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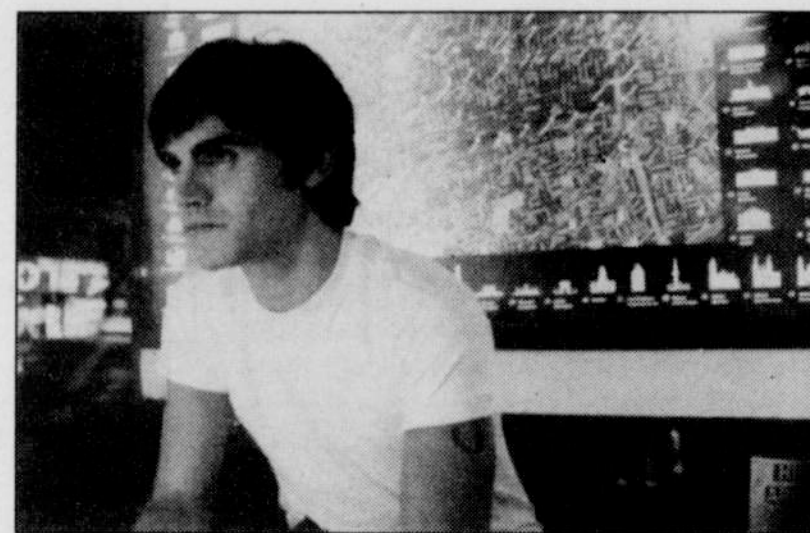
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Mora (Bernarda Pagés) and their attempts to drug Mora's visiting brother, Felipe (Javier Lombardo), and seduce him into impregnating Roberta. They try everything in their arsenal—skimpy dresses and lingering caresses from Roberta, drugged drinks—but confused Felipe spurns them all; despite his attraction to Roberta, he's expecting his girlfriend and a business partner at their apartment any minute. Complications ensue when the partner arrives and gets dead drunk, and the girlfriend, an uptight Christian, learns—along with Felipe—of the girls' "troubling lifestyle." Running gags of Felipe's job as a "turkey inseminator" in Patagonia, voyeur neighbors and the business partner stuffed into a cupboard bring some laughs, and the actors make the most of their characters. But the trope of the women's lack of handy skills (Felipe is constantly fixing things in the apartment) and their increasingly desperate efforts to get him in bed become tiresome and annoying after a while. And it doesn't help that the premise of *El Favor* is a little too close to Spike Lee's horrendous *She Hate Me* for comfort.

Perhaps the highest-profile film of the fest is Atom Egoyan's *Where the Truth Lies*. Egoyan frequently features gay content, as in *Exotica*'s queer financial investigator. *Where the Truth Lies* riffs on the Hollywood erotic thriller genre with a gay twist. It's a multilayered, time-shifting story about Vince Collins (Colin Firth) and Lanny Morris (Kevin Bacon), a Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis-type act from the '50s, complete with trashy comedy routines, heckling crowds and a telethon for polio. Problem is, the act falls apart at the height of the guys' fame in 1957, when a dead girl turns up in their hotel room, though neither man was charged. Fifteen years later, a reporter who had appeared on their telethon is writing a biography of Vince Collins and is delving into the mystery of the dead girl and the part Collins and Morris played in it. This intricately plotted film is well acted and well worth seeing despite some confusing stretches. But it's almost more interesting for the off-screen drama of Egoyan's unsuccessful fight against an NC-17 rating. The homophobic Motion Picture Association of America, which determines film ratings, was apparently unhinged by a brief scene of a man-woman ménage. Perhaps if Egoyan had followed the porn formula in which two men

pay attention to the woman and carefully ignore each other, the film would have passed with the desired R. But this pivotal scene in the movie does quite the opposite. Egoyan made some edits but wouldn't cut this scene, and thanks to the MPAA, this may be a rare chance to see the film in Egoyan's near-preferred cut.

Viewers who like reality more than fiction will find much to love in two of this year's documentaries. A third one, a comedy performance of the increasingly unnecessary Margaret Cho, is more dicey. Cho's first two filmed performances were strong, vital and above all funny works, with the comedian brilliantly describing her experiences as a TV star, her fag-hagdom and her mother, with prickly political commentary thrown in. In this fourth film, *Margaret Cho: Assassin*, she's drawing on a dry well. The film opens and closes with irritat-



An Argentinian rent boy blurs the line between reality and hallucination in *Night Watch*.

ing testimonials about how great and cutting-edge Cho is. But most of her insights are no more interesting than those of anybody on the street with a modicum of wit. They're mostly obvious political rants about how stupid and evil George Bush and the Republicans are—hardly news—along with the usual pandering commentary on queerness and racism. She pauses too long for idolatrous whoops and applause, which the brainless audience of fans provides in waves.

AG is an acronym little known outside the band of "Aggressives"—butch lesbians who identify with aggression—who created it. Daniel Peddle profiles this scene through six different women in the bracing documentary *The Aggressives*. Docs are only as good as the life stories they showcase, and this is one of the most effective I've seen in getting inside the heart of a small, marginalized community—in this case black, Asian and Latina gender-busters. Stereotypes of mean, mindless butches



The Aggressives documents a band of black, Asian and Latina gender-busters.