



Cameron Crowe follows the Fast Times with a life of Singles, still making the everyday seem extraordinary

Cameron Crowe:
Constantly improving the chronicle of a generation.

When lovable high school burnout Jeff Spicoli pounded his Vans against his forehead and stammered, "That was my skull. I'm so wasted," most Hollywood execs didn't get it.

When drifter grad Lloyd Dobler rambled, "I don't want to sell anything, bought or processed, or buy anything sold or processed, or process anything sold, bought or processed... so what I've been doing lately is kickboxing," again, Hollywood execs didn't get it.

And when writer-director Cameron Crowe was putting the finishing touches on his most recent venture, *Singles*, he still had to fight to ensure that the slices of his generation were not abandoned on the editing room floor by those same execs.

"In some ways, the stuff I write is so slice-of-life it almost needs to be seen by the people it's about to be appreciated," Crowe says. "We've been fighting really hard to get a release date on *Singles*. The people that are releasing the movie don't really know what it is. They just don't think there's an audience."

But there is an audience, and the 34-year-old writer has been hanging out with it for the last 2 1/2 years in Seattle — hanging out trying to get a better feel for what being young, free, poor and on your own is all about.

"The film is very specifically about being in your early to middle 20s and just trying to make your way through the minefields of relationships — you've lost your virginity, you have a job, you don't live at home anymore, you are out in the world," Crowe says.

"But then something really cool happens. It's almost unspoken. Disconnected single people who live in an apartment house, they'll kind of come together in an odd, great way. Your door will be open and your next door neighbor, who is about your age, got home and he's not ready to go to bed yet and he's like, 'Hey, what's going on?'"

It's not glamorous stuff. But then, Crowe's characters are not glamorous. In fact, they're way average.

"I don't believe that the world is full of popular people and nerds," Crowe says. "I think in the middle is the great majority of people who are not so glamorous or nerdy that they are represented in movies."

His fascination with the people-in-between led Crowe to return to high school to research his novel *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, a book he later adapted for the big screen.

He wrote *The Wild Life*, (also made into a film) and made his directorial debut

with *Say Anything*, a

comic love story about an unlikely couple.

But capturing the ambiance of real life is not always easy, and translating reality to film is a unique challenge.

After two films, Crowe says he has learned what works and what doesn't. *Singles* underwent some changes and almost emerged without an ending, not because it wasn't in Crowe's script but because he had problems achieving the desired effect.

"Endings are tough. *Singles* ends with voices all over the city obsessing about love as we're pulling away from this apartment house, [but] you kinda have to work with these union actors, and they all sounded like they were making a bad radio ad. In the end I came back with no money left and just got all my friends and people on the crew to just talk, and that ended up being the end of the movie," he says.

Singles is full of the kind of realistic conversations and characters that made *Say Anything* stand out in a sea of teen-oriented movies.

"Having directed two movies, I think I'm learning about what works with my

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living off the ordinary

stuff, and it generally is when you hide the acting," he says.

"The actors have told me that all the lines and the dialogue is so reality-based, that if you sound like you're acting, you're really dead. It should have the natural flow and it's hard to get there, but when you get there these great accidents happen."

Crowe also managed to pull together some of the hottest sounds coming out of Seattle to complement his movie-making skills. *Singles'* propulsive soundtrack continues a Crowe trademark that started with *Fast Times*.

The film debuts tracks from Paul Westerberg and a constellation of Seattle's finest musical talents including Alice in Chains, Pearl Jam, Mudhoney and Soundgarden. Crowe denies "cashing-in" on the red-hot Northwestern sounds though, having started his project before the nation recognized Seattle as a high musical mecca.

"Isn't it weird how you go from just pounding on your friends to get them to listen to this music that you love, to all of a sudden apologizing for it being trendy?"