



## julien donkey-boy

**Harmony Korine**

USA, 1999

94 minutes ■ Colour/35mm  
 Production Company: **Independent Pictures/Forensic/391 Films**  
 Producer: **Cary Woods, Scott Macaulay, Robin O'Hara**  
 Screenplay: **Harmony Korine**  
 Cinematographer: **Anthony Dod Mantle**  
 Editor: **Valdis Oskarsdottir**  
 Sound: **Brian Miksis**  
 Principal Cast: **Ewen Bremner, Chloe Sevigny, Werner Herzog, Evan Neumann, Joyce Korine, Chrissy Kobylak, Alvin Law**

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Harmony Korine is for real. After his masterpiece *Gummo* was roasted by a confused and unadventurous critical establishment, the film became a cult hit around the world, proving that his art was eminently accessible and at the apex of cool. Yet, Korine is a radical whose cinematic project will have aesthetic repercussions for years to come. Rejecting both the anti-narrative principles of experimental cinema and the clichés of Hollywood narrative, he has restated and amplified his ideas; it was this kind of non-linear storytelling that made *Gummo* such an intriguing and satisfying work. He is also a provocateur, challenging audiences with politically tough images that are meant to offend those who cannot see their place in his vision. He is, finally, the future of American Cinema.

*Julien donkey-boy* is a companion work to *Gummo*, especially in Korine's choice of central character. Assisted by an astonishing and courageous performance by Ewen Bremner from *Trainspotting*, Korine has created Julien, an adult who expresses himself as a child and sees the resolution of his problems in child-like ways. How this disorients our relationship to him is similar to our revulsion at the faux adult behaviour of *Gummo*'s kids.

Julien is a difficult character to sit with; he is a jabbering know-it-all abused by his over-the-top, wrestling-obsessed German father (the extraordinary Werner Herzog), hated and ignored by his quiet, serious brother and faced with the enigmatic consequences

of his relationship with Pearl, his sister. He has none of the usual self-censoring functions that "normal" human beings employ and so becomes increasingly alienated from those around him until he experiences the early symptoms of schizophrenia.

*Julien* is a beautifully realized film. As its various strands weave slowly together, the impending sense of horror the film evokes forces us to rethink all of our assumptions about the strange characters whose lives we have entered. They become us, human beings not quite capable of resolving love loss and life's other mysteries into a coherent whole.

*Julien* has recently been declared a "Dogme" project by the Danish arbiters of such things. And, while it certainly stands with *The Celebration* and *The Idiots* as a socially confrontational and immediate work of film, it delves so much deeper into the inner workings of cinema as to render this association nearly meaningless.

■ **Noah Cowan**

**Harmony Korine** was born in Bolinas, California in 1974. At the age of 19, he wrote the screenplay for Larry Clark's *Kids* (95). His first film was the critically acclaimed *Gummo* (97). *Julien donkey-boy* (99) is his second feature film.

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