

The stars of multi-award winning new British flick *My Summer of Love* hit Sydney.

# LEADING LADIES

Every once in a while, a film comes along that breaks the mould and breathes new life into an industry often swamped with sequels, special effects and the same old Hollywood formula. Brit-flick *My Summer of Love* – the second film from acclaimed director Pawel Pawlikowski – does just that. The story of two girls from opposite sides of the tracks, who form a strong bond of friendship and briefly become lovers – it's a tale that ultimately leads to obsession and deception. Since its release last year, the film has won a slew of awards, including accolades for its two previously unknown leading ladies Emily Blunt, 22, and Natalie Press, 23. The young stars came to Sydney last month to attend the Aussie premiere of the film, which opened the 2005 Sydney Film Festival.

## What was your acting background before you got these roles?

*Emily:* I trained and did school plays and then got an agent out of the blue when I did a show in the Edinburgh Festival. I did some TV drama and then *My Summer of Love* came along.

**"My brother was mortified, but that's normal as he's 15 and all his friends are going to be looking at my breasts on the internet. It's so embarrassing for him"**

*Natalie:* I didn't go to drama school. I did workshops and a couple of days acting on things here and there. *My Summer of Love* was my big break, and the auditions were going on when I got cast in *Wasp*, a short film that went on to win this year's Academy Award for Best Short Film.

## What attracted you to the characters in the film?

*Natalie:* I loved Mona's spirit, intelligence and perception. She has an incredible spirit.

*Emily:* I loved Tamsin's sense of adventure; her yearning for more and that she isn't a defeatist. Even though she appeared to have everything, she still had to put on a facade of theatre, drama and tragedy because she was actually lacking so much.

## How are you dealing with all the attention from the film's awards?

*Natalie:* I think there was a 10-day stint of five or six ceremonies earlier this year and that was quite mad, but it was just amazing.

## Have you been inundated with scripts since?

*Emily:* We've definitely seen an increase of interesting scripts we would never have dreamt of getting before. We were really spoilt because the roles in the film were extraordinary, but we haven't stopped working since the movie.

## What was it like filming the lesbian scenes?

*Natalie:* We don't really see them as lesbians; but as two girls who are interested in daring each other and pushing the boundaries of the world they exist in.

*Emily:* They're both pretty angry with men at the time, but there were scenes to me that were harder than



Natalie Press (left) and Emily Blunt

those. The complexity the girls feel at some moments in the film, to show all those layers, that was hard.

## How did your families react to the lesbian scenes?

*Emily:* My brother was mortified, but that's normal as he's 15 and all his friends are going to be looking at my breasts on the internet. It's so embarrassing for him!

*Natalie:* With my family it was, like, "When are you going to do something when your character actually has a nice fun time?"

## Did you get to do a lot of workshopping the characters?

*Natalie:* I had 22 auditions before Pawel finally said yes – because it wasn't just up to him. He fought very hard to work with me, but for producers and financiers, doing a feature film without a star is risky. It became the most amazing process. It gave me all that time with the character, so she was really under my skin by the time we filmed.

## So, could filming have fallen through during that time?

*Natalie:* Yes. It's so hard to get British films financed and made these days. But, luckily, people were desperate to work with Pawel after his previous film, *Last Resort*.

## Emily, how soon afterwards did you get involved?

*Emily:* It was quite late in the process because they'd been through boarding schools, daughters of rock stars and models. Natalie had to meet hundreds of Tamsins. When we met, it just felt really static between us.

*Natalie:* I wrote in my diary: *I think we found her.*

## Why do you think the film has been such a success?

*Natalie:* Young people can relate to what these girls are going through. Also, everyone has been waiting to see what Pawel is going to do next.

*Emily:* I think it stands alone against all the other Brit films at the moment.

Interview: Madeleine Collins