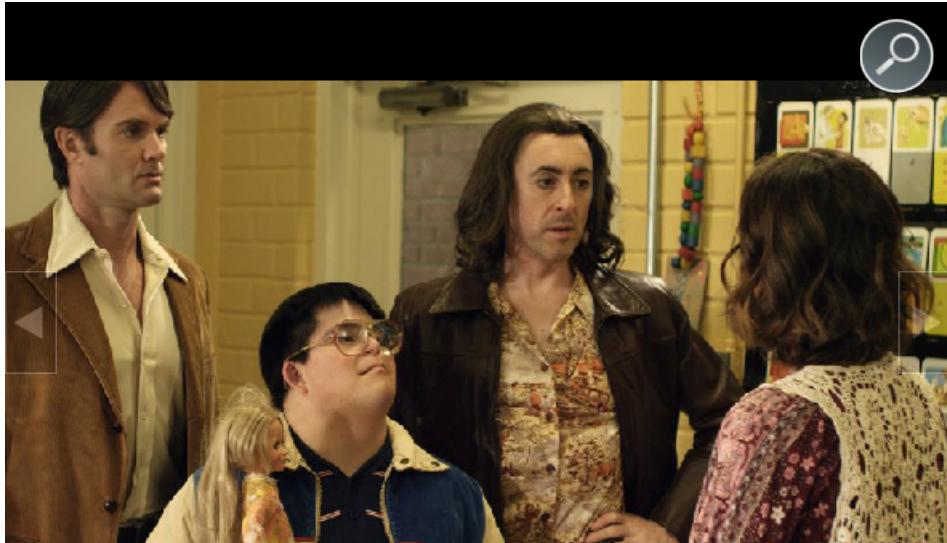


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## Making it big any day now

By **Lucy Howard** - 6 days 4 hours ago

Actor Isaac Leyva, who has Down's syndrome, stars as Marco in *Any Day Now*, his feature film debut, which arrives in UK cinemas this month following an award-winning turn on the international festival circuit.

**Video: Any Day Now**

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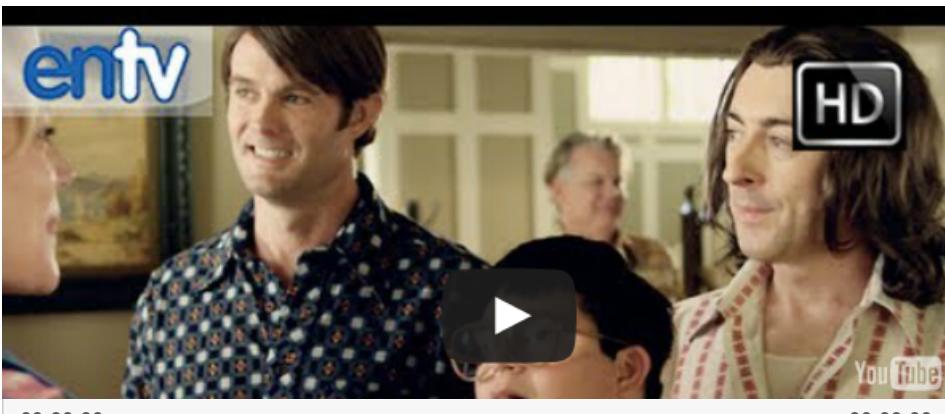
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In the 1980s and 90s, actor, playwright and filmmaker Nabil Shaban was in demand in film, TV and theatre. He played characters ranging from Hamlet, to a romantic lead, and a Dr Who baddie. Ten years on, the offers and commissions have dried up. In an outspoken interview with Kelly Mullan, he claims that creeping Nazi attitudes to disability are squeezing disabled people out of mainstream



entertainment

## A model for equality

While the Social Model must still stand, argues Andy Rickell, it, and the people who advocate and proselytise for it need to recognise the place that impairments have in defining us as disabled

Isaac Leyva tells me that he fulfils a lifelong ambition through his role in this film. 'It was my dream to be an actor. I am a performer.' So how did he get into acting? 'My mom found Performing Arts Studio West [in California], where I study acting, music and dance.' Following Any Day Now, he remains committed to perfecting his craft. 'I still study acting at Performing Arts Studio West and audition for parts.'

Set in the 1970s and based on a true story, Any Day Now features a gay couple, Rudy and Paul (played by Alan Cumming and Garret Dillahunt), who want to adopt Marco, an abandoned teenager who appears on their doorstep- but first they must fight a biased legal system.

Leyva relished his experience filming Any Day Now. 'I liked working with Alan Cumming and Garret Dillahunt. Being on set was fun and exciting. The crew made me feel like a star.' He has certainly caught the bug. 'I love acting. I like to see myself on the TV or at the movies. I like meeting other actors.'

Any Day Now raises awareness of issues of sexuality, identity, family and disability through the daily experiences and personal and legal struggles of the central characters. As Alan Cumming has pointed out in a number of interviews, it may be set in the 1970s, but many of the prejudices it exposes still exist today, if not even more so than before. Assumptions and preconceptions are challenged in this hard-hitting story, and the film packs an emotional punch with its powerful performances, not least from Leyva (Garret Dillahunt has described Leyva as 'the best actor on the set').

Often in films like this, non-disabled actors play the disabled characters, as seen most famously with Tom Hanks and Daniel Day-Lewis. Not so here. Leyva feels it is very important that disabled actors are given such roles and a platform to showcase their skills and experience, 'so people can see our talent.'

He is a man of many other talents too, including competing in the Special Olympics. 'I ran in Special Olympics in high school. I won a silver medal and a gold medal,' he says, proudly. In his no doubt diminishing spare time, he enjoys watching movies when he's not starring in them, as well as 'playing video games, dancing and singing.' He gets to sing and dance in Any Day Now, fulfilling yet another ambition.

He also reveals a lifelong passion for Disney. 'I used to watch the Disney Channel,' he says. This helped fuel his desire to be an actor. 'I want to do more movies. I'd like to work with Disney and do a musical.'

At this rate, Disney may well be knocking on Isaac Leyva's door any day now.

**Tags:** [film](#), [Disability](#), [Down's syndrome](#), [actor](#)

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