



Wassup Rockers

Larry Clark

USA, 2005

English, Spanish

111 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **Glass Key**

Executive Producer: **Sharon Stone,**

Patrick Meehan

Producer: **Henry Winterstern,**

Kevin Turen

Screenplay: **Larry Clark**

Cinematographer: **Steve Gainer**

Editor: **Alex Blatt**

Production Designer: **John Demeo**

Sound: **Steve Weiss**

Music: **Harry Cody**

Principal Cast: **Jonathan Velasquez,**
Francisco Pedrasa, Milton Velasquez,
Usvaldo Panameno, Eddie Velasquez

Print Source: **Capital Entertainment,**
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Larry Clark's most famous photographs have captured that contradictory, uncertain moment of young adulthood when boys feel they must begin to act like men. Menacing and diminutive, timid and overconfident, his subjects consistently intrigue those interested in the human condition. Clark has certainly showcased these young men in his films as well, but has situated them as characters within layers of traditional narrative rather than making their inner lives his artistic focus.

In its immediacy and intimacy, *Wassup Rockers* comes much closer to Clark's photographs, especially his collection "The Perfect Childhood." Less interested in narrative than his previous films, it nonetheless shares their pointed moments of provocation and social comment.

The film concerns a gang of skaters, refugees from El Salvador – although everyone thinks they're Mexican – who live in South Central LA. They are hassled in their neighbourhood because they don't identify with hip hop, preferring instead tight pants, black T-shirts and hardcore punk music that owes much to earlier Latino bands like Suicidal Tendencies. The leader of the gang is shy, sweet Jonathan, (Jonathan Velasquez) very much a teenager, a charmer with the ladies and lead singer of their band.

Much of the first half of the film is observational, watching the guys skate, rock and flirt with girls. In the second half, they board an endless series of buses to visit a legendary

staircase in Beverly Hills that is *the* cool place to skate. Once there, trouble starts: first with the law, then with two girls attracted by their exotic appearance – that is, until their boy-friends show up. The guys end up fleeing, trying to escape via a maze of backyards but finding trouble, some of it violent, at every turn. The film's coda, detailing the long trip home, is unflinching poetic.

Throughout the Beverly Hills sequence, the boys are respectful and never mean to the freaky socialites, crazy WASPs and fashion queens that casually prey upon them, which makes the incidental violence engendered by their presence all the more ironic. The boys' attitude is summed up by Jonathan's insouciant T-shirt slogan: "Wassup Haters?" Indeed.

■ Noah Cowan

Larry Clark presents William Eggleston's Stranded in Canton in the Festival's Dialogues: Talking with Pictures series this year.

Larry Clark was born in Tulsa and studied at the Layton School of Art in Milwaukee. He began to take photos at a young age and has since published several books of photography including "Tulsa" (71), "Teenage Lust" (83) and "The Perfect Childhood" (95). His feature films are *Kids* (95), *Another Day in Paradise* (98), *Bully* (01), *Ken Park* (co-director, 02), which screened as part of the Festival's inaugural Visions programme, and *Wassup Rockers* (05).