



February 17, 2005

High Life

Review by Dennis Harvey

A Night and Day Sweatshops production.
Produced, directed, edited by Lila Yomtoob.
Screenplay by cast, from a story by Yomtoob.

With: Michael Wiener, Priscilla Holbrook, Sam Marks, Max Faugno, Sharon Eisman, James Ford, Doug Paulson, Sunah Biltsted.

Made on a microbudget, DV feature "High Life" is a slice of twentysomething Brooklynite life that might easily have turned pat or stagey, yet emerges a razor-sharp miniature, capturing the precise moment when prolonged adolescence surrenders to sober adulthood. Solid fest item won't be an easy commercial sell, but certainly bodes well for the future of director Lila Yomtoob and her collaborators.

Helmer and cast worked up the script during an intensive three-month rehearsal period, improvising all dialogue. Often this sort of path leads toward actorish indulgence, but not here. Young artist Sy (Michael Wiener) has recently acquired a live-in girlfriend in slightly older, much more together Melissa (Priscilla Holbrook). She urges him to get serious about his career, a notion he views with ambivalence, and which in any case looks unlikely to happen so long as junior sib Satchel (Sam Marks) and pals use the expansive loft space as their permanent party pad. During the course of a single day, all tensions come to the fore, with some surprising results. Perfs, language, and tech/design aspects are perfectly honed (albeit with a near-excess of jump-cutting) to mine situation's naturalistic seriocomedy.

Camera (color, DV), Brian Newman; music, Douce; production designer, Brit Till. Reviewed at San Francisco Indie Film Festival, Feb. 6, 2005. Running time: 72 MIN.