A photograph showing Denise and Paul arriving at a Welsh campsite. The image is captioned "Denise and Paul arriving at the Welsh campsite".

[Dream On](dream-on-lloyd-eyre-morgan.html "Dream On by Lloyd Eyre-Morgan") by Lloyd Eyre-Morgan  
Reviewed by [Simon Belt](people.html#simon-belt "Simon Belt") June 2013

This coming of age story about two teenage boys who meet on a Welsh campsite is also a coming of age story for Lloyd Eyre-Morgan (LEM Films) as a filmmaker. It is certainly evocative of much of the randomness and accident involved in fumbling through those coming of age experiences, in terms of story, structure, execution and outcome. It's also a bit random in its flirtation with politics and moral messages.

Introducing you to the tone and style of the film, based in the late 80's, it opens with Denise (Janet Bamford), the supposedly overbearing mum from Rochdale, arriving with Paul (Bradley Cross) at the campsite in Towyn, Wales, with a delightful sound scape of music by Andy Oliver. Denise says (without a word from Paul):

"Bloody hell fire Paul, have you se'n this? Well, it's not like in the brochure me ma'm sent us, it's like a bloody shitstorm's hit the place. [Paul struggles when lifting the bags.] Oh give over Paul, they're not that heavy. Christ, I can see why you make me to write you letters to get you out of PE, it's embarrassing."

Filling out the introduction to the other two main characters, Norman (Matthew Seber), the campsite's Thatcher loving owner walks up to greet them with:

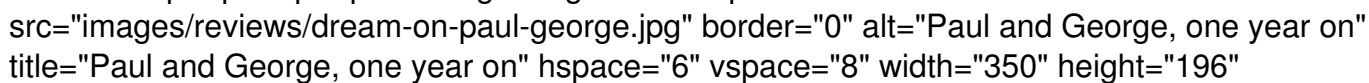
"Welcome, welcome, you must be Denise. Cor, your mother said that you were beautiful, but bloody hell, you're a cracker. [Denise] Behave, I've not even got all my slap on. [Norman] And this must be your son Paul? Hello Butt. [Denise] Oh erm, don't mind him, he's not a chatty one our Paul, timid little thing. [Norman] Well he won't be once he's met my Angharad (Emily Spowage), she's a real firecracker my daughter like. [Denise] Ooh, eh up Paul, you might have an holiday romance - that'd be a first eh?! [Norman] Right, shall I take to what we like call our premier pitch spot? [Denise] Oh well, go on then, that'll be lovely. Oh isn't he lovely Paul? For Christ's sake if you've got a face like a wet Wednesday all week you can sod off back to Rochdale. [Norman] Paul, why don't you go to campsite reception, meet my Angharad, and she'll show you around. [Denise] Well go on, I'm sure she doesn't bloody bite. [Turning to Norman, with Paul effectively dismissed] So, where's this, er, premier pitch spot then?"

This first scene though has Paul, the timid little thing and sulky teenage lad, watching and learning, making telling but voiceless faces at everything, desperately waiting and yearning for his chance to join the alien world of adulthood. With this opening scene, the film is pretty much setup, all the main characters deftly positioned, and only needs George (Joe Gosling) to be picked up on the way to the campsite shop to meet Angharad, the bridge from boyhood to manhood. George is bullish, full of bravado, friendly, worldly-wise, and gone to the campsite in the hope his Dad will turn up and continue the holiday experiences he had when he was a kid.

The first scene where we see Angharad is really funny as it captures the coming of age period for young men so very well - she scares the living daylight out of timid little thing Paul, as she delivers a storming

performance of a young woman in full and confident control of herself, feeling her way round how to achieve total world domination, or at least her dominance over men. In fact, the lightness of touch and playfulness with which sexuality is dealt with in the script is such a breath of fresh air - and the layered way in which adults deal with it expresses a generosity of spirit and flexibility largely missing in today's ironically highly sexualised socialised society but rather strictly ritualised in what's appropriate and what isn't.

Although George starts out as the confident, attractive and worldly young man for Paul to focus on rather than the vicarious Angharad, his flawed character is increasingly fleshed out for all to see, but is a weakness that Paul just won't see as a problem. Indeed, the focus of the script on the problems of George and his relationship, or lack of, with his Dad and his problems is so much more a contemporary theme rather than one from the 80's, but the scenes are thankfully interspersed with the funniest flirtatious acting and looks going. And the quips and teases by Angharad the other two campers, Larry (Mark Hill) and April (Nicola Jeanne), keeps the script moving in a more natural direction.

One year on from their initial liaison, Paul returns to the campsite to

meetup and then runaway to realise their dream. The fairytale world of how it's all supposed to work out begins to unravel in proper pantomime style with bizarre twists and turns that you just couldn't make up, or is that just me that can't make things like that up? Surreal it definitely is, but thankfully holds together with smarty pants story switches and one liners to die for, intimate scenes that are just about believable in amongst the chaos. And at least the odder moments are carried on by the fabulous soundtrack.

I'm not convinced by the main storyline, but the sub-plots, sidelines and intimacies involved in the sub-plots are cracking and more than compelling. There's such a meshing and playfulness of genres that it is a great example of the potential the actors involved have to offer, some transitioning from stage to film with ease. And the script shows marvelous components, though the reliance on sub-plots to hold things together is really the overall frustration with this film - almost very good but just too disparate for my liking.

Emily Spowage as Angharad was outstanding, and although Janet Bamford as Denise was setup as an overbearing character, I found her to be compelling and grounded. Presumably not intended I suppose, but the two lead female roles were head and shoulder in strength of character and purpose above the men in this film, and credit to them for making the parts so dominant. And the scene at the end with Trish (Zoe Iqbal) and the barmaid (Annie Wallace) was a treasure to savor.

So all in all, some magical moments of a delightfully relaxed approach to sexuality and the adult world, tremendous sub-plots that keep the film moving and together, and a soundtrack that helps blend the performances with the script - hats off to a tremendous coming of age for Lloyd as a filmmaker.

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Dream On has been picked up for general release by TLA releasing on June 10th on dvd from Sainsbury's, Amazon and HMV. Watch a snippet from the trailer below. Dream On is also showing at the Hackney Picture House in London on June 19th.