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What he'll do to win the girl

Cera's virginal twerp adds some French flair in pursuit of love

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"Punk" and "rebel" don't belong in the same sentence with "Michael Cera." But somehow, they connect in the few-holds-barred teen comedy "Youth in Revolt."

"Youth" serves up our favorite sweet pushover ("Juno," "Nick & Norah's Infinite Playlist") as Nick Twisp, virginal twerp, in love-lust with brazen, confident Sheeni (Portia Doubleday). And we see Nick's alter ego, "Francois," a mustachioed hoodlum and hipster, the sort of guy who actually has a shot with a girl like Sheeni.

★★★^{1/2}

YOUTH IN REVOLT
90 minutes, R

(for sexual content, language and drug use)

Directed by Miguel Arteta.
Produced by David Permut.
Written by Gustin Nash,
based on the novel "Youth in Revolt: the Adventures of Nick Twisp," by C.D. Payne.
Photographed by Chuy Chavez. Edited by Andy Keir and Pamela Martin. Music by John Swihart.

With Michael Cera, Portia Doubleday, Jean Smart, Zach Galifianakis, Erik Knudsen, Adhir Kalyan, Steve Buscemi, Fred Willard, Ari Graynor, Ray Liotta and Justin Long.

Because literate and witty boys like Nick don't get the girl. Not usually, anyway. He keeps a journal. He soft-sells his insults to his cougar-mom (Jean Smart) and whoever her latest beau is (Zach Galifianakis, Ray Liotta). Nick knows that Oakland is "a city filled with women who have zero interest in me." What he may not know is that his every gesture and high-voiced utterance screams "sissy."

But a vacation in a rural trailer park, meeting the fetching Sheeni, could change that.

"What's your name?"

"Dillinger," he lies.

She's the daughter of "religious fanatics," but sexy and



Michael Cera's Nick Twisp has eyes only for Sheeni Saunders (Portia Doubleday).

savvy enough to recognize her powers over boys, with a cruel willingness to use those powers on Nick. What she talks him into doing is why he needs a Francois in his psyche — "bold, contemptuous of authority, irresistible to women," who stands up to his parents, sets fires, consumes psychedelic mushrooms and makes trouble.

Equal parts inspired and irresponsible, the new film from Miguel Arteta (director of the cult hit "Chuck and Buck") turns C.D. Payne's novel (script by Gustin Nash) into a hit-or-miss homage to that French classic of outlaw love, "Breathless." Arteta captures Sheeni's inscrutable smile and Nick's clumsy obsession, and

the daft eccentrics (Fred Willard, Justin Long) whose path Nick crosses.

Yes, it's still a movie about another "I am going to die a virgin" teen. But "Youth in Revolt" is also about French books,

French singers and classic French films, about being the smart boy who wants to win the heart of "the mother of my future gifted children" but not smart enough to not make every mistake doing it.



Michael Cera and Adhir Kalyan in "Youth in Revolt." Director Miguel Arteta taps classic French films like "Breathless" in Cera's alter ego, Francois.

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ON THE COVER

Amy Adams, Matthew Goode and Adam Scott in "Leap Year." Design by Staff Artist Lisa Mansolillo Dalie.