

THE TRAVEL ISSUE

NINTH ANNUAL REPORT: AMERICA'S MOST LIVABLE CITIES FOR LESBIANS

Lesbian Culture, Politics, and Entertainment

November 2003

Girlfriends

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Bad Girls, Good Movie

Thirteen shows the passion at the heart of two girls' downward spiral.

by Candace Moore

Catherine Hardwicke's debut

feature opens on a bedspread. Two newly pubescent girls face each other cross-legged, a position emblematic of youthful sleepovers and tell-alls. We watch as the two laughing, exuberant, seventh-graders proceed to punch each other in the face with more primal aggression and bloody results than Brad Pitt and Edward Norton in *Fight Club*; come to find out they're numbly high on household inhalants.

This remarkable film about the pressures of adolescence—and

pratfalls of teens in the media-saturated, escapist culture of Los Angeles—will give you lockjaw. If it doesn't, you can't

recall the wash of hormones that once made your hips jut and your zits sprout. Supplement that rage, self-consciousness, and idealistic stupidity with easy access to drugs, self-mutilation, sexual voracity, and a side-swiped single mom (played by pitch-perfect Holly Hunter) who can barely drag *herself* to AA, and you see how *Thirteen's* main character Tracy (Evan Rachel Wood) transforms from a girl in pigtails into a walking Molotov cocktail.

Thirteen centers on Tracy as she hurls stuffed animals in the trash, hootchies up her skirt, and dives into a codependent best-friendship with the "hottest chick" in junior high, bad girl Evie Zamora (Nikki Reed). Wood is recognizable as Kewpie-doll Jesse from *Once and Again*, but as Tracy she's like a little blond surfer girl channeling Beelzebub. Her inner bitch unbottles her agony on

anything between her and the thong underwear aisle, especially Mommy; but you've got to hand it to her, she makes Courtney Love's edge resemble that of a knitting, convalescing granny.

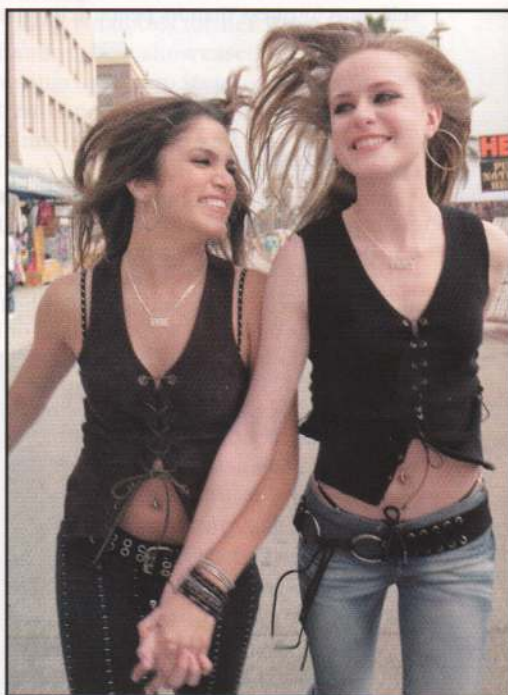
Thirteen glibly captures the cliquey vocab, slutty swagger, and super-superficiality of contemporary "in" kids. When Tracy lets Evie size her up in the halls, the two assess each other one body part at a time and decode their truths through their jelly bracelet regalia. Caught in a Debordian Society of the Spectacle, surrounded by billboard advertisements for strip clubs and "Beauty is Truth" slogans, Tracy and Evie shoplift on Melrose Avenue, score drugs, pierce tongues, and give older boys blowjobs between sultry swigs of beer.

Evie is the hard-n-fast lifestyle mentor, and Tracy, her eager, crushed-out pupil. The line between identification and desire between the two girls is plenty fuzzy. Evie hooks up one night, leaving Tracy sexually frustrated. Miserable, Tracy slices into her forearm. When Evie teases Tracy, saying she doesn't know how to kiss, Tracy counters with "Want me to prove it, lesbo?" and the two lock lips with full porn abandon. Making a mockery of the budding-adolescent "kissing lesson" scene, these girls are a far cry from just experimenting.

Hardwicke rightfully won Best Dramatic Directing at this year's Sundance. Her film's intrepid aesthetics match its no-holds-barred, authentic material. Never do you suspect that the actors are navigating from tape marks like corpses edging from their crime scene outlines.

Handheld Super 16 cameras zoom freely and intimately as they zero in on the characters' emotional bombast. One beautifully cut scene perfectly renders the feel of first-time hallucination when the girls, wearing orange construction vests, drop acid in a park and play in the sprinklers.

The immediacy and brutal honesty of this film is due to Hardwicke's



Girls just want to have fun, do drugs, steal, and "experiment."

writing partner, Nikki Reed (who plays Evie), who co-penned the script based on her life experiences. Unlike Larry Clark's *Kids*, which capitalized on shock value, *Thirteen* is grounded in the perspective of one girl as she struggles to become a woman. This truth, though it might floor you, is never gratuitous. *Thirteen* remains respectful of its subject matter by not shying away from too-difficult pain or adopting the hokey, reflective distance of voiceovers or flashbacks. A superb film, undeniably one of this year's best. Grade: **A**

Candace Moore recently edited the book *Revolutions of the Mind*.

Quick Hits

Lesbian compilation DVDs are perfect for short attention spans.

by Candace Moore

Book-ended by two of director Jamie Babbit's

(*But I'm a Cheerleader*) delectably imaginative shorts, "Sleeping Beauties" and the Sundance-honored "Stuck," this DVD compilation of accomplished Power UP members' short movies serves its promotional purpose: to rub our noses in how much lesbian talent this networking organization can boast. "Size 'em Up," "Breaking up Really Sucks," and "The 10 Rules,"

Girls on Film

Various directors
Power UP, 94 min.



Edgy lone Sky (left) is part of Power UP's package.

written respectively by Christine Russo, Jennifer McGlone, and Lee Friedlander, are quirkily funny and entertaining, unlike most fetid festival cheese. "Chicken Night" recalls a Dorothy Allison novel, enacted by Ione Skye, sans abuse. Grade: **A-**

Strangers with Candy, Season 1

(Comedy Central Home Video, 2003)
Starring actress Amy Sedaris' black humor is so refreshingly tasteless in this Comedy Central sitcom, you'll nearly whiz your knickers. Attending Flatpoint High (a gone-to-the-dogs De Grassi), Jerri Blank (Sedaris) is a forty-six-year-old, nub-toothed returning-freshman who admits to being "a boozier, a user, and a loser" and romanticizes her Tijuana donkey sex show days. Blank refers to her pubic region as her "bacon strip," runs over one of the "violent kids" with a golf cart when he prevents her from humping her abandoned son, and, in a motel room blaring the Spice channel, uses a health class-assigned baby as bait to try to seduce a maternally instigated girl. Smart, raunchy, and with gay jokes galore. Grade: **A**

The First Annual PlanetOut.com Short Movie Awards Highlights

(Picture This! Home Video, 2001)
The primo gay Web site's pick of the best boys' and girls' short films is now available on DVD from Picture This! Of the dyke shorts, "Lesbianage IV" stands out in black and white, a mock trailer for pulpy lesbian mysteries that tips its hat to the choppy energy of early talkies. "Candy Kisses" is an amusing cartoon that pokes fun at the wishy-washiness of nonmonogamous relationships; it's good for a "too true" chuckle. "Restroom" is a compelling David Lynchian piece about a girl stuck in a surreal lavatory who needs to wipe. Grade: **B**

Watching You

(Wolfe Video, 2003)
A decent sampling of the latest lesbian-themed short pics, including international festival winners "4 p.m." of the Melbourne Lesbian & Gay Film Festival and "Bare" of the Brussels International Film Festival. The star pieces, though, are "Interviews with My Next Girlfriend," a hilarious take on the idea of interrogating prospective dates and making them perform juggling acts; "Traveling Companion," which centers around some cute flirtation between a lonely travel writer and a literate waitress at the now-defunct L.A. lesbian hang, Little Frida's; and the title film, "Watching You," in which a voyeur meets the object of her lens. Grade: **B+**

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Travel Our Way

When *Girlfriends* published its first special travel

issue last year, I called up Tom Roth, a gay marketing whiz who organizes expos and surveys the LGBT community about its travel habits. Tom gave me a lot of interesting information—we smart queers are more interested in “knowledge-based” travel than straights, for example—but he didn’t yet have a way to separate his lesbian data from the gay men’s.

My pestering must have made an impression; this year Tom published an interesting breakdown of his lesbian-specific statistics. “The ‘gay market,’” he announced, “is actually two very distinct

markets, male and female.” (Hooray! The first lesson I learned at a lesbian magazine is catching on.) And the differences between the two markets Tom’s research exposed is really interesting, if not exactly surprising.

For example, Tom’s male respondents say it’s a real priority for them to find “kinship” when they travel, which I interpret as a euphemism for “hook-up.” Lesbians want kinship, too, but “relaxation” is higher on our list.

Isn’t that classic? It makes sense to me: as a woman, I’m not surprised that we want to catch up on some sleep and sit by the pool while we’re off work. It’s not that we don’t want to

have sex. (Last time I went to Paris with the wife, the maids had to kick us out of our hotel room every afternoon to clean.) It’s that we’re so happy to be relieved of kids, making coffee for the boss, or working twice as hard for the same money as our male counterparts.

It turns out also that we get up earlier when we travel and line up for more activities like tours, shopping expeditions, snorkeling, or wine tasting. Our gay brothers like to sleep in and then just organize their day around whatever comes up, or whoever walks up and says, “Hi, sugar.” Why does that not surprise me, either?

I hope you enjoy this year’s special issue. I’m particularly happy myself with Jennnifer Tanaka and Taschkaa Turnquist, our two lovely cover cowgirls. Not only are they gorgeous, they’re a real couple, they’re designers, and they’re opening up a clothing boutique together in L.A. Write them fan mail, and we’ll forward it.

Finally, although I’m intrigued by Howard Dean’s campaign (stay tuned for detailed election coverage in our March issue 2004), I’m wishing plenty of luck to openly gay Chrissy and her father Dick Gephardt. We got our picture snapped at San Francisco’s LGBT Center on the day her dad signed up for PFLAG—how cool.

Enjoy!

Heather Findlay, Editor in Chief



LOBBLEY LABOVITZ

Chrissy Gephardt (right) and me: her ideal destination is the White House.

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