



BOWIE: STARMAN AND THE SILVER SCREEN

Basquiat

Artist Julian Schnabel's directorial debut is a star-studded biopic of Jean-Michel Basquiat, a gifted and prolific painter and street artist who died at the age of 27 after an exceptional rise through the New York art scene in the 1980s. Bowie plays Andy Warhol, whom he was fascinated with and dedicated a song to him on his fourth album *Hunky Dory*. Other cast members include Gary Oldman, Christopher Walken, Courtney Love, Dennis Hopper and Willem Dafoe.

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This first feature film by painter Julian Schnabel is as much an evocative thesis on creativity as a sensitive biography of a single artist. At times *Basquiat* evokes Schnabel's own imagination more than Jean-Michel Basquiat's. There is, for example, only a loose factual account offered of Basquiat's artistic development – his progression from his 'Samo' spray-painting graffiti phase to more complex paintings and art objects. Biography is not strictly this film's primary concern: it wants to transcend the narrow confines of realism exemplified by Vincente Minnelli's Van Gogh biopic *Lust for Life*.

For all its anomalies, *Basquiat* nonetheless feels majestic and confident. Basquiat's irreverent charisma, his emotional dependency and his wilful self-destructiveness are sensitively expressed through Jeffrey Wright's performance. Particularly distinctive is the repertoire of poses and movements Wright evolves to capture Basquiat's aloof coquettishness – his floaty, camp shuffling as he walks through New York streets, or his slow, intricate hand gestures. Through Wright's performance Schnabel also offers here a eulogy to the physicality of Basquiat's brash artistic talent. We see him obsessively spraying hip-hop *haikus* on dilapidated walls or (with a cursory nod towards Scorsese's 'Life Lessons' segment of *New York Stories*) executing his first sprawling painting after being given a studio space by Nosei, splashing vibrant colour onto an unwieldy, loose canvas on the floor to the accompaniment of music by Tom Waits, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.

This is a bold, often beautiful film, and when the focus is on Basquiat's visual imagination, Schnabel absents his *auteurist* self and serves his subject far better. The image one comes away with is of Basquiat towards the end of his life. Already spiralling out of control, he stands astride Benny's jeep, triumphantly waving and grinning, dressed in pyjamas and clogs inscribed with the word 'Titanic'. *Basquiat* works best when, as here, Schnabel celebrates his protagonist's infectious, childish, alienated vibrancy.

Stella Bruzzi, *Sight and Sound*, April 1997

BASQUIAT

Director: Julian Schnabel
Production Companies: Eleventh Street Productions, Miramax Films
Executive Producers: Peter Brant, Joseph Allen, Michiyo Yoshizaki
Producers: Jon Kilik, Sigurjón Sighvatsson, Randy Ostrow
Co-producer: Lech J. Majewski
Unit Production Manager: Adam Brightman
Production Co-ordinators: Dawn Murphy Riley, Sirad Balducci
Location Manager: Lys Hopper
Location Co-ordinator: Greg Schnabel
Post-production Supervisors: Michael A. Jackman, Desirée Jellerette
1st Assistant Director: Jonathan Starch
2nd Assistant Director: Lisa Janowski
Casting: Sheila Jaffe, Georgianne Walken
Screenplay: Julian Schnabel
Based on a story by: Lech J. Majewski, John Bowe
Story Developed by: Michael Thomas Holman
Director of Photography: Ron Fortunato
Camera/Steadicam Operator: Andrew W. Casey
Visual Effects Supervisor: Randy Balsmeyer
Editor: Michael Berenbaum
Production Designer: Dan Leigh
Art Director: C.J. Simpson
Set Decorator: Susan Bode
Additional Set Decorator: Chris Frankenberger
Storyboard Artist: Brick Mason
Costume Designer: John Dunn
Wardrobe Supervisors: Mark Burchard, Barrett Hong
Key Make-up Artist: Jennifer Aspinall
Additional Make-up Artist: Nina Port
Key Hairstylist: Wayne Herndon
Additional Hairstylist: Mary D'Angelo
Hair Consultant: Yuseff
Titles/Optical Effects: János O. Pilenyi
Optical Effects: Balsmeyer & Everett Inc
Digital Opticals/Titles: Cineric Inc
Music: John Cale, Julian Schnabel
Additional Music: Bill Laswell
Arranger: David Soldier
Music Supervisor: Susan Jacobs
Music Editor: Patrick Mullins
Recording Engineer: John Wall
Music Consultant: Michael Lang
Sound Mixer: Allan Byer
Additional Sound Mixer: Tom Nelson
Re-recording Mixer: Dominick Tavella
Supervising Sound Editor: Ira Spiegel
Dialogue Editors: Louis Bertini, Bitty O'Sullivan-Smith
ADR Engineers: David Bolton, Peter Waggoner
ADR UK Editor: John Poyner
ADR LA Editor: Randy Vandergrift
Foley Artist: Brian Vancho
Foley Recordist: George A. Lara
Stunt Co-ordinator: Jeff Ward
Fine Art Co-ordinator: Greg Bogin

Cast

David Bowie (*Andy Warhol*)
Dennis Hopper (*Bruno Bischofberger*)
Gary Oldman (*Albert Milo*)
Jeffrey Wright (*Jean-Michel Basquiat*)
Benicio del Toro (*Benny Dalmau*)
Claire Forlani (*Gina Cardinale*)
Michael Wincott (*Rene Ricard*)
Parker Posey (*Mary Boone*)
Elina Löwensohn (*Annina Nosei*)
Paul Bartel (*Henry Geldzahler*)
Courtney Love (*Big Pink*)
Tatum O'Neal (*Cynthia Kruger*)
Christopher Walken (*the interviewer*)
Willem Dafoe (*the electrician*)
Jean Claude Lamarre (*Steve 'Shenge'*)
Chuck Pfeifer (*Tom Kruger*)
Rockets Redglare (*Rockets*)
Esther G. Schnabel (*Esther Milo*)
Jack Schnabel (*Jack Milo*)
Lola Schnabel (*Jacqueline Milo*)
Peter McGough (*himself*)
David McDermott (*himself*)
Michael Chow (*Mr Chow*)
Stella Schnabel (*Stella Milo*)
Steven Randazzo (*maitre d' at Ballato's*)
Michael Badalucco (*counterman at deli*)
Francis Dumaurier (*Giorgio*)
Joseph R. Gannascoli (*guard at hospital*)
Hope Clarke (*Matilde*)
Brian Wright (*young Jean-Michel*)
Tarmo Urb (*Lech*)
Denise Burse (*Mary on TV*)
Robert Alexander (*band guy*)
Vincent Laresca (*Vincent*)
Nemo (*Nemo*)
Leonard Jackson (*Jean-Michel's father*)
Dave Shelley (*photographer*)
Frederick Weller (*Frank*)
Rene Rivera (*Juan*)
Sam Rockwell, Ron Brice (*thugs*)
William Seymour (*Mr Chow's maitre d'*)
Richard Butler, Joe Glasco, Steven Parenago, Vladamir Parenago,
Jose Luis Ferrer, Irene Kiss, Richard The Ox (*medieval villagers*)
Olatz Maria Schnabel (*Christine*)*
Paul Outlaw (*Paul*)*
Linda Larkin (*fan*)*
Julie Araskog (*Julie*)*
Isabella Rossellini (*woman at party*)*
Vincent Gallo *

USA 1996

107 mins

* Uncredited

+ Inside Cinema: David Bowie (Wed 5 Jan only)

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