

## Document Citation

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## Absolute Beginners (BRITISH-COLOR)

An Orion Pictures release of a Virgin and Goldcrest presentation of a Palace production. Produced by Stephen Woolley, Chris Brown. Executive producers, Nik Powell, Al Clark, Robert Devereux. Directed by Julien Temple. Screenplay, Richard Burrige, Christopher Wicking, Don MacPherson, based on the novel by Colin MacInnes; camera (Super Techniscope, Rank color), Oliver Stapleton; editors, Michael Bradsell, Gerry Hambling, Richard Bedford, Russell Lloyd; music, David Bowie, Ray Davies, Gil Evans, Paul Weller, Patsy Kensit, Sade, Tenpole Tudor, Jerry Dammers, Nick Lowe, Ekow Abban, Working Week; music arranged & conducted by Gil Evans; sound (Dolby), David John; production design, John Beard; art direction, Ken Wheatley, Stuart Rose; choreographer, David Toguri; costume design, Sue Blane, with David Perry; additional dialog, Terry Johnson; associate producer, David Wimbury; assistant director, Ray Corbett; casting, Susie Figgis, Mary Selway, Leonora Davis. Reviewed at the Orion screening room, L.A., March 14, 1986. (No MPAA Rating.) Running time: 107 MINS.

Colin .....	Eddie O'Connell
Suzette .....	Patsy Kensit
Vendice Partners .....	David Bowie
Henley .....	James Fox
Arthur .....	Ray Davies
Big Jill .....	Ege Ferret
Dido Lament .....	Anita Morris
Harry Charms .....	Lionel Blair
The Fanatic .....	Steven Berkoff
Athene Duncannon .....	Sade Adu
The Wizard .....	Graham Fletcher Cook
Ma .....	Mandy Rice-Davies
Flikker .....	Bruce Payne
Ed Ted .....	Tenpole Tudor
Cool .....	Tony Hippolyte
Call Me Cobber .....	Alan Freeman
Baby Boom .....	Chris Pitt
Dean Swift .....	Paul Rhys
Misery Kid .....	Julian Firth
Hoplite .....	Joe McKenna
Amberley Drove .....	Ronald Fraser
Mrs. Larkin .....	Irene Handl
Cynthia Eve .....	Sylvia Syms
Salt Beef Man .....	Eric Sykes
Vern .....	Peter Hugo Daly
Saltzman .....	Johnny Shannon
Dorita .....	Amanda Jane Powell
Mario .....	Robbie Coltrane

**Hollywood** — "Absolute Beginners" is a terrifically inventive original musical for the screen, the likes of which hasn't been seen in quite some time. Daring attempt to portray the birth of teenagedom in London, 1958, almost exclusively through song has some probably inevitable ups and downs, but comes out well ahead overall in the plus column.

A strong bet in its native Britain, elaborate pic faces an uncertain commercial future domestically, as its thoroughgoing Englishness may prove too much of a barrier for Yank youths. Soundtrack is spectacular, and full cross-plugging promo efforts will need to be made via videos and music outlets to stir up interest. World premier takes place March 30 at the San Francisco Intl. Film Festival.

Based upon the late Colin MacInnes' cult novel about teen life and pop fashion in the percolating moments just before the youth cultural explosion in the early 1960s, first major film from Julien Temple since "The Great Rock 'N' Roll Swindle" in 1980 cleverly spans nearly 30 years of musical tastes, neatly bridging the gap between jazz maestro Gil Evans and rock star David Bowie, who sings three tunes and costars as well.

In addition to interpreting the genesis of teen culture, Temple is interested in the political and radical backdrop in Britian at the time, including the Notting Hill race riots. Temple has thrown an untold number of musical, sociological and stylistic ingredients into the pot and stirred vigorously, so it's amazing the result has turned out as palatably as it has.

Tenuous storyline is a typical one of teen love achieved, lost and regained, and is used as a mere string to which a constant parade of musical numbers and flights of fancy are attached. Aspiring photographer Colin and tyro fashion designer Suzette seem a perfect

match, but when the latter begins getting ahead and becomes engaged to a snooty couturier played by James Fox, Colin decides to sell out and make the most of his connections in a last-ditch effort to win back his lady love.

In the mad swirl of events which constitute the picture, Colin meets up with such colorful characters as a musical mogul who specializes in pre-pubescent boy singers, a mid-Atlantic ad exec played by Bowie who tempts him into the material world, sinister real estate promoters, a fanatic racial separatist and assorted pimps, hustlers, hipsters, jazzers and scenesters in the happening world of Soho.

In creating a stylized view of 1950s culture, Temple and lenser Oliver Stapleton have made great use of fabulous sets fashioned by production designer John Beard. An astonishing moving camera take throughout the Soho set in the early going represents a fully worthy homage to the opening shot of Orson Welles' "Touch Of Evil." More to the point, however, the film is constantly conjuring up impressions of two of the key directors of the era, Vincente Minnelli and Frank Tashlin, Minnelli for the lush surfaces, color schemes and camera style, Tashlin for the fun vulgarity. Visually, pic represents a constant barrage of pleasures.

Unfortunately, such stylized, studio-enclosed works usually have difficulty finding favor with modern audiences. For Americans, there will be the additional problems of the occasionally thick accents and obscure references. The jazz connection, however rewarding, and the involvement of arranger Gil Evans, will be for aficionados.

Given the diversity of sources, soundtrack coheres very impressively. Bowie scores strongly with both the title tune and a fancy production number, Ray Davies contributes an amusing setpiece as a hip old fogey, and Sade's delivery of her song "Killer Blow" is stunning.

Overall, music is used to advance the storyline and flesh out the concerns of the tellers, but not necessarily in the conventional manner of Broadway or opera. There's a little of everything here, which keeps it almost constantly stimulating. When the invention sags, which it does at times, film seems heavy and pointlessly brassy, but Temple manages to recover quickly.

The expensive Palace production, its first since "The Company Of Wolves," financed in conjunction with Virgin, Goldcrest and U.S. distrib Orion, is tops in every technical department. Young leads Eddie O'Connell and Patsy Kensit are attractive and natural, all they are really called upon to be, and the racial turbulence which jumps from the background to centerstage at the end provides a rawer social context than one finds in most musicals.

—Cart.