



Juno Temple

DIRTY GIRL

Written and directed by Abe Sylvia
(The Weinstein Company)

In this quirky coming-of-age story, Danielle (Juno Temple) is the self-proclaimed "class whore" of Norman High School in Norman, OK, circa 1987. She's a pretty typical angsty teenager who fights with her mother, idolizes Joan Jett, and fosters a deep longing to find the father she's never met. But Danielle is also a unique character among teenage girls in contemporary films—she's both sexy and sexually confident.

The film opens with her commentary on other high school girls, who, she says, "don't realize they're the ones with all the power." We then see our protagonist stepping out of a car she appears to have just had sex in before heading to class, where she proceeds to interrupt her abstinence-only sex ed teacher with a question about the pullout method. This leads to a trip to the principal's office where she's told, "No one likes a dirty girl."

Danielle's classmate Clarke (Jeremy Dozier) has his own problems. Obese, friendless, and gay, he can usually be found cowering in corners with his hood covering his face. And at home, Clarke's violently homophobic father forces him to attend therapy sessions in hopes of making him straight.

When Danielle's punishment leads to a fateful partnership with Clarke—the two are forced to complete one of those bizarre parenting projects where they have to take care of a bag of flour—an unlikely friendship begins. They run away from home, and embark on an adventure filled with hilarious and profound moments. Along the way, Danielle helps Clarke embrace his identity, and Clarke in turn helps Danielle realize a dream of her own. Set to a fantastic riot grrrl soundtrack, this story of a non-traditional family will melt even the coldest of hearts. [ARIANA ANDERSON]



Alessandro Nivola and Abigail Breslin

JANIE JONES

Written and directed by David M. Rosenthal
(Tribeca Enterprises)

Little Miss Sunshine is growing up! In this family drama, the adept and adorable Abigail Breslin plays 13-year-old Janie Jones, the daughter of a meth-addicted mom (Elizabeth Shue) who takes her to meet her rock star father Ethan for the first time while he's in the middle of a tumultuous tour. Ethan (Alessandro Nivola) isn't exactly clean and sober himself, nor is he excited to learn about his

paternity. But when Janie's mom bolts for rehab during Ethan's concert, leaving Janie there to fend for herself, he's forced to take her on board the tour bus and attempt to parent her amidst the band's melodrama. Stuck in privileged post-adolescence, Ethan has a lot to learn, and Janie, mature for her years, has much to give.

Turns out our heroine is a blossoming musician herself, and she and Ethan slowly get to know each other through the songs that they play and sing, alone and then together. Sure, there are a couple of predictable moments in both plot and dialogue as father and daughter grow closer on the road, and the occasional product placement and reference to Miley Cyrus might make some in the audience cringe. But Breslin and Nivola are fine actors who bring to Janie and Ethan a captivating vulnerability and humanity, not to mention a collection of lovely harmonies. *Janie Jones* is a good flick for the youngster in your life who's taking up guitar lessons, or who might be thinking about it. [ANNA BEAN]



Chloë Grace Moretz

TEXAS KILLING FIELDS

Directed by Ami Canaan Mann
(Anchor Bay Films)

Ami Canaan Mann knows a thing or two about crime thrillers: she began her career as a second unit director on her father Michael Mann's classic cop drama *Heat*, and logged some hours as a writer for the TV shows *NYPD Blue* and *Robbery Homicide Division*. In her second feature film, *Texas Killing Fields*, Mann proves that she, too, has a stamp to put on the

family business.

Inspired by a series of unsolved murders in rural Texas, the film focuses on two officers (Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Sam Worthington) working to catch a serial killer who leaves his victims in a vast stretch of land known as the "killing fields." When another body surfaces outside of their jurisdiction, they enlist the help of a female cop (Jessica Chastain) to help them in their search. Chloë Grace Moretz also stars as Anne, a troubled preteen who may be able to lead them to the murderer.

With such an impressive roster of actors in the cast, it's no surprise that each character delivers intense dialogue and suspenseful action. Jessica Chastain (who was wonderful in *The Tree of Life*) broadens her range as a brassy, determined police officer, a role that should further propel her to "next big thing" status. And as usual, Moretz shows off talent beyond her years.

Texas Killing Fields does lack some of the plot twists that are standard in most contemporary thrillers. The identity of the murderer is never really a mystery, and Mann spends a little too much time on a red herring that never quite pays off. But despite these flaws, the movie is a moody, satisfying drama that makes Mann's future as a director look extremely promising. [ELIZA THOMPSON]