

DVD Review: 'Youth in Revolt' Showcases Michael Cera's Versatility

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CHICAGO – Some actors are so brilliantly in command of their abilities that their efforts are routinely taken for granted. Michael Cera's utter failure to hit a single false note onscreen has led some to believe that he's simply playing himself, as if playing oneself was somehow easy to begin with.

Cera's comic persona is as impenetrable as Woody Allen's. He embodies vulnerable neurotic teenage angst with an authenticity unmatched by any actor in recent years. His best lines are delivered under the breath and at odd angles, striking the funny bone with impeccable deadpan timing. After Hollywood tried (and failed) to turn him into a commercial commodity, with "Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist" and the embarrassing "Year One," it's a relief to see Cera in a role that proves he has a range beyond the persona he has mastered.



DVD Rating: **4.0/5.0**

"Youth in Revolt" is based on the excellent book series by C.D. Payne, whose teenage characters speak with an eloquence beyond their years, while their minds (and hormones) remain fixed in adolescence. Payne's horny hero, Nick Twisp, memorably described his penis as "a remote region accessed indifferently for businesslike micturition," that had developed overnight into "a gaudy Las Vegas of the body." Such writing evokes an intriguing fusion of Charlie Brown's elevated speech and "Superbad"'s vibrant vulgarity. Like the protagonists of countless sex comedies, Twisp (Cera, bonier than ever) simply wants to get laid, and is desperate to woo the girl of his wet dreams: the impossibly gorgeous, mature and enigmatic Sheeni Saunders (played by the impossibly named Portia Doubleday). Sheeni is looking for someone more confident, forceful, aggressive...in other words, bad. Super bad, in fact. Thus, Nick undergoes a complete transformation in order to win the girl, delving into the untapped waters of his dark side.

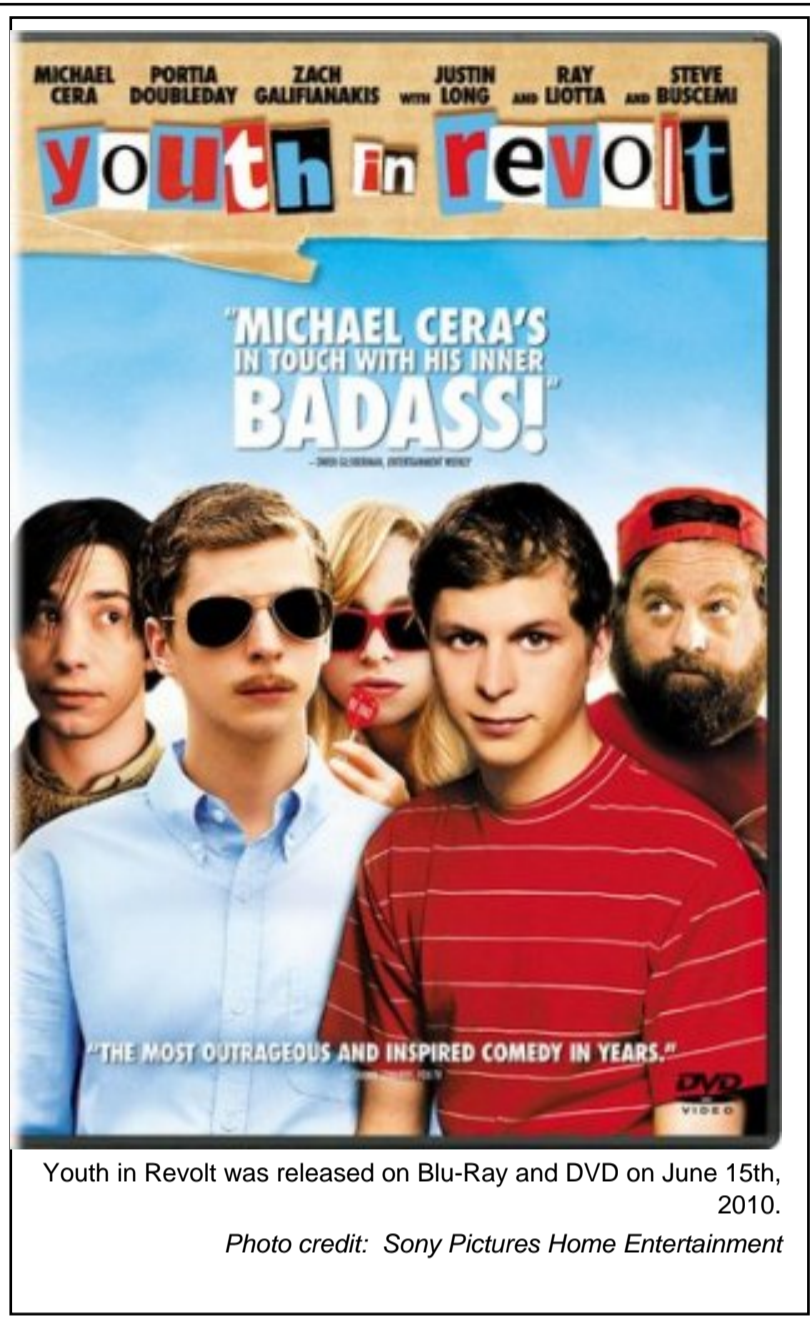


Michael Cera stars in Miguel Arteta's *Youth in Revolt*.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

Director Miguel Arteta ("The Good Girl") mostly succeeds in staying true to the spirit of Payne's text. His visualization of Nick Twisp's alter-ego, mustached chain-smoker Francois, is ingenious in its simplicity (Cera does double duty as both characters, a la "The Parent Trap"). Arteta is also unafraid of protracted awkward silences, which are a perfect fit for Cera, whose comedic rhythm and timing are so magnificent, it's as if he can hear the audience in his head (he would make a great stage actor). This is easily Cera's funniest vehicle since "Superbad," though it falls short of being his best film, especially once Gustin Nash's script stumbles into sentimentality at the end. Cera, however, has

never been better. His character's newfound assertiveness is guaranteed to provoke applause and major laughs, as well as hopefully lead "Youth in Revolt" to achieve well-deserved cult status on DVD.



Youth in Revolt was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on June 15th, 2010.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

"Youth in Revolt" is presented in its 1.85:1 aspect ratio, and includes a fair amount of special features, the majority of which are also included on the film's Blu-Ray edition. About ten minutes into Cera and Arteta's feature-length audio commentary, the weary star is clearly exhausted by the act of participating in a "one way conversation" consisting of an "unnatural amount of talking." Though the track fails as an insightful analysis, it is a thoroughly pleasurable hang-out session for fans of the director and actor, who admit that their love of the book may have hurt the film in the long run. They point out how some dialogue and set-pieces prove to work far better on paper than they do on the screen (such as Nick's "Carlotta" persona, which is confined to a weak cameo). Arteta highlights some of the film's bizarre surprise appearances by people such as Apollo 11 crew member Michael Collins, and reminisces about how Jean Smart (as Twisp's mother) played much of her role while hiding a broken leg.

Most of the deleted footage expands on Peter Sluszka's animation, which is often awkwardly juxtaposed with the film's action, save for the sequence where Nick becomes transfixed by some rather acrobatic hallucinations. Sluszka's work takes many forms, veering from the pedestrian to the truly inspired, though his cutesy epilogue for the end credits, featuring nothing less than a flying car, is painfully cornball. There's some diverting live-action bits that give added screen time to scene-stealing co-stars Zach Galifianakis, Steve Buscemi, Fred Willard and the terrific Erik Knudsen as Nick's even more neurotic friend, Lefty. A collection of audition tapes illustrate how the young ensemble was splendidly cast, though some of them (particularly Knudsen and Kaylan) seem to be initially presenting their own variations on the stereotypical Cera persona.

'Youth in Revolt' is released by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment and stars Michael Cera, Portia Doubleday, Jean Smart, Zach Galifianakis, Erik Knudsen, Adhir Kalyan, Steve Buscemi, Fred Willard, Ari Graynor, Ray Liotta, Justin Long and M. Emmet Walsh. It was written by Gustin Nash and directed by Miguel Arteta. It was released on June 15th, 2010. It is rated R.



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