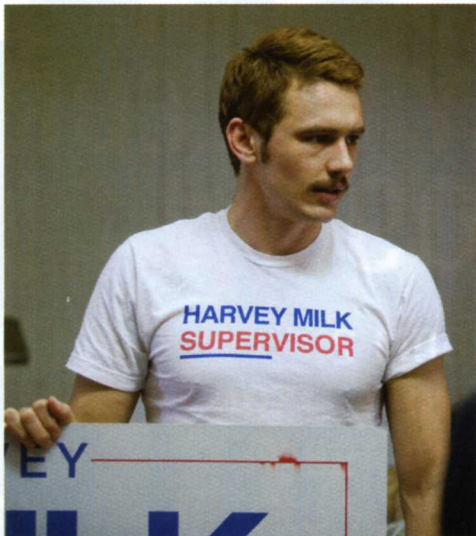


FILMS OUT IN JANUARY



Harvey Milk saw injustice around him and decided to do something about it. In 1977, he became the first openly gay politician elected to American public office and became the catalyst for gay activists across the US. His leadership helped to propel the fight for equal rights while opposing anti-gay activists such as Anita Bryant. He won over a large demographic with his humour and fighting spirit. Anyone who has ever heard of Milk knows how his story ends. 2008 marked the 30th anniversary of the Harvey Milk tragedy and America is still in a state of turmoil over gay marriage. Harvey Milk's fight continues - and his story has now been made into a feature film simply titled *Milk*. Even knowing where the story is headed doesn't diminish the impact.



Harvey Milk, and James Franco who breaks free of his Spiderman days and gives a mature and nuanced performance as Scott Smith, his long-suffering boyfriend. Franco also manages to look hot - even with a dodgy moustache. The entire cast is excellent, but nods go to Josh

Brolin as the straight politician tortured by Milk's growing influence, and Emile Hirsch as a camp young man who awakens to political activism. An interesting feature of the assembled cast is that there was a conscious effort for "sexual-preference-blind" casting - meaning straight actors play gay, gay actors play straight and all the permutations in-between. This is an unusual stance for a Hollywood film and a step forward for gay actors. The costuming is evocative and the 70's come alive in all their tight-trousered, handlebar-moustachioed glory. The movie was filmed in the Castro district of San Francisco and they successfully recreate the 70's vibe. This is a studio film which doesn't feel like a studio film and it deserves Oscar nominations in several categories. *Milk* scores not only as a piece of gay history, but also as a damn fine piece of cinema.

**KH**  
**Out: 23 January**  
 ★★★★★

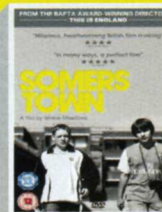
Gus Van Sant's masterful direction keeps the pace tight and the focus on the characters and their relationships. He weaves archival excerpts together with fresh footage to give the film a documentary feeling. Often, films which set out to tell an "important" story falter under the weight of their worthiness, but the deft touch of this director and screenwriter means that this story unfolds without being self-reverential. Standout performances include Sean Penn in the title role, who seems to embody the spirit of

THE BEST DVDS  
 JANUARY '09



**NO REGRET**  
 A treat for fans of new Asian cinema, *No Regret* is set amidst Seoul's sleazy rent boy scene. It tells the tale of 18-year-old orphan Sumin who, when fired from his job, has little option but to accept work at leading up-market male brothel, where he enters into a sexually-charged relationship with businessman Jaemin - with tragic consequences. An authentic, gritty, sensually shot and exhilarating Korean gay drama.

**OUT: 12 JANUARY**  
 ★★★★★



**SOMERS TOWN**  
 Director Shane Meadows' follow-up to his award-winning *This Is England* is another low-budget slice of English life, but this time viewed through the eyes of Polish teenager Marek (Piotr Jagiello). Forced to move to England by his father, he strikes up a friendship with Midlands-runaway Thomas Turgoose. At just 70 minutes, this B&W outing may be on the slight side, but it paints a tender and evocative portrait of what life can be like for some Eastern European immigrants in London.

**OUT: 12 JANUARY**  
 ★★★★★



**SUN KISSED**  
 The latest release from Peccadillo Pictures, *Sun Kissed* is a desert set mystery romance. Novelist Teddy escapes into the American wilderness to cure his writer's block, but falls into a passionate affair with the enigmatic and troubling Leo. A beautifully shot drama with a nice soundtrack, although some may find the minimal plot is somewhat stretched to fill the 90-minute duration.

**OUT: 26 JANUARY**  
 ★★★★★



**TROPIC THUNDER**  
 Possibly dragging the joke out a little longer than necessary, Ben Stiller's *Tropic Thunder* still proved a big hit with audiences in 2008. He stars alongside Jack Black and a blacked-up Robert Downey Jr as a group of actors shooting a war epic, who suddenly find

themselves engulfed by a real war zone and have to start fighting for real.  
**OUT: 26 JANUARY**  
 ★★★★★