

Paranoid Park

Distributor

Madman Entertainment
Director/writer
Gus Van Sant (from a novel by Blake Nelson)

Producers David Cress, Charles

Gilbert, Nathanael Karmitz, Neil Kopp

Key cast Gabe Nevins, Daniel Liu, Taylor Momsen, Jake Miller, Lauren McKinney, Winfield Jackson



In the DVD extras for this film, writer Blake Nelson describes himself and director Gus Van Sant as suffering from "arrested development" because of their continuing passion for portraying the teen years despite being in their 40s/50s. Van Sant has a history of making lyrical and expressionistic studies of young introspective men caught up in crises (*My Own Private Idaho*, *Gerry*, *Elephant*) and Cannes award-winning *Paranoid Park* moves him to Portland, Oregon, where we are guided, unreliably, by sweet-faced Alex (Nevins), armed with a skateboard, caught between *not* wanting to get laid, a murder mystery and his parents' divorce.

Australian cinematographer Chris Doyle's immersive technique (shared role with Rain Kathy Li) brings to life the concreted choreography of the skater park (dubbed Paranoid Park) where Alex finally dares to hang out (but doesn't skate)—in a dance of the camera where skateboards become an extension of the boys' bodies, an extra appendage. An eclectic soundtrack that mixes French spoken word, Beethoven and blues, rather than relying solely on the usual skater punk, means the film has Lynchian flavour and even touches of *Virgin Suicides* in the soft electronica and deadpan monotone of Alex's narration.

The narrative, as always, is not Van Sant's primary concern.

The script meanders and gets lost, although Alex does warn us about the lack of sequence, that he "wasn't very good at creative writing", and some of the characters/actors (Momsen especially as the bitchy girlfriend, Jennifer, like, yeah, like, oh my god, channelling Ja'mie) are patchy. But mixed with this is a disarming naturalism that seems to capture the essence of teen culture right now, with none of the conflict and histrionics usually accompanying the genre in relationships between 16-year-olds and their peers and parents.

Paranoid Park had a limited release at the cinema and performed slowly at the box office, obviously missing the teen market completely. But it's not just for teens, and hopefully the DVD release will mean more get the chance to appreciate it. The DVD extras include *At the Movies* interviews with cast and crew and the obligatory 'making of' doco, as fragmentary as the film itself, where we learn that Detective Liu is actually a police sergeant, the kids were hand-plucked from an open casting call and that they all had to go to school on set. Interestingly, the dynamic between the boys and girls off set pretty much reflects the characters' portrayals, the girls silently observing as the boys strut their stuff.

KIRSTEN KRAUTH

Darling! The Pieter-Dirk Uys Story

Director/writer

Julian Shaw

Distributor

Ezydvd.com.au

Producer Jonathon

Green

Featuring Pieter-

Dirk Uys, Nelson

Mandela, Desmond

Tutu, Zackie Achmat



Darling! is young Sydney based New Zealander Julian Shaw's touching documentary on the life-to-date and work of South African satirist Pieter-Dirk Uys, covering his critical anti-apartheid history and ongoing HIV/AIDS education through comical cross-dressing performances at schools throughout schools in South Africa. Shaw's refreshing and affecting voice sensitively delivers a strong portrait with an awakening message.

The DVD extras include a 20-minute Q&A with Uys and Shaw from the first (and very appreciated) cinema screening in Cape Town in 2007. There is a gallery of Shaw's production notebooks and drawings and also some deleted scenes.

Darling! was runner-up for the Panorama Audience Awards at the Berlin International Film Festival in February and screened at the Torino Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in April. It has also screened theatrically in New Zealand's international documentary festival DOCNZ and in queerDOC in Sydney in 2007. Shaw won the 2007 Inside Film Award for Independent Spirit Award. *Darling!* has been theatrically released in South Africa and has recently been sold to USA for TV. While Shaw is excited about the DVD release nationwide in Australia, he is disappointed that it has not been picked up for television.

Shaw has also recently published *Modern Odysseus*, "a movie in a book form" satire of the slick excesses of 21st century with Colin Friels as the lead.

RUBY BOUKABOU

Juno

Distributor Fox

Searchlight

Director Jason

Reitman

Writer Diablo Cody

Producers Lianne

Halfon, John

Malkovich, Mason

Novick, Russell Smith

Key cast Ellen Page,

Michael Cera, Jennifer Garner, Jason

Bateman, Allison Janney, J.K. Simmons,

Olivia Thirlby



Juno is the latest in a vein of quirky, cool, American indie fare such as Noah Baumbach's feature debut *The Squid and The Whale* (2005), David O. Russell's *I Heart Huckabees* (2004) and Zach Braff's *Garden State* (2004). Like the former, this film combines exquisite designer technique with heartfelt character detail and a healthy does of irony.

Played by Page (*Hard Candy*), Juno MacGuff is anything but a victim in this sympathetic portrait of Middle America. Page is delightful in this performance that saw her rightly nominated for both a BAFTA and an Oscar and saw an endearing \$11.7m return [source: MPDAA] for the film at the Australian box office.

The team has clearly had way too much fun creating extras such as a gag reel, gag take, cast 'n' crew jam, screen tests and four featurettes named *Way Beyond 'Our' Maturity Level*, *Honest to Blog!*, *Creating Juno*, *Diablo Cody is Totally Boss* and *Jason Reitman for Shizz*. There is also a limited edition with five Kimya Dawson songs from the movie soundtrack. All in all, bursting with entertainment.

RACHAEL TURK