

by Kathleen McInnis

Fellow USC Grads/Friends Come of Age

Bokenkamp, Kuenne explore intense personal relationships in their indie debuts



Preston Tylk

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Writer/Director Jon Bokenkamp demonstrates a keen eye for the nature of desire and regret in his feature film debut, *Preston Tylk*. Taut, richly subtextual, and slyly addictive, the film is an effective cautionary tale of love ignored. Shot as a low-budget indie, Bokenkamp has avoided the usual pitfalls of first-time directors by shooting a tight script with unexpected performances. Starring Luke Wilson and Norman Reedus, Bokenkamp's film primes the audience for a chase of classical proportions as one man's wife is murdered and both her husband and lover seek retribution from each other. Dennis Farina's role, as the seedy private detective who straddles the thin line of the law, is possibly the most forceful and persuasive work this actor has delivered since his salad days on "Crime Story"—showcasing a range of talent that is sure to add to his already high career profile. Bokenkamp has also enlisted fellow Writer/Director/Composer Kurt Kuenne (*Scrapbook*) to contribute an eerie score to this evocative story of hunter and prey. **Contact:** Next Generation (1.310.450.5887).

Scrapbook

Kurt Kuenne's own award-winning directorial feature film debut is as powerful as fellow USC alum Bokenkamp's, but where Bokenkamp uses

the thriller genre to carry out his theme of redemption, Kuenne instead chooses a coming-of-age story about the relationship between two brothers. While the younger man has grown up in the shadow of his older brother and now must lash out for some semblance of individuality, the other must deal with indiscretions and disregard for his younger brother's emotional pain. The resolution leads to a crushing and vengeful final act. Justin Urich and Eric Balfour are the two brothers,

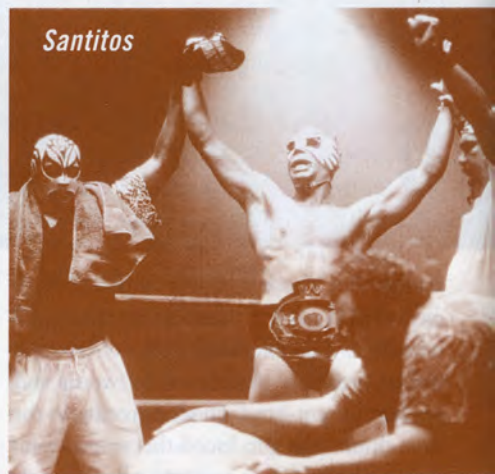
impressively performing the difficult swings between selfishness and brotherly protectiveness, with an emotional maturity unexpected in such young actors. Kuenne has created a complex and delicate study of the angst of youth; so powerful is his message that Producer Roni Eguia has decided to screen the film as part of an open forum intended to give youths and members of the film industry a chance to face the realities of youth violence. The event is sure to be an eye-opener for distributors who attend, as it will give them a chance to discover the power of this story on screen, and just maybe incite them to do more than pay lip service to empowering America's youth. **Contact:** Piano Player Productions



Scrapbook

Santitos

This may be Director Alejandro Springall's feature film debut, but his wealth of experience, both as a documentary filmmaker and a producer (most recently of *Cronos*, from Mexico) has primed him well for this wildly humorous and beautifully executed story. Moving effortlessly from saints who appear in oven doors to a rapturous collision of the mystical and mundane, *Santitos* is the story of a young widow who has recently suffered the loss of her only child—a daughter who



never woke up from a tonsil operation. Haunted by not being allowed to see her daughter's dead body, Esperanza is convinced by a vision of St. Jude that the child hasn't really died after all. Her journey of discovery (and also, ultimately, of sexuality) provides a litany of experiences at once defining, precarious and bizarre. Springall has fashioned a rare, whimsical tone in this story that promises redemption in return for faith, and in this milieu—home to melodrama and fervent religion—we find the perfect pitch for a gentle parody of naive superstition. Festival audiences have roared with delight at this boldly sexual story, and a recent re-editing after its Sundance premiere has left the film a lustrous pearl amid a sea of indie entries. **Contact:** Goldheart Pictures. (1.212.924.7270).