

Review Teen goes in search of J.D. Salinger in gentle 'Coming Through the Rye'



Alex Wolff, left, and Stefania Owen in the movie "Coming Through the Rye." (Red Hat Films)

By **Sheri Linden**

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A Jewish outcast at a waspy boarding school, Jamie Schwartz is hardly the only kid in the world to identify with Holden Caulfield. But the protagonist of the gentle memory piece “Coming Through the Rye” has one key distinction: his encounter with Holden’s famously reclusive creator, novelist J.D. Salinger. The movie’s key distinction is [Chris Cooper](#)’s forbidding but soulful turn as the idolized writer.

Recalling his own adolescent search for Salinger, writer-director James Sadwith unfolds a mildly engaging coming-of-age road trip, set in a nostalgia-kindled 1969. Yet as heartfelt and personal as the story is, much of it feels like standard teen angst. Even Jamie’s particular obsession with “The Catcher in the Rye” — he’s adapted it for the stage — hasn’t the intended dramatic pull.

As the 16-year-old aspiring writer who’s tormented by the “mean guys and phonies” at his Pennsylvania prep school, Alex Wolff is fittingly earnest and self-involved. Jamie’s open-heartedness is evident; his holy grail is Salinger’s blessing for his independent-study project, but truly he’s seeking communion and validation. The film

conveys this without building a compelling case for why Jamie deserves our attention — or the affection of the smart, spirited and exceedingly grounded Deedee (a captivating Stefania Owen).

When they hit the road for New Hampshire, with Deedee at the wheel of a sky-blue Rambler, the movie enters less predictable territory. Sadwith, whose TV credits include the miniseries “Sinatra,” conjures a few memorable moments in his big-screen debut. But the most stirring moment belongs to Cooper, who turns a barely audible, exasperated sigh into a complicated life story.

‘Coming Through the Rye’

MPAA rating: PG-13, for some drug material, sexuality and language.

Running time: 1 hour, 35 minutes

Playing: Laemmle Monica Film Center, Santa Monica; Laemmle Town Center 5, Encino; Laemmle Playhouse 7, Pasadena; Regency South Coast Village, Santa Ana

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