

Cinnamon Joe

Cinnamon Joe produces a fresh, yet familiar style of rock. Their roots; Lucid, August Falling, and Sola Fide are all former projects of the group's members. The band integrates asymmetrical rhythms and complex harmonies into its songs; finessing a balance between spontaneous blazing guitar solos and well-crafted songwriting.

Check Eugene Weekly's nightlife page to find out where to see them live this Saturday night.

myspace.com/cinnamonjoe

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movies BY JASON BLAIR

Teddy (Jason Weaver), Rashad (Tip Harris) and Esquire (Jackie Long) in *ATL*.



Peach Fuzz

Coming of age in Atlanta

ATL: Directed by Chris Robinson. Written by Tina Gordon Chism, based on a story by Antwone Fisher. Produced by Dallas Austin, Jody Gerson, James Lassiter, Will Smith, Tionne Watkins. Cinematographer, Crash. Editor, David Blackburn. Production design, Robb Buono. Music, Aaron Zigman. Costumes, Shawn Barton. Starring Tip Harris, Antwan Andre Patton and Lauren London with Mykelti Williamson and Keith David. Warner Brothers, 2006. PG-13. 105 minutes.

Despite a title that resembles a corporate moniker or an acronym for a rock band, *ATL* immediately has two things going for it. One, it's not a race movie. It's a movie about class differences and how we overcome them. As a result, the questions raised by the film — namely, can we escape the places we come from? — are more universally available, allowing the movie to access such varied sources as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Stand by Me*.

The other fact about *ATL* is that it establishes, without apparent irony, an entirely new film genre: the hip hop rollerskating movie. (Does *Roll Bounce* really count?) In *ATL*, if you can't skate, you can't date, and if you fall while skating, you're removed from the floor. Don't expect a run on black skate movies anytime soon, but don't be fooled into thinking this is the roller derby, either. *ATL* is a much gentler creature than that.

ATL takes place on Atlanta's south side, where every day is hot, classrooms are cramped, and public pools are the only way to beat the heat. For four high school seniors — Rashad, Esquire, Teddy and Brooklyn — this year is make or break. Graduation, getting a job and going to college are all important, of course, but I'm referring to winning the team skate competition, which determines bragging rights for years to come.

Rashad (Tip Harris, aka rapper T.I.), our narrator, is a serious, principled type. Since losing his parents in a car accident, he's been the father to his younger brother, Ant (Evan Ross). Rashad neatly summarizes his outlook early on: "When you've got responsibilities, you ain't got time to dream." Jam skating, a hybrid of speed skating and dance, is the rare luxury he affords himself. Esquire (Jackie Long), meanwhile, expects to go to college, and it's clear that his goal of breaking away will eventually clash with Rashad's rugged pragmatism.

The clash comes in the form of New-New (Lauren London), a pillowy beauty with inch-deep dimples. New-New is attracted to Rashad's brooding sincerity, and Rashad slowly manages to accept her affections. But when it turns out that New-New may have misrepresented her background, Esquire is the one who discovers it, bringing *ATL*'s themes into sharp relief.

What's so remarkable about *ATL* is how it avoids the clichés of thug life while maintaining a credible story. There's very little sex, none of which is graphic. There's only one handgun, late in the picture, and it's fired exactly once. True, in a subplot, Ant is persuaded to distribute drugs, but he gets nabbed for it, and we never see it on-screen. Kids in

***ATL* takes place on Atlanta's south side, where every day is hot, classrooms are cramped, and public pools are the only way to beat the heat.**

ATL do steal clothes they can't afford, but these kids also swoon when their favorite song comes on the radio. By resisting the urge to be larger than life, *ATL* comes closer to representing real life, or real life as many kids know it.

Having said that, there isn't much here for adults. This is a movie for and about — and for all I know, by — teenagers. But this is a sweet film that's occasionally very smart. Is *ATL* the black *Clueless*? Not exactly. But both films update classic themes successfully, treating adolescence with wit and style without pandering to their subjects. **EW**