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SUNDANCE AND BERLIN. "THE KILLER INSIDE ME," "THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT" AND "PLEASE GIVE"

by David Hudson

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Among the films premiering at [Sundance](#) before heading to the Berlin in a couple of weeks are four dramatic narratives in the [Berlinale Competition](#) lineup. Two are actually competing: [Rob Epstein](#) and [Jeffrey Friedman](#)'s *Howl* (and [here](#)'s that roundup) and [Michael Winterbottom](#)'s *The Killer Inside Me*. And two aren't: [Lisa Cholodenko](#)'s *The Kids Are All Right* and [Nicole Holofcener](#)'s *Please Give*.

"Introducing the world premiere of Lisa Cholodenko's *The Kids are All Right*, Sundance's [John Cooper](#) joked that if anything bad were to happen during the screening, 'there would go the independent film industry,'" reports [Peter Knegt](#) for *indieWIRE*. "His reference came from the fact that reps from essentially every distributor were in attendance, anticipating the last minute entry to the fest and one of its hottest acquisition titles. Cholodenko admitted she had raced to get it finished in time, but there was absolutely no evidence of hastiness on screen. The audience laughed, even cheered (at a soon-to-be-classic scene in which *Kids* co-stars [Annette Bening](#) and [Mark Ruffalo](#) sing a duet of [Joni Mitchell](#)) en route to a rapturous round of post-screening applause."

"All those people showed up because of Cholodenko's reputation as one of American cinema's best-kept secrets," writes *Salon*'s [Andrew O'Hehir](#). "Her earlier films, *Laurel Canyon* and *High Art*, revealed her as an unusual combination of writerly intelligence and cinematic craft, but for whatever set of weird business reasons she has struggled to bring this scenes-from-a-lesbian-marriage comedy to completion, which took seven years from start to finish. Given the red-hot politics of the gay marriage issue, her timing is arguably perfect, and at any rate the movie is worth the wait. Cholodenko gets memorable performances from Annette Bening and [Julianne Moore](#) as the flawed, self-involved but profoundly human partners in a long-running relationship that's hitting one of those slippery, middle-age danger zones."

"Seriously, who knew that the usually somber Cholodenko... could do funny and breezy so well, or that the normally brittle Bening had such a facility for graceful comic timing?" asks [David Fear](#) in *Time Out New York*.

"Ruffalo is superb as a free spirit who has gotten through life on his carnal appeal," writes [Tim Grierson](#) for *Screen*, "But Bening and Moore are the real treats," argues *New York's* [Logan Hill](#).

Updates, 2/9: *Salon*'s [Andrew O'Hehir](#) talks with Cholodenko; Focus Features has picked up rights to *Kids*, reports [Mike Fleming](#) at *Deadline Hollywood*.