

Submarine

By Tom Sims, Executive Director, Cape May Film Society

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Coming of age films have been hit or miss in recent years—in fact, I think they've been a little less frequent compared to when I was younger. Then again, maybe coming of age films have more of an impact when you're actually... well... coming of age. The new film *Submarine* is a self-proclaimed coming of age film, but it doesn't look like the coming of age movies I remembered as a kid--like *Porky's* (1982) or *Ferris Bueller's Day off* (1986), and wow did I just date myself.

At 15, protagonist Oliver Tate (played by relative newcomer Craig Roberts) pursues who he believes to be the love of his life while trying to help save his parents' marriage. The girl of his dreams, played by Yasmin Paige, is (for all intents and purposes) a pyromaniac and simply an oddball. Then again, all the characters in this film are too—oddballs that is, not pyromaniacs. But this only endears you to this quirky, off-beat comedy all the more.

Don't be fooled by the above-the-title credit given to Ben Stiller, who was a producer for the film. Not only is his presence in the film limited to a cameo on a soap opera that flashes on the screen for precious seconds, but this film's sense of humor cannot be traced back to a Ben Stiller style. No antics, not much empty comedy calories in this film—so perhaps Stiller wanted to express a comedic bent we don't get to see in many of his films. Or maybe he just wasn't that involved in writing *Submarine* (which was written by another relative newcomer Richard Ayoade).

This film takes you in several different directions, and each one of them is as well constructed as the last. The subplot of Oliver's mother (played by Sally Hawkins) flirting with ex-lover now neighbor Graham Purvis (played by Paddy Considine) is as engaging and funny a storyline as Oliver's pursuit. Roberts plays his protagonist with a lot of emotion and energy—and Paige has equal depth and vulnerabilities.

So coming of age never had such a grown up style or approach. This film goes for the laughs but doesn't do so on the cheap. The humor is subtle at times, but never so subtle that you're not laughing along. This film is proof that comedy does not have to be taken from a dumpster of adolescent humor. It's as intelligent and moving as it is funny, and you don't have to stoop to get it. The summer movies are out! What have you seen lately? Drop me a line capemayfilm@hotmail.com if there's been something that has impressed (or disappointed) you at the box office.