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Golden Exits

Alex Ross Perry

Producer Christos V. Konstantakopoulos, Alex Ross Perry, Adam Piotrowicz, Katie Stern, Joshua Blum, Craig Butta.

Production companies Faliro House Productions (Athen, Greece), Washington Square Films (New York, USA), Bow & Arrow Entertainment (Los Angeles, USA), Forager Film Company (Chicago, USA), Webber Gilbert Media Group (Chicago, USA). **Written and directed by** Alex Ross Perry. **Director of photography** Sean Price Williams. **Editor** Robert Greene. **Music** Keegan DeWitt. **Sound design** Ryan M. Price. **Sound** Jim Morgan, Lion Thompson. **Production design** Fletcher Chancey, Scott Kuzio.

With Emily Browning (Naomi), Adam Horovitz (Nick), Jason Schwartzman (Buddy), Chloë Sevigny (Alyssa), Mary-Louise Parker (Gwendolyn), Lily Rabe (Sam), Analeigh Tipton (Jess).

Colour. 94 min. English.

Premiere January 22, 2017, Sundance Film Festival

It's April and Naomi has come to New York from Australia to work for Nick, an archivist cataloguing the materials belonging to his partner Alyssa's dead father. Nick was given the job by her sister Gwen; both are suspicious of Nick's preference for female assistants. Naomi doesn't know anyone in the city apart from her childhood acquaintance Buddy. He runs his own recording studio and employed Jess to run it; she later became his wife. Her best friend Sam is Gwen's personal assistant; Gwen isn't easy. Naomi and Jess are in their twenties; Sam and Buddy in their thirties; Nick, Alyssa and Gwen in their forties; none of them are happy. It's there in their faces, captured in tight close-ups which amplify the stubborn sense of discontent. Naomi's arrival awakens things that could be, that might have been, that never will be. Each generation covets the other's privileges while quietly forgetting its own. New York is even more beautiful as spring moves into summer, but the warm light doesn't penetrate the cold interiors, which only grow darker. Naomi was always going to leave again and was always going to leave an impression, now it's only about leaving with grace.

James Lattimer

“The music does the talking”

Your two last films both took as a defining moment characters escaping from the city to the countryside. Now, **Golden Exits** is based in New York City. Why did you choose to set the film in a city this time?

Alex Ross Perry: It’s there the whole idea started. I’ve been staying at home a lot lately, writing constantly, five days a week, for many separate writing jobs I have had over the past few years. A small story in and about a neighbourhood was very much where my head was at when this movie began to form.

Many of the characters seem to revolve around the past, symbolised by the family archive Nick is organising. The focus on the past is then interrupted by Naomi’s arrival. Could you please explain the significance of the past in **Golden Exits**?

I couldn’t succinctly if I tried. Perhaps this is the central question of the movie. It seems that both marriages in the film, Nick and Alyssa, Buddy and Sam, are trying to move forward from past events that still hang heavy over their homes. I think long-term relationships, family and marriages, tend to get heavier and heavier as time progresses.

Formally and aesthetically, all of your films are very different. After *Queen of Earth*’s edginess and time-hopping structure, why did you choose to construct **Golden Exits** in a smoother and more straightforward way?

To simplify and try another form of storytelling that hadn’t been necessary for any of the previous films. A story with seven main characters which takes places over about ten weeks, but really we only see ten days or so, was interesting to me. Most films with overlapping ensembles take place over a very succinct period of time. *Magnolia* and *Short Cuts* both take place over only about two days. I wanted to see what would happen when you stretch that out.

Contributions from actors are valuable to you, as you’ve explained in a previous interview. Was the screenplay of **Golden Exits** completely written out in detail – or did you again leave out parts of the script?

Early in the process, when I was still searching for all the ways to make this film different from the last one, Chloë Sevigny told me that she is ‘terrified of improv’, so I decided right then that this film would have no improvisation and that actors would stick to the script. It was a great challenge for me, since I had never come close to that level of adherence to the writing. Always we are making up new ideas, lines, words, on set. This time it was different, by design, as a way to challenge myself and the actors.

The musical score – again by Keegan DeWitt – appears to be an important ‘protagonist’ in your film. How was the collaboration with him, and how did you develop the score?

As with *Queen of Earth*, Keegan is a part of the process very early. He is looking at footage the day after we shoot it and we have music from him by the end of the shoot, so the edit and the score take shape in tandem with one another. I told him that in this film, the characters never say what they are actually thinking or feeling, and that the idea I was interested in would be that the music does the talking for them.

Interview: Ansgar Vogt, January 2017



Alex Ross Perry was born in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania in 1984. He attended the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and worked at Kim’s Video in Manhattan. Perry lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Films

2009: *Impolex*. 2011: *The Color Wheel*. 2014: *Listen Up Philip*. 2015: *Queen of Earth* (90 min., Berlinale Forum 2015). 2017: *Golden Exits*.