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Patrick Stewart and Ian McKellan check each other out in *X-Men*

## Freaks and geeks

A childlike man stalks his boyhood buddy in *Chuck and Buck*; politicians persecute mutants in *X-Men*



Mike White (left) and Chris Weitz

### CHUCK AND BUCK

The gay film for the new millennium has arrived. *Chuck and Buck*, directed by Miguel Arteta and written by Mike White (who also plays Buck) is a truly brave movie that ignores conventional cinematic notions of sexuality to study the unique relationship of the title characters.

Buck is a childlike, mentally slow 28-year-old who lives alone with his mother. When she dies, he invites his very closest childhood friend, Chuck, and Chuck's fiancée, Carlyn, to the funeral. Buck's entirely too affectionate behavior toward Chuck seems to raise uncomfortable memories utterly foreign to Chuck's grown-up life as a hobnobbing Los Angeles talent scout and record producer, and he flees angrily. But he's already extended Buck an insincere, token invitation to visit, and Buck, who is naive enough to take Chuck's offer at face value and believe it still stands after his unwanted advances, picks up and relocates to a Los Angeles residence hotel.

The rest of the movie involves Buck's attempts, despite Chuck's increasing hostility, to convince him to pick up their relationship where it left off. During his breaks from stalking Chuck and Carlyn, Buck writes a play, which he convinces Beverly, the box office manager at a children's theater, to cast, produce and direct. The play, *Hank and Frank*, is heavily autobiographical, and Beverly pithily observes that it's "not for children" but "a love story—a homoerotic...misogynistic...love story." Actually, Buck's "misogyny" is directed toward one woman in particular: A very Carlyn-like witch in the play casts a spell on Hank and Frank to make them forget their happy closeness. Ultimately, Buck's need for Chuck's love can't be fulfilled in the way he wishes, and the film ends on a bittersweet, not entirely resolved but believably optimistic note.

*Chuck and Buck* has characters and events the likes of which you've never seen before in any movie, but they're never made to seem bizarre or sensational; instead, they're conveyed with guilelessness and grace. The film's sexually frank look at this most unlikely couple will hardly appease viewers, gay or straight, desirous of idealized, sexy movie pairings, but *Chuck and*

*Buck* is a winning, conscientiously written, warmly executed examination of love and sex that is, despite its daring and rather serious subject matter, a funny, smart, touching and very entertaining film. —Christopher McQuain

### X-MEN

A U.S. senator stands in chambers, rallying his fellow politicians in an effort to push a new law to track those different from "normal" citizens, all to protect the nation's children. In Mississippi, a young girl is thrown out of her house by her parents when they discover her hidden secret. Protesters wield signs promising bodily harm to those they hate and fear.

Sound disturbingly familiar? These events occur in the excellent new action film *X-Men*, based on the popular Marvel comic book series. In the movie, those persecuted are "mutants," each of whom is genetically different from Homo sapiens.

Sir Ian McKellan stars as Magneto, and his super-powered character will take whatever actions he deems necessary to protect mutants from the hateful world around them.

"In a way, I feel like I'm a 'mutant,'" he says in the film's press materials. "Being a gay man, I often am thought to be too dangerous, unusual and abnormal to be allowed into society as a whole, judging by the laws that prevail in my country and indeed throughout the world. And it's not just gay people who can identify with these characters, but other minorities as well."

The undercurrent of anti-mutant sentiment seen in the film—and its similarity to anti-gay movements in the world today—is part of what drew director Bryan Singer to *X-Men*. During our recent interview at a New York press junket, he agreed the "mutants" have much in common with homosexuals:

"Unlike if a person is born into a race or something like that, at least they have parents who are like them, who are of the same nationality or ethnicity," he explains. "But if you're 13 or 14 years old and you're some guy and you realize you're liking other guys or some girl and you start realizing you like other girls...there's nobody. You don't have your parents; you're really [alone]."

In the film, the anti-mutant Sen. Kelly is played by Bruce Davison, who told me he was feeding off some of the rants of political troublemakers from the past (Sen. Joseph McCarthy) and the present (Sens. Jesse Helms and Orrin Hatch and pop psychologist Dr. Laura Schlessinger). Still, he noted that his character's comeuppance is revolutionary.

"I like the journey that the character goes through," Davison says, "starting out as this right-wing reactionary political hate-maker and ending up walking a mile in the mutant's moccasins." —Andy Mangels

"One of the year's best and most provocative films"

—Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE

"The one movie at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival that I wouldn't hesitate to call EXTRAORDINARY"

—Owen Gleiberman, ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

"TERRIFIC!"

—Leonard Maltin, PLAYBOY



ARTISAN ENTERTAINMENT and BLOW UP PICTURES PRESENT A FLAN DE COCO FILM MIKE WHITE CHRIS WEITZ  
LUPE ONTIVEROS BETH COLE PAUL WEITZ "CHUCK & BUCK" STYLING ELAINE MONTALVO COSTUME DESIGNER JOEY WARONKER  
TONY MAXWELL SMOKEY HORNELL JEFF BETHANCOURT MUSIC BY RENEE DAVENPORT EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHUY CHAVEZ  
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DIRECTED BY JASON KLIOU JOANA VICENTE WRITTEN BY MATTHEW GREENFIELD STARRING MIKE WHITE DIRECTED BY MIGUEL ARTETA

# CHUCK & BUCK

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