



63rd Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Competition



PRINCE AVALANCHE

A FILM BY DAVID GORDON GREEN



SYNOPSIS

An odd couple of sorts, Alvin (**Paul Rudd**), meditative and stern, and his girlfriend's brother Lance (**Emile Hirsch**), dopey and insecure, leave the city behind to spend the summer in solitude repainting traffic lines down the center of a country highway ravaged by wildfire. As the two begin their gradual journey across the landscape, swapping stories and butting heads, what unfolds is an unexpectedly humorous yet moving examination of an unlikely friendship that reveals distinct approaches to finding one's way in life.

In **PRINCE AVALANCHE**, American filmmaker **David Gordon Green** exhibits his mastery for infusing poignant character study with comedic insight through subtle shifts in tone, incisive dialogue, and a profound appreciation for place. Set to the haunting backdrop of a barren expanse of burnt-out Texas wilderness – whose melancholic beauty is accentuated with the music of the rock band **Explosions in the Sky** and collaborator **David Wingo's** stunning score as well as **Tim Orr's** sweeping cinematography – **PRINCE AVALANCHE** bucks convention by exploring male bonding in a refreshingly genuine – and often absurdist – way. Adapted from **EITHER WAY**, an Icelandic film, **PRINCE AVALANCHE** is driven by strong performances by the two male leads.



PRINCE AVALANCHE was filmed in Bastrop State Park, which had been ravaged by a devastating wildfire in September 2011. Shooting took place over a 16-day period in May 2012. “It was just starting to bloom a little bit more than I’d like,” writer-director David Gordon Green states. The area around Bastrop had recently been showcased in fellow-Austinite Richard Linklater’s *Bernie*, but now, of course, the park itself had a completely different look.

“It had a weird, Martian quality about it,” actor Paul Rudd recalls. Adds actor Emile Hirsch, “It was really gloomy – not the best place for a depressed person. But it was perfect for us, because being around all these burnt trees and charred ground really put us in an appropriately weird place.” But the flip side of the coin was that the place was all theirs to do as they wished, Green notes. “Typically, there’s a lot of campers and visitors there – it’s a state park. So it was kind of fun for us to have our own run of the place, because it was essentially abandoned when we were working there.”

Capturing the unusual, barren landscape in an engaging way was left to director of photography Tim Orr. “He’s shot all my movies so far, and dozens of my commercials,” says Green. “We’ve worked together since film school,” at North Carolina School of the Arts, where Green met many of his continuing collaborators. Adds Rudd, “I love Tim’s work. When I look at his shots, I feel like I’m looking at a painting.”

Orr’s cinematography was key to sharing the experience of Bastrop with the audience. “There’s a fragility to the camera work, which ties in per-

fectly with the fragile environment we were in,” the director says. “It’s not a super confident camera with an attitude. It’s a camera that’s trying to find things and trying to keep up with the characters.” Green and Orr referenced movies such as the Dardenne Brothers’ *The Son* and Wim Wenders’ *Kings of the Road*. “In those movies, the camera is the audience. It almost seems like it’s thinking or searching or wondering, with a little bit of curiosity to it. Rather than cool camera movies, which aren’t really appropriate here.”

Planning the many beautiful shots Green and Orr were able to create was made all the more easy by the simplified production methodology being employed. “There weren’t big trucks with loads of gear to worry about, like in a studio feature. And there were never more than 10 people on set, anywhere,” Green explains. “And we didn’t have a difficult schedule – we wrapped, in fact, two days early. We’d finish up some days, relaxed, and go get burgers.”

The gentler schedule allowed the two to not only execute shots that Green had written into the script in a creative way, but also find some of the shots on the day which give PRINCE AVALANCHE its unique look and place the viewer in the recovering environment of Bastrop. For instance, capturing ants busy at work or colorful caterpillars or yellow paint making its way down a gently-flowing stream. “There are so many weird things out there – it’s this kind of new nature that’s coming to life. It was hard to prepare for anything, because it was always just so uncertain and mysterious what would wander over!”

Wildlife was a big part of the imagery – some planned, some found. In one beautiful shot, Lance, walking in the distance, watches as a skunk investigates some road kill. “The script actually called for a coyote – but then it came down to spending \$1200 for a coyote or borrowing a skunk from a skunk lady for \$45!” Green remembers. “Skunks are far more interesting – even though this one wasn’t destinked – we were all a little scared.” And for the rodent experts, skunks indeed are vegetarians and would have no interest in making a meal out of road kill. “We melted some gummy bears and put them out there inside a tortoise shell. For some reason, they like gummy bears.”

Accompanying many of the scenes is the music of Austin-based EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY and composer David Wingo. Says Green, “I feel like the three main characters in the movie are the performances, the camera work and the music.” Wingo has been the director’s closest friend since grade school and has composed music to most of his films since *George Washington* – and lives in Green’s neighborhood. “He also introduced me to EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY. These guys speak my language. We go see movies together all the time.” The group has composed for Green, often with Wingo, since *All the Real Girls* in 2003.

Green skipped the usual spotting sessions film composers and directors normally do together, instead inviting the band to the set to get the vibe of the film, and then turning them loose to compose cues for scenes, which he and editor Colin Patton would then cut to the rhythm and tone of the music. “We kind of followed their cue in the edit room. They would write a piece of music, and then send

me the recording. It actually was a really efficient way to work, having all your collaborators live within a mile of your house. You can always just jump over and see where they’re at, give them your new files, and hear their new music.

Filming Alvin’s weekend alone (a scene which was not in the original film) provided not only plenty of cinematographic opportunities, but plenty of time to let Paul Rudd flex his improvisational acting muscles, as well as those of his character. “Alvin fancies himself to be somewhat of an outdoorsman, but he may not be,” the actor explains. “There are certainly some things he’s quite capable of doing, like capturing his food and eating it, or building things. He can do things that many people probably couldn’t. And yet his uniform and the way he is seem to be a little incongruous to the way you would imagine somebody that does that kind of stuff. There isn’t the inherent ruggedness that you associate with somebody spending time in the woods for days. There’s something a little more genteel about him, and I like that.”

Green agrees. “Yeah, Alvin thinks of himself as a little bit more of a man’s man outdoorsman than he actually is – he’s not the ‘average Joe’ he thinks he is. The weekend scenes are not only a detour for him – and a respite from Lance – but they let you see that he’s actually somebody who’s missing a few pieces. I mean, he’d catch a squirrel and fry it up – things that give him a kind of machismo of the day. But he’s no deer hunter. He probably had a pellet gun and just popped off a squirrel or trapped it with a piece of cheese, in a very undramatic way.” Alvin also complements his squirrel meal with some tasty roots, no doubt found nearby. “I’m

sure he's read all the Boy Scout field guides," the director adds.

His faux-macho persona isn't even lost on the tough-as-nails truck driver, who, when Alvin bums a cigar off him, tells Alvin, "You shouldn't smoke those – you look like an idiot." "Sam Shepard told me that one time when he gave me a cigarette," Green recalls. "He said, 'You look stupid.'"

Alvin is actually surprisingly unlike the actor portraying him. "I thought this was perfect for Paul – because Paul actually is a great builder and a great craftsman. He actually has these strengths and abilities himself. So it was kind of fun to have him actually there, because he could do the physicality of the character."

Alvin also takes some time to live out his fantasy home life, courtesy of a burnt-out home available for some pantomime. "We had some stuff written in the script," says Green, "but we wanted that to be what Paul wanted it to be, and really designed the sequence to be something that was special to him. It's funny, Emil was getting bored back at base camp, saying, 'C'mon, let's film something with me.' But we just wanted to spend the day with Paul." Describes Rudd, "We just let the mood and the weather dictate what would happen. We found a location and said, 'Let's just play out some kind of scenario of what maybe is going through this guy's mind.' And it's just playing house a little bit, which I think is something he probably would like to do," with on-camera business improvised by the actor.

In one other very special scene, Alvin comes upon an older woman combing through the ruins

of her own home. Explains Green, "We were scouting locations for Alvin's pantomime scene with 1st assistant director Atilla Salih Yücer, and one of our producers, Craig Zobel, and found this wonderful lady, JOYCE PAYNE, who was actually combing through the ashes of her own house. He called me up and said, 'You gotta come over and meet this woman.'"

Zobel had videotaped the woman giving a brief tour of her destroyed life, and, after showing the footage to Green, the director decided to create a sequence of the woman giving a similar tour to Alvin. "I went to talk to her, and I asked her, 'Would you be intimidated by a camera and a boom mic in your face walking through your home?' And she said, 'Yeah, probably,' so we gave it a shot. And she was incredibly natural. I couldn't have asked for anything more."

The experience was unforgettable for Rudd. "David shot it, sort of, documentary style. She was just there, going through her house, which she does. And we just talked a little bit about what it was that she was looking for, what her experience was like. There was this kind of sadness in her that she felt, as if 'I had all of these things, all of this history, this documentation of my life. And now that that's gone, I have no proof that it even existed.' She felt that she had vanished, too. She was raw and sad and beautiful and intriguing. She was a lovely lady."

Though, of course, not in the original script, Green simply shot the material and, later, found a way to incorporate it into the story. As Rudd recalls, "David just said to me, 'Let her be who she wants to be. Talk about what she wants to be, and then we'll

figure out a way that that works in our story,' instead of trying to fig a square peg into a round hole." The director was more than pleased. "I'm not sure she even knew when the camera was going. She was just a real special lady we were fortunate to find. And you could go out there tomorrow, and she'll probably still be there."

Green also makes use of Ms. Payne in two other sequences, involving Lance LeGault's truck driver – where she appears to be accompanying him, as Lance and Alvin point out, though LeGault has no idea what old woman they're talking about. Explains Green, "Some of that is taken from the Icelandic movie. That's a very common folklore ghost story, that there will be a woman that's not real that walks down the road. Once we found Joyce, we just put her in that role – it just seemed correct." So is she a ghost? "That's kind of the fun of the movie – maybe there's a world where there's ghost, or maybe it's just insanity. It seems so ethereal, I don't think I really even know myself," he smiles.

Along their simple travels, Alvin and Lance come upon a gruff, surly truck driver – the type of odd character often found in David Gordon Green films. "I like to design a world with people that I recognize or identify with or I'm entertained by," he explains. "I guess I'm attracted to the odd. Probably everyone in all of my movies is odd. But then so are my friends and family and the people I hang out with – and that's what makes them interesting to me. I like movies where there are characters that are seen kind of outcasts – but not make a freak show out of them. They're just fun to watch."

Playing the truck driver is the late character actor, Lance LeGault, who died not long after production wrapped. "He was a force of nature," Hirsch says, "bold and blunt." LeGault would enrapture his fellow cast and crew members with his quite-true tales from a life filled with Hollywood adventures, including playing music briefly with Elvis Presley. "He was the genuine article," says Rudd, "a real cowboy. He had a John Wayne quality about him. I was so sad when I learned he'd passed."

"He was an old school showman – everyone was scared of him. He was a cantankerous old fucker," Green adds with a smile. "He'd show up on set with his wife and his tank of oxygen and do this wonderful improv with Emile and Paul. He was like from the Lee Marvin school of acting. He'd say, 'Sit back, kid, here we go.'" LeGault's many years of experience and hard work were not lost on his co-stars. "He was a real actor," says Hirsch. "He had real craft, and he was technically aware. And he could improvise in character, which was just captivating."





Paul Rudd can currently be seen in Judd Apatow's *This Is 40* starring opposite Leslie Mann. The film is an original comedy that expands on the story of Pete (Rudd) and Debbie (Mann) from *Knocked Up* as we see first-hand how they are dealing with their current state of life. *This Is 40* was nominated for a 2013 Critics' Choice Award for Best Comedy Movie and Rudd was nominated for Best Actor in a Comedy.

Rudd's other film credits include: *Our Idiot Brother*, *I Love You, Man*, *Role Models* (co-writer), *The 40 Year Old Virgin*, *Anchorman*, *Wanderlust* (producer), *Dinner for Schmucks*, *How Do You Know*, *Monsters Vs. Aliens*, *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, *The Ten* (producer), *Night at the Museum*, *Diggers*, *Reno 911*, *The Cider House Rules*, *The Object of My Affection*, *Wet Hot American Summer*, *The Chateau*, *Clueless*, and William Shakespeare's *Romeo + Juliet*, among others.

Rudd recently returned to the Broadway stage this past fall in Craig Wright's *Grace* starring opposite Michael Shannon, Kate Arrington, and Edward Asner. *Grace* follows a wide-eyed young couple (Rudd and Arrington) as they start a new life in sunny, promise-filled Florida, with big plans to open a chain of Gospel motels. An agitated neighbor (Shannon) and a caustic exterminator (Asner) complete the foursome as destinies collide in this intensely entertaining and suspenseful journey. The play opened at the Cort Theatre on October 4th and closed on January 6th.

On stage, Rudd has previously starred opposite Julia Roberts and Bradley Cooper in Richard Greenberg's Broadway production of *Three Days of*

Rain. He also starred in Neil LaBute's *Bash* in both New York and Los Angeles as well as LaBute's *The Shape of Things* in London and New York. He made his West End debut in the London production of Robin Phillips' *Long Day's Journey Into Night* opposite Jessica Lange. Other Broadway credits include Nicholas Hynter's *Twelfth Night* at Lincoln Center Theater with a special performance which aired on PBS' "Great Performances" and in Alfred Uhry's Tony Award winning play, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*.

On television, Rudd recently guest starred on NBC's *Parks and Recreation*. He also was co-writer/co-creator of the critically acclaimed series *Party Down* on Starz. Additionally, he garnered wide recognition with a recurring role on the TV sitcom *Friends* as Mike Hannigan.

Upcoming features include starring opposite Amy Poehler in David Wain's *They Came Together* for Lionsgate, opposite Tina Fey in Paul Weitz's *Admission* for Focus Features, and opposite Will Ferrell and Steve Carell in Adam McKay's *Anchorman 2* for Paramount.

EMILE HIRSCH (Lance)

Emile Hirsch recently wrapped *Lone Survivor*, based on the bestselling book by Marcus Luttrell, opposite Mark Wahlberg, Taylor Kitsch, and Ben Foster and being directed by Pete Berg.

Earlier this year Emile was seen in William Friedkin's *Killer Joe* a dark comedy where Hirsch stars opposite Matthew McConaughey and Juno Temple; Oliver Stone's *Savages* with Blake Lively, Taylor Kitsch, John Travolta, Uma Thurman, Salma Hayek, and Benicio Del Toro.

Next year Emile will be seen in *Twice Born* based on the bestselling book by Margaret Mazzantini, starting opposite Penelope Cruz and directed by Sergio Castellitto; and *Motel Life* based on the novel by Willy Vlautin, starring opposite Dakota Fanning.

Hirsch was a Screen Actors Guild Award nominee as part of the ensemble of Gus Van Sant's *Milk*, in which Hirsch starred as real-life activist Cleve Jones opposite Sean Penn's Screen Actors Guild and Academy Award-winning performance as Harvey Milk. The Los Angeles native was recently seen in *Taking Woodstock*, directed by Ang Lee and based on James Schamus' adaptation of Elliot Tiber's memoir.

DAVID GORDON GREEN (Writer & Director)

Since his debut film, *George Washington*, which had its auspicious World Premiere at the Berlin Film Festival, other credits include *All the Real Girls*, *Undertow*, *Snow Angels*, *Pineapple Express*, *Your Highness*, *The Sitter*, and the HBO series *Eastbound and Down*. He is currently in post-production on his next film, *Joe*, starring Nicolas Cage.

Green is a graduate of The North Carolina School of the Arts. He was born in Arkansas and now resides in Texas.

FEATURE FILMS

- 2013 PRINCE AVALANCHE
- 2011 THE SITTER
- 2011 YOUR HIGHNESS
- 2008 PINEAPPLE EXPRESS
- 2007 SNOW ANGELS
- 2004 UNDERTOW
- 2003 ALL THE REAL GIRLS
- 2000 GEORGE WASHINGTON





CAST & CREW

Lance Emile Hirsch, Alvin Paul Rudd,
Lady Joyce Payne, Truck Driver Lance LeGault

A Muskat Filmed Properties & Dogfish Pictures Presentation
In association with Lankn Partners, Dreambridge Films,
The Bear Media, Rough House

PRINCE AVALANCHE

Written & directed by *David Gordon Green*
Based on the film *Either Way* by *Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurdsson*

Produced by *Lisa Muskat, Derrick Tseng, Craig Zobel, James Belfer, David Gordon Green*
Executive Producers *Leo Joseph, Todd Labarowski*
David Óskar Ólafsson, Árni Filippusson, Tobias Munthe, Theo Youngstein
Danny McBride, Jody Hill, Matthew Reilly
Co-Executive Producer *Brad Coolidge, Melissa Coolidge*

Director of Photography *Tim Orr*
Production Designer *Richard A. Wright*
Edited by *Colin Patton*
Co-Producers *Berndt Mader, Alexander Uhlmann*
Costume Designer *Jill Newell*

Original Score by *Explosions In The Sky*
& *David Wingo*
Music Supervisor *Devoe Yates*



PRINCE AVALANCHE

A FILM BY DAVID GORDON GREEN



TECHNICAL DETAILS

16:9 Letterbox 1:2,39
Screening Format: DCP
Length: 90 Minutes

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