

A darker view of Louisville

By Rich Copley

HERALD-LEADER CULTURE CRITIC

Louisville native Stu Pollard's *Keep Your Distance* works hard in its opening frames to establish the film's old Kentucky home.

That would mostly be Louisville, with numerous angles on the Louisville skyline and a lot of radio chatter from regional blowtorch WHAS, where the protagonist, David Dailey, is a celebrity talk-show host.

After those establishing shots, though, *Distance* settles into being a fair psychological thriller that uses Louisville as a backdrop the same way Woody Allen employs New York or M. Night Shyamalan utilizes Philadelphia. It's just striking to us because we are not so used to seeing Louisville on a big screen — though with *Elizabethtown* on the horizon, get used to it.

Distance is Pollard's second feature film, following the fetching 1999 romantic comedy *Nice Guys Sleep Alone*, a film that utilized the Kentucky countryside and Churchill Downs to tell its story. This film is a more urban drama that makes Louisville look like a substantial Midwestern city.

It's also darker, a multifaceted sexual drama starring some marquee actors in former *Ally McBeal* star Gil Bellows in the

Meet the director

■ Director Stu Pollard will attend the 7:40 and 9:40 p.m. screenings today and Saturday at the Kentucky Theatre, 214 E. Main St., to introduce *Keep Your Distance* and take questions afterward. Admission is \$6.50 adults, \$5 seniors.

■ Pollard will also be at a screening at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 27 in the Student Services Auditorium at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond. A reception will be at 6:30 p.m.; he will discuss the film after the screening. Admission is free. Call (859) 622-1871.



Pollard

FILM REVIEW

'Keep Your Distance'

★★★

Rated R for sexual content and language. 95 minutes. Kentucky Theatre.

lead and perennial movie tough-guy Stacy Keach as a wealthy racetrack executive.

Dailey (Bellows) is enjoying the fruits of local celebrity, regularly passing billboards of himself advertising his show and hawkling things such as coffee shops. He and his wife, Susan (Kim Raver), have just been named Kentuckians of the Year by Kentucky Monthly magazine.

But someone's out to get him,

sending him mysterious cards and splattering his billboards with blood-red paint.

At the same time, Susan wants to push their sexual relationship in some unconventional directions. In the wake of a politician's sexual scandal, he becomes convinced that his stalker will use his wife's sexual appetites to extinguish his star.

About the same time, he meets Melody (Jennifer Westfeldt), a pharmaceutical rep who's got her own troubles: workaholic following a messy divorce and a spoiled rich kid suitor, Sean (Christian Kane), who won't take her "no" for an answer.

The film opens with Sean's very public proposal of marriage at Churchill.

Distance's two biggest weak-

nesses are having too much going on and a nagging reluctance to show its hand until very late in the movie without giving much payoff for our patience.

On the upside, it is an interesting exploration of how imprisoning fame and power can be and how easily the best people can be spattered with mud.

David and Melody are the most genuinely good people in the movie. They also spend the most time on the run. David is running from his wife, whom he'd probably leave if it wouldn't look so bad in the paper, and his mysterious stalker; and Melody is running from Sean, who can afford to make her life uncomfortable.

Bellows and Westfeldt do a nice job creating a chemistry their characters insist is just friendship, though we can see more is there.

Pollard is doing a nice job bridging an artistic gap between the have-camera-will-shoot crowd in Kentucky and nationally established filmmakers. This review is probably even more critical than it would be of most local work because despite some shortcomings, we can see that Pollard has potential to make very good movies.

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