



MEMBER PICKS

Little Miss Sunshine

'This is one of the first films I remember watching... It's full of heart, deliriously funny, and the cast is superb'

Claire Cho, BFI member

When the Hoover family discover that young Olive (Abigail Breslin) has qualified for the Little Miss Sunshine beauty pageant they all jump in their yellow van and begin an 800-mile road trip from New Mexico to California, with only two days to get there. Screenwriter Michael Arndt's sparkling debut features rounded characters and a delicately balanced tragi-comic edge.

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A dark, ironic tone is struck at the outset of *Little Miss Sunshine*, as footage of a chronically depressed man in hospital plays over the title. It transpires that protagonist Frank is a failed suicide, a fact that establishes early on the themes of success and failure that run throughout the movie. As Frank reluctantly embarks on a road trip from Albuquerque to the Little Miss Sunshine pageant in California with his sister's family, seven-year-old competitor Olive dreams of winning the beauty parade, while her father, Richard, is obsessed with his 'nine steps to success' motivational programme. Richard's son, Dwayne, meanwhile, is so fixated with getting into flight school, he's refusing to speak until he's accepted. Equally ambitious, Frank tried to pay the ultimate price for failing to woo a young male student and win the title of No. 1 Proust scholar (both, crushingly, went to his competitor). Over the course of the road trip, each member of the family has something to learn about accepting human failings and adjusting their goals.

But such messages are delivered relatively subtly, playing second fiddle to the film's driving force: black comedy. While stressed mother Sheryl and sweet-natured Olive generally play the foils, their male relatives are strong comic figures. Subversive Grandpa is a heroin-snorting rebel who's been thrown out of his retirement village and advises Dwayne to sleep with as many women as possible. Dwayne's vow of silence takes the stock type of the sullen, silent teenager to a ridiculous extreme. He offers up choice words to his uncle via a notepad: 'I hate everyone,' he responds when asked who he hangs out with, angrily underlining the word 'everyone' when Frank queries this. Manically positive, Richard is in comic juxtaposition to his father and son, as well as his mournful, intellectual brother-in-law, who infuriates him by flooring his arguments in a single sentence. The perfect casting makes for some exceptionally confident comedy.

The most pertinent and challenging comic theme is that of society's attitude to sexuality. Unlike Grandpa, most of the small-town American characters encountered see sex as shameful but exciting. At the Little Miss Sunshine pageant, the pre-pubescent girls are caked in make-up and pose provocatively on stage, leading Richard to furrow his brow in concern and comical disbelief (an expression that immediately renders him more sympathetic). A striptease performed by Olive is both more innocent and more openly sexual (we're to presume it derives from her coach Grandpa's experiences with strippers). It's arguably less sinister than the knowing,

teasing preening of her competitors, yet it's still the focus of collective moral outrage. As the family join Olive on stage for a hilarious, uplifting finale, the film embraces Olive's naivety in all its messy, misguided glory, exposing beauty pageants for their implicitly dangerous hypocrisy.

The subversive, anti-glamour stance is supported by the grainy look and wobbly shots of the cinematography, which mimics the appearance of documentary footage – perhaps no great surprise from a directing team known for their music documentaries. *Little Miss Sunshine* is unmistakably an indie comedy, but with its accessible humour and universal themes, it's one that surpasses many of its Hollywood contemporaries and deserves to be a cult hit.

Anna Smith, *Sight & Sound*, October 2006

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE

Directed by: Jonathan Dayton, Valerie Faris
©: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation
Production Companies: Big Beach Productions, Bona Fide Productions
Presented by: Fox Searchlight Pictures
Presented in association with: Big Beach Productions
Executive Producers: Jeb Brody, Michael Beugg
Produced by: Albert Berger, Ron Yerxa, Marc Turtletaub, David T. Friendly, Peter Saraf
Associate Producer: Bart Lipton
Big Beach Production Executive: Sara Pollack
Big Beach Finance Executive: Jennifer Freed
Unit Production Manager: Michael Beugg
Production Supervisor: Bob Dohrmann
Production Co-ordinator: Michyl-Shannon Quilty
Production Accountant: Mike Revell
Location Manager: Chris Miller
1st Assistant Director: Thomas Patrick Smith
Script Supervisors: Lyn Matsuda-Norton, Suzanne C. Swindle
Casting: Kim Davis-Wagner, Justine Baddeley
Casting (Associate): Cate Engel
Casting (Voice): Barbara Harris
Written by: Michael Arndt
Director of Photography: Tim Suhrstedt
A Camera Operator: Jeffrey P. Greeley
B Camera Operator/ Steadicam Operator: Larry 'Doc' Karman
Gaffer: Paul W. Mcilvaine
Key Grip: Paul H. Goodstein
Still Photographer: Eric Lee
Edited by: Pamela Martin
Production Designer: Kalina Ivanov
Art Director: Alan E. Muraoka
Set Decorator: Melissa Levander
Property Master: Tony Bonaventura
Costumes Designed by: Nancy Steiner
Costume Supervisor: Robin McMullan
Key Costumer: Jennifer Starzyk
Costumer: Lisa Hyde
Department Head Make-up: Torsten Witte
Key Make-up: Angel Radefeld
Department Head Hair: Janis Clark
Key Hairstylists: Susan Carol-Schwary, 'Dugg' Kirkpatrick
Music Composed by: Mychael Danna
Featuring Music by: Devotchka
Additional Performance Music by: Tony Tisdale
Music Supervisors: Susan Jacobs, Anne Litt
Music Editor: Josh Winget
Music Recorded/Mixed by: Brad Haehnel
Score Recorded by: Devotchka
Choreography: Marguerite Derricks
Sound Mixer: Steven A. Morrow
Boom Operator: Craig Dollinger

Re-recording Mixers: Rick Ash, Terry Rodman
Supervising Sound Editors: Andrew DeCristofaro, Stephen P. Robinson
Dialogue Editor: John C. Stuver
Sound Effects Editor: Steven F. Nelson
ADR Mixers: Ron Bedrosian, Bob Deschaine, Greg Steele
ADR Editor: Nancy Kyong Nugent
Foley Artists: Greg Barbanell, Diane Marshall
Foley Mixer: Lucy Sustar
Foley Editor: Kerry Ann Carmean
Stunt Co-ordinator: Tom Robinson Harper
Pageant Consultant: Rita Alaman
Post-production Consulting by EPC: Joe Fineman
Unit Publicity: Insignia Inc., Erik Bright, Jesse Salka

Cast

Greg Kinnear (*Richard Hoover*)
Toni Collette (*Sheryl Hoover*)
Steve Carell (*Frank*)
Paul Dano (*Dwayne Hoover*)
Abigail Breslin (*Olive Hoover*)
Alan Arkin (*Grandpa Hoover*)
Marc Turtletaub (*doctor 1*)
Jill Talley (*Cindy*)
Brenda Canela (*diner waitress*)
Julio Oscar Mechoso (*mechanic*)
Chuck Loring (*convenience store proprietor*)
Justin Shilton (*Josh*)
Gordon Thomson (*Larry Sugarman*)
Steven Christopher Parker (*teen boy 1*)
Bryan Cranston (*Stan Grossman*)
John Walcutt (*doctor 2*)
Paula Newsome (*Linda*)
Dean Norris (*State Trooper McCleary*)
Beth Grant (*pageant official Jenkins*)
Wallace Langham (*Kirby*)
Lauren Shiohama (*Miss California*)
Mary Lynn Rajs kub (*pageant assistant Pam*)
Jerry Giles (*funeral home worker*)
Geoff Meed (*biker dad*)
Matt Winston (*pageant MC*)
Joan Scheckel (*judge*)
Casandra Ashe (*girl in hallway*)
Mel Rodriguez (*Officer Martinez*)
Alexandria Alaman, Alissa Anderegg, Brittany Baird, Cambria Baird, Brenae Bandy, Kristen Holaas, Maliah Hudson, Destry Jacobs, Lindsey Jordan, Shane Murphy, Annabelle Roberts, Sydni Stevenson-Love, Nicole Stoehr, Lauren Yee (*pageant contestants*)

USA 2006
102 mins

REGULAR PROGRAMME

Experimenta: Lensing the Landscape: River Yar + discussion with artists William Raban and Chris Welsby

Wed 18 May 18:15

Terror Vision: Ms .45 (AKA Angel of Vengeance)

Fri 27 May 18:30

Relaxed Screening: Frequencies (AKA OXV: The Manual) + intro and discussion

Mon 30 May 18:10

Projecting the Archive: Idol of Paris + intro by Josephine Botting, BFI Curator

Tue 31 May 18:15

NEW RELEASES

The Northman

From 22 April

Ennio

From 22 April

Firebird

From 22 April

We're All Going to the World's Fair

From 29 April

The Velvet Queen: Snow Leopard

From 6 May

Vortex

Tue 10 May 18:00 Preview + intro by Gaspar Noé

From Fri 13 May

The Quiet Girl

From Sat 21 May

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

The Umbrellas of Cherbourg (Les Parapluies de Cherbourg)

Tue 17 May 20:50; Sat 28 May 18:15

Cleo from 5 to 7 (Cléo de 5 à 7)

Wed 18 May 18:10 + intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large

The Incredible Shrinking Man

Thu 19 May 14:30; Tue 31 May 18:20

Journey to Italy (Viaggio in Italia)

Thu 19 May 18:10; Wed 25 May 20:50; Fri 27 May 18:20

Daughters of the Dust

Fri 20 May 14:40; Thu 26 May 20:40

Tokyo Story (Tokyo Monogatari)

Sat 21 May 11:10; Wed 25 May 18:00

The Long Day Closes

Sun 22 May 12:30; Thu 26 May 20:50

Still Walking (Aruitemo aruitemo)

Mon 23 May 20:45

A Farewell to Arms

Tue 24 May 20:50

The Miracle Worker

Sun 29 May 11:20

Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans

Mon 30 May 18:20

RE-RELEASES

Croupier

From Wed 4 May

Vampyr

Thu 5 May Preview 18:15; Mon 23 May 14:00 Seniors' Matinee + discussion

From Fri 20 May

Cabaret

From Fri 6 May

Get Carter + The Frighteners: The Manipulators

Mon 30 May 18:00 + intro by Douglas Weir, BFI Technical Delivery Manager

From Fri 27 May

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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

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