

Triumph of the Candy Girl

Exorcising demons: Diablo Cody says her film, *Juno*, is a 90-minute apology to an ex



FILM INTERVIEW

From stripper to Oscar nominee: Juno's scriptwriter Diablo Cody tells her remarkable story

With a name like Diablo, it's tempting to think there's something of the Devil in Miss Cody. Certainly, you have to wonder if this 29-year-old Chicago native has sold her soul for success: an ex-stripper and phone-sex operator, her debut script, teen pregnancy comedy *Juno*, has seen her nominated for a Golden Globe, Bafta and an Oscar and has so far grossed \$100million in the US. Now fielding calls from the likes of Steven Spielberg, it's amazing to think that five years ago she was revealing her sex-industry exploits on blog Pussy Ranch.

► **When you strip, you take on a different persona... It gave me a place to hide out and figure out who I was** ◀

'I think I may be the only accidental screenwriter in Hollywood,' she laughs. Approached to pen a script by producer Mason Novick, who had been impressed by her blog, she initially refused. 'I was at a point where I didn't want to try anything I could fail at,' she says. But after publishing her first book, *Candy Girl: A Year In The Life Of An Unlikely Stripper*, Cody resolved to write *Juno*.

The result is an acerbic comedy about the titular teen (Ellen Page) who gets pregnant while still at school and decides to give the baby up for adoption. Though she has never had a baby, Cody notes the story was inspired by a friend who fell pregnant as a teenager. 'That was a difficult thing for us to get through as friends. She was grappling with a grown-up issue and I didn't really understand.'

Cody, whose real name is Brooke Bussey-Hunt, says writing the script was 'my way of exorcising demons', referring to *Juno's*

relationship with the father of her child, Paulie (Michael Cera). 'People think of the pregnancy being the major plot point,' she says. 'For me, it was the chance to work out issues about a relationship I had in high school. The movie is a 90-minute apology to this guy, so it feels good.'

But what's refreshing is that *Juno* is no Paris Hilton wannabe. 'I was not part of the modern teen culture where the biggest concern is who has the latest cellphone,' says Cody. 'I can't imagine having those concerns as a teenager.' Raised in a middle-class Catholic family, Cody says she led a sheltered existence in her teens, though compared to her practical parents she was 'always a black sheep', in particular when she started stripping.

'I think I had some minor psychotic break,' she says. 'I turned 24 and realised I was officially an adult. I could no longer

use adolescence as an excuse for my behaviour. I was unable to hold down a job, my personal life was in complete chaos... I was just buckling under the pressure and I lost it one day and started doing that. I think I just wanted to hide. When you strip, you take on a different name and persona. You put on wig and it really is escapism. It gave me a place to hide out and figure out who I was.'

Though Cody recently split from her husband, musician Jon Hunt, it seems she's worked it out now. With horror script *Jennifer's Body* due to go into production, she's also developing TV series *The United States Of Terror* with Spielberg. Cody admits she can't help but be a little excited. 'My mom calls me and says: "Remember, stay grounded!" I'm like: "Why? I've been grounded for 30 years, let me freak out a bit!"' *James Mottram*
Juno (12A) is on general release from Fri

GIG

F**k Buttons

If you're not entirely familiar with the concept of noise rock as a musical subgenre, don't lose too much sleep over it. A loose label at best, we're largely talking wildly avant-garde bands constructing music out of screams, drones, feedback and other antisocial phenomena. Not really everyone's cup of tea, then.

However, just as you'd never have guessed post-rock would spawn a crossover band until Mogwai, so Bristol-formed, London-based F**k Buttons may manage something similar with noise rock.

The screams, drones and feedback are all present, but what Andrew Hung and Benjamin John Power have created with them is astonishing. Due next month, debut album *Street Horrnsing* drags sounds from the abyss and forges them into music of primordial



prettiness. Opener *Sweet Love For Planet Earth* sets the tone: it begins with gently twinkling keyboards, gradually overtaken by a lush thrum of distortion, building and building until vaulting, melodic drones bring it to a climax.

It's not a comparison they'd welcome, but in a way F**k Buttons' music shares a certain something with the widescreen, synth-driven majesty of Joshua Tree-era U2, if more spiritually than sonically. The current live set is essentially a fairly straightforward run-through of *Street Horrnsing*, but that's not to say there's anything sterile about a F**k Buttons gig. Bouncing and

charging between massive banks of electronics, Hung and Power fling themselves about the stage with the enthusiasm this magnificent music deserves. *Andrzej Lukowski*

Tonight, The Maze, 257 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, 8pm, £5, £4 adv. Tel: 0115 947 5650. www.fuckbuttons.co.uk

GIG

Scanners

Maybe it's horribly xenophobic to say so, but it always feels suspect when a British band gets noticed by the Americans before we've clocked them.

After all, for all the wonders of the Web, if a band is living and gigging in the UK, surely we'd see them first? But it would be unfair to write off London quartet *Scanners* as another case of a mediocre, Bush-style band that the US unfathomably decided to take to. In truth, it's a travesty that *Scanners'* debut album, *Violence Is Golden*, only arrives here on February 18, almost two years after its release in the US. Brandishing a noisy but impeccably tuneful wall of post-punk sound, they simply demand your attention on jaw-droppingly bombastic album opener *Joy*. Even the more generic moments of new wavery are shored up by singer Sarah Daly's cracked, PJ Harvey-like whine. Hopefully they're not too bored of their debut yet, because it seems to be about time that *Scanners* got the homecoming they deserve. *AL*



Fri, Junktion 7, 6 Ilkeston Road, Canning Circus, Nottingham, 8pm, £6, £5 adv. Tel: 0115 911 6959. www.scannersmusic.com

DANCE

Magpie

Being an audience member at a contemporary dance show is a bit like eating a bag of Revels: you never really know what you're going to get until you've committed yourself to taking that first bite, after which there's no turning back.

Probe's new production, *Magpie*, will at least give its audience seven different flavours to choose from, as it aims to reinvent the old-time variety show with a programme that consists of three existing pieces and four new commissions. Probe is the brainchild of Antonia Grove and Theo Clinkard, celebrated former members of Rambert and Rafael Bonachela's Dance Company respectively. Grove and Clinkard's vaunted position in the industry is most readily visible in the high calibre of the choreographers whose commissions they will be performing here.

These include the avuncular Stephen Mear, a pillar of the musical-theatre establishment, with work on *Mary Poppins* and many of the Chichester Festival's musicals under his belt, and the



rather more dangerous Mark Bruce, whose 2007 show, *Sea Of Bones*, was a sensory assault filled with wood-painted dancers brandishing severed human heads.

Philip Holyman

Tomorrow, Déda Theatre, Derby Dance, 19 Chapel Street, Derby, 8pm, £10, £8 concs. Tel: 01332 370911. www.probeproject.com