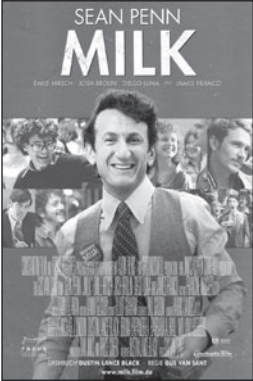


GUS VAN SANT

b. July 24, 1952

“‘Milk’ is about political grassroots organizing and making it work. That’s what I want people to take away from it. It doesn’t matter if they’re gay or straight.”



Gus Van Sant is an Academy Award nominated director and screenwriter whose films include “Good Will Hunting” and “Milk.”

Van Sant was born in Louisville, Kentucky, the son of a traveling salesman. At an early age, he began producing semi-autobiographical Super-8 movies.

In 1975, Van Sant graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design. After college, he moved to Los Angeles, where he developed a fascination with the city’s marginalized subcultures.

With \$20,000 in savings, he bankrolled most of his first film, “Mala Noche” (1985). Shot in black and white, the ill-fated love story between two men earned Van Sant critical acclaim. The Los Angeles Times named “Mala Noche” the year’s best independent film.

Van Sant wrote and directed “Drugstore Cowboy” (1989), which received rave reviews and won an Independent Spirit Award for the screenplay. “My Own Private Idaho,” starring Keanu Reeves and River Phoenix as male hustlers, earned Van Sant another Independent Spirit Award.

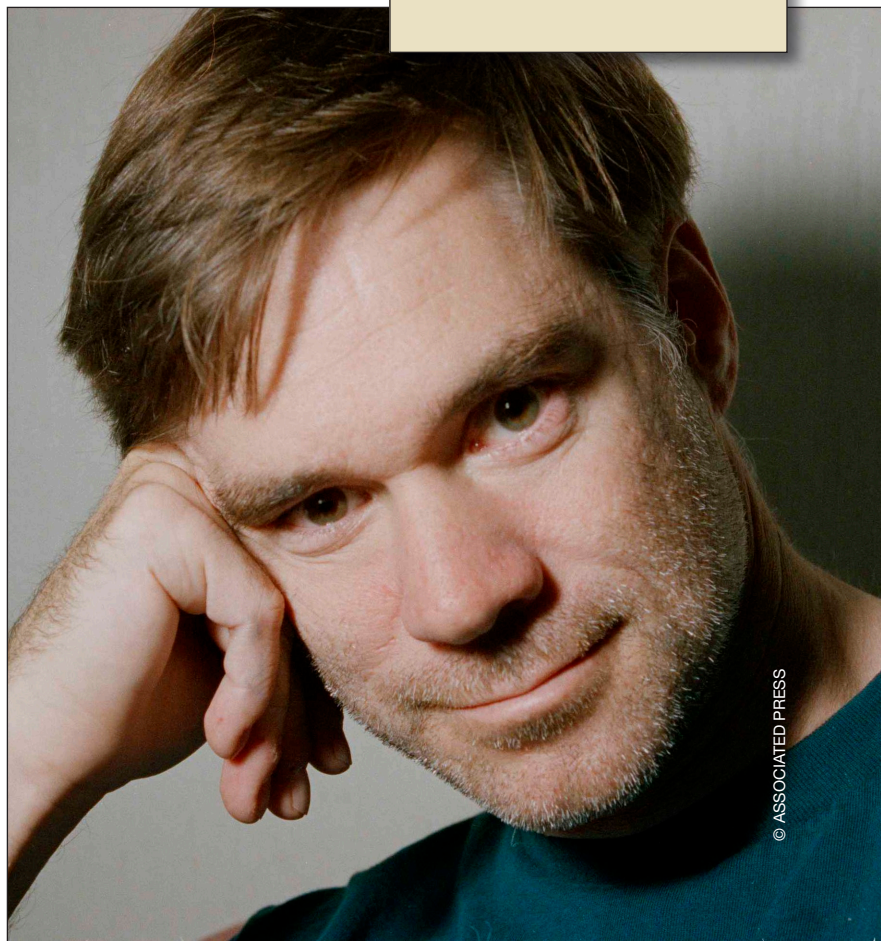
The success of Van Sant’s first major studio directing project, “To Die For” (1995), starring Nicole Kidman, established him as an A-List Hollywood director. His 1997 blockbuster, “Good Will Hunting,” starring Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, was nominated for nine Academy Awards, including best director.

In 2003, Van Sant directed the controversial HBO film “Elephant,” based on the Columbine High School massacre. “Elephant” won the top prize (Palme d’Or) and the Award for Best Director at the Cannes Film Festival.

In 2008, Van Sant directed “Milk,” the story of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man to become an elected official. The film, starring Sean Penn, was nominated for eight Academy Awards, including best director.

The Advocate named Gus Van Sant one of its 2008 People of the Year.

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