

Juno

reviewed by [David Heim](#) in the [April 8, 2008](#) issue

Diablo Cody won an Academy Award for her screenplay for *Juno*, and it's true that the film bubbles along on the strength of the snappy, frank commentary that Juno (Ellen Page) offers on the travails of being pregnant at 16. Juno's idiom is fully postmodern: at times she is schoolyard cool ("I've taken like three pregnancy tests, and I'm forshizz up the spout"), at other times consciously retro ("What other shenanigans could I get into?"), and her cultural references range from the latest indie band to the Old Testament (her version of a "closed adoption": "I mean, can't we just, like, kick this old school? Like, I have the baby, put it in a basket and send it your way, like Moses and the reeds?"). The viewer stays interested if only to see what one-liner she will emit next on her journey to parenthood.

Juno seems incapable of viewing any moral claim without irony. In deciding not to have an abortion, she seems mostly offended by the soulless atmosphere of the abortion clinic and by the idea of playing a hackneyed social role (on the phone to the clinic she can't help mocking her own condition: "Hi, I'm calling to procure a hasty abortion . . .").

Still, in her cool, offhand way, Juno has a big heart and an underlying innocence. Against the usual norms of high school life, she is attached to the gentle, gawky, Tic Tac-scarfing Paulie Bleeker (Michael Cera) and can't wait to resume hanging out with him. It's not clear what she sees in Paulie, but there is something refreshing about a film in which the teen characters are (ironically, considering Paulie is the father) more interested in friendship than in sex.

The film offers a short glimpse of Juno crying after she delivers her child and gives it up for adoption. That's one of the few scenes to suggest that bearing new life and giving it up will leave some deep marks. But then *Juno* is not really about the realities of teen pregnancy or of adoption. It is a clever riff on teen lingo and a cheerful fantasy about how a sense of humor and a good friend can get you through almost anything.