

Film Tip of the Week



By Ray Pride

JANUARY 26, 1998: Writer-director Peter Hall's strong, brooding debut feature is one of those raw, microbudgeted American movies burning with a story to tell, much like "Bang" or "Habit," suggesting a capacity for an American independent film scene beyond Miramax and other corporate titans. Tim (Desmond Devenish) is 15, high-strung and developing his own personal punk ethos on the way to becoming a proven sociopath. His mother committed suicide a year ago and his father has transplanted them to the upstate New York hamlet of Cold Mills, New York, where a trashed house trailer suits him just fine while he drinks his heart away. ("Delinquent"'s starkly-lit underworld of water and forest, a despoiled glade, is akin to the realms of two other recent psychosexual dramas, Rebecca Miller's "Angela" and Mo Ogdronik's "Ripe.") Without detailing Tim's troubled descent-Hall's telling is grimy Grimm, suspenseful and achingly tragic, abetted by taut thriller editing, gorgeously punctuated by the crackling sound of Gang of Four (most of which is collected on their "Shrinkwrapped" CD). Tim's world boils over when he finds his match in Tracy (Shawn Batten, photo), a just-bounced boarding-school brat on the verge of her own fervent self immolation. The cruelty of the world toward these lost children is unabating, steeped in pain, yet a fresh and bracing coming-of-age story that fascinates even as it frightens. A grandly nihilistic ending haunts.

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