

WEEKEND PLUS

Dad gets kid's goat, but punk has spunk

By LARRY WORTH

AS tales of troubled youth go, "Delinquent" will never be mistaken for "Rebel Without a Cause." Then again, writer-director Peter Hall earns credit for putting his own spin on James Dean's spiritual successors.

In his debut behind the camera, Hall at least tries to redefine age-old themes — sometimes capably, sometimes not.

With subjects running the gamut from abusive dads and teen pregnancy to voyeurism and attempted

murder, Hall might have done better to keep his ambitions — no matter how admirable — in check.

He gets the most mileage from the 15-year-old hero, Tim. Sharing a cramped trailer with his boozewalling father, Tim is slapped around once too often. Running off to a de-

serted summer house, he finds videos of one of its inhabitants, a pretty adolescent named Tracy.

As it turns out, Tracy has as many troubles as Tim. Specifically, she's pregnant with her English teacher's child. But it isn't until Tim and Tracy's paths cross that the makings for tragedy are set in motion.

Unfortunately, Hall's blending of their storylines is far from seamless. The problem is exacerbated via long stretches with little dialogue, making the goings-on take far too long to kick in.

But when they do, Hall switches into overdrive. His hand-held camerawork becomes properly jarring, setting the tone for a non-Hollywood ending that's downright inspired.

Meanwhile, the acting ranges from

DELINQUENT ★★ 1/2

Written and directed by Peter Hall. Starring Desmond Devenish, Shawn Batten and Jeff Paul. Running time: 84 minutes. Unrated, but contains violence. At Embassy 2, 3, 4, Broadway and 47th Street.

alluring to excruciating. In the latter category, Jeff Paul is a virtual cartoon as Tim's violent father, while associate producer Marisa Townshend is utterly laughable as Tim's former teacher. Hopefully, she'll keep her talents off-camera in the future.

The good news is that Desmond Devenish is a real find as Tim, conveying emotions only hinted at in the script. Shawn Batten also holds her own as the duly confused Tracy.

It's chiefly due to their efforts, coupled with Hall's obvious potential, that "Delinquent" has something to offer bad boys and cineastes alike.