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OUT AT THE MOVIES

I SHOT ANDY WARHOL

Lili Taylor, Stephen Dorff, Martha Plimpton
Directed by Mary Harron

Artist and promoter Andy Warhol was shot by a woman in 1968. Lots of people know that. You may even know that her name was Valerie Solanas, but did you know she was a lesbian? She was also a prostitute, a college graduate and gifted writer, a visionary feminist, an incest survivor, and quite possibly a paranoid schizophrenic. But none of these labels can adequately convey a complex picture of Solanas,

income and her career.

The film also implies that Warhol was fascinated by Solanas because she was queer, another parallel between them. And it is perhaps as a lesbian-feminist icon that Solanas most deserves to be remembered. In her book, *The SCUM* [Society for Cutting Up Men] *Manifesto*, later published by Olympia Press, she writes: "The true artist is every self-confident, healthy female, and in a female society, the only Art, the only Culture, will be conceited, kooky, funky females grooving on each other, cracking each other up, while cracking open the universe."

On top of telling a beautifully shot, uncensored and fascinating story—and re-creating a much-hyped period—*I Shot Andy Warhol* contains an outstanding performance by Lili Taylor as Solanas, and reminds us that not all of queer history, art and icons has to be pretty or palatable. (Opens June 28 at KOIN Center Cinemas, for times and ticket prices call 255-5555 and press 4608.)

Cinema

who was as bitterly wry as she was disturbed. Luckily, first-time feature director Harron and producers Christine Vachon (*Kids, Stonewall*), Tom Kalin (*Swoon, Go Fish*) and American Playhouse's Lindsay Law have brought together an outstanding ensemble cast to finally unravel the Valerie Solanas story.

WELCOME TO THE DOLLHOUSE

Heather Matarazzo, Brendan Sexton Jr.
Directed by Todd Solondz

This is my absolute favorite film so far this year. Best described as an American junior high version of *Muriel's Wedding* (which I also adored), this movie about the not so benign cruelty of "friends" and family manages to be both painfully funny and deeply unsettling. Although purposefully suburban and straight, the film plays the edge of camp and avoids cheap sentimentality. But *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, which won the prestigious grand jury prize at this year's Sundance Film Festival, is a story about the revenge of the nerds.

As Dawn Weiner, the middle child in middle school from a suburb in the middle of New Jersey, 13-year-old Nickelodeon veteran Matarazzo landed one of the best roles ever written for an adolescent girl. Full of intelligence, awkward Dawn struggles to maintain her dignity as she suffers acts of contempt and humiliation, which range from having a beautiful baby sister who hops around the yard in a ballerina costume to having the class thug and his mean-streak girlfriend kidnap her, threaten to rape her, and force her to go to the bathroom while they watch. Not easy stuff to negotiate. Dawn's equally awkward and unattractive older brother, Mark (played by Matthew Faber, who is also in *Stonewall*), buries himself in his studies and makes a stab at popularity by forming a band with the school hunk (Steve). Dawn's infatuation with the unattainable Steve only serves to further frustrate her, and leads her onto dangerous ground.

Director Todd Solondz describes his inspiration for the film this way: "At 11, I was at the peak of my creative powers. I was writing stories and playlets, putting together poetry projects. I was absorbed by my 'work.' At 12, I was no longer reading or writing, just counting days and checking them off. I was interested in survival. What is it about seventh grade? This film is a comedy because that is the only way I know how to deal with excruciating torment."

Dollhouse is a film that all outsiders will relate to—whether you were too smart, fat, queer, poor or dressed funny. Junior high is a miserable time all around, and even if as an adult you've had a moment to laugh about it and laugh at all the kids who tortured you who have gone absolutely nowhere in life, you'll never forget how it felt to be that vulnerable. *Welcome to the Dollhouse* captures it and provides a superb catharsis. (Opens June 21 at KOIN Center Cinemas.)

Reviews by Cathay Che, who is a regular contributor to POZ magazine and Time Out in New York.



Lili Taylor as Valerie Solanas

This Sundance award-winning film paints a none too flattering, but not entirely unglamorous portrait of Warhol's factory and hangers-on (brilliantly recreated with the help of actual survivors of the scene), as well as late-'60s bohemian life in and around New York City's Washington Square Park. It starts by looking at the life of Solanas, the abused daughter of a working-class Atlantic City family who majored in psychology at the University of Maryland and wrote for the college newspaper. After arriving in NYC, Solanas was determined to live as an artist, which of course meant not wasting her mind holding down a regular job. As a result she turned tricks and developed a hustler mentality: looking at men solely as a meal-ticket to be taken advantage of, the whole time suspicious that they were actually taking advantage of her.

Solanas was introduced to Warhol through her turbulent association with transvestite diva Candy Darling (amusingly played by hetero hunk Dorff), who later became a Warhol superstar. Solanas felt Andy could make her famous by producing her crude class-war play *Up Your Ass*.

While Warhol wasn't really interested in producing Solanas' play, he cast her in his film *I, A Man*, and gave her a little money. As her mental state declined, Solanas continued to aggressively pester Warhol, along with a man she'd met in the park who was so interested in publishing her writing that he initially gave her a \$500 advance. The film suggests that the day Solanas shot Andy Warhol was the day she realized that she'd let herself become dependent on two men for her

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