

# Carmike 12

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12:30PM DAILY.

SHOWTIMES FOR FRIDAY OCT. 7  
THROUGH THURSDAY OCT. 13, 2005

**Wallace and Gromit G**  
(1:00, 1:45, 3:15, 4:30, 5:30)  
7:00, 7:45, 9:15, 9:55

**In Her Shoes PG-13**  
(1:30, 4:20) 7:00, 10:00

**Waiting R**  
(1:55, 4:45) 7:20, 9:40

**Serenity PG-13**  
(1:30, 4:10) 7:00, 9:40

**Greatest Game Ever  
Played PG**  
(1:45, 4:30) 7:05, 9:55

**Corpse Bride PG**  
(1:30, 3:30, 5:30) 7:30, 9:30

**Just Like Heaven  
PG-13**  
(2:00, 4:30) 7:00, 9:30

**An Unfinished Life PG-13**  
(2:00, 4:20) 7:30, 9:50

**Exorcism of Emily  
Rose PG-13**  
(2:00, 4:40) 7:20, 10:00

**40 Year Old Virgin R**  
(1:35, 4:10) 7:10, 9:50

**Wedding Crashers R**  
(1:40, 4:15) 7:10, 9:50  
( ) Bargain

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## movies BY LOIS WADSWORTH



Fun and games with Becky (Kelli Garner) and Justin (Lou Pucci).

## Improvistational Truth

Weird? Different? Good!

**THUMBSUCKER:** Written and directed by Mike Mills, based on the novel by Walter Kirn. Produced by Bob Stephenson, Anthony Bregman. Executive producers Anne Carey, Ted Hope, Cathy Schulman, Bob Yari. Cinematographer Joaquin Baca-Asay. Editors Haines Hall, Angus Wall. Music supervisor, Brian Teitzell. Original music, Time De Laughter. Music performed by The Polyphonic Spree, with additional songs by Elliot Smith. Production design, Judy Becker. Costume design, April Napier. Starring Lou Pucci, Tilda Swinton, Vincent D'Onofrio, with Vince Vaughn, Keanu Reeves, Benjamin Bratt, Kelli Garner, Chase Offerle. Sony Pictures Classics, 2005. 96 minutes. R. **2005 Sundance Special Jury Prize for Acting (Lou Pucci)** and **2005 Berlin International Film Festival Silver Bear for Best Actor (Lou Pucci).**

One of a new class of offbeat comedies, *Thumbsucker* was shot in and around Portland and Beaverton. While its Oregon locations shouldn't influence my affection for the film, it does. I love what I perceive to be the film's Northwest sensibilities. Filmmaker Mike Mills accepts at face-value this family of oddballs and its one "normal" member, the younger brother. Such generosity reminds me of how director Phil Morrison and writer Angus MacLachlan treat *Junebug's* Southern characters naturally, despite some characters' unfocused anger, confusion and regional idiosyncrasies (*EW* 9/15).

Likewise, *Thumbsucker's* open attitude toward adolescent sexuality further reminds me of another recent coming-of-age movie I liked a lot, Miranda July's *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, (*EW* 8/4). Finally, the parents' lack of self-awareness, which is more or less required by the genre, almost reaches self-delusion in both films.

The Cobb family lives well enough in Beaverwood, but 17-year-old Justin (Lou Pucci) still sucks his thumb. Justin's mom, Audrey (Tilda Swinton), and dad, Mike (Vincent D'Onofrio), disagree as to what should be done to fix Justin's problem. While the parents are unable to see the problems in their own relationship, they are eager for Justin to undergo therapy to escape the lure of his thumb. Both parents and Justin are oblivious to his brother, Joel (Chase Offerle), who just toodles on through life on his own.

Meanwhile, Justin's New Age orthodontist, Perry Lyman (Keanu Reeves) has plans. As played by Reeves, Perry would have been right at home with Albert (Jason Schwartzman) and Tommy (Mark Wahlberg) in last year's unforgettable comedy, *I Heart*

*Huckabees* (*EW* 10/21/04). While Albert and Tommy are relatively innocuous in their belief that they have found the true path to enlightenment, Perry brazenly uses his role as an authority figure to experiment on Justin, with hilarious results.

I don't mean to imply that *Thumbsucker* is derivative of these other films, because this film has its own original take. Rather, I am struck by the similarity of several small films' approach to character and story. Like *Huckabees*, *Me and You* and *Junebug*, this film undertakes a non-ironic, comic investigation of relationship and family dynamics through quirky, flawed but benign characters. It's a forgiving sensibility I would like to see expressed more often, both in life and in the movies.

Other characters who fit the description include Justin's sex-and-love interest, Rebecca (Kelli Garner), who seems older than he but is as unsure of herself. And Justin's debate coach, Mr. Geary (Vince Vaughn), is racked with self-doubt despite his intention to help Justin by putting him on the team.

Finally, a television star Audrey has worshipped from afar turns up as one of her drug rehab patients. Matt Schraam (Benjamin Bratt) brings the whole celebrity thing crashing down multiple notches on the reality scale, a purpose the similarly admired sexpot Catherine Vauban (Isabelle Huppert) fulfills in *Huckabees*.

Mills achieves *Thumbsucker's* look through restricting camera moves and imposing a dogma-like naturalism on the set. Extensive improvisational "rehearsals" preceded the cameras, which gives the film what the press notes call "a loose, deceptively casual style." Whatever. It works.

Pucci's performance is not over-rated. As Justin, he's flexible, emotionally present and credibly grown-up by film's end. He even looks like he could be Swinton's kid. Swinton, of course, cannot give a bad performance. D'Onofrio plays an older, less malleable character in Mike. His performance is subtle, touching. Offerle is surprisingly present. But Reeves takes the cake as Perry, giving a restrained performance that is laugh-aloud funny.

*Thumbsucker* opens Friday at the Bijou. You don't want to miss this one. Very highest. **EW**