A Perfect Threesome

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After a decade of weepy AIDS-film clichés (parent-child reconciliation, sexual self-acceptance), we aren't in Philadelphia anymore. In Three Needles, tentatively out this April, we're in China, Montreal, South Africa—chasing the virus at its actual frontiers. Screenwriter/director Thom Fitzgerald tells three wildly different tales charting how economic and social frailties have fueled the pandemic. "I chose three places where the experience of AIDS is almost unrecognizable from one to the next," says Fitzgerald. Needles profiles a Chinese black-market blood dealer (Lucy Liu) and her victims; a Canadian porn actor and his mother (Stockard Channing); and Christian missionaries (Chloë Sevigny, Olympia Dukakis and Sandra Oh) in Africa. "I asked myself why, at a time when all of humankind has a common enemy in this virus, has it not brought us together? Why has it been even more divisive?" says Fitzgerald, whose other films include The Event and The Hanging Garden. Despite the tough subject matter and seemingly bleak stories, Needles trades unremitting harshness for humor, heroism and quiet courage. Go—and leave the Kleenex at home.

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