

The Hollywood Reporter

Everything's Gone Green

Bottom Line: Aimless twentysomething grapples casually with big issues in screenwriting debut for "Generation X" author.

By John DeFore

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Paulo Costanzo, Steph Song and JR Bourne star.

South by Southwest

AUSTIN -- Hard as it is to believe, "Everything's Gone Green" is the first feature produced from a screenplay by Douglas Coupland, the "Generation X" author whose zeitgeist-surfing career is so soaked in pop culture one might expect him to have blazed through movies and TV by now and started penning serialized dramas for YouTube.

Not so. As "Green" suggests, the author still is comfortable with old media. He has no burning desire to stretch its form as he did the novel's in "Generation X." The result is a likable if low-key finding-yourself outing that will win admirers on the festival circuit and could sustain a small theatrical release.

The film is surprisingly light on pop-culture references with the most noticeable being its title. The New Order song "Everything's Gone Green," whose confused narrator doesn't know where he is or which way to go, could be a theme song for Paulo Costanzo's Ryan, a Brillo-headed Vancouverite who in one day loses his apartment, girlfriend and job.

He also loses something he never had -- a slice of the lottery winnings his father mistakenly believed were coming his way. As compensation, Ryan lands a job at the lottery division, interviewing new winners for a promotional magazine. As his new acquaintance Bryce (JR Bourne), boyfriend of Ryan's budding crush Ming, (Steph Song), notes, the job entails access to information that an unscrupulous man could exploit to make lots of

cash with minimal effort. Ryan decides to try that lifestyle on for a while. He can only hope the change doesn't ruin his chances to steal Ming away from Bryce.

The script's themes aren't easy to miss, though Coupland seasons each with a dash of ambiguity: working for the man is a soul-killing drag (but many alternatives involve self-delusion or danger); the movie industry, in which Ming routinely dresses Vancouver up to resemble various U.S. locations, is ubiquitous but hollow (yet a prop palm tree triggers a flash of last-act transcendence); and, as with a beached whale our heroes are drawn to touch, interesting people long to connect with something larger than themselves --though with business suit-clad squares hobbling down to the beach alongside Ryan and Ming, can the spiritually hungry youths really believe they're special?

Coupland and director Paul Fox aren't aiming for grandiosity though, which is helpful. The performances and production values are modest, in line with the stunted ambition of "Green's" protagonists. Intentionally or not, the comedy generally earns chuckles instead of laughs, even when its script takes an outlandish turn or detours into brief sendups of contemporary self-help psychobabble. (The latter suggests that the filmmakers might have flirted with broad satire at one point, then rejected it in favor of a more personal story.)

If the picture secretly hopes to supply viewers with the kind of epiphany its characters seek, it falls short, staying instead on turf tread in many other good-hearted festival films before it. Within that arena though, it holds its own.

EVERYTHING'S GONE GREEN

First Independent Pictures

Radke Films /True West Films

Credits:

Director: Paul Fox

Screenwriter: Douglas Coupland

Producers: Chris Nanos, Elizabeth Yake, Henrik Meyer

Executive producers: Scott Mackenzie

Dan Lyon, Michael Baker, Morris Ruskin

Director of photography: David Frazee

Production designer: Peter Andringa

Costume designer: Sheila White

Editor: Gareth C. Scales
Cast:
Ryan: Paulo Costanzo
Ming: Steph Song
Bryce: JR Bourne
Alan: Aidan Devine
Ryan's Mom: Susan Hogan
Ryan's Dad: Tom Butler
Running time -- 94 minutes
MPAA rating: R

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