

# Small-town homophobia addressed in 'Season'

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the hard-edged Micki in hopes of helping her settle down.

Charlie's lines are clichéd and contrived in a tediously elementary manner. He asks Micki, "What are you running from, or what is it that you are searching for? Everyone does one or the other. ... Don't regret the things you do."

It becomes clear throughout the film that Charlie lacks substance, and he simply becomes a sort of cheesy martyr full of fluffy insight.

One thing Charlie's wisdom does heighten is the sense of Micki's insecurities and dissatisfaction.

Roberta, on the other hand, has found the place to land after a full life of traveling. Tragically, that place has left her somewhat empty and broken.

Roberta's character is full of angst. This and this alone seems to define Roberta's character and serves as a constant impact on her development.

Roberta's defensiveness toward Micki leaves audiences with another sense of the film's inadequacies. They may wonder what these women are feeling and what motivates them.

The film successfully and boldly confronts lesbian sexuality through

humor and in an erotic manner.

Micki's friends and fellow lesbians from New York are briefly inserted in "Out of Season" in a humorous sequence where they define the different types of lesbians. The women also express their sexuality by dancing together in front of the homophobic town at a bar. The same effect is presented through a single sexual encounter. These scenes show no fear in saying what these women have wanted to say for so long.

"Out of Season" is not as stylistically successful or as intriguing as the 1998 Festival's full-bodied "High Art," but "Season's" touches of natural lighting and setting contribute to a sense of realism that makes the characters and relationships plausible. Nothing is technically spectacular, but all is based on simplicity rather than spectacle. It is this simplicity that successfully conforms to the small-town feeling of the film.

"Out of Season" manages to imply the influences of age and time and their impact on the development of relationships between people. The roles of sexuality, fortune and fate are adequate explorations of the dissatisfactions in life. Still, "Out of Season" leaves audiences wanting more.

# Film twists '80s formula

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the film neglects to illustrate fully his relationship with Maggie. The audience is left confused, wondering what their friendship is based on. This poor character development hinders the film most, and by not having a solid connection to the characters, the plot starts to drag more than RuPaul.

The end result is a film split into two parts, the first half being a comedy that introduces a number of interesting characters and situations and a second half that turns into a drama and basically leaves those interesting characters back in the first half.

Overall, the idea of looking back at the '80s with a '90s-trained eye is

## Film Review

**Title:** "Edge of Seventeen"  
**Stars:** Chris Stafford, Tina Holmes  
**Director:** David Moreton  
**Rating:** unrated  
**Grade:** C +  
**Five Words:** Shallow character development hinders film

interesting, but Moreton fails to complete what starts out as a great film.

Maybe he should have added Eric to the criminal, the jock, the princess, the basket case and the brain in "The Breakfast Club." Or he could've made Cameron gay.

# 'Straight' a powerful story

BY SAMUEL MCKEWN  
 Senior editor

David Lynch's "The Straight Story" is an amazingly simple yet brilliant little film, sort of like its title.

It is not something one would expect from David Lynch, he of nasty little fantasies such as "Blue Velvet" and "Eraserhead." This is the Lynch we last saw in "The Elephant Man," a kind, subtle craftsman who draws out spectacular performances from his actors.

Here, that performance is given by Richard Farnsworth, who will not only garner an Academy Award nomination but will probably win it. Farnsworth is Alvin Straight, a 73-year-old man who finally decides to mend relations with his brother Lyle (Harry Dean Stanton), who has just had a stroke.

With his own health starting to fail, Alvin sets out to make this journey from Laurens, Iowa, to Mt. Zion, Wis., on his riding lawnmower, partly because he has no driver's license, partly because he wants this done his own way.

His subsequent journey takes him to places and meets him up with people and little more. Many of the film's long, thoughtful camera pans focus simply on Alvin riding on his mower or the sky or just the fields in the background. Midwestern life unfiltered.

Somehow, Lynch makes all of this seem about as exciting as any movie this year. We identify and admire the realness of it, even though we don't identify with Alvin. The movie's back-

drop takes us to a place Midwesterners are quite familiar with and bathes it in integrity and strength. Like the Midwest, Lynch portrays these stoic characters as they are - sans makeup, frills or any filthy language.

From a script written by John Roach and Mary Sweeney, "The Straight Story" is less about the destination than it is the journey, which doubles as a journey back through Alvin's mistakes and triumphs in life. He is no saint, doesn't portray himself as such and is a bit stubborn. It takes a little of that to ride a mower on the road with 30 cars ambling slowly behind you.

So when Farnsworth's character comes across a young runaway (Anastasia Webb) who has a few of the same qualities, his advice is real. His experiences are real. And Farnsworth, who could've been the old man preacher and still made his performance work, takes the trickier road, admitting failure and even that he may not know. "The Straight Story" understands, unlike few movies do, what old-age wisdom is really about.

It understands the Midwest, both its beauty and its unrefined nature, perfectly, too. The phrase "colorful character" wouldn't fit here; just as "Blue Velvet" helped redefine new, almost non-binding limits on subject matter, Lynch's latest work redefines the notion of reality. The roles are less about character than they are about ideas of life, embodied by actors, mostly unheralded. It creates a refreshing effect - the film never asks us to identify with the people as much it does with the ideas they convey.

# Robert Henri helped advance modern art

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stricken immigrants.

Many of the members of the prestigious Art Academy said Henri was painting ugly pictures and setting a bad example for his students.

Needless to say, his work and the work of his students was ostracized from the Academy's many art exhibits.

"He was a trend-setter because he kind of broke from the Academy," Dawson said. "He challenged the way

that artists were accepted in the art world."

Henri and his pupils in turn shunned the Academy and put on their own art exhibits, essentially spearheading the do-it-yourself approach to exhibiting and marketing art that is deemed unacceptable by the masses.

Upon his death in 1929, Henri was seen by many artists as an inspiration. A pioneer, much like his father, Henri put an indelible mark on the progression of American modern art. And

## Film Review

### The Facts

**Title:** "The Straight Story"  
**Stars:** Richard Farnsworth  
**Director:** David Lynch  
**Rating:** G (absolutely pristine)  
**Grade:** A  
**Five Words:** Simple, beautiful, honest: "Straight" works

A large supporting cast is led by Sissy Spacek, who plays Alvin's daughter. Stanton is in the film's more powerful scenes as the suffering Lyle.

The film, though, belongs to Farnsworth, and Lynch is a wise enough director to get out of his way; the acting never seems to have been directed, though the movie still has a distinct Lynch feel in terms of camerawork.

It ought to be strange that this particular director can pull "The Straight Story" off. Lynch's last movie, "Lost Highway," was a jumbled mess. Before that was the disaster of "Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me." Does it mean he's matured?

Probably not. Occasionally though, he turns out ground-breaking stuff. "Blue Velvet" fit the bill much more neatly. "The Straight Story" lives in an entirely different universe but is maverick in its own way. There are so many movies right now that tell how it ought to be or how they want it to be or how it is even though we know differently.

"The Straight Story" is different, but not because the movie tells it like it is. It doesn't tell at all. It just is.

today, just as with his students of the past, people continue to make art with a freedom championed by Robert Henri, a man whose work few truly know.

"I don't think that his style was so much emulated by his students as the fact that they were inspired by his spirit and his enthusiasm for life and his very firm belief that students should paint what they see," Dawson said.

"He was an American patriot. He truly believed in American artists."

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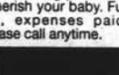
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