



## Paranoid Park

Gus Van Sant

FRANCE, 2007  
English

90 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: MK2

Producer: Marin Karmitz,

Nathanaël Karmitz

Screenplay: Gus Van Sant, based on  
the novel by Blake Nelson

Cinematographer: Christopher Doyle,  
Rain Kathy Li

Editor: Gus Van Sant

Production Designer: John Pearson-Denning

Sound: Leslie Shatz

Principal Cast: Gabe Nevins, Dan Liu,  
Jake Miller, Taylor Momsen,  
Lauren McKinney

Production: MK2, 55 rue Traversière,  
75012 Paris, France.

T (33-1) 4467-3011 F (33-1) 4307-2963  
birgit.kemner@mk2.com

### CONTACT INFORMATION

US Distributor: IFC Films

International Sales Agent: MK2

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*Paranoid Park* feels like a provocative continuation of Gus Van Sant's recent, extraordinary trilogy of films: *Gerry*, *Elephant* and *Last Days*. This new work shares with them a fragmentary, ethereal quality: they are modest enterprises, trading on quiet nuance and atmosphere; they resist direct analysis but form coherent narrative units. As we begin considering them as a whole, the films show more and more moments of intersection, languidly yielding hard-won truths about the nature of hope and fear, especially as they relate to the inner lives of young men in the modern world. It appears that Van Sant is creating a sprawling, ambitious work about the human condition, one stealthy chapter at a time.

On paper, *Paranoid Park* is robustly narrative. A teenaged boy and his friend check out a mythologized skate park. The youth's attraction to its culture of punkish freedom and the hypnotic rhythms of ball bearings on concrete lead him into a fast friendship with a low-life anarchist. Something horrific happens at the nearby railyards, and suddenly our young man is at the centre of a criminal investigation. But what crime did he commit, if any?

It sounds positively generic. And Van Sant respects the expectations of a crime film: he sweats out both the audience and the boy, Alex (Gabe Nevins), as his connection to the case is made clear. But information and action do not arrive in linear form; rather, Van Sant puts forth the boy's ideas, his panic, fragments of action, voiced memories and lots of skating. These elements drift around us, sometimes connecting easily, sometimes requiring intuition to resolve

the conflict within Alex. It is a sophisticated work, beautifully edited and with impressive respect for its audience's intelligence.

Although it nestles comfortably into Van Sant's recent work, *Paranoid Park* also represents a rich collaboration among three artists. The source material for the film is a Blake Nelson book, a teen novel from the cultural inheritor of S. E. Hinton and a keen observer of contemporary American youth culture. It boasts the cinematography of the ridiculously talented Christopher Doyle, whose fluid camera style is adapted here to reproduce with great authenticity the expectant rush of skateboarding, while more static framing outside that closed, youthful world reinforces the isolation Alex feels from everyone outside his meaningful subculture.

■ Noah Cowan



Gus Van Sant was born in Louisville, Kentucky. His films include *Mala Noche* (85), *Drugstore Cowboy* (89), *My Own Private Idaho* (91), *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* (93), *To Die For* (95), *Good Will Hunting* (97), *Psycho* (98), *Gerry* (02), *Elephant* (03), which won the Palme d'Or and the best director prize at the Cannes Film Festival, *Last Days* (05), *Chacun son cinéma* (segment, 07) and *Paranoid Park* (07), which earned him the 60th Anniversary Award at the Cannes Film Festival.

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