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Relax, It's Just Sex

It's what comes after that should make you a little nervous.

By Kyle Buchanan

From *The Advocate* April 8, 2008

A Four Letter Word

Directed by **Casper Andreas**
 Starring **Jesse Archer, Charlie David, and Cory Grant**
Embrem Entertainment



For an inveterate party boy like *A Four Letter Word's* Luke, sex is all-consuming -- at least until it's over. Better at remembering body parts than faces, Luke (Jesse Archer) spends every New York minute on the prowl until he has a transformative encounter with a mysterious hunk named Stephen (Charlie David). Something about this sex was different, Luke insists: "I think we even looked each other in the eyes." A drama queen who speaks exclusively in bons mots, Luke can deflect any oncoming relationship with a well-placed quip -- but for Stephen, is he willing to make an exception?

Straight romantic comedies tend to save their kiss for the final reel, but the modern gay rom-com is a different breed. In these films the leads have moved well beyond kissing by act 2, and "I love you" is an obstacle, not a goal. Love isn't just a four-letter word, it's a test -- and one that many gay men, including Luke, keep putting off. After all, why should they work at a relationship when casual encounters come so easily?

Director Casper Andreas knows this terrain well, as you might expect from someone whose previous film was called *Slutty Summer*. What you might not expect is the level of wit in this modest production, which is so familiar and confident with its characters that it feels like the third season of a lost Logo series. Archer and David are both appealing, but Cory Grant makes the strongest impression as Zeke, an activist who works with Luke and challenges him to justify his reputation as a "gay cliché." Luke doesn't pretend to have all the answers, but by the time things wrap up he's matured just enough. He may not have passed the test yet, but at least he's been studying.

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