

OSCAR'S QUEER FRIENDS

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by nature with a dick, successfully seduces (and then abandons) a beautiful, so-called dyed-in-the-wool lesbian. You'll have to see it to decide for yourself.

S Late Bloomers

Lesbian romance is in the air, and this refreshing love story revels in its possibilities. Directed by Julia Dyer with a screenplay by her sister, Gretchen, the film concerns the unlikely love that develops between two middle-aged women, one married and a mother, the other an awkward and shy schoolteacher.

And the winner is...

® Fire

Deepa Mehta's original and emotionally charged drama is set in India and tells of the love that develops between two married women, whose unfolding passion clashes violently with a patriarchal society. Taut, brave and invigorating.

Best Foreign Language Film:

S Ma Vie en Rose (My Life in Pink)

Ludovic is a 7-year-old girl born into a boy's body in this entertaining Belgian comedy-drama. Ludo's insistence at dressing in girl's clothing and play marriage with the boy-next-door is met with confusion and increasing volatility on the part of both parents and neighbors. A story of innocence and the



PHOTO BY SAM EMERSON

Kevin Spacey in *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*

indomitable power of being true to one's self.

S A Toute Vitesse (Full Speed)

Gaël Morel, star of *The Wild Reeds* (in which he played a gay student), directs this absorbing drama of the tangled sexual lives of young people in Southern France that explores themes of bisexuality, unrequited gay love and racial prejudice.

S Les Voleurs (Thieves)

Catherine Deneuve is a middle-aged professor who falls desperately in love with a much younger woman in this crime drama by gay director André Téchiné. Deneuve is startling as a level-headed woman thrown into an emotional tailspin.

And the winner is...

® Happy Together

The title is purely ironic in this, Wong Kar-wai's somber, fascinating look at the death throes of a relationship. Leslie Cheung and Tony Leung play vacationing lovers stranded in Buenos Aires who drift apart, but are unable to break the mysterious bond that holds them together.

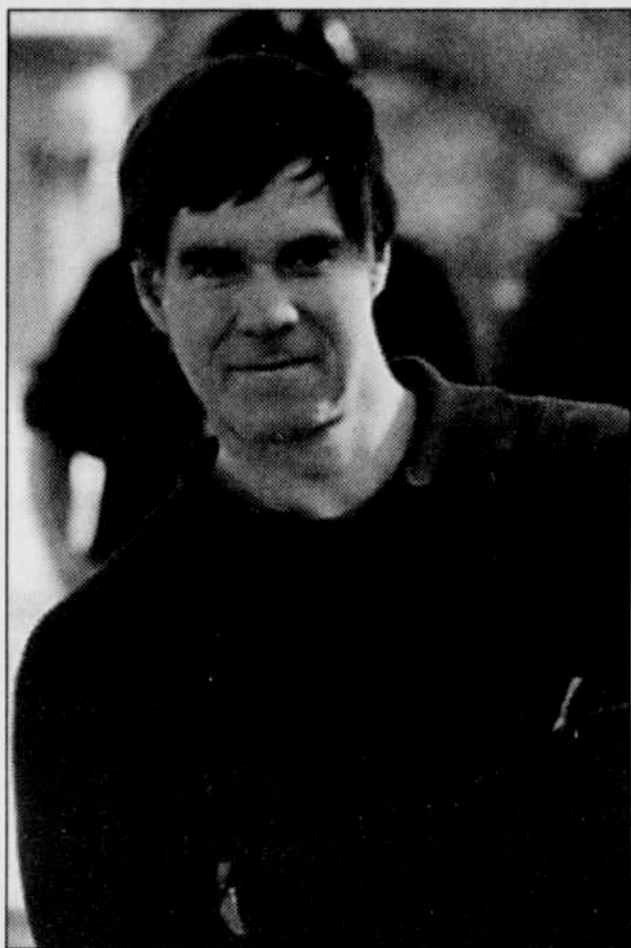


PHOTO BY GEORGE KRANCHYK

Gus Van Sant

Best Director (Openly gay or lesbian)

S Gregg Araki, for *Nowhere*

The conclusion of independent bad boy Araki's "teen apocalypse" trilogy (following *The Doom Generation* and *Totally Fucked Up*). He's possibly the most subversive of queer directors (recent sightings in the arms of a woman notwithstanding), for his stories are ostensibly straight ones with the ever-present allure of same-sex attraction.

And the winner is...

® Gus Van Sant, for *Good Will Hunting*

This drama of a troubled prodigy (Matt Damon) and his search for meaning and a father figure has become a surprise hit. Van Sant avoids the easy sentimentality inherent in the story and delivers a funny, touching exploration of friendship, injured psyches and self-discovery. His nomination for an Academy Award for Best Director is the first for an openly gay director since James Ivory's in 1985.

Best Lesbian Character:

S Alison Folland, for *All Over Me*

Folland is riveting as Claude, the gawky teen who suffers the pain of unrequited love for her best friend, the tensions of accepting her own lesbianism, and the joy of hope and love when she begins a real relationship with a young musician (Leisha Hailey).

S Nathalie Richard, for *Irma Vep*

This young French actress is alternately funny and heartbreaking in the role of Zoe, a shy-but-impetuous seamstress who falls in love with the bewitching Maggie Cheung.

S Marisa Ryan, for *Slaves to the Underground*

Ryan plays the sexily butch lead singer in an all-girl band who becomes fiercely protective toward a young bisexual woman she falls in love with.

And the winner is...

® Tilda Swinton, for *Female Perversions*

The British actress plays a high-powered and highly strung lawyer whose suppressed anxieties and vulnerability become her undoing. She likes men, and is even involved with one, but her real passion is with Laila Robins. Their attraction and sexual energy pulsates on

screen.

Best Gay Male Character:

S Robert Downey Jr., for *One Night Stand*

Downey offers a good portrayal of a New York choreographer who becomes bedridden with AIDS in this Mike Figgis-directed drama. The film is terrible, but Downey makes it at least bearable.

S Philip Seymour Hoffman, for *Boogie Nights*

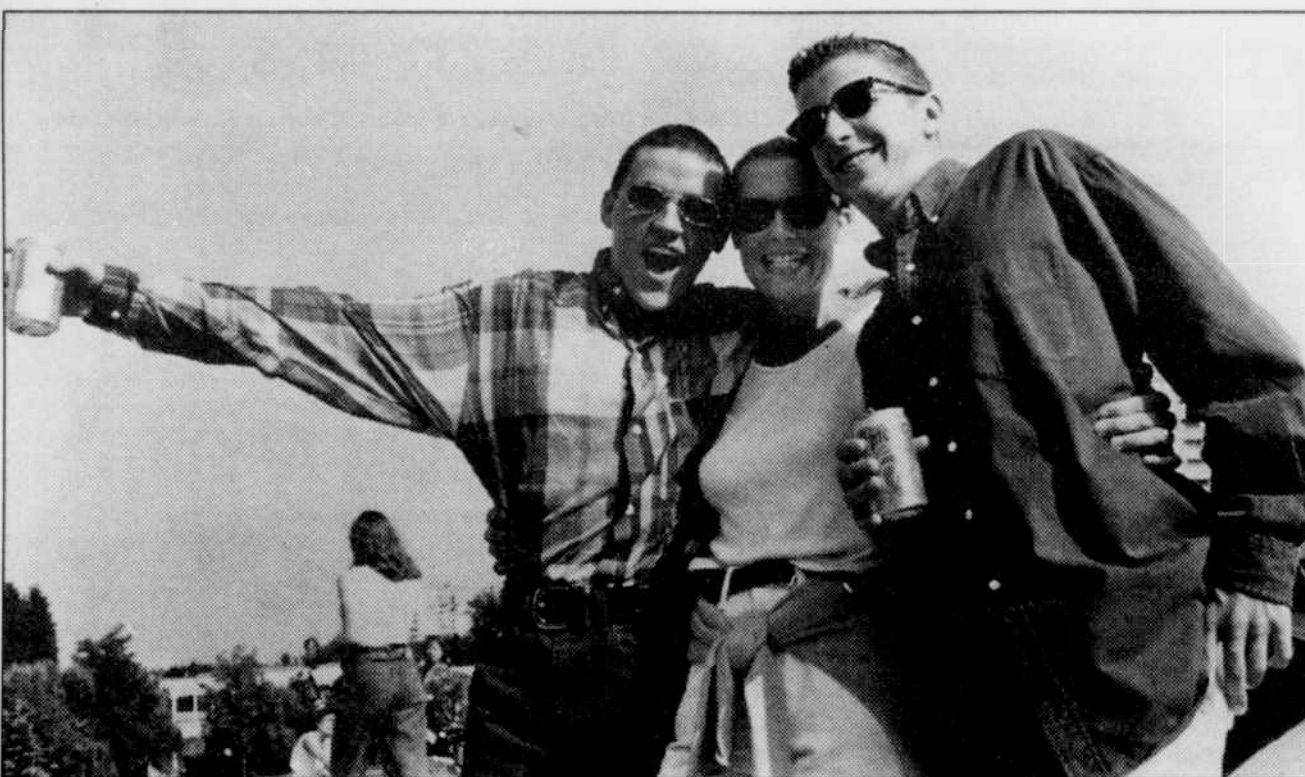


PHOTO BY PAUL CHEDLOW

Scott Neal (left) and Glenn Berry with director Hettie Macdonald on the set of *Beautiful Thing*

Hoffman plays a dorky, pudgy porno-set gofer who has the hots for the well-endowed star Dirk Diggler (Mark Wahlberg). His interest is initially played for laughs, but his awkward, rejected pass at his object of affection is actually quite affecting.

S Greg Kinnear, for *As Good as It Gets*

As an artist who suffers the slings and torments of his racist, homophobic neighbor (Jack Nicholson), Kinnear gives a well-rounded and thoughtful portrayal. He plays it slightly effeminately, but never to the point of caricature.

S Steve Huison and Hugo Speer, for *The Full Monty*

Huison is the nerdy Lomper and Speer is the hunky Guy, part of a group of unemployed



PHOTO BY PETER MOUNTAIN

Mick Jagger in *Bent*

steel workers who decide to do a Chippendale-style revue. The revelation that the two are gay is wonderfully handled.

S Kevin Spacey, for *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*

Spacey gives one the best performances of

the year as Jim Williams, an antiques dealer on trial for killing his lover, brilliantly registering the character's humor, propriety and sinister charm.

S John Robin Baitz, for *Last Summer at the Hamptons*

Finally a gay character who stays true to his longtime lover, is intelligent, out and successful, and does not end up getting made fun of, gay-bashed or killed! Baitz is great in this Henry Jaglom talk fest.

And the winner is...

® Rupert Everett, for *My Best Friend's Wedding*

Everett steals the show from stars Julia Roberts and Dermot Mulroney. Playing Roberts' editor and evidently second-best friend, Everett brings matinee-idol looks and sex appeal to the screen. It is he who comes to the aid of the leading lady and saves the day, offering a shoulder, a hanky and a bon mot.

Best Transsexual or Transgender Character:

S Steven Mackintosh, for *Different for Girls*

Tough straight guy Rupert Graves becomes confused when he discovers that he's in love with Kim (Mackintosh), a post-operative transsexual. Mackintosh is a revelation as the demure but determined woman.

S The entire cast of *Bugis Street*

The setting for this lively Singapore film is the Sin Sin Hotel, a haven (and workplace) for a bevy of gorgeously attired, lovelorn transvestite prostitutes. A delightfully tawdry melodrama.

S Mick Jagger, for *Bent*

Jagger is an eyeful as Greta, a slinky cross-dressing chanteuse and owner of a decadent gay nightclub. The scene where he belts out the Weill-Brechtish song "The Streets of Berlin," while dangling on a trapeze over a delirious audience, makes the decadence of *Cabaret* seem like child's play.

S Renoly Santiago, for *Con Air*

He plays "Sally Can't Dance," a drag queen convict who may have been the "prison bitch" of "Cyrus the Virus" (John Malkovitch), but is really just more proof of the Don Simpson homophobia syndrome previously encountered in *The Rock*. Santiago defends the role by claiming that his was the bravest character in

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