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Tuesday 1:30, 5:30
Wednesday & Thursday 2:00, 6:15

VIVA (R) In Spanish with English Subtitles
Friday - Monday 4:00, 8:15
Tuesday 3:30
Wednesday & Thursday 4:00, 8:15

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FRI 12:05 7:30
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HELLO, MY NAME IS DORIS

FRI 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10
SAT 12:10 4:50 7:10
SUN-TUE 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10
WED 12:10 2:30
THU 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10

WHAT WE BECOME

9:30

MAGGIE'S PLAN

12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:45

THE LOBSTER

11:45 2:25 5:05 7:45 9:30 10:15

THE MAN WHO KNEW INFINITY

2:30 5:00

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5:10



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5:15



VAXXED

7:05



DEADPOOL

7:05



POPSTAR

8:55



HAIL, CAESAR!

9:00

\$2 TUESDAYS

MOVIES

BY RICK LEVIN



ALEXI PAPPAS (SECOND FROM RIGHT) IN *TRACKTOWN*

PHOTO BY FRED GORIS

THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG DISTANCE RUNNER

Set and shot in Eugene, Tracktown tells the story of a young runner as she faces the Olympic Trials

Few things are as staid and predictable as the lone-athlete sports film. Since the sleeper success of *Rocky* in 1976, such movies have become increasingly formulaic potboilers in which we dutifully witness, as though through a fisheye lens, the algorithmic progress of an underdog as he confronts endless obstacles on the way to inevitable triumph. Cue ovation.

Thankfully, *Tracktown* subverts that formula in surprising ways without losing its competitive edge. Set in Eugene, the movie tells the story of Plum Marigold (Alexi Pappas, a real-life member of the Oregon Track Club Elite team here in town), a long-distance runner training to run in the Olympic Trials.

When Plum is momentarily sidelined by an injury, she is plunged into everyday life — a daylong journey she experiences as a kind of existential odyssey through unfamiliar corridors of doubt, desire and re-dedication. *Tracktown* hones down close on this single day, as Plum wanders Eugene, meets a guy (Chase Offerle), deals with her overbearing parents (Andy Buckley of *The Office* fame and *SNL* alum Rachel Dratch) and, eventually, comes face to face with her own identity as a runner.

As Plum, Pappas makes her way through the film as a kind of waifish alien, full of wide-eyed wonder and innocent bemusement as she confronts the stuff most of us take for granted: namely, other people and all the psychological and sexual quirks that come with them. A virgin, both literally and figuratively, she is about to receive an education in the ways of the world.

Plum is at once charming, childlike

and wise, and the cognitive dissonance between her almost pathologically single-minded focus on running and her new-found absorption into the gritty, chaotic world provides a unique and thrilling glimpse into the mind of an athlete — what it takes to win, and what can get in the way of winning.

Co-written and co-directed by Pappas and Jeremy Teicher, *Tracktown* is successful on several levels at once. Though it isn't without its romanticized elements, the film does offer a frank and sometimes jarring portrayal of the gritty life of a young runner: peeing by the side of the trail, a stalled menstruation, the head-case parents with their issues of control, the obsessive focus on training that can alienate and isolate the athlete.

The movie is unflinching in its revelation of the real cost of competition, an honesty that only strengthens the heroism at the heart of Plum's pursuit. Pappas brings a brightness and vulnerability to her role that speaks of hard-won experience: She is an able actor who is also a professional athlete, and we implicitly trust the reality she is portraying.

More impressively, *Tracktown* refuses to traffic in the easy sentiments of most films of its ilk. It is irrelevant whether there is gold at the end of Plum's trials. As she prepares for the most important race of her career, the issue becomes not how, or even whether, she wins, but what she must overcome in the process. It's not the goal but the journey that makes the athlete.

Tracktown has its Oregon premiere 7 pm Tuesday, July 5, at McDonald Theatre; \$10, tickets at mcdonaldtheatre.com.



ALEXI PAPPAS AND OREGON TRACK CLUB COACH IAN DOBSON AFTER A RACE