

Recording Mixers
Andy Koyama
Chris Carpenter
Robert Schaper
Supervising Sound Editor
Scott A. Hecker
Supervising Dialogue Editor
Allen Hartz
Dialogue Editors
Byron Wilson
Teri Dorman
Sound Effects Editors
Eric Norris
Perry Robertson
ADR
Recordist:
Phillip Rodgers
Mix:
Jeff Gomillion
Supervising Editor:
Allen Hartz
Foley
Artists:
Gary Hecker
Nancy Parker
Mix:
Brian Ruberg
Editors:
Roy Seeger
Jonathan Klein
Stunt Co-ordinator
Jim Dowdall
Cost
Craig Ferguson
Paul Kerr
Emma Redgrave
Rebecca Edmonds
Tulip Brown
Digger
Ian McNeice
Graham
Melda Staunton
Dr Bridget
Anthony Stewart Head
Sam Gervasi
Ross Ackland
Will Edmonds
Charlotte Church
Olivia Edmonds
Stephen Noonan
Jordanio
Joseph Alessi
Inzo
Lavi Aulija
Dr Mahar
Marion Bailey
Mary

Dominic Cooper
boyfriend
Poppy Elliott
girlfriend
Danny Webb
Denny Wise
John Naismith
Cheeky Chops
receptionist
Spud Murphy
Drew
Kieran Creggan
nurse
Louise Delamere
Janice
Tom Ellis
Ivor
Phyllida Law
Mrs Williams
Kirsty Mitchell
Nessie
James Woolley
judge
Nick Collier
tube boy
David C. Robinson
Spike
Digger McQuade
drums, The Love Rats
Sam Burgess
bass, The Love Rats
Mike Outram
guitar, The Love Rats
Paul Kerr
guitar and vocals, The Love Rats
Terry Earl
drums, The BeeLzeeBOPS
Jim Richardson
double bass, The BeeLzeeBOPS
Alan Darby
guitar, The BeeLzeeBOPS
Brian Dee
piano, The BeeLzeeBOPS
Joss Ackland
vocals, The BeeLzeeBOPS

Certificate
12A
Distributor
Warner Bros
Distributors (UK)
9,469 feet
105 minutes 13 seconds
Dolby Digital/DTS/SDDS
In Colour

Cardiff, the present. While in a drunken stupor, washed-up 1980s pop star Paul Kerr rides his motorbike out of a window at his mansion. He denies being suicidal but is sectioned by medical staff. When she learns of Paul's confinement, hair-salon owner Rebecca informs her teenage daughter Olivia that she is the result of a fling with Paul. Olivia goes to the psychiatric hospital and informs Paul that he is her father.

Posing as his wife, Paul's housekeeper helps him to escape from the hospital. Paul's former bandmate Digger joins him at his mansion to help him conquer his alcoholism. Paul gets sober and begins to bond with Olivia. Rebecca warns him to leave Olivia alone and accuses him of ignoring the letters she sent him while she was pregnant.

Paul discovers that Olivia has an impressive singing voice. His opportunistic manager tries to persuade him to release a new greatest-hits album, but Paul refuses. His manager steals the CD on which Paul recorded Olivia's voice. Paul informs Rebecca of Olivia's talent and explains that he did love her and that the letters she wrote to him were disposed of by his record company.

Paul's manager phones Olivia to register his interest in her voice. Olivia flees to London. Paul and Rebecca follow her, discovering from Paul's manager

that she has gone to an audition at the Royal Academy of Music. Paul and Rebecca arrive in time to see her perform and gain a place. Paul and Rebecca rekindle their romance. At her leaving party Olivia sings with her father.

I'll Be There is a predictable comedy centred on the discovery by Cardiff teenager Olivia that Paul Kerr, a faded 1980s pop star, is in fact her father. Paul is played by Craig Ferguson, a former stand-up best known for his roles in *The Big Tease* and *Saving Grace*, who also makes his directorial debut here and is co-author of the screenplay with first-timer Philip McGrade. Given his level of involvement, Ferguson must shoulder much of the blame for the film's blandness.

The relationship between Paul and Olivia carries little dramatic weight. He readily accepts her as his offspring and the pair bond easily despite the disapproval of Olivia's mother Rebecca. One of her reservations is that Olivia will be seduced by her father's rock-'n'-roll lifestyle, but Paul indulges in a strikingly mild form of hedonism. There's no suggestion of drug-induced excess and we're told that Paul has never been much of a philanderer. His main weakness is for booze, but he swiftly defeats his addiction and comfortably resists returning to it.

Olivia, meanwhile, is a level-headed teen who does a paper round on her pink moped and whose main act of rebellion involves running away to London to audition for the Royal Academy of Music. She's played reasonably well by Charlotte Church, who released her first album *Voice of an Angel* in 1999 at the age of just 13. Given Church's international success, it is at least credible that Olivia's singing voice should attract the interest of Paul's unscrupulous manager and impress the Royal Academy jury.

By contrast the scene in which Paul delights the crowd with an impromptu appearance at a pub gig ("He's making a comeback!") gushes one spectator) is not only hard to swallow but smacks of self-aggrandisement on Ferguson's part. If he had juxtaposed Olivia's blossoming talent with a less complacent version of Paul, the film might have opened a potentially rich seam of tension. Instead, *I'll Be There* is an insipidly feelgood picture that works towards a smug finale in which even the minor character of Rebecca's gay business partner is reunited with the lost love of his life.

There are only two moments of flourish: first in the opening scene, panning down to a church porch, the camera tracks into the building to introduce us to the source of the voice we have been listening to; and later, when depicting Paul's road to sobriety, Ferguson invests in a montage sequence where he toys with frame-within-a-frame devices. For the most part, though, Ferguson's disappointing debut has the look, feel and ambition of a television special, commissioned for the Christmas holidays.

Matthew Leyland

Minimal Stories

Argentina/Spain 2002

Director
Carlos Sorín
Screenplay
Pablo Solarz
From an idea by
Carlos Sorín
Pablo Solarz
Director of Photography
Hugo Colace
Editor
Mohamed Rajid
Art Director
Margarita Jusid
Music
Nicolas Sorín

©Guacamole Films/
Wanda Visión
Production Companies
Guacamole and Wanda
Visión present
a Carlos Sorín film
Associate Producer
José María Morales
Production Executive
Martín Bardi
TV Videos Production
Cecilia Mieres
Production Co-ordinator
Buenos Aires:
María Rosa Godoy
Production Manager
Martín Bardi
TV Videos Director
Rafael González del Cerro
Assistant Directors
Federico Badia
Verónica Souto
María Celina Eslava
Casting
Argentina Northern
Provinces:
Verónica Souto
Buenos Aires/Uruguay:
Mario Mahler
Argentina Southern
Provinces:
Carolina Sorín
TV Videos Director of Photography
Daniel Sorín
Camera Operators
Rafael Sahade
TV Videos:
Franco
Steadicam Operator
Rafael Sahade
Special Effects
Rubén Santeiro
Rubén Buelta
Graphic Art Design
Edgar Simkin
Set Decorator
Adriana Maestri
Costume Designer
Ruth Fisherman
Titles
Claudio Tarrabe
Claudio González
Soundtrack
"Canción de Alceipe" -
Carlos Paredes; "Porque
te tengo que olvidar" -
Kiko Benítez; "Strangers

in the Night";
"Caminemos" - Rosamel
Araya; "Lullaby" - Alana
Davis; "Blue Suede
Shoes"; "Conociéndote" -
Jorge Scoufalos, César
Pueyrredón;
"Levantando el
Avispero" - Anibal
Maldonado; "Shine
Dancing"; "La fiesta de la
alegría"; "Las cosas lindas
se parecen a ella"
Sound Design
Abbate & Díaz
Direct Sound
Rubén Piputto
Sound Mixing
Alfonso Pino
Estudios Exa
Sound Transfer
Image Films S.A.
Sound Editors
Marcelo Lago
Rubén Piputto
Foley
Perfecto de San José
Sound Post-production
Abbate & Díaz

Cast
Javier Lombardo
Roberto
Antonio Benedictti
Don Justo
Javierra Bravo
María Flores
Julia Solomonoff
Julia
Laura Vagnoni
Estela
Enrique Otranto
Carlos
Mariela Díaz
Rosa
María Rosa Cianferoni
Ana
María del Carmen Jiménez
baker's assistant 1
Magin Cesar García
García
Armando Grimaldi
porter
Mario Splanguño
baker
Rosa Valsecchi
baker's assistant 2
Anibal Maldonado
Fermin
Carlos Monteros
Losa
Silvina Fontelles
fat girl
Pedro Andrada
driver
Francis Sandoval
María's daughter
Argentina Albarracín
doctor
Roberto Trucco
beach guy
Junior
long face
Norma Oyarzún
nurse

Sabino Morales
policeman
José María Larosa
González
Rosario Vera
mother-in-law
Angela Azzi
secretary
Dulia Dora Almonacid
contestant
Sabino Rodríguez
Fernando Molina
Juan D. Rodríguez
Ramón Molina
Ismael González
Rolando González
Nestor Silvio Quintana
men from Corrientes
Marcelo Vázquez
prisoner
Ruben Von Der Thusen
restaurant waiter
Fabián Bonilla
ophthalmologist
Hector Tuma
collective rep
Carlos Alonso
Estela's brother

Elizabeth Jordan Cruz
prisoner's girlfriend
Viviana Puerta
TV soap actress
Fabián Bril
TV soap actor
María Lorena Natalini
Kimi
Miguel Cortese
Alex
Mariano Setto
Octavio

Certificate
15
Distributor
Optimum Releasing
8,238 feet
91 minutes 32 seconds

Dolby Digital
In Colour
Subtitles

Argentinian theatrical
title
Historias mínimas

Patagonia, the present. In separate, overlapping stories, three characters hit the roads of Southern Argentina, heading for the city of San Julián. María Flores, 25, travels by bus with her baby to claim a game-show prize. Travelling salesman Roberto, 40, applies sales techniques to woo a young widow; he is going to surprise her with a specially ordered birthday cake for her young son. Don Justo, 80, who has spent his final years sitting by his son's roadside general store, runs away, hitchhiking to the nearby city to find his lost dog.

María wins the top prize, a food processor that's of little use to her given that she has no electric current and barely any food. She trades it for the lesser prize of a make-up set. Roberto alters the cake *en route*, transforming it from a football into a turtle in fear that the widow's 'son' René may be a girl. He arrives only to discover the widow (and son) returning home with another man. When a heartbroken Roberto visits the widow's shop the next day to sell his wares, she lets slip that René's birthday was celebrated quietly with just her son and her brother. Learning that she is still unattached, Roberto is encouraged to continue his courtship. Don Justo befriends a young woman driver Julia; despite his failing health, he finds the dog, now with a new owner. A few years back Don Justo had run over a man who had the power to withdraw the ▶



Satellite town: Antonio Benedictti

◀ elderly man's driver's licence. The dog witnessed this, and Don Justo feels that he disapproved of his owner's actions enough to leave him. After a relatively sizeable sum of money is exchanged for the dog, the old man is reunited with his pet. In the final scene María sits on the bus home, staring into the mirror of her new, turtle-shaped make-up kit.

Every filmgoer knows that the road is cinema's favourite place for tales of loneliness, self-realisation and eventual fulfilment. And so it is that director Carlos Sorín sends off his trio of lonely, unfulfilled lead characters across the dusty roads of Patagonia, Southern Argentina. Their motives for setting out are ostensibly 'realistic', but we soon detect in their separate journeys a distinct brand of whimsy. Sorín, whose 1989 film *Eversmile*, *New Jersey* was also a road movie set in Patagonia, never seems sure whether his new film is a credible account of everyday rural Argentina or a larger metaphor about longing, an uncertainty of tone not helped by the conventional storytelling. All the narratives are tidily resolved by the end, our heroes having absorbed pat lessons of self-improvement from their respective experiences.

There are a few strained attempts at symbolism – trucks speeding across the screen, leaving the film's 'lost' characters standing still; or the recurring turtle image, an emblem perhaps of steadfast determination or shell-protected isolation. But the film works better as an everyday view of this distant place. *Minimal Stories* offers a glimpse of remote Argentina and the strange undercurrents of trade that seemingly sustain the edges of its collapsed economy. All three stories involve some form of barter in their resolution, an under-the-table deal in exchange for something "worth more than money": a woman's dreams of beauty before her youth leaves her; a lonely salesman's desire to find companionship and to right the wrongs of his first marriage; an old man's need to be forgiven, if only by his dog, before death.

The performances by this assembly of unprofessional actors offer some lively moments. Particularly impressive are María del Carmen Jiménez as a baker's wife, shyly drawing philosophy from the soap opera she watches, and 92-year-old Rosario Vera, struggling to see the form of a turtle in a football-shaped cake. The performance of Antonio Benedictti as Don Justo would be remarkable even from a veteran actor – although frustratingly the film glosses over the troubling fact that this loveable old grandpa is in fact a murderer. But it's telling that the most affecting supporting role is supplied by professional actor Magin Cesar García as Roberto's modest colleague, uneasily being force-fed sales techniques in a roadside café. It's a rare moment of polished control in a film that lapses too often into raw tedium.

Gilda Williams

Mon-rak Transistor

Thailand 2002

Director

Pen-ek Ratanaruang

Producers

Nonzee Nimibutr
Duangkamol
Limcharoen

Screenplay

Pen-ek Ratanaruang
Based on the novel by
Wat Wanlayangkoon

Director of Photography

Chankit
Chamniwikaipong

Editor

Patamanadda Yukol

Production Designer

Saksiri Chuntarangsri

Music

Amornbhong
Methakunavudh
Chartchai Pongprapapan

Production Companies

Cinemasia and Five Star
Productions present a
Pen-ek Ratanaruang
film

Executive Producer

Chareon lamphongporn

Production Manager

Phalathon Sriraksa

Location Manager

Gaid Phittayakornsilp

Assistant Directors

Cherdpong Laoyont
Watanachon Kongthon

Continuity

Navarutt Roongaroon

Casting

Sukumaporn
Suthisrisinlpa

Light

Chalaom Pidpad

Special Effects

Leng Special Effects

Art Director

Wittaya Chaimongkol

Costume Designer

Sombatsara Teerasaroch

Make-up

Sittiporn

Rujirongwathaporn

Hairstylist

Monta Harnwichai

Soundtrack

"Nam khang duan hok",
"Mong", "Chai laew sl",
"Luem mai long (Never
Forget)", "Taharn gane
kon sao", "Namta pua",
"Luem mai long (Never
Forget) (remix)" –

Suppakorn Kitsuwani;

"Pen sode tammai" –

Viroj Ta-a-sa; "A-tid u-

thai ram luck" – Winai

Ta-a-sa; "Baan nee chun

rak" – Putipong

Kraisorn;

"Kid tuang pee mai" –

Wanchana Kerddee

Sound Design

Amornbhong

Methakunavudh

Sound Recording

Nipat Sumneangsano

Consultant

Kobsuk Charuchinda

Cast

Suppakorn Kitsuwani

Pan

Siriyakorn Pukkavesa

Sadaw

Black Pomtong

Yod

Somlek Sakdikul

Suwat

Pornitip Papanai

Dao

Ampol Rattanawong

Siew

Prasit Wongrakthai

Chuey, Sadaw's father

Chartchai Hamnuansak

prison guard

Akarat Nitipon

Kiattisak

Sawang Rodnuch

Yen

Chanikan Pocharat

Oye

Baworanrit Chantasakda

Sia Noom

Jakra Rujirawanich

Sia Noi

Natta Watanapaibul

Suwat Tuktawe

Rattiya Ishao

Pooat Pocharat

Sia Noi's henchmen

Bancha Arala

Plern Praewsupan

Kerd Morakot

band

Somjeen Thai-atwitte

dancing teacher

Sanom Sriboonrawd

dancer

Sakarin Jangarom

Wittaya Ulit

Manit Mattarak

Samrit Maneerod

comedians

Pakawat Wisetmanee

Piyasan Kantaprasit

Niroot Hoonrod

Kung Utain

Kraduaktongkam band

members

Sua Sopon

Dong Muanaum

cane-cutters

Ornapa Kritsadee

charity party host

Certificate

15

Distributor

Institute of

Contemporary Arts

10,869 feet

120 minutes 46 seconds

Dolby Digital Surround-EX

In Colour

Subtitles

Sadaw begins an affair with a worm-tablet salesman, by whom she has her second child. Pan and a fellow labourer abscond to the city and turn to crime. Pan is arrested for robbery. Upon his release from prison, he returns to Sadaw, who reluctantly takes him back.

It would not be a slight on the Thai musical *Mon-rak Transistor* to say that it is full of crap. The film begins with a close-up of a laxative bottle. In the background, mercifully out of focus, the young reprobate – and eager singer – Pan is passing the fruits of a recent robbery for inspection by prison guards. The remainder of the picture is rendered as a flashback explaining Pan's decline, narrated with a Brechtian flourish by one of the guards, but the scatological imagery runs throughout. While Pan deserts the army for a singing career, his wife Sadaw falls in love with a worm-tablet salesman who promises customers: "If you buy today and shit out tomorrow, I'll pay you one baht for four worms." Pan complains that a vegetable diet has turned his stools green. While in jail, he topples into a vat of excrement. He may reach for the stars but he always finds himself back in the shit.

It's a minor miracle, then, that *Mon-rak Transistor* remains so fragrant. What publicity the movie has received has focused on its kitsch elements – colourful sets, zany songs, links to *Tears of the Black Tiger* (2001), with which it shares a cast member (Suppakorn Kitsuwani, who plays Pan) and a producer (Nonzee Nimibutr). The film undoubtedly has its lush spells. At a village fair, revellers share the dance floor with goats and ducks, watched over by a lavish Ferris wheel and flanked by tombola stalls, one of which is decorated with Liverpool FC memorabilia. When Pan is called up for military service, his bountiful serenades continue during basic training. Backing vocals are provided by his fellow grunts, who interrupt shooting practice to harmonise.

But very quickly the wackiness evaporates to reveal a tougher core.

When we first meet him, Pan is a show-off with mischievous Tinkerbell eyes and a style of movement which suggests that voguing didn't die out with the 1990s. He even smiles underwater, like Esther Williams. Once he joins a singing troupe, and is consigned to mopping floors, the joy hisses out of him. It would be comforting to feel that the movie wasn't occasionally complicit in his ordeal. Immediately after his big debut, Pan is persuaded to strip for a humiliating photo session. It should be a downbeat scene, marking the point when his optimism curdles, but the camera is only too grateful for the opportunity to snap its handsome lead in his snazzy smalls.

Elsewhere the slide into despair is unrelenting. You sense as Pan presents his bride with a clunky transistor radio in a Moschino bag that the writer-director Pen-ek Ratanaruang has a bee in his bonnet (his last film, the well-regarded *6IXTYNIN*g, was a comedy thriller set against the backdrop of Thailand's crumbling economy). And so it proves: there are numerous barbed compositions, including a shot of the betrayed wife Sadaw sitting in front of McDonald's with a homeless child sleeping beside her, as well as the ironic spectacle of the now vagrant Pan being ejected from a fancy-dress benefit when it is discovered that his soiled outfit was not simply thrown together for the evening.

Mon-rak Transistor isn't the first movie to hijack the musical genre to criticise capitalism, a notable example being the disturbing 1981 film of Dennis Potter's *Pennies from Heaven*. But the picture to which it bears the closest resemblance is *O Lucky Man!* (1973). Both works focus on the rise and fall of an itinerant, idealistic hero roaming a landscape crowded with eccentrics, and both are peppered with songs that observe or advance the politicised narrative. Ratanaruang blows his chance to be the new Lindsay Anderson with a heartbreaking reunion between Pan and Sadaw, curtailed by a montage of their carefree courtship. All but the most cynical audiences will be too busy crying honest tears to complain.

Ryan Gilbey



Fairground attraction: Siriyakorn Pukkavesa