

the new year parade

DIRECTED BY TOM QUINN



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The New Year Parade is Not Rated and runs 85 minutes long.
 High resolution stills available at: www.thenewyearparade.com

Honors

Winner, Grand Jury Prize, Best Narrative: **Slamdance Film Festival**
Nominee, Best Film Not Playing in a Theater Near You: **IFP Gotham Awards**
Winner, Best Acting Ensemble: **Ashland Independent Film Festival**
Winner, Best Independent Feature: **Philadelphia Film Festival**
Winner, Best Narrative Feature: **DeadCENTER Film Festival**
Winner, Best Director: **Bend Film Festival**
Winner, Best Supporting Actress: **Bend Film Festival**
Winner, Best Narrative Feature: **IndieMemphis Film Festival**
Special Jury Prize: **Lone Star International Film Festival**
Official Selection, 2007 Narrative Rough Cut Lab: **IFP**

SYNOPSIS

The New Year Parade follows Jack and Kat McMonogul over the course of a year as their parents separate, struggle with their decisions, and eventually divorce. As past indiscretions are exposed, Jack and Kat question their own identities while struggling to build meaningful relationships.

The family breakdown is set against the backdrop of Philadelphia's Mummers, one of the oldest American folk traditions. Since pre-revolutionary times, the working-class of South Philadelphia have paraded on New Year's Day. In 1901, the merriment was organized into a city-sponsored event: The first annual Mummer's Parade. Today, nearly 15,000 members, many third and fourth generation, work 364 days a year and spend up to 100,000 dollars for a chance at bragging rights in the neighborhood and a continuing sense of tradition.

Jack is a banjo player in the South Philadelphia String Band, where his dad is captain. After a crushing defeat in the New Year parade, Jack heads home to tell Kat their dad is moving into an apartment. At twenty-five, Jack is deemed "old enough" to deal with the details of his parents' situation; becoming their confidant, their go-between, and Kat's caretaker. Internally, Jack is wearing thin, but struggling to hide it. While tending bar, he meets a neighborhood hairdresser named Julie. Although Jack initially wants a sexual fling their attraction soon develops into something more, forcing Jack to question his own ability to maintain a relationship.

While his dad obsesses over leading their club to a comeback, Jack considers joining The Quaker City String Band. Revered in the neighborhood, Quaker City has taken first prize four times in the past six years, while South Philadelphia licks their wounds from thirteenth. When Quaker shows interest, Jack must choose between joining a more successful band and continuing the one tradition their family has left.

Meanwhile, sixteen-year-old Kat tries to hold the family together. She stays with her dad most weekends and keeps her personal life secret from friends at school where she runs the morning TV program. Her co-producer, Curtis, is an awkward seventeen-year-old in love with analog tape formats, home audio recording, and Kat McMonogul.

Although aware of Curtis' affection, Kat begins dating a member of the hockey team. He soon suggests she go on the pill so they can begin having sex. As the year wears on, Kat grows increasingly desperate to confide in someone, but is unable to do so.

The New Year Parade is an attempt to step back from the broadly discussed, but barely understood term: DIVORCE, instead emphasizing the small moments of change that many young people experience.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

DELVING INTO DIVORCE

Five years ago, Tom Quinn began videotaping interviews with his close friends discussing their parents' divorces (some of which took place twenty years prior), their memories of the breakdown, and the hold it still had on them. Many of these friends shared common experience and fears – some using the exact same phrases to describe situations – but had never discussed them before, much less with each other. Even more troubling, many had found themselves making the same mistakes their parents had despite lifelong fears of doing so.

These interviews became the foundation of **The New Year Parade**. The fictional characters of Kat and Jack McMonogul would allow Tom to explore the small moments so many of his friends had shared, with hopes of creating further dialogue and discussion about divorce's effect on young people. Because the emphasis would be on quiet observation Tom searched for another component to give structure, which he found in Philadelphia's Mummery.

CASTING THE FILM

After researching Mummery for several months, attending rehearsals and stringband concerts, Tom completed the shooting script for **The New Year Parade** and began casting. The first discovery was Jennifer Welsh, who would play Kat McMonogul. Jen was a local high school student, preparing to attend art school for sculpture and education. Although she had never acted before, Jen lived through similar experiences to Kat and was channeling those in her sculpture and painting. Because of the intensely emotional scenes required from her, Jen began a five-month preparation period, which included rehearsals, improvisational training, and character exercises. During this time, Tom asked Jen to keep a diary "in character" and to write additional scenes based on moments she felt missing for Kat.

Meanwhile, Tom would pair Jen against potential actors to carefully build a believable onscreen family. After auditioning several accomplished theater actresses for the role of Lisa, the mother of Kat and Jack, Jen suggested MaryAnn McDonald, the mother of a close friend. Although she had also never acted, MaryAnn immediately had what the trained actresses lacked: the quiet presence of a strong woman grieving. Impressively, MaryAnn immediately began asking questions that better-defined Lisa, shaping her into a mother torn by guilt. Most importantly, the warmth of her real-life relationship with Jen carried over, giving the characters an unspoken history and love for each other that is shaken by the story's events.

Next, Andrew Conway was discovered through Kathy Wickline casting. Andrew was a tango dance instructor, having worked in Buenos Aires and Los Angeles before returning to Philadelphia. Also an experienced carpenter, Andrew had recently begun training as an actor. After an incredible audition, Andrew began rehearsing with the other cast members.

The character of Jack presented a unique challenge. The mid-twenties guys Tom based Jack on never seemed to be carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders, and often publicly played down the challenges in their lives, despite inner conflicts. Jack needed to be immediately likable and charismatic despite the poor choices his character sometimes makes. After several frustrating months of auditioning a wide range of actors and non-actors, Tom ran into Greg Lyons at a convenience store one morning.

Tom and Greg had known each other for twenty years, having attended elementary and high school together before both going onto the Communications program at La Salle University. While writing the screenplay and searching for actors, Tom felt Greg was the perfect incarnation of Jack – warm and brotherly, but quietly intense. However, Greg had been touring the country for several years as a member of the band Laguardia and so Tom looked elsewhere.

However, Laguardia recently disbanded and Greg was now home. Tom immediately asked him to audition and found what he had been searching for – a versatile non-actor who could project Jack’s inner struggle. Additionally, Tom found a nice parallel between Greg’s band aspirations and Jack’s. In previous years, Greg had twice released albums on mini-majors to critical acclaim, but had yet to break through to the mainstream. Like Jack, all Greg wanted was one shot at the recognition and respect he was working so hard for. Amazingly, a year later Greg’s new band, Eastern Conference Champions, would impress the president of Geffen and sign to Suretone Records, the home of Weezer, Chris Cornell, and The Cure.

With the family of non-actors in place, Tom cast professionals in supporting roles. He had worked with Tobias Segal on his first feature, *Lusting for Dust Words*, and again on Eugene Martin’s *The Other America*. By casting Tobias as Curtis, Tom could use his training and experience to structure Jen’s raw emotional investment. This quickly produced fruitful results. During the second day of shooting, Jen and Tobias filmed a scene where Kat opens up about her life to Curtis. Although she had been preparing for months, Jen was nervous about the intense emotions required of her. Tom worked with the two actors separately, focusing on structure with Tobias and the emotional content with Jen. By the second take, Jen had tears streaming down her cheeks while relaying Kat’s frustrations and fears.

Similarly, Tom cast Irene Longshore as Jack’s girlfriend, Julie. Irene is a veteran of numerous films and plays, having also worked with Tom on Eugene Martin’s *The Other America*. Irene perfectly captured Julie’s mix of insecurity and strength and was heavily experienced with both scripted and improvisational working styles. For many of their scenes, Tom would free Greg and Irene to improvise twenty-minute sequences, blurring the line between real conversations and scripted material. This gives a tremendous naturalism to their onscreen relationship

FILMING MUMMERY

If divorce is the universal component of the story, Mummery is the specific. When Tom first approached producers with the screenplay, he was told it was an impossible film to shoot on a limited budget because of the Mummies’ storyline. The film called for over one hundred trained musicians, costumes, floats, and a parade with thousands of extras. Tom’s good friend, high school biology teacher and screenwriter Steve Beal, was excited about the project and signed on to get the film made. Together they approached The South Philadelphia String Band, who were preparing to march in their 60th parade. Tom’s college classmate Frank Voight was a member of the band and arranged the meeting.

Although their initial agreement only covered two weeks of shooting at their club, the band embraced the production with open arms, leading to a two-year collaboration. As the band readied itself for the 2005 Mummer’s Parade, they incorporated the cast and crew for six months of intense shooting. The cast members sat in on rehearsals, drilled with the band,

and built props and costumes. Finally, on New Year's Day, five cameras followed the band down Broad Street for the parade, filming Greg and Andrew parading in the street and Jen, MaryAnn, Irene, and Tobias on the sidelines. The resulting sixty hours of footage broadened the scope of **The New Year Parade** far beyond any budget limitations.

The film was also welcomed by the Mummer's community at large and includes many real-life members in supporting roles. The most memorable of these is Charlie Roetz, a lifelong member of Quaker City String Band. Tom contacted Charlie about acting in the film after reading a post by him on a community message board. When Jack is deciding whether to forsake his father's band to join Quaker City, Charlie sits with Jack at a bar and tells him a true story about his dad, a member of Quaker City String Band who died when Charlie was four-years-old.



A few years ago, during a Fourth of July parade, a woman on the sidelines handed Charlie's captain a photo – his face turning white as they continued marching. At the next rest stop, Charlie's captain handed the photo to him – a picture of his father taken on New Year's Day, 1954. Although this woman had no way of knowing (his father was with the Durning String Band at the time) she had given Charlie something of incredible importance – an unseen photo of his father, who he never had the chance to march with. During the improvised scene, Charlie becomes choked up while impressing on Jack the importance of their tradition and the need to stay with his father's band.

Contributions like Charlie's make **The New Year Parade** more than a regional film on Mummery, but rather a reflection on the things we inherit, both good and bad, and the ways we pass them to our own children.

SHOOTING THE FILM

Influenced by filmmakers such as John Cassavetes, John Sayles, Jim McKay Terrence Malick, and Gus Van Sant as well as Philadelphia filmmakers Eugene Martin and Lance Weiler, **The New Year Parade** is photographed in a rich verité style. Many of the most powerful moments are quiet ones: Kat wandering Philadelphia's bustling Italian Market to buy dinner for the family, or Jack grabbing a cigarette in the desolate market at night, calming his nerves before a date.

"I thought a lot about John Sayles and Terrence Malick before shooting," says Quinn, "They both use community as character and landscape as theme." Because of this, several shooting days were set aside to shoot the characters as they go about their day – Kat wandering her paper route before school, Jack bartending at a neighborhood pub. This working method was something Tom learned while shooting B Camera for Eugene Martin on *The Other America*. "Often I would put a wireless mic on the actor and walk around with them for a few hours – stealing interactions and finding great natural moments. Although technically 'non-actors', by the end of rehearsals the cast were making very sophisticated choices about how they implied their characters' inner-lives."

In **The New Year Parade**, the close-knit Irish and Italian community of South Philadelphia creates a unique challenge for families struggling in secret. Because most neighborhoods consist of row homes, and much of the community is parish-centered, privacy can be difficult. The McMonogul home actually belongs to Jack and Joan Cassidy. For a previous film, Tom had hoped to shoot in a New Jersey shore house his grandmother had owned years ago. He tracked down Jack and Joan, who bought the house as a vacation property, and explained his situation. They graciously gave him a key and full-access for a week in exchange for tickets to the premiere screening.

Five years later, Tom contacted the Cassidy's in search of a row home to house the McMonogul's. Once again the Cassidy's welcomed the production and offered to commute from the New Jersey for a week while Tom used their house. Before leaving, Joan Cassidy imparted some South Philadelphia wisdom. "Joan told me to always keep the front window curtains perfect. It could be a demolition zone inside, but the curtains are what the neighbors see and that's important to a South Philadelphia woman. I remember shooting the family fight. Andrew had Greg pinned against the wall and was threatening to throw him down the stairs while Jen screamed for him to stop with tears running down her face. By the time I called 'cut' there were quite a few neighbors who had heard the commotion and decided to 'step out for a cigarette.' I ran out and explained the situation to them, but you quickly realize how hard it is to keep secrets in a close knit community."

Most of the film was shot with a two-person crew. Often, Tom would work with the actors and shoot, while Mark Doyle set up lights, ran sound, or shot B camera. For more difficult scenes, Tom made calls to local filmmakers and friends who donated their time, energy, and equipment to further the production.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Since 1960, the divorce rate has increased by 400%, effecting 50,000 children each year. We've heard these statistics to the point that they're meaningless. The issue has become so present that it is invisible in many ways. We understand divorce. We get it. Problem solved.

Another statistic: Many psychologists will tell you that children bounce back from divorce after 2 years. Everyone has their own story, but for my friends this has not been the case. They may have accepted the situation and agreed to shuffle back and forth on weekends. If asked about it, they would give you a one-sentence summary of their life and shrug. For them, the real effects came later – as they worked to build and sustain relationships, lacking a working model. Some of them held lifelong fears of making the same mistakes and then did so, unexplainably. They pushed through and persevered, but there was a sense of reinventing the wheel. In discussing it amongst ourselves, we felt young people were not encouraged to talk openly about their feelings or concerns.

In film, divorce is often a quick back story; a shorthand for character development. *That kid, the one with the ratty clothes, the quiet misfit – he has a single parent, fill in the blanks.* For **The New Year Parade** I was interested in those blanks, the moments that we consider “understood” or too common to showcase. What happens when kids grow up with these statistics bouncing around in their heads? What hope does that give them?

I don't claim to have answers, but perhaps in presenting **The New Year Parade** these questions will prompt new dialogue among young people and their parents.

THE CAST

ANDREW CONWAY (Mike): Andrew recently committed to a full time acting career and has since landed roles in several independent films in Philadelphia, NY, and NJ while also appearing on programs such as *Forensic Files* and *Hack*. Andrew aspires to be recognized as a versatile actor in the film and television industries. Having studied at the Walnut Street Theater and Temple University, Andrew continues to hone his talents through working with other actors, constant reading, and reviewing video materials. Andrew is also Philadelphia's premier Argentine Tango performer, instructor, and choreographer, having taught and performed in Japan, Ireland, Mexico, and Argentina as well as several venues nationally.

IRENE LONGSHORE (Julie): Irene has appeared and starred in numerous productions including *Falling Petals*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Children's Hour*, *The Dining Room*, *Bloody Poetry*, and *Lillian Hellman, Age 13*. She had a starring role in the independent film, *The Other America*, which opened the 2004 Slamdance Film Festival and went on to screen in San Francisco, Boston, and Philadelphia. Other roles include leads in the independent film *Between* as well as roles in *Girl*, *Interrupted* and the TV program *Boston Public*. As a member of Another Urban Riff theater company, Irene has appeared in *Mono*, *The Summer They Stopped Making 'Ludes*, *Mixed Tape Project*, and *30-Minute Project*. Most recently, she learned to skateboard and curse fluently to perform the lead role of Alice in the new play *Real Dramatic*, a summer stock production in Massachusetts. Irene has recently completed the independent film, *American Standard* in New York.

GREG LYONS (Jack): Greg and Tom Quinn knew each other for twenty years, having been classmates together from first grade through the same Communications program at La Salle University. Although Tom had considered Greg a natural fit for the quiet musician in his film, Lyons had been on tour during the first months of preproduction. Upon his return, Greg proved to be a likeable, compelling, non-actor able to navigate the many storylines of **The New Year Parade**. Greg also plays drums in Eastern Conference Champions who signed with Geffen Records during the shooting of **The New Year Parade** and recently released their debut album, *Ameritown*, on Suretone Records (home of Weezer, Chris Cornell, and The Cure). ECC recently made their television debut on *Last Call with Carson Daly* in August 2007 after touring for five months and are currently preparing to tour with Frank Black of *The Pixies* during Fall 2007.

MARYANN MCDONALD (Lisa): MaryAnn has been married to Larry McDonald for 24 years and is a mother of three children. She has a daughter Christina, 21, a film major at California State University, and two sons, John, 19 and Larry, 16. "This is the first time I've ever acted," MaryAnn says, "although as a kid I used to put on shows for family and friends all the time. They were a captive audience. It has been a great learning experience and I enjoyed working with the cast and crew." After auditioning actresses for several months, the role of Lisa was still vacant. Jen Welsh (Kat) was friends with MaryAnn's daughter and suggested her for the role. During her audition, it was obvious MaryAnn could bring great depth to Lisa as a mother heartbroken and grieving over the loss of her marriage.

THE SOUTH PHILADELPHIA STRING BAND (themselves): The South Philadelphia String band were essential in realizing this film. The band worked with our cast and crew for two years, performing as extras, giving use of their club, props and costumes, and allowing the production team unlimited access for three months as they prepared for the 2005 Mummers' Parade. This culminated with a five camera shoot on Broad Street, intimately documenting Mummery on the most important day of their year. January 1st, 2007 marked the 61st time the South Philadelphia String Band has marched in the annual parade. In those 61 years, South Philadelphia has taken first prize 3 times and placed in the top ten 37 times, making them one of the most successful string bands in history.

TOBIAS SEGAL (Curtis): Tobias had starred in Tom's first film *Lusting for Dust Words* before winning a Barrymore Award for Best Supporting Actor in 2002 for his performance in *Equus* – the youngest man to achieve the honor. Since then, Tobias has starred in several plays including *The Puppetmaster of Lodz*, *According to Goldman*, *Twelfth Night*, *Disco Pigs* and most recently, *Sweetie-Pie* during the 2007 Philadelphia Fringe Festival. Tobias also played the lead of Ari in *The Other America*, which opened the 2004 Slamdance Film Festival and supporting roles in *Rocky Balboa* and on *Law and Order*.

JENNIFER WELSH (Kat): Jen is currently attending college for sculpture and hopes to become a high school art teacher. She was chosen from 2,000 high school students for the role of Kat, although she had never acted before. "I read some lines from the script and found that it related to my own life, which first got me interested. The movie really is a rollercoaster of emotions and I think they are all important and real things that happen to families and their children." After her audition, Jen began a five-month preparation period that included rehearsals, keeping a diary in character, and auditioning with potential actors.

THE FILMMAKERS

TOM QUINN (Writer/Director/Producer/DP/Editor): Tom Quinn grew up in Bucks County, PA, where he directed a few shorts and freelanced as a camera assistant. His debut feature, **The New Year Parade**, was selected for the IFP Narrative Rough Cut Labs, won the Grand Jury Prize for Best Narrative at Slamdance, and was a Gotham Award nominee for “Best Film Not Playing in a Theater Near You.” Tom has been listed one of the “25 New Faces of Independent Film” by *Filmmaker Magazine* and “Ten Young Writer-Directors to Watch,” by *MovieMaker Magazine*. He was fortunate to be the first American filmmaker accepted to the Toronto International Film Festival Talent Lab and is currently working toward his MFA at Temple University.

MARK DOYLE (Gaffer/Audio/Assistant Editor): Mark Doyle is a Philadelphia-based filmmaker whose cinematography work includes *The Judas Kiss*, which premiered at the Monaco International Film Festival. After working with Tom in filmmaker Eugene Martin’s production course at Temple University, Mark became the primary crew member on **The New Year Parade**, setting up lights, dressing the set, recording audio, and shooting B camera. Mark was also a key collaborator in post-production, logging and assembling large amounts of footage in preparation for the IFP Narrative Rough Cut Lab and helping to shape the final version of the film.

STEVE BEAL (Producer): Steve Beal is a Philadelphia-based biology teacher and realtor. His passion for **The New Year Parade** screenplay led him to become its producer. Steve’s business and management background provided a support system for Tom’s creative work – leading to relationships with the Philadelphia Mummer’s Association and The South Philadelphia String Band. Steve helped coordinate auditions and rehearsals, while also contributing private equity to the film. Since the film’s completion, Steve has been preparing for an exciting and aggressive distribution strategy.

REVIEWS

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

BY ROGER EBERT / December 9, 2009

(3 stars)

I'm pretty much paraded out. The high point for me was the Fourth of July 25 years ago in Three Oaks, Mich., where Shriners performed an intricate choreography while riding their power mowers. But I now believe Philadelphia's Mummers Parade must be worth attending every year. The marchers aren't hauling ads for Pepsi or anchoring giant inflated Ronald McDonald balloons. They march because of fierce generational pride.

This I learn from Tom Quinn's "The New Year Parade," an appealing indie feature that weaves together the traditions of the parade and an Irish-American family. If that sounds contrived, it's not; the two flow together in a convincing way. The film, which won top prizes at Slamdance 2009 and (understandably) Philadelphia, introduces us to the McMonogul family, whose members have been part of the South Philadelphia String Band for three generations.

Mike (Andrew Conway), the father, is captain of the band. He discovers his wife (Ann McDonald) has cheated on him, and moves out in a rage. There are subtle hints that she might have had her reasons. Their children, Jack (Greg Lyons), in his early 20s, and Kat (Jennifer-Lynn Welsh), about 16, are devastated -- Kat especially, but she decides to stay with her mom. Jack accuses Mike of choosing to destroy the family instead of forgiving his mom, and so Jack contemplates the unspeakable: leaving the band and enlisting with its traditional arch-rivals.

Quinn photographed his film over four years, and yet, as his own editor, has mastered what must have been hours of material into a story so convincingly embedded in the band and parade that it would have been impossible to create it just for a film. His characters all seem to be much of that world; whether his actors are, I can't say. But we see them rehearsing, marching, hanging out, caring about the band. For Jack to join the opposition is the most hurtful thing he could do to his father.

On top of that is the enormity of the parade itself. I vaguely imagined it as a bunch of people dressed up funny and playing "Yankee Doodle." The costumes and props cannot even be described. The year's work and no doubt the money involved is almost unimaginable. Yet Quinn does not make the film's plot rest on that weary old device of who wins the big parade/game/match/bout/ election. This is not about winning, but about striving.

"The New Year Parade" is a tad frayed around the edges, no doubt because of the scope of the reality presented. But the story holds strong, the indie approach is more moving than a polished production plugging in big stars, and this is the sort of film a civic resource like Facets exists to show.

Speaking of which, did you see the nice article about Facets Cinematheque that ran in the New York Times this week?

VARIETY

By PETER DEBRUGE

Philadelphia's colorful Mummers' Parade bookends an unsentimentalized portrait of 21st-century divorce in "The New Year Parade." Winner of the Slamdance grand jury prize, Tom Quinn's first feature combines non-professional actors with hundreds of actual marching band participants to yield an almost documentary-like look at a family left reeling after the parents separate. Quinn, who hails from the emerging "Phillywood" independent scene, possesses a strong artistic sensibility and the confidence to build his story around intimate, sometimes mundane life moments as opposed to melodrama. Interest will be strongest locally, but fest play looks promising for this high-integrity project.

Set over the course of a year (and painstakingly assembled over four), pic opens with the South Philadelphia String Band learning they've placed an unimpressive 13th at the annual parade. In the 12 months it takes the marching club to pull itself together for the next show, team captain Mike McMonogul (Andrew Conway) slowly watches his own family drift apart. Eldest son Jack (Greg Lyons) is best equipped to handle the split, watching out for 16-year-old Kat (Jennifer-Lynn Welsh) as best he can.

When fellow mummers gossip about his mother's infidelities (the reason for the divorce) within earshot of his sister, Jack doesn't hesitate to pick a fight. But he's also distracted with a budding relationship of his own, and Kat doesn't trust his new girlfriend (Irene Longshore) enough to confide her own dating issues. The boy for Kat is clearly her A.V. Club partner Curtis (Tobias Segal), but she's stuck in an unhealthy relationship with a school hockey star (Paul Blackway), who pressures her to take the pill so they can have sex.

Because Quinn encouraged his actors to improvise, sometimes recording hours of footage to be condensed into a short scene, the narrative style takes some getting used to at first. Grocery shopping or band practice are weighted as equally as heated arguments and sex scenes, providing an unusually well-rounded sense of character even as it makes for a rather inelegant flow. Scenes don't have obvious in and out points, but instead seem sampled from lives that continue when the cameras stop rolling.

The most important dramatic moments are all here, as when Kat's boyfriend tries to get fresh or Jack, feeling distanced from his father and determined to win the next parade, approaches a rival team about playing for them. But the truly unforgettable scenes are either entirely silent (signing the divorce papers) or totally improvised (in one, a real band member tells a story about how a bystander randomly gave him a photo of his father as a child, a beautiful allegory for the film's family-first themes). Life isn't tidy, the movie reminds us, with the ripples of the McMonogul divorce echoing as betrayal and distrust in all the relationships it touches.

Handheld camerawork and naturalistic lighting enhance the pic's kitchen-sink realism. If the final score is anywhere near as effective as the temp tracks featured in the Slamdance cut, the soundtrack could be a must-own (a la "Once").

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

By Deborah Young

Bottom Line: Sensitive indie illuminates divorce in working class South Philadelphia.

TURIN, Italy -- In "The New Year Parade," the painful breakup of a working-class marriage is set against Philadelphia's traditional Mummers Parade. Tom Quinn's feature debut demonstrates what can be done on a \$7,000 budget: not a lot in the looks department, but a great deal of emotional depth through a sensitive, documentary-style approach to blending characters and community into a believable whole. Having major prizes at Slamdance (for best narrative) and the Philadelphia Film Festival (best indie feature) under its belt should give film a push in limited distribution.

The story unfolds over the course of a year in the closely knit Irish and Italian community of South Philly. Mike McMonogul, the captain of one of the city's marching bands, reacts violently after discovering his wife's infidelity. Opening in the tense middle of the McMonoguls' break-up, Quinn closely observes the devastating effects of divorce on the two children, Kat (Jennifer Walsh), who attends Catholic high school, and older brother Jack (Greg Lyons), a musician and part-time bartender.

Without ever being obvious or condescending, Quinn -- who directed, wrote, produced, shot and edited the film -- shows the ripple effects of divorce on a family. Jack and Kat struggle with their own relationships and a fear of intimacy. Like a mirror image of his mother, Jack plots his own form of betrayal by contacting a more successful rival band, much to his father's displeasure and pain. Kat juggles two potential boyfriends while she resists pressure to lose her virginity.

Not all of the action is neatly laid out, and the story remains a little rough around the edges. However, this rawness is more a characteristic of the film than a major flaw. It blends in with the use of handheld camera and extremely naturalistic dialog culled from hours of taping the non-pro cast. The labor pays off in a strong sense of realism.

Further underlining the film's documentary feel is Quinn's use of real marching bands in all their kitschy splendor, particularly the South Philadelphia String Band.

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

By Steven Rea

There's a scene in Tom Quinn's very fine *The New Year Parade* in which the bandleader of the South Philadelphia String Band, beginning a rehearsal, reminds the guys with their saxes and banjos that the silence between the notes is as key as the notes themselves. "The space with no sound is as important as the space with notes in it," he says. Those are wise words, and Quinn, a Philadelphia-area writer and director, has taken them to heart. A keenly observed drama about the breakup of a South Philly family, *The New Year Parade* is full of quiet and noise - numb sorrow and popping fireworks.

Stretching over the course of a year, with the Mummers Parade and its preparations ever present, Quinn's movie trolls the rowhouses, taverns and diners of South Philadelphia, describing the dissolution of the McMonoguls: A wife (MaryAnn McDonald) who's had an affair, a husband (Andrew Conway) who can't deal with it, and

their kids, a high school girl, Kat (Jennifer Welsh), and a twentysomething son, Jack (Greg Lyons), coming to grips.

Quinn captures the gritty textures of the city - the crosshatching phone wires, the metal awnings, the stalls of the Italian Market. And he finds beauty there, like the hulk of a given-up-for-dead ocean liner moored on the Delaware, looming large over an affectionate encounter between Kat and her dockworker dad.

The strengths of *The New Year Parade* - its documentary-like measure of the every day, its easy barroom banter - sometimes become a weakness, too. A few of the performances feel forced, or self-conscious, underwritten or overexposed. But the main players are strong, and Irene Longshore as Jack's new girlfriend, and Tobias Segal as Kat's school friend, are both memorable.

The New Year Parade won the grand jury prize at the recent Slamdance Film Festival. It deserves more recognition down the line - and not just from local audiences who see themselves, literally and figuratively, in Quinn's beautifully composed frames.

The New Year Parade *** (Out of four stars)

INDIEWIRE (Slamdance Coverage)

By Eric Kohn

...The prize for the finest of the unhappy youth movies, however, goes to "The New Year Parade." Talented director Tom Quinn (no relation to the Magnolia Pictures exec) makes a stunning debut with this sterling observation of a brother and sister pair straining under the pressures of their parents' divorce. Quinn has a calculated, Altman-esque approach to staging conflict. Because it functions as a wise examination of universal human despair, "The New Year Parade" proves that keen observation of human behavior yields the strongest results--although budgetary requirements probably hold a close second place spot.

FILMMAKER MAGAZINE (Slamdance Coverage)

By Brandon Harris

...Although the narratives have been a shallower pool, with disappointments ranging from *Frost*, a brisk Cameron Crowe rip-off that can't hit all of its telegraphed genre beats with anything resembling nuance or style, to *The Project*, the Brooklyn indie film within a Brooklyn indie film that follows a trio of white filmmakers attempting to document the lives of dope dealing inner city black kids with increasingly exploitative and personally dangerous results, Tom Quinn's magnificent *The New Year Parade* has easily assumed the mantle of film to beat in the narrative competition.

Rough around the edges, with a temp score that uses Elliot Smith's soulful downer ballads to better effect than *Good Will Hunting*, the film delves into a year in the lives of a disintegrating family in South Philadelphia's Irish enclaves. Something of a naturalistic, blue collar *The Squid and The Whale*, the pic revolves around the effect of an infidelity and the power struggle that ensues between parents, as they fight a proxy war through their children. Quinn, who wrote, directed, shot, and edited himself with a bare bones crew, has made a consistently touching movie in which all of his characters, even the most flawed (which, like Baumbach's marital strife narrative, is the mother) are

seen with empathy. Quinn creates a recognizable and multi-textured world for his characters to inhabit; South Philadelphia is clearly a place he has thought much about, one tinged with decay and regret, but also love, humor and beauty.

The New Year Parade brims with wonderful glimpses of spaces the cinema rarely visits. Quinn, whose deftness with performers equals his eye for authentic detail, uses real South Philly marching bands, has his characters visit Geno's Steaks and he depicts the unraveling of the family against the backdrop of the implosion of Veteran's Stadium, incorporating into the film a series of places and cultural events that resonate in this working class milieu. Unlike so many bourgeois filmmakers condescending to poor or working class characters (see *The Project*, or the much hyped *Ballast* over at Sundance, but more on that somewhere else), seeing their lives as mere vacuums of pain and aesthetic playgrounds in which the filmmakers can work out their own complexes of guilt and lack of understanding in narratives weighed down by arty pretensions, *The New Year Parade*, with its flat narrative, subtle sensitivity to class, gently crafted performances by non or marginal actors and its rough hewn yet entirely appropriate hand held camerawork, does many of the things American Independent films have traditionally done well.

HAMMER TO NAIL

[NEW YEAR PARADE, THE - The Return of Regional Cinema](#)

Posted by Michael Ryan / 03 / 17 / 08 (Rerun November 24, 2009)

A local Austin record collector was telling me about a group of 1940s era Western Swing 78rpm records that were recorded and distributed only in Texas. The records were pressed in small batches but the micro record companies that distributed them all were profitable until the '50s when the big national companies came onto the scene. Today with filmmaking costs so low, the old local record label concept may be poised to reemerge and allow for a purely local film scene to blossom. *The New Year Parade* is a film that is entrenched in the culture and multi-generation working class Irish community of South Philadelphia. The excellent non-professional cast and the story of a family that is torn apart by divorce is centered in the Philly phenomenon of Parade and marching band clubs. The film will serve both as a mirror and a document for this unique urban community.

Jack (played by first-timer Greg Lyons) plays banjo in his father's South Philly String Band. The band loses the parade competition every year and though they are dreaming big for next year Jack is at the end of his patience. His father and mother are living apart and caught in the middle of their divorce is Jack's 16 year old sister (played by Jennifer Welsh, another first-timer). The film is strongest when it is focused on the young girl and her struggle to cope with both her own sexuality and her parents infidelity and divorce. I was a bit surprised that there wasn't a religious component to her struggle but I was happy that her character hadn't seen *Juno* and thus she had a healthy attitude toward the value of birth control.

Lyons carries a heavy burden as the conflicted Jack, and not just because his character is so oppressed. His limited range as a first-time actor is amplified by direction and writing that tends to be at times monotone; consequently, he tends to appear a bit

hangdog and mopey. An awkward use of generic music doesn't drive the story as it was probably intended, but the rich reality based narrative, local extras, solid lead performances, and authentic working class setting is what makes the film sing.

While I was watching *The New Year Parade* I thought about all of the various ethnic communities I grew up amongst in NYC, most of which have now almost all been destroyed by what I call Urban Wealth Blight. The fact that such a working class multi-generational community actually still exists in a major city is amazing. Unfortunately, I fear that this film will one day be viewed as a time capsule of an era long gone.

In the Q&A, the director Tom Quinn was asked if he had found distribution. He said a few deals were in the works with a couple of 'Big Distributors,' but he shrugged and said that he knows there are probably 15,000 people in Philly who are somehow connected to someone who appears in the film or attends the annual parade. He is absolutely right. *The New Year Parade* will surely be loved by everyone who flocks to the streets of Philly every New Year's Day and this crowd alone will make the film a major financial success. To heck with those big distributors.

EFILMCRITIC.COM

By Jason Whyte

A hit at this year's South by Southwest Film Festival, Tom Quinn's heartbreakingly real human drama is among the best indie dramas this decade. A working class family in urban Philadelphia is going through some pretty tumultuous times; the parents are breaking up, the twenty-eight-and-still-living-at-home son is trying to take that next step in life, and his teenage sister is experimenting with losing her virginity. Spanning the course of a year and utilizing a kind of documentary style filmmaking that feels like we are voyeurs in the lives of these people, Quinn is able to make us feel like this domestic drama is really happening, but it is also thanks to amazing, real performances from his leads (Jennifer Lynn Welsh as the precocious daughter is a knockout) that makes this film very unique and brutally honest. I also admire the fact that this film was made for nearly no money yet is so rich in scope and drama that it is easy to overlook. It's kind of awesome to see.

VANRAMBLINGS.COM

By Raymond Tomlin

An absolutely stunning tour-de-force piece of filmmaking, writer-cinematographer-producer-editor Tom Quinn's "*The New Year Parade*" makes for 2008's most auspicious directorial debut. With a luminous, engaging and often heart-wrenching central performance by newcomer Jennifer-Lynn Welsh, there are just not enough good and great things that VanRamblings can write about *The New Year Parade*.

But we'll certainly try.

Set in an evocative working class neighbourhood in south Philly, in the spare 87-minute running time of the film, Tom Quinn achieves such a warm sense a character and place that the viewer is pulled right inside his tale of a marriage in disintegration, and the impact on all of those directly involved.

There's little wonder that *The New Year Parade* wowed 'em at the Slamdance Festival earlier this year, where it took the Grand Jury Prize. Every moment of *The New Year Parade* is wondrous — from the enchanting and boisterous Mummer's Parade rehearsal scenes, to Welsh's quiet, ruminative high school scenes, from the scenes with Greg Lyons and his entirely sympathetic and humane new girlfriend, Julie (Irene Longshore), to the scenes along the Philly docks, and every scene before, after and in-between. Quite simply, *The New Year Parade* proves to be a must-see!

THE BOSTON GLOBE

By Tom Russo 12/6/09

Writer-director Tom Quinn's intimate indie uses Philadelphia's intensely competitive Mummers Parade as a backdrop for a story about a blue-collar family struggling with the pain of divorce. Jack (Greg Lyons) is the son old enough to walk away from his parents' mess (and his dad's parade crew) but quietly compelled not to; Kat (Jennifer Welsh, an unpolished standout) is the teenage daughter whose sunny manner is clouded by the domestic tug-of-war and familiar adolescent pressures. The character interplay is strong enough that verite glimpses of Mummers culture are actually a sidelight. Extras: history of the parade and its participants.

THE PHILADELPHIA CITY PAPER

By Sam Adams / October 30, 2009

No Rating | CP Grade: B

Tom Quinn sets the dissolution of a South Philly family against the backdrop of string-band culture, making for a low-key but satisfying blend of melodrama and observant naturalism. Greg Lyons and Jennifer Welsh play the children of oddly named South Philadelphia String Band leader Mike McMonogul (Andrew Conway) and wife Lisa (MaryAnn McDonald), whose infidelities split their marriage apart. Although his cast is largely composed of nonprofessionals, Quinn draws relaxed performances from most, especially rock-scene veteran Lyons (current Eastern Conference Champions and former Laguardia/Trip 66 drummer), although Conway seems uncomfortable with some of his more dramatic moments. The film's best parts have little to do with its leading roles, or even its story. Quinn spent a year hanging around with real Mummers, and the time he put in shows in the film's detailed but unforced capturing of a culture often reduced to fat drunks in drag. At times, Quinn literally loses the plot, wandering off to let some banjo-playing veteran reflect on years of Mummery, but the stories, and the faces, are so engaging you don't mind the diversion.

EFILMCRTIC.COM

By Jay Seaver / 11/17/09 5 STARS

The glib description of "*The New Year Parade*" is that divorce is hard on everybody - not just parents and children, but everyone else caught up in it, including the parade orchestras. Fortunately, the movie itself isn't glib, just honest and extraordinarily well-made, given how truly independent this independent movie is.

It opens with television coverage of Philadelphia's Mummers Parade, a New Year tradition where various musical clubs march and are scored on their performances. The South Philadelphia String Orchestra didn't do so well this year, but that's not all that's on the minds of some members - Mike MacDougal (Andrew Conway) is bothered by the

fact that he didn't see his daughter Kat (Jennifer Welsh) in the crowd at the usual place, although his son Jack (Greg Lyons), also a member of the orchestra, tells him that's hardly surprising, since their mother Lisa (MaryAnn McDonald) wouldn't want to come, considering the separation. It sets the next year up as a struggle, not just for the band, but for the MacDougals.

Divorce sucks. It is not, in and of itself, a bad thing, to be avoided at all costs - by the time a couple gets to where the MacDougals are, it may be the best thing they can do. Still, nobody enjoys the process, and director Tom Quinn has put together a series of scenes that capture how helpless and angry the whole thing makes a person feel, as well as how it skews even seemingly unconnected things. I can't personally look at any particular scene and say, yes, I've been there - everyone's experience is different; I was away at school and missed much of the everyday tension when my parents split - but there's not a single one that doesn't feel genuine.

That is, in large part, due to the excellent performances by the cast. The acting is doubly impressive when you consider that many of the cast members had no previous acting experience, and may not do anything else. Take Jennifer Welsh, who is fantastic as Kat; this movie is the teenager's debut, and she has since gone to college to major in sculpture and perhaps become a high-school art teacher. She's completely genuine, whether because of that or in spite of it. Part of it is because much of what we see is her doing things, rather than talking about them, but she doesn't ever over-emote when given dialog or a scene that is about showing how Kat feels. Similarly, MaryAnn McDonald had no experience, and while she winds up with the smallest part of the four family members, she gets the job done.

Andrew Conway and Greg Lyons, meanwhile, were already performers of different sorts - Conway a tango dancer and instructor, Lyons a musician - so it's a bit less of a surprise when they impress. Lyons is particularly good, looking maybe a little older than his character's twenty-five years (or how young working-class men actually look, outside of Hollywood), capturing the character's passive-aggressive vibe beautifully: He's going to be the good son, and maybe he doesn't even realize that he's trying to show who has the moral high ground. He makes Jack very much Mike's son in that way; Conway manages to give Mike a well-realized combination of pent-up aggression and desire to do right by his family. He's great in the scene where he seems to snap; he's a little scary, enough to make us a little nervous around him even though all indications are that he hasn't done anything wrong.

That's the family drama part of the movie, which generally takes the forefront, with the scenes of the band preparing for the next Mummies Parade providing background. Quinn uses it well; it never threatens to overtake the MacDougals' story, and serves as a nice reflection of it, as the tension between father and son start to form cracks in the band. It provides an interesting and unique background, though, and Quinn has obtained excellent access. During the last act, with New Year's approaching, Quinn blurs the line between narrative and documentary footage, showing the preparation.

To be totally honest, there were moments when I might have liked to see more of that; it's unique and interesting. But they're just brief moments, where we want more, which in no way detracts from what the movie is offering us.

NEW CITY FILM

By Ray Pride / 12/8/2009

RECOMMENDED

Tom Quinn's genial, four-years-in-the-making "The New Year Parade," winner of a Slamdance jury prize, is a study of the effects of divorce on the members of one South Philadelphia family across the course of a single year. Set in the world of Mummers, or competitive marching bands, Quinn's great stroke beyond marshaling the time scheme of the film is getting the motions (and emotion) of hundreds of musicians on screen in such lucid fashion. The seemingly improvised performances have a sweet, ragged edge, and the music swells. Nothing musical on film has touched me the way the first viewing of "Once" did, but "The New Year Parade" is a song in the heart.

PHILADELPHIA WEEKLY

By Matt Prigge / October 27, 2009

Grade B

Perhaps one day a filmmaker will make a movie that depicts South Philly as fun-loving and fancy-free. Actually, they have: it's called Strut!, a documentary about the Mummers. But Tom Quinn's keenly observed The New Year Parade—set among the downcast members of the Mummer's brethren, the South Philly String Band—isn't that picture.

That's not a knock; even the area's big splashy Hollywood inspirational sports weepie, Invincible, wound up spending over half its length in a dingy bar among hard-drinkin', hard-smokin' depressives. The New Year Parade, too, is set among the chronically downcast, but at least that's less a syndrome of their neighborhood than because of the divorce saga at the film's center.

Greg Lyons leads a cast of mostly non-pros—the terrific local theater actor Tobias Segal being a glaring exception—as the son of the String Band's team captain (Andrew Conway), who has recently caught his wife mid-tryst. Lyons, who plays banjo under the father he doesn't quite like, is mostly able to stand tall amidst the kerfuffle, even acquiring a tryst-turned-girlfriend (Irene Longshore). Meanwhile the split affects his teen sister (Jennifer-Lynn Welsh) in both subtle and decidedly unsubtle ways.

Quinn's narrative hits many of the expected divorce-drama beats, but he doesn't hit them with the expected force. Major developments happen off-screen or are simply inferred; when the mother, who has been suspecting forgiveness from her husband, is unexpectedly served divorce papers, her initial reaction is calm, borderline bemused. One jump cut later and she's quietly bawling, but the cumulative effect remains powerful because of the odd but recognizably human way she processes the shock.

But more often The New Year Parade is obsessed with details far more mundane. Employing a style that teeters on documentary, Quinn combines mumbly improv work from his non-actors with off-hand details, his handheld digital camera endlessly picking up shots that endlessly establish both place and mood. Oftentimes a scene will be made of a battering ram of tiny close-ups or shots of people who just happen to be in the same bar, warehouse or street.

Quinn also shot and edited his feature debut, and *The New Year Parade* feels written with both the camera and the editing program. True, there are far, far too many music montages, but there's no denying Quinn's almost scary budding talent.

PHILADELPHIA CITY PAPER

by Molly Eichel / DECEMBER 2, 2009

Philly cleans up in Spirit Award noms

It's December so that means Awards Season is officially upon us. This morning, the Spirit Award nominations were announced and Philly freakin' owns them. *Precious*: Based on the Novel 'Push' by Sapphire, directed by Philly-born Lee Daniels, leads the proceedings with five noms for Best Feature, Best Director (Daniels), Best First Screenplay (Geoffrey Fletcher), Best Actress (Gabourey Sidibe) and Best Supporting Actress (Mo'Nique). A.D. Amorosi interviewed Daniels way back when *Precious* — then called *Push* — took Sundance by storm.

But that ain't all folks. Margate boy/Penn grad Scott Neustadter (along with Michael H. Weber) gets a nod in the Best Screenplay category for his work on *(500) Days Of Summer*. Whoa, A.D. Amorosi also interviewed Neustadter when *Summer* premiered at the 2009 Cinefest. Norristown's Maria Bello gets Best Actress recognition in the creepy-looking *Downloading Nancy*. And, of course, Philly itself plays a huge role in Robert Siegel's *Big Fan*, where Patton Oswalt's arch nemesis is named Philadelphia Phil, even though he's played by a Brooklyn-accented Michael Rappaport (I talked to Oswalt about his first dramatic turn when the movie came out in August).

The biggest news for locals though comes from Tom Quinn, whose film *The New Year Parade* — about a couple's dissolving marriage, set against the Mummers' Parade, is up for the John Cassavette's award, which is given to the best feature made for less than \$500,000. You know about Quinn and *The New Year Parade* even though it was made on a cheap-o budget, 'cause Mark Maurer told you about him in October

Check out all the nominations after the jump, including links to our reviews and notes on when some film will be released here.