

# The New York Times

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

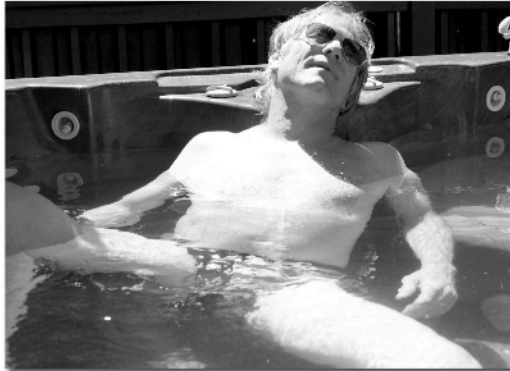
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## Among Lonelyhearts, a Meeting of Minds

**H**ello Lonesome," Adam Reid's smart, poignant trilogy of interwoven vignettes, manages the considerable feat of creating six fully human characters who are quirky enough to transcend the stereotypes found in a typical indie film. Except for a young couple who rush headlong into a relationship after connecting on the Internet, the rest dwell in the uncomfortable limbo of the lonely unattached.

The feature directorial debut of Mr. Reid — who also produced, wrote and shot the film — "Hello Lonesome" was self-financed on a \$50,000 budget and completed in 15 days, and it has won a number of awards at regional film festivals. Structurally, it is a Chekhovian mosaic, similar to Rodrigo Garcia's films in its attention to minute personal detail but somewhat lighter in tone. Its main flaw is a compulsion to tie up its stories too neatly.

That said, the dialogue is remarkably spontaneous and the performances, especially that of Harry Chase, a real-life voice-over artist playing an eccentric version of himself, refreshingly natural. His character, Bill, a divorced man in his 50s who rarely changes out of his underwear, works in his spacious rural home with a soundproof studio. The movie shows him laboriously recording many takes of



some amusingly inane commercials and introductions, supervised by an unseen director. There's a trampoline in his backyard and a fish pond in the woods.

Bill enjoys a "playdate" with a zaftig blond woman who visits and spends the night, but his most regular human contact is Omar (Kamel Boutros), an opera-loving postal delivery man with whom he exchanges needling banter and invites to shoot at bottles in the woods. Heartbreak and longing lurk under Bill's jocular surface. Periodically, he leaves unacknowledged and increasingly desperate voicemail messages for his estranged daughter, in which he pleads for forgiveness for many personal failures.

Lynn Cohen is almost as fine in the less developed role of Eleanor, a thorny, short-tempered suburban widow in her 70s whose worsening eyesight has led the Department of Motor Vehicles to revoke her driver's license. Reluctantly forced to sell her most prized possession, a 1966 Thunderbird coupe, she relies on her much younger next-door neighbor, Gary (James Urbaniak), to drive her to the grocery store.

Defensively witty and sarcastic, Gary, a David Hyde Pierce type, is a shy copy editor who often speaks without premeditation, and he acquiesces to a platonic romance in which they sleep side by side on the same bed. The arrangement echoes Eleanor's relationship with her husband, who had told her: "Let's not mess around. Let's just rest together."

The young lovers, Debby (Sabrina Lloyd) and Gordon (Nate Smith), have the one vignette that veers toward tragedy with an unexpected medical shock. That bad news is more than the movie can handle. But until that revelation, their story captures the essence of a speedy, post-hookup courtship in which they pose the most intimate queries in a "lightning round" of questions and answers. Gordon makes good money gambling on Internet sites with names like bookienights.com.

By trying to cram their drama into a multistory format, "Hello Lonesome" doesn't allow it enough time to develop. Especially in its dispensing of medical information, it feels barely sketched. But

the emotional chemistry between Debby and Gordon — she's experienced and willful, and he's boyish and ingeniously playful — feels authentic.

The movie's determination to be offbeat is established in opening and closing voice-over monologues describing the elaborate courtship rituals of bowerbirds. They sound a lot like ours.

The adventures of a reckless widow, a reclusive voice-over guy, and one very lucky young man.



"LONELINESS IS NO JOKE... BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT CAN'T BE FUNNY." - FRODO BAGGINS  
"...AN ASTONISHING DIRECTORIAL DEBUT." - AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL ISLAND  
"EMOTIONALLY ORGANIC AND RAW" - DON SUTHERLAND, SMELLS LIKE SCIENCE  
"RADIANT PERFORMANCES" - VEREWIRE.COM

## Hello Lonesome

WRITTEN & DIRECTED by ADAM REID

