

How this mismatch mines great comedy

‘WE’RE making a film about gays and coalminers,’ actor Joseph Gilgun tells a gaggle of teenage girls who’ve turned out, like moths drawn to a flame, to watch the Misfits star shooting scenes for *Pride*. ‘What d’ya think about that?’ They’re fairly nonplussed, truth be told, more interested in asking Gilgun to pose for their selfies, which he does quite happily. ‘Don’t get knocked up!’ he advises the starstruck posse as they head off down the street.

Matt Mueller goes on set of the next big Brit hit, *Pride*

Gilgun’s summary is on point: *Pride* details an intriguing chapter in British history, when a group of gay Londoners, dubbing themselves LGSM (Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners), set out to help one South Wales community during the bitter 1984-85 strikes against Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government. Scripted by Stephen Beresford and directed by Matthew Warchus, the film

celebrates two disparate groups not always enamoured of one another but overcoming prejudice to reach a joyously uncynical solidarity.

‘We haven’t got an agenda with *Pride*,’ says Warchus, whose background is mainly theatre, with hit musical *Matilda* among his credits. ‘It’s not preachy; it’s not trying to serve a particular constituency or defend any beliefs. I can imagine an audience of all kinds laughing at the same situations in the film.’

Joining Gilgun on location today are Dominic West, Andrew Scott (*Sherlock*),



Crossing communities: Ben Schnetzer, Joseph Gilgun, Andrew Scott and Dominic West



Laugh out loud: Misfits star Joseph Gilgun takes a break from filming *Pride*

rising British stars George MacKay and Faye Marsay and American newcomer Ben Schnetzer, who takes *Pride*'s ostensible lead as fiery activist Mark Ashton. Call them Team LGSM. Meanwhile, Imelda Staunton, Bill Nighy and Paddy Considine are among the actors portraying the Welsh mining community. Today's sequence, shot on Halloween last year on a West Hampstead lane that's been dressed to pass as the shabby 1980s, sees Ashton turning up at Gay's The Word bookshop to apologise for an earlier quarrel with his LGSM mates.

Everyone's sporting 1980s attire and barnets but some are stuck being far less fashionable than their counterparts, namely Scott and West, who play couple Gethin and Jonathan and are decked out, respectively, in tattered bathrobe and

faded pink pyjamas. The *Wire* star's hair is blond-tipped and frizzed. It's not a good look.

While underpinned by political substance, what has set *Pride* on the path to becoming this year's unlikeliest feel-good movie (think *Billy Elliot* or *The Full Monty*) is its affectionately spiky humour. When it premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May, it went down a storm, with superlatives fired at its standout ensemble, and it looks set to be similarly embraced on our shores.

With Warchus and Beresford deftly weaving together multiple story strands, *Pride* comes rife with comic interludes, including Staunton's encounter with a rubber dildo and West shocking the Valleys with a sinewy disco routine. On set, the actor was yet to shoot the dance

but has his co-stars in stitches as he describes practising moves in his front room. There's clearly camaraderie to burn on the set of *Pride*, begging the question: who's the biggest joker?

'Dom,' says Gilgun.

'No, you are, you twit,' retorts West.

'Well, I bully the director but he's only small,' answers Gilgun. 'The whole thing's been brilliant and it's been a comfort having the real LSGM people around...'

'It's LGSM,' corrects Scott, laughing.

'I keep saying that!' Gilgun groans in mock horror. 'Lesbians Support The Gay Miners – that's a whole different film.'

'*Pride 2*,' says Scott. 'This time it's gayer.'

Pride is in cinemas Friday, September 12.