



AMERICAN HONEY

Director: Andrea Arnold
Writers: Andrea Arnold
Stars: Sasha Lane, Shia LaBeouf, McCaul Lombardi
Runtime: 162 minutes

PLOT: A teenage girl with nothing to lose joins a traveling magazine sales crew, and gets caught up in a whirlwind, as she crisscrosses the Midwest with a band of misfits.

REVIEW: The first American feature by British director Andrea Arnold, is a road

movie that rambles all over the place. It is not so much unstructured as structureless. Its freewheeling approach is entirely in keeping with its characters and subject matter. The characters here are a bunch of hippy misfits who roam across Texas and the Midwest in a minibuss. On one level, the film stands as a travelogue, a cinematic equivalent to Robert Franks' photographic project, *The Americans*. Like Franks, Arnold is looking at many different sides of contemporary US life through the eyes of her observant heroine, Star.

The film is shot with handheld camera in a documentary-like way - but there are also strange and sudden bursts of lyricism.

Arnold also pays exhaustive attention to the natural world. There are beautiful shots of dusty landscapes at dawn or dusk - and a few scenes in which we see Star trying to rescue insects. As she tries to sell her magazine subscriptions, Star comes across oil workers, ready to spend a small fortune for companionship, earnest Christian moms, doe-eyed kids liv-

ing in absolute poverty and wealthy modern-day cowboy-types. She has a very tempestuous romance with Jake under the eyes of the gang's leader, Krystal, a tough, jealous and mean-spirited wrangler who is very glamorous in a blue collar way.

For all its longueurs, it is a rich and rewarding reworking of the road movie genre - a film that is as original as it is exasperating.

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Abridged from Independent UK

UN CERTAIN REGARD HYMYILEVÄ MIES

Director: Juho Kuosmanen
Writers: Juho Kuosmanen, Mikko Myllylahti
Stars: Eero Milonoff, Joonas Saartamo, Oona Airola
Runtime: 92 minutes

REVIEW: Finnish director Juho Kuosmanen's *Hymyilevä Mies* (*The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki*) is a candid, unvarnished tale about one of Finland's first international feats: on 17th August 1962, small-town amateur boxer Olli Mäki fought American world champion Davey Moore during the world championship final - an event that was also the first ever professional boxing match to be held in Finland.

Kuosmanen's film describes the excitement and about this event, national pride and promises of a Finnish world champion, which put the provincial boxer under intense pressure. This is luckily no remake of a *Rocky* movie. It is as non-



spectacular as its main character, his understated persona escaping the glamorous world of professional boxing, sponsors, press, photographers.

Strong stylistic choices definitely distinguish Kuosmanen's film from other *Un Certain Regard* entries. *Hymyilevä Mies* carries a reminiscence of neo-realist aesthetic, the choice of a black-and-white, extremely grainy and rough image paired with the simplicity of its main characters. The often hand-held camera stays close to them, pausing on ordinary moments amidst the hype of the match.

A splendidly told and splendidly made debut that certainly impresses, Juho Kuosmanen's *Hymyilevä Mies* suggests great promise for the future, with as much deadpan humour as reserved emotional expression, and just the right balance of style and story.

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Reviewed by Mohaiminul Islam

GRAND PRIX

It's Only the End of the World

Director: Xavier Dolan
Writers: Xavier Dolan, Jean-Luc Lagarce
Stars: Nathalie Baye, Vincent Cassel, Marion Cotillard
Runtime: 97 minutes

PLOT: A terminally ill writer, returns home after a long absence to tell his family that he is dying.

REVIEW: Even when his films stumble through uneven tones or erratic plot twists, Dolan always comes out swinging, with the overarching theme of angry, passionate characters infusing each new effort with sizzling attitude. "It's Only the End of the World" reduces those ingredients to their simplest variables, which is especially telling since he didn't originate the material.

Yet this slickly shot ensemble piece, adapted by Jean-Luc Lagarce, manages to find some high points in its first-rate cast, which includes some of the best that modern French cinema has to offer. Mostly set in the confines of the



family's home, "It's Only the End of the World" rises above its inherent theatricality thanks to Dolan's ongoing visual invention, as he recycles the high-contrast lighting and shifting colors that first cropped up in his work with "Lawrence, Anyways." However, where those movies applied their distinctive cinematic tricks to a complex set of circumstances, "It's Only the End of the World" - which clocks in at just under 100 minutes - unfurls like an outline for a formulaic story of constant bickering and resentment that no amount of pretty images can salvage.

Dolan has crafted the semblance of a substantial movie that never quite gets where it was supposed to go. Fortunately, considering Dolan's current rate of production, there's no question he'll keep trying to get there.

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Abridged from Indiewire