

# also opening

## Bitter & Twisted (M)

★★★★☆

Director: **Christopher Weekes**  
 Starring: **Noni Hazlehurst, Christopher Weekes and Leeanna Walsman**  
 Screening: **Chauvel, Paddington**

SET in the southern suburbs of Sydney, this low-budget drama about a family quietly imploding under the weight of their grief marks writer/director/actor Christopher Weekes as a talent to watch out for. The 24-year-old, who funded *Bitter & Twisted* himself, is a naturally economical storyteller, sustaining our attention, as well as the tension, in a situation where the characters are in effect becalmed.

Three years after the death of eldest son Liam, the Lombard family is still grappling with the need to chart a new course. Dad Jordan (Steve Rodgers) seems to have taken the route of passive resistance, compulsively overeating, and sleepwalking through work as a car salesman.

Out of desperation at what has become of her life, mum Penny (Noni Hazlehurst) wilfully mistakes menopause for a late pregnancy.

When the truth is revealed, she succumbs to an ill-advised dalliance with a slippery toyboy.

Son Ben (Weekes) has so little sense of his own identity, he winds up practically stalking Liam's old girlfriend (Leeanna Walsman), who conveniently lives on the other side of the cul de sac. Her affair with a married man (Gary Sweet) is about to end in tears.

Hovering on the sidelines is Matt Newton's spick lad-about-town.

A grimly compelling and briskly humane look at love and loss.

**VR**



Family affair: Leeanna Walsman