

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE

FILMMAKERS SCOTT McGEHEE AND DAVID SIEGEL MIX GAY AND STRAIGHT VIEWPOINTS—AND AN EXPLICIT VIDEO-TAPE—TO UPDATE A CLASSIC TALE

David Siegel and Scott McGehee aren't the first duo to direct a movie together—they're part of a trend that includes Joel and Ethan Coen, the Polish brothers, and others. But they may be the only successful team comprising one gay codirector (McGehee) and one who's straight (Siegel). And they're likely the only partners who'll tell you they began this way because they didn't know any better.

"It started with Scott and me, out of ignorance," says Siegel. The two of them sat down with *The Advocate* while they were promoting *The Deep End* at the Cannes Film Festival in May. "We didn't go to film school, and we knew nothing about film production at all."

Since they've written all their scripts together—starting in 1990 with a short homage to Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* and continuing through their acclaimed first feature, *Suture*—directing together seemed natural as well. Obviously, the teamwork is paying off. *Variety* calls their \$3.5 million *The Deep End* "absorbing" and "beautifully made," and it has won awards at Sundance and accolades at Cannes.

In this updated '40s drama, Siegel and McGehee's switch of the child from a daughter to a closeted gay son grabs today's audiences—especially in the scene where a blackmailer (Goran Visnjic of *ER*) shows



Partners in crime drama (left to right): Siegel, Swinton, McGehee

Margaret (Tilda Swinton) a graphic videotape of her son, Beau (Jonathan Tucker), having

sex with his older male lover, who has since turned up dead.

Obviously, it's one thing to be told your son is gay and quite another to see it. "We talked a lot about how much of that video to show," says McGehee. "You could just show Tilda's reaction; the key to the scene is what's going on with her. But we thought it was really important to have the audience also confront the image of that 17-year-old boy having gay sex, sharing a little bit of what the mother's going through."

The filmmakers faced challenges of their own in shooting the scene, which shows their young leading man being penetrated and loving it. "Jonathan Tucker had to be 18 to do something like that," says Siegel. "But Jonathan wasn't going to turn 18 until halfway through our shoot. So we had to schedule around his birthday."

Tucker, who's heterosexual, took plenty of good-natured ribbing before the cameras actually rolled. "On the set," Siegel recalls, "everyone was going, 'Hey, Jonathan, it's coming up next week!'" "Gonna be a man!" adds a deadpan McGehee.

Still, both directors agree, the young actor took the scene in stride—with one exception. Says Siegel: "He managed to call his girlfriend three times in the course of shooting the scene." —Michael Giltz