

= The Chumscrubber =

The Chumscrubber is a 2005 American @-@ German comedy @-@ drama film , directed by Arie Posin , starring an ensemble cast led by Jamie Bell . The plot , written by Posin and Zac Stanford , focuses on the chain of events that follow the suicide of a teenage drug dealer in an idealistic but superficial town . Some of the themes addressed in the film are the lack of communication between teenagers and their parents and the inauthenticity of suburbia . The titular Chumscrubber is a character in a fictional video game that represents the town and its inhabitants .

Posin and Stanford had originally planned to shoot the film using their own funds , but they sent the script to producers Lawrence Bender and Bonnie Curtis who agreed to produce the film and help to raise the budget . Bell was cast in the lead role after an extensive auditioning process , and the film was shot in various California locations over 30 days in April 2004 .

The Chumscrubber premiered at the Sundance Film Festival on January 25 , 2005 and was released theatrically on August 26 , 2005 . An accompanying soundtrack , composed mostly by James Horner , was released on October 18 , 2005 . The film was both a critical and commercial failure , receiving mostly negative reviews and earning back only US \$ 350 @,@ 000 of its \$ 10 million budget .

= = Plot = =

Troy Johnson ( Josh Janowicz ) , the supplier of prescription drugs to fellow high school students in the fictional southern California town of Hillside , commits suicide . Troy 's best friend Dean Stiffle ( Jamie Bell ) , is prescribed more antidepressants by his psychiatrist father Bill ( William Fichtner ) after discovering the body . When Dean returns to school , he is antagonized by drug dealers Billy ( Justin Chatwin ) and Lee ( Lou Taylor Pucci ) , who were supplied by Troy . Their friend , Crystal Falls ( Camilla Belle ) , flirts with Dean , but he soon realizes that her true intentions are for Dean to retrieve the remaining drugs in Troy 's home and refuses to cooperate . To force Dean to procure the drugs , Billy and Lee plan to kidnap Dean 's brother , Charlie ( Rory Culkin ) , as a ransom , but they end up kidnapping another boy named Charlie Bratley ( Thomas Curtis ) instead .

The kidnappers hold Charlie Bratley ? whose parents are unaware that he is missing ? overnight at Crystal 's home . Dean eventually agrees to go to Troy 's house to find the drugs . Upon delivery , Billy discovers that the bag doesn 't contain the prescription drugs and starts a fight with Dean , leading to Dean 's arrest . While trying to explain everything to Officer Lou Bratley ( John Heard ) , Charlie 's father , Dean reveals that his brother Charlie replaced the drugs with a bag of the vitamins that their mother Allie ( Allison Janney ) sells . Neither Officer Bratley nor Dean 's father believes his story , but he is released , whereupon his father increases his dosage of antidepressants . Meanwhile , Charlie Stiffle crushes the real drugs and puts them into a casserole that his mother made for Troy 's memorial .

The next day is Troy 's memorial service and the wedding of Mayor Michael Ebbs ( Ralph Fiennes ) to Charlie Bratley 's mother Terri ( Rita Wilson ) . Lou finally realizes that his son actually has been kidnapped and heads out to look for him . Now at Lee 's house , Crystal asks Lee to help stop the kidnapping scheme , but he does not comply . Crystal goes to Dean 's house for help , where she finds him hallucinating about Troy 's death and finally expressing his grief . Meanwhile , a paranoid Lou , encouraged by Billy , tries to kill Charlie Bratley to avoid being caught , but Charlie fights back and slices the knife through Billy 's eye . Billy runs out into the street , screaming in pain , and is hit by Lou 's police car .

Dean attends Troy 's memorial , where all of the visitors are intoxicated by the drugs that are in his mother 's casserole . Troy 's mother , Carrie ( Glenn Close ) , discloses to Dean that she never knew her son . Dean tells her about Troy and acknowledges that they were best friends , and she thanks him . Billy is later sent to prison . Lee , who successfully changes the narrative of his involvement during the trial , is acquitted . A closing voice over explains that Dean and Crystal " escape together " , and they are shown kissing .

= = Cast = =

Jamie Bell as Dean Stiffle , a teenage outsider and the film 's protagonist . He refuses to face his grief over his best friend 's suicide , instead choosing to numb his feelings with drugs .

Camilla Belle as Crystal Falls , Dean 's rebellious classmate . Unlike her friends , she feels sympathy for Dean and is reluctant to partake in the plans to kidnap his brother .

Justin Chatwin as Billy , a drug dealer at Dean 's high school who was formerly supplied by Troy . He dreams to join the air force after graduation , but his fight with Charlie Bratley leaves him with impaired vision .

Glenn Close as Carrie Johnson , Troy 's devastated mother . She tries to mask her grief with a cheerful persona , and continually guilts her neighbors by telling them bluntly that she does not blame them for Troy 's death .

Rory Culkin as Charlie Stiffle , Dean 's younger brother . He spends most of his time on the family couch playing video games .

Thomas Curtis as Charlie Bratley , the 13 @-@ year @-@ old son of Officer Lou Bratley and his ex @-@ wife Terri . Having been largely ignored by his negligent mother , at the end of the film he is sent to live with Lou .

William Fichtner as Bill Stiffle , Dean 's psychiatrist father who uses Dean as the subject of his books . Though he spends his life always looking for potential new material , his book sales turn out to be disappointing .

Ralph Fiennes as Michael Ebbs , the mayor of Hillside and Terri Bratley 's fiancé . After suffering a head injury and spilling paint in the shape of a dolphin , he becomes infatuated with dolphins and paints them all over his house ; at the end of the film , he resigns from politics and becomes an artist .

John Heard as Lou Bratley , a police officer and Charlie Bratley 's father . He cannot let go of his previous marriage with Terri , and finds satisfaction in giving her copious parking tickets .

Allison Janney as Allie Stiffle , Dean 's overworked mother . She initially struggles to sell her VeggiForce vitamins , but by the end of the film , she has found success and VeggiForce has become something of a cult .

Josh Janowicz as Troy Johnson , Dean 's best friend and the supplier of prescription drugs to the student body at his high school . After his suicide , he appears frequently in Dean 's hallucinations .

Carrie @-@ Anne Moss as Jerri Falls , Crystal 's laidback mother . She is obsessed with Terri Bratley 's interior design work , but cannot catch her attention until she tells Terri that her son was at Jerri 's house .

Lou Taylor Pucci as Lee Parker , Billy 's smart but timid friend who often succumbs to peer pressure . His parents pressure him about his schoolwork , hoping for him to get into a good college .

Rita Wilson as Terri Bratley , a successful interior designer and Charlie 's mother . She grows increasingly frustrated and demanding as her wedding to Michael approaches , and by the end of the film her design efforts have become less fruitful .

= = Themes = =

The title of the film refers to a video game character , " The Chumscrubber " , who helps his friends to survive in a superficial world by keeping things authentic , and is portrayed as a post @-@ apocalyptic hero , carrying his severed head in his hand as he fights the forces of evil . The Chumscrubber 's world was intended to be a reflection of the Hillside community , shown by the repetition of characters ' lines in the video game ; a voice in the game yells " Kill him ! Stab him ! Get him again ! " , the exact line said by Billy to Lee at the end of the film , urging him to stab Charlie Bratley . Producer Bonnie Curtis described the character as " this sub @-@ human monster the kids feel they are becoming " . Posin commented that " the Chumscrubber is everything that that community has suppressed or denied or tried to ignore , and [ ... ] the idea that the collective denial of the community as a whole finally gives birth to a character that will not be ignored " .

Posin stated that one theme of the film is that " the adults in this world tend to be immature or childish and the kids tend to be very mature and adult and sophisticated for their age " . He shot the teenage characters slightly below eye level to create the impression of looking up at an adult , and shot the adults slightly above eye level as if the viewer were looking down at a child . He said that hypocrisy was " at the top of the list " of the themes he wanted to explore in the story . While all of the adults in the film are attempting to live perfect lives , they cannot see that their children are driven to suicide , antidepressant addiction and kidnapping ? for instance , Terri is so obsessed with her upcoming wedding that she does not realize her son is missing .

The film features dolphins as a recurring motif . Michael forms an obsession with dolphins and paints them all over his house , the street plan of Hillside is shown to form the shape of a dolphin at the end of the film . Nathan Baran of Hybrid Magazine was frustrated by the lack of explanation of the motif , saying : " Never are dolphins discussed by anyone else to have any meaning whatsoever . [ ... ] What is the significance of the dolphin as an image ? [ ... ] it is a completely arbitrary image awkwardly stuffed with forced meaning " . Posin saw Hillside 's formation of a dolphin shape as " beauty and order to the chaos " , illustrating Michael 's belief in deep beauty where everybody else finds chaos .

= = Production = =

While working at a Hollywood talent agency Arie Posin had been writing scripts for 10 years , " trying to break in [ to ] " the film industry , when he decided that he would rather be a director than a screenwriter . Posin asked writer Zac Stanford to write the screenplay for The Chumscrubber based on his idea . Because they collaborated on the story , Posin later described the film as " rooted somewhere between " his own memories of growing up in suburban Irvine , CA and Stanford 's upbringing in a small town in the Pacific Northwest . Posin and Stanford had originally planned to shoot the film with their own money . Posin 's girlfriend suggested that he send the script to five producers ; one , Lawrence Bender , responded and passed the script on to his partner Bonnie Curtis . Posin and the producers brought the project to around sixty uninterested production companies before sufficient funds for the US \$ 10 million budget were raised and production began .

Posin considered numerous other actors for the lead role of Dean before he decided to cast Jamie Bell . Auditions for the role spanned over a year , and Posin said that he met " probably every young actor in Hollywood between a certain age " . For the role of Crystal , Posin sought a beautiful but fragile actress . He chose Camilla Belle after she auditioned , and according to him , " She just was the character " . Posin wanted an actor similar to Ralph Fiennes to play Michael , but was surprised when Fiennes himself agreed to be in the film . Justin Chatwin , a Billy Wilder fan , was drawn to the script after hearing that Posin had trained with Wilder . Ben Kingsley and Robin Williams were set to star in the film at different points in pre @-@ production .

Principal photography of The Chumscrubber began in April 2004 and lasted for 30 days . Filming locations included Los Angeles and Santa Clarita in California , as well as two soundstages .

= = Reception = =

= = = Box office = = =

The Chumscrubber premiered on January 25 , 2005 at the Sundance Film Festival . It went on to be shown at the 27th Moscow International Film Festival in June 2005 , where it won the Audience Award . The film was released theatrically in the United States on August 5 , 2005 , playing in 28 theaters . It earned US \$ 28 @,@ 548 on its opening weekend , ranking 59th at the box office . It closed after two weeks in release with a total domestic gross of \$ 52 @,@ 597 . The film 's highest @-@ grossing overseas releases were in Australia with \$ 96 @,@ 696 , Germany with \$ 81 @,@ 323 , and Greece with \$ 71 @,@ 100 . It earned only £ 36 from its single @-@ weekend release in

the United Kingdom , meaning that only six people paid for a ticket to see the film . With a total foreign gross of \$ 298 @, @ 804 , the film 's total worldwide gross was \$ 351 @, @ 401 and was a box office bomb .

= = = Critical response = = =

The Chumscrubber received mostly negative reviews from critics and has a " rotten " score of 35 % on Rotten tomatoes based on 60 reviews with an average rating of 4 @. @ 9 out of 10 . The critical consensus states " This derivative poke at suburbia falls short of delivering a scathing indictment of upper middle @-@ class disconnect . " The film also has a score of 41 out of 100 on Metacritic based on 12 critics indicating " mixed or average reviews " .

Peter Travers of Rolling Stone gave the film 1 star out of 5 , describing it as " an appallingly clumsy and stupid take on drugs , kidnapping and suicide in suburbia " . A. O. Scott expressed similar sentiments in The New York Times , calling the film " dreadful " and criticizing its unoriginality . Variety 's Scott Foundas also wrote that the film " doesn 't have an original bone in its body or a compelling thought in its head " and called it " insufferable " , " self @-@ conscious " and " smug " . Olly Richards of Empire gave the film 2 stars out of 5 and described it as " a tragic waste of acting talent , with nothing new to say . " The A.V. Club 's Keith Phipps praised Posin 's technical direction and the cast 's acting skills , but found that the film still fell " flat on its face " .

The film was more warmly received by David Sterritt of The Christian Science Monitor , who described it as " dreamily surreal , acutely intelligent , and strikingly tough @-@ minded " and called it a " stunning directorial debut " .

= = = Home media = = =

The film was released on DVD in Region 1 on January 10 , 2006 . The special features included on the disc are an audio commentary from Arie Posin , a 12 @-@ minute " making @-@ of " featurette , and 10 deleted and extended scenes .

= = Soundtrack = =

The film 's original score was composed by James Horner . Though Horner 's previous work comprised mostly high @-@ budget studio films ? including Titanic ( 1997 ) , Braveheart ( 1995 ) , The Mask of Zorro ( 1998 ) , and Apollo 13 ( 1995 ) ? producer Bonnie Curtis approached him to score The Chumscrubber because " You never know until you ask . " Horner agreed after seeing an early cut of the film . He and Posin spent five days on a soundstage , experimenting with different musical arrangements . Posin described the final product as " dramatic with a wink and a smile to it "

" Our House " ? Phantom Planet  
" Bridge to Nowhere " ? The Like  
" Run " ? Snow Patrol  
" Pure Morning " ? Placebo  
" Oblivion " ? Annetenna  
" Spreading Happiness All Around " ? James Horner  
" Kidnapping the Wrong Charlie " ? James Horner  
" Dolphins " ? James Horner  
" Pot Casserole " ? James Horner  
" Digging Montage " ? James Horner  
" Parental Rift / The Chumscrubber " ? James Horner  
" Not Fun Anymore ... " ? James Horner  
" A Confluence of Families " ? James Horner  
" The End " ? James Horner