuses on a young American woman’s visit to a covert abortion clinic in a motel.

Another topical submission is Lorenzo Lanzillotti’s ***Punch of a Late Summer***, a feature film that explores the struggles of bipolarism against the backdrop of the Italian countryside. ***The Fragile King***, a feature film by South African director Tristan Holmes tells a similarly moving tale of the bond that forms between a young boy and his grandfather after his mother dies in a tragic accident. And, ***The Father, The Son and The Rav Kalmenson***, a light-hearted yet thought-provoking short film by French director Dayan D. Oualid, examines the dichotomy between the playfulness

of childhood and the expectations of the protagonist Yoel’s local Orthodox Jewish community rabbi.

The work of local filmmakers, such as Seb Cox’s first-time feature film ***Are We Monsters***, will also be screened at the festival, taking the audience on a journey into the realm of the supernatural through the lens of a werewolf undergoing an identity crisis.

The varied selection of films demonstrates Della Valle and Mancuso’s talent for the curation of a timely and insightful programme. “*Crossing the Screen* is an independent festival, so we don’t have to comply with rules or make compromises,” Della Valle comments. “We have freedom of action, and that’s a good thing!”

