

"As ballet-makers, Canfield and Balanchine both stress speed and athleticism. Both respect the past without repeating it... And each, in his own way, is distinctly American."

Bob Hicks, *The Oregonian*

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James Canfield, Artistic Director

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**FILM**



Richard Ruccolo (left) and Dan Bucatinsky overcome their differences in *All Over the Guy*

**A second chance**

Three new gay films hit theaters, fresh from their festival debut

BY CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN

**W**hile adapting his stage play *I Know You Are, but What Am I?* for the screen—an effort now manifest as the film *All Over the Guy*—writer/star Dan Bucatinsky had some specific pop culture predecessors in mind.

"This was a two-character play, and I thought, 'What would this play be like if it were a movie?'" he tells *Just Out*. "And it was very much like *When Harry Met Sally...* I thought that if I literally made the same sort of mainstream romantic comedy but made *When Harry Met Larry...* instead, it could be more contemporary, more relevant, more hip."

And so, like *Sally*, the film is a relationship comedy involving a mismatched couple haphazardly thrown together by their misguided and/or self-serving friends, with comically (and sometimes not-so-comically) awkward results. Also like the popular Billy Crystal-Meg Ryan vehicle, *Guy* has drawn comparisons to the neurotic dramedies of Woody Allen, although even its most serious moments are a few significant shades lighter than Allen's angst.

Unlike Harry and Sally or Annie Hall and Alvie Singer, however, *All Over the Guy* features two male leads as the on-again/off-again couple. (It opens Oct. 5 at Fox Tower Cinemas after kicking off the Portland Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Film Festival.)

Eli (Bucatinsky) is an anxious nerd traumatically raised by overly supportive psychotherapist parents. He collects *Planet of the Apes* memorabilia and obsessively cooks eggs when he's stressed out.

Tom (Richard Ruccolo) is a strong, silent type traumatically raised by WASP-y country club alcoholics. When the couple are set up on a blind date by Tom's best friend, Jackie, who has the hots for Eli's best friend, Brett, the results are less disastrous than uncomfortable.

But disaster is just a sexual encounter (and possible emotional entanglement) away, and that's exactly the path fate sets for the hapless twosome. In fact, most of the film is told in retrospect, with Eli relating his sob story to a brassy receptionist at an STD clinic, where he's waiting for his traditional post-breakup HIV test, and with Tom, having hit bottom with his drinking problem, spilling the beans at a 12-step meeting.

Meanwhile, Jackie and Brett are getting married, and Eli and Tom are both invited.

Could enough champagne and wedding cake effect a reconciliation?

Bucatinsky downplays the difference in sexual orientation that could falsely separate *All Over the Guy* from its rightful milieu.

"I felt intrigued and challenged to tell a story that was like any other romantic comedy—mainstream but gay," he says. "I call it a 'beside the point' movie, because the fact that they're gay is really beside the point. This is not a movie about the plight of the gay man. It's a movie about the tortures of blind dates, dealing with your friends, trying to find someone, not turning into your parents. We got criticized for not being 'gay enough'—for not showing enough booty—and we got criticized for being too gay and not showing enough of the Brett and Jackie relationship. The one thing I learned in making this movie is that you cannot satisfy everybody."

The film's jaunty insights into relationships, although enjoyable enough, are certainly more typical than Eli and Brett's close friendship. Director Julie Davis was initially skeptical that a straight character could be close to a gay one without a certain level of discomfort.

So Bucatinsky wrote a scene in which "Eli and Brett are reaching that divide where they draw the line. You know, what's locker room talk for a couple of buddies where one of them is gay and one of them is straight? With the straight guys I know who are friends with gay guys, there're no holds barred. They get a kick out of hearing all about it. But I thought it would be fun to show Brett drawing the line and getting squeamish."

Finally, Bucatinsky hopes the film's seemingly optimistic ending doesn't detract from its intended realism.

"I don't necessarily see these guys getting together for the rest of their lives," he admits. "I see them as coming to an agreement at the end of this particular wedding day, but as to whether these guys are still together a month from now? No idea. And that's life! It's heaven to me when people say: 'Finally, this is a movie that's funny, it's about relationships, and they happen to be gay. It's not about Ecstasy, and it's not about poppers, and it's not about shirts off in a bar and raves. It's about guys, just people.' If people are saying that, then I'm saying: 'Great! We did it.'"