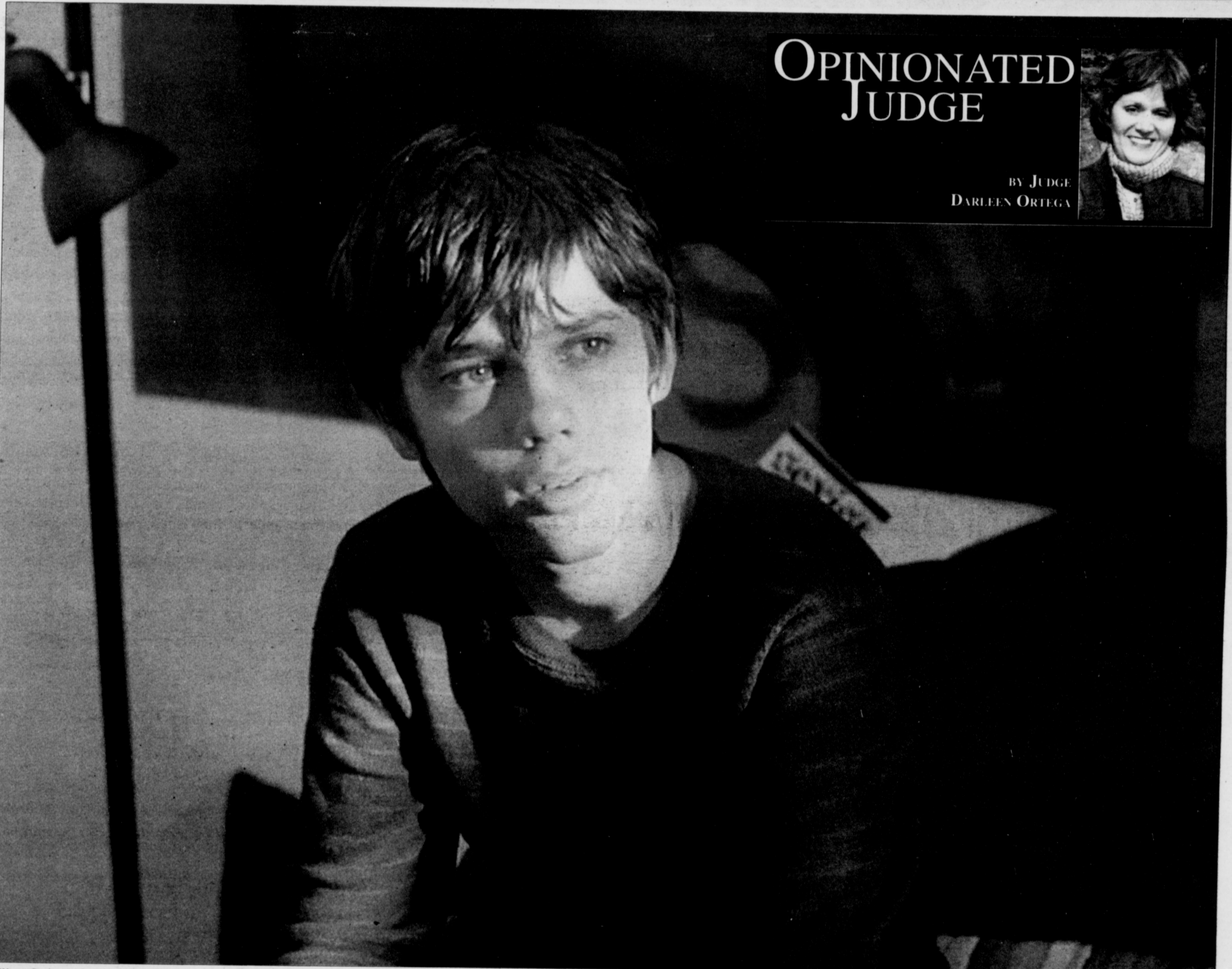




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## OPINIONATED JUDGE

BY JUDGE  
DARLEEN ORTEGA



Ellar Coltrane stars in Rickard Linklater's new film 'Boyhood' which charts a boy's childhood in real time, as it is lived.

PHOTO COURTESY IFC FILMS

# Real Life Drama *Capturing the soul of growing up*

BY DARLEEN ORTEGA

The concept behind Richard Linklater's new film, "Boyhood," seems so obvious when you hear it that you wonder why it has never been done before. Filmed over 12 actual years, the film follows the fictional story of a boy's childhood — ages 6 to 18 — with the same actors playing the boy, his older sister, and his divorced parents. Far from a gimmick, the result, in director Linklater's capable hands, is a revelation. Never has a film so poignantly captured the sweet ache of family life, of parenting, and of the passing of childhood.

The story is deceptively simple. It follows the lives of Mason (Ellar Coltrane), his frequently annoying older sister Samantha (Linklater's daughter Lorelei), and their parents through moves, marriages, and divorces, and the dramas, big and small, of everyday life. And it is, quite literally, the story of Mason's coming-of-age.

Coming-of-age stories are nothing new. Generally they focus on a pivotal event or a life-changing summer. But if you think about it, most people's lives don't contain that type of dramatic arc. The changes come incrementally — little shifts occur in attitude and

perspective, or trust is built or lost in an accumulation of small incidents. Kids take risks all the time — it's a wonder any of us survive childhood — but most people survive just fine. So, though there are moments in this film where the audience is primed for a major dramatic turn (particularly a scene where a middle-school-aged Mason is drinking with his friends and there are weapons around), those moments mostly play out in the same understated way that most people's lives do. You don't miss that movie-dramatic arc either — this story makes you care, and wonder, like you would in real life.

It strikes me that Linklater's method may have yielded a sort of spiritual process for capturing the soul of growing up. He started with the outlines of a story and with two carefully chosen kids, and when filming began there wasn't a complete script. Instead, Linklater checked in with Coltrane and the rest of the cast each year, assessed where Coltrane was emotionally and experientially, and then wrote the screenplay for that segment, informed by the truth of the cast's own lives. The physical and emotional develop-

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