

Delirious (2006)

USA

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PARK CITY -- [Delirious](#) is not the first film to lampoon the absurdity of and obsession with celebrity culture, but writer/director [Tom DiCillo](#)'s smart, funny and ultimately over-the-top spoof is more often than not, spot on. His latest effort would have been more satisfying if it had the subtlety and restraint of [Living in Oblivion](#), whose sly sophistication helped make DiCillo a cult hero to indie filmmakers.

Given that DiCillo has a loyal following and that a solid, well-written comedy is a hot commodity, [Delirious](#) should have strong art house potential and appeal to a young, hip audience.

DiCillo wrote the lead for [Steve Buscemi](#), at his pale and haggard best here. He plays Les, a sour, frustrated paparazzi, who lives in a dump of an apartment in New York. Into his life waltzes Toby (Michael Pitt), a homeless aspiring actor, whom Les tutors in the tricks of his trade and allows to crash at his pad, which is decorated by sorry examples of taxidermy mounted on the peeling walls.

Les takes himself way too seriously -- more self-appointed philosopher than photographer -- and is bereft of self-knowledge. This set-up works best when it's played for laughs with Pitt as straight man. The film falters when the budding friendship turns melodramatic and comes in for some amateur psychological analysis. Buscemi is forced to overact in a shrill role that requires him to carp and harangue far too often. It's grating and soon the pair sounds like a bickering married couple.

Toby begins an unlikely romance with a Paris Hilton/Britney Spears wannabe, K'harma ([Alison Lohman](#)), a talent-free girlish sexpot who is famous for being famous. When not singing and dancing in her underwear in a music video, she sits in her hotel wearing that underwear and shades. DiCillo has a lot of fun with this character and the romance -- [Elvis Costello](#) shows up as one of K'harma's party guests -- and Toby is showered in rose petals as he stands outside her hotel. Then he's compelled to hug the doorman. When Les finds out about the affair, he reacts like a jilted lover.

With obvious relish, DiCillo sends up dueling publicists, sycophants of all stripes including the fawning, entertainment press and those bottom feeders, the paparazzi. The reality show that stars a homeless serial killer, where Toby gets his big break, is priceless.

Frank G. DeMarco's edgy cinematography conjures the grungy urban wilderness of NYC as well as the glitzy fantasy world of the rich and famous. Teresa Mastropierro's production design nails the squalor of lower class city life and the sterile luxury of the newly moneyed.

DiCillo and his composer, [Anton Sanko](#), make terrific use of music to drive and cut between scenes. The score rocks the movie.

Delirious

Peace Arch Films Ltd, Peace Arch Entertainment Group

Credits: Director: Tom DiCillo; Writer: Tom DiCillo; Producer: Bob Salerno; Executive producer: [Mark Balsam](#), Jimmy de Brabant, [Michael Dounaev](#), [John Flock](#), [Gary Howsam](#), Jennifer Levine, Kami Nagudi, [Barry Zemel](#), Lewin Webb; Director of photography: Frank G. DeMarco Production designer: Teresa Mastropierro; Music: Anton Sanko; Co-producer: [Kristi Lake](#), Jamie H. Zelsermyer; Costume designer: Victoria Farrell; Editor: Paul Zucker; Cast: Les: Steve Buscemi; Toby: Michael Pitt; Kharma: Alison Lohman; Manager: Gina Gershon.