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The Achievers

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A Lincoln Log production. Produced by Christian Harrison, Troy Hauschild, Abraham Lim. Directed, edited by Abraham Lim. Screenplay, Lim, Michael Golanco, based on the stage play "Achievers" by Golanco.

With: Dave Lee, Samantha Quan, Akie Kotabe, Jennifer Willison, Bahldeep Parihar, Tim Chiou, Mark Stephens, Troy Hauschild, Clay Van Christie, Randall Park, Helen Tang, Alexis Rhee.

By [DENNIS HARVEY](#)

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Abraham Lim's bright sophomore feature "The Achievers" sports some general overlap with fellow San Francisco Asian-American fest title "Americanese," in that both are about Los Angelenos of varying Asian-heritage ethnicities haplessly careening through relationships, or lack thereof. But middle-aged seriocomic torpor of "Americanese" has here been replaced by twenty-something energy and a borderline-absurdist sensibility that ultimately cuts at least as deep. Pic deserves attention from fests (and bizzers) on the lookout for breaking talent, with arthouse exposure dependent on risk-taking distrib interest. A DVD cult following is assured.

At the start, an end is already in sight for five flatmates; the sole unemployed resident, uber-slacker Shingo (a very funny Akie Kotabe), has forgotten to pay the rent, resulting in a 30-day eviction notice. Suddenly stricken with remorse at his irresponsibility, Shingo tries to make money as best and fast as he can, an effort that leads to his ill-advisedly manufacturing thousands of Ecstasy pills. Worse, some of their "failed prototypes" are mistaken for allergy pills by punching-bag-passive Murphy (Dave Lee).

Ellen (Samantha Quan) is supposedly looking for a new

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home they can all move to, but in fact she's already decided it's time to go solo. However, her self-worth is based on her corporate job and crass Caucasian boyfriend (Troy Hauschild), neither of which seem very safe bets for the future.

Indian computer nerd Trent (Bahldeep Parihar) and fifth housemate Akira (Jennifer Willison), whose closeted self-loathing leads her to walk on the wild side, round out the group.

Cleverly interwoven plot strands, a lively mix of visuals, spot-on perfs and a cool soundtrack make "The Achievers" a divertingly loopy experience by turns deadpan, surreal, and quietly poignant.

Dialogue and presentation provide little hint that the pic was derived from a stage play. It has a great deal of fun with the flailings of characters glimpsed freefalling between school days and true adulthood, needling their weaknesses without ridicule or malice.

At its world-premiere screening, the wet print still lacked a finalized sound mix and closing credits. Otherwise, tech/design aspects looked sharp on slim means.

Camera (color, HDcam), Lim; music, Gabriel McNair; music supervisor, Tim Hugh; production designers, Sarah Cook, Monica Wille; sound editor, Lim; assistant director, Stephanie Sapien. Reviewed at San Francisco Asian-American Film Festival, March 17, 2006. Running time: 103 MIN.

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