

'It's about relating'

After adorable success with 'Garden State,' Zach Braff eschews romantic comedy and plays a character you're going to want to kill.

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INTERVIEW Zach Braff has set a John Cusack-high bar for your new boyfriend, made a million girls weep upon announcing his departure from "Scrubs" and has damn good taste in music. We hate him but you love him. So we interviewed him anyway.

His new film, "The Last Kiss," picks up where "Garden State" left off — not quite as disassociated but certainly as disenchanted. His character, Michael, has a great future wife in Jacinda Barrett but homewrecker vixen Rachel Bilson, of "The O.C.," dangles the carrot (and more). His friends, his in-laws — every couple around him is breaking up and breaking down. Says Braff: "You can definitely find some character you can relate to."

► **What sort of scripts were you getting after "Garden State"?**
Just crap. After "Garden State," which I made because I felt like no one was making the kind of movies I wanted to go see, I got sent a whole lot of stupid romantic comedy nonsense. I read this and I couldn't believe the studio was going to make it — it was so ballsy and honest and real. The main character — for a chunk of the movie — the audience is going to want to kill.

► **Tony Goldwyn, also an actor, directs. Is that more comforting?**
There's something really refreshing about that and [his] knowing how actors like to be talked to and knowing how actors like to be part of the collaborative process and not just feel like pawns.

► **And Jacinda Barrett — from the "The Real World: London" — more than just a pretty face, eh?**
She's quite an actress, huh? She'd done a couple of movies, and I remembered her from the "Real World." She was so hot, ya know? When she came for this part, and we had a lot, a

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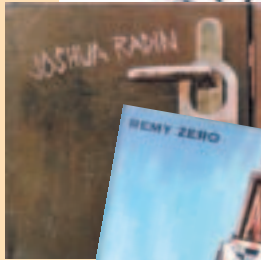
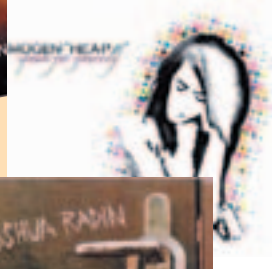
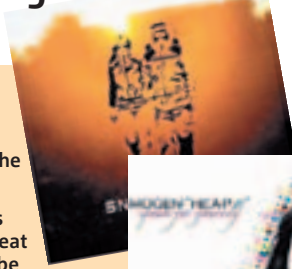
So how does "The Last Kiss" soundtrack, also produced by Braff, stack up? Here he is with the breakdown:

"CHOCOLATE" BY SNOW PATROL: "This opens the movie. It's a great anthem. It felt like a great start to the movie and the lyric is 'This could be the very moment I'm aware I'm alive' and that's one of the things this movie is about."

"HIDE AND SEEK" BY IMOGEN HEAP: "Rachel actually played this for me because it was on 'The O.C.' She was playing it just to play it for me, not for the soundtrack really, and I thought it was so cool and original. We talked about how it was on 'The O.C.,' but we were like, 'Oh, who cares?'"

"STAR MILE" BY JOSHUA RADIN: "Joshua is a good friend of mine. I just really like his music. He's in the spirit of James Taylor and Paul Simon and Cat Stevens and that sort of music I loved growing up. It's just beautiful, beautiful music."

"PROPHECY" BY REMY ZERO: "Remy Zero is one of my favorite bands. That's the song that plays when Rachel [Bilson's character] and I are getting together. It has a great drive and it's sexy without trying to be sexy. Great band." METRO/SA



BRAFF

lot, a lot of girls, uhh, women for this part ... she nailed it. She was so perfect and right and beautiful and heartbreaking.

► **Then you've got the homewrecker — Rachel Bilson from "The O.C."**
She's a hottie. She's got a pretty naughty sex scene. She's very into ...

► **... Nietzsche?**
[Laughs] No, more like Us Weekly. She's a very sweet girl and very into fashion. She's a genuine person and not yet jaded by the system.

► **You earned as much praise for writing and directing "Garden State" as you did for its soundtrack.**

I don't know much about music. I just know what I like. I have a lot of friends that share music and talk about music, and on my Web site and my MySpace, we talk about music. There's no real science. It's just making mixes of music I really like.

► **Other people's mixes don't sell a million copies.**
People had such a strong reaction to "Garden State" because music evokes emotion. It's about relating to a scene in a movie. ... Music tells a very powerful story, very easily. When I hear a great song, I want to put images to it. A great song can take a good scene and make it great.

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