

‘The Smell of Us’: Venice Review

Kids do nothing a lot of substance, although there’s loads of intercourse and substance abuse

VENICE — **Larry Clark** does Paris within the oddly named if in any other case largely acquainted *The Smell of Us* (one hopes the title isn’t a touch upon French hygiene). This is principally a Francophone *Kids*, with solely barely extra physique hair and with teen prostitution changing HIV. Oodles of very specific sexual content material, arduous consuming and drug use will hold D.J. youngsters from seeing *Smell* in cinemas, ought to a stateside distributor decide this up, although a nicely-publicized VOD premiere appears extra possible. That means, previous voyeurs and randy kids alike can take pleasure in this impressionistic and downright miserable story of adolescent sexuality from the consolation of their very own houses, ought to they so want.

Clark’s earlier movie, 2012’s *Marfa Girl*, which was distributed solely on-line, was set within the sleepy, solar-drenched Texas city of the title. With the teeming metropolis of gray-skied Paris as its backdrop, as an alternative of the Lone Star State, the frames of *The Smell of Us* are naturally extra densely full of individuals. On prime of that, cinematographer **Helene Louvart**’s frequent shut-ups recommend each intimacy and a way that there’s no private area or privateness in both the large metropolis or the twenty first century, the place the whole lot’s continuously captured on video telephones and small cameras (footage of each is threaded into what passes for the narrative all through).

The screenplay is credited — “was written” could be overstating the case — to **Scribe**, the pen-identify of 24-yr-previous Frenchman **Mathieu Landais**, in addition to Clark. However, there’s a way that a lot of the scenes have been improvised on the go, and the present edit isn’t held collectively by a storyline as a lot as the truth that a number of individuals occur to seem in a single multiple scene. About half the movie is over earlier than audiences even get to know the names of a few of the youngsters they see, always engaged in nothing a lot of substance — although there’s loads of substance abuse.

The most arresting presence of the group of skaters and lease boys Clark follows

seems to be referred to as Math (**Lukas Ionesco**), brief for Mathias. He's acquired the options of a nicely-mannered Roman aristocrat, topped by a head of angelic, blondish curls. He's additionally very conscious of his attract, milking his seems for money by sleeping with wealthy older males. They're clearly turned on by his ephebic physique, with its mild dusting of physique hair that means he'll quickly flip into a person, so this could be the final cease earlier than his lack of innocence. Of course, in actuality, that innocence has been gone for ages, although it is by no means fairly clear what has changed it or why Math does what he does (he does not precisely reside on the road).

Dark-haired beanpole M.G. (**Hugo Behar-Thinieres**) ceaselessly hangs out with Math and in addition turns tips. But the explanations behind his conduct, which emerge piecemeal from solely vaguely related scenes, are very totally different, since he's desperately in love together with his buddy. That's strictly one-sided, nevertheless, as Math, who's described by his semi-incestuous mom (**Dominique Frot**) as "too egocentric to have any pals," is simply "homosexual pour le money," as he himself so heartlessly places it.

That's about it when it comes to story, although the movie additionally follows different members of their posse, who all come to skateboard and hand around in entrance of the Palais de Tokyo and its twin constructing, the Museum of Modern Art. None of the individuals right here appear to have numerous self-value or a developed sense of ethical judgment, not to mention any curiosity in artwork, in order that they pay zero consideration to each the numerous artwork-loving guests that move them by or the world's incessantly drunk homeless man that the kids have nicknamed Rockstar — there's even a supposedly provocative shot of the clochard's crotch because the wets himself — who seems to be suspiciously like Clark on an particularly dangerous day. Clark's *Bully* star **Michael Pitt** additionally seems, uncredited, as a scruffy busker.

What the sequences of all these kids, clearly adrift in an amoral void, all add as much as is open to debate. A fast shot of Math crying on the shoulder of a colleague after servicing a shopper suggests he may need a flicker of an internal life in any case and a disturbing sequence together with his grotesquely screechy mom hints at extreme unresolved points at residence (they're particularly resonant when one realizes Lukas is the son of **Eva Ionesco**, whose troubles together with her well-known

photographer mom have been the topic of her biographical function *My Little Princess*, with **Isabelle Hupert** because the mom).

There's additionally a particularly odd sequence by which an older bearded male feels up half-bare, dripping-with-sweat kids at a rave and not one of the dancing boys appear to actually thoughts. When the pumping diegetic music is changed by soothing indie rock and the pictures decelerate, there's virtually a way that the director, who's seventy one, has launched this determine as a type of perverse touch upon the very fact he hasn't stopped eyeing up bare youths because the starting of his profession as a photographer again in Tulsa.

As is usually the case with Clark, there's no try to elucidate something, solely the will to movie what's there, proper now and on the floor. Indeed, very similar to the characters within the movie, part of the viewers may really feel merely numbed after being uncovered to a lot intercourse, violence, medicine and basic apathy.

Absent a story throughline, most of the photographs are stitched collectively by the just about fixed stream of loud and punchy songs on the soundtrack, a lot of it from the hand of **Jonathan Velasquez**, one of many leads from Clark's *Wassup Rockers*.

Production corporations: Morgane Production, Polaris Film Production & Finance, Polyester, Wild Bunch

Cast: Lukas Ionesco, Diane Rouxel, Theo Cholbi, Hugo Behar-Thinieres, Rayan Ben Yaiche, Adrien Binh Doan, Dominique Frot, Philippe Rigot, Michael Pitt,

Director: Larry Clark

Screenplay: Scribe, Larry Clark

Producer: Gerard Lacroix, Christophe Mazodier, Pierre-Paul Puljiz

Director of images: Helene Louvart

Production designer: Natalia Brilli

Editor: Marion Monnier

Music: Howard Paar

Sales: Wild Bunch

No score, 87 minutes