

**FILM**



STARRING GIL BELLOWS,  
JENNIFER WESTFELDT,  
CHRISTIAN KANE, KIM RAVER  
AND STACY KEACH.  
DIRECTED BY STU POLLARD.  
RELEASED BY FABRICATION  
FILMS. RATED R; 1:35.

**Keep Your Distance**

Homeboy do-it-all writer/director/producer Stu Pollard's second effort, "Keep Your Distance," dares to consider questions to which the Carla Sue set wants replies. Are those ab fab Derbyplace power couples as perfect as they seem? What really goes on in their glamorous Upper River Road lives when they're not posing for magazine covers?

Surprise, it ain't all Southeast Christian ice cream socials. At least for the area's hottest matrimonial duo since John Y. and Miss America lived in the governor's manse.

David Dailey (Gil Bellows) is *the* WHAS-AM personality. He's been No. 1 in town eight years in a row. His face is plastered on billboards all over the burg. He's more popular than Rick Pitino, Hizzoner For Life or Muhammad Ali. Eat your heart out, John Ziegler.

His gorgeous wife, Susan (Kim Raver), is also a boffo media star. Think Darcie Divita with smarts, slit skirts, a come-hither personality and a hint of discretion.

They're "Kentuckians of the Year," a "public relations" dream team," according to Dailey's boss, Kevin Sullivan (Gary Anthony Williams). They are "Louisville's Perfect Couple."

So it seems. At least until David finds a key to a Seelbach Hotel room with a cryptic handwritten note on his car. He figures soulmate Susan wants to spice up their perfect life. She's in the room all right. Dressed like Jenna Jameson, too. It's just that she has another lover in mind. When David walks in, the plot takes a turn.

Intrigue ensues. Also in the mix is recently divorced Melody Carpenter (Jennifer Westfeldt), who is being stalked by wannabe hubby Sean Voight (Christian Kane). Or by a mystery person driving a black Mercedes. Or both. Beleaguered Melody and David become pals after they meet by chance. When Louisville's media star with the mostest is busted, he calls her — not his wife — to bail him out. Yet David and Susan want to work



Gil Bellows' character, David Dailey, is a popular radio personality. Think Terry Meiners.

things out. But David continues to get mysterious notes. Melody sees that Mercedes in her rearview mirror wherever she drives. And in her dreams. David and Melody continue to pursue their friendship. They rendezvous in spots with scintillating views of Louisville's skyline.

Intrigue smolders. The real star of "Keep Your Distance" is our beloved town. As in his initial effort, "Nice Guys Sleep Alone," Pollard sets a pasel of scenes at familiar local landmarks. Here, it's the Red Lounge, Seelbach Hotel, Captain's Quarters, Headliners, Cave Hill Cemetery and, of course, Churchill Downs. In fact, minor player Brooks Voight (Stacy Keach in cameo) has a plush office below the Twin Spires.

One suspects Pollard desires to showcase Louisville as Woody Allen has Manhattan. Yet beyond his fetishlike fascination with depicting Derbytown in glossy 35mm for the world to see, there are encouraging signs in his second effort. Pollard has deftly avoided a sophomore slump.

"Keep Your Distance" is vastly superior, both conceptually and in execution, to Pollard's maiden effort. Yes, his dialog is often stilted. Characters tend to converse in cinematic code. There are some moments bracingly obvious. How very Edward Bulwer-Lytton that the denouement takes place during a dark and stormy night.

There is an underdeveloped side story

about a politico with a sordid past that is never fully realized. It is a diversion, detracting rather than enhancing the plot line.

Nonetheless, there is enticing mystery to "Keep Your Distance." Who is behind the disturbing, inscrutable notes David keeps receiving? What is his or her motive? Who is driving that black Mercedes and why is he (or she?) following Melody wherever she goes? Is David really going to get it on with Susan and Susan's lover as his sweetie proposes? Does "Louisville's First Couple" survive? Or does David find happiness ever after with Melody (Westfeldt, the star of "Kissing Jessica Stein")?

There's more than enough to keep an audience locked in. It will be hard for local filmgoers not to check out this earnest film noirish homage to Louisville.

Also of interest is the commercial fate of this flick. In true indie fashion, Pollard, a devout filmmaker if ever there was one, is being forced to multitask. Not only did he write, direct and produce the film, he personally delivered coffee and muffins at a press screening. Such is the nature of movies not underwritten by the moguls of Hollywoodland.

One hopes he chooses to persevere. With "Keep Your Distance," Pollard shows promise that good things may be forthcoming as he matures as a filmmaker.

BY C D KAPLAN  
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Kim Raver (of TV's "24") plays Susan, David Dailey's arm-candy wife.