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## My Own Private Idaho

### Gus Van Sant

USA, 1991, 105 minutes  
Colour/35mm

Production Company: Idaho Productions

Executive Producer: Gus Van Sant

Producer: Laurie Parker

Screenplay: Gus Van Sant

Cinematography: Eric Alan Edwards,

John Campbell

Editor: Curtiss Clayton

Art Director: David Brisbin

Principal Cast: River Phoenix, Keanu Reeves,  
James Russo, William Richert, Rodney Harvey,  
Chiara Caselli

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When Gus Van Sant's *Drugstore Cowboy* hit the screens last year, it became an instant success as one of the first films to accurately portray the world of the itinerant youth of America. These kids are not necessarily from poor backgrounds and are not necessarily going to spend the rest of their lives on the fringes of society, but they are definitely out there pushing the extreme edges of the envelope. They are, to put it simply, turned off by what they see — and from their perspective this is understandable. Van Sant has crafted a dark comedy about two of these kids and brilliantly married it to Shakespeare's "Henry IV, Part One" and "Henry IV, Part Two". Mike Waters (River Phoenix) is a modern-day Prince Hal whose father is the Mayor of Portland, Oregon. Scott Favor (Toronto's Keanu Reeves) is a wildly narcoleptic street hustler who keels over into a dead sleep at the most improbably moments. The two become unlikely friends and head out to see the world. As these two pals travel from Portland and Seattle to Italy, their lives are confounded and enriched by a colourful band of companions, "customers", and lost relatives. Van Sant was inspired by both Orson Welles's *Chimes at Midnight* and a man who was crazy about hustlers and reminded him of Falstaff, and he has combined the stories with remarkable results. *My Own Private Idaho* is a kind of contemporary classic about a new breed of adolescent, told through their eyes with tremendous wit and great humanity. It is often said that the best stories are right in front of our eyes, and with superb artistry, Van Sant lets you catch a glimpse of their wild and wacky world in all its toughness and richness.



**Gus Van Sant** was born in Louisville, Kentucky. After earning a B.F.A. in film at Rhode Island School of Design, he moved to Hollywood and began working with Ken Shapiro, the maker of the cult classic *The Groove*

*Tube*. While in Los Angeles he made a medium-length independent film, *Alice in Hollywood*, a tongue-in-cheek look at the trials and tribulations of a naïve young actress. Moving to New York, Van Sant spent the next two years creating commercials for a Madison Avenue advertising firm. He then moved to Portland, Oregon, where he has lived ever since, writing and directing films, shooting commercials and music videos, and painting. He has made numerous award-winning short films, including an adaptation of one of William S. Burroughs's short stories. His first feature film, the widely acclaimed *Mala Noche* (87), won the Los Angeles Film Critics Award for Best Independent/Experimental Feature. His second feature film, *Drugstore Cowboy* (89), won the 1989 National Society of Film Critics Award for Best Picture, Best Screenplay, and Best Director. *My Own Private Idaho* (91) is his third feature film.

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