

# 'Gun' in 'burbs is loaded with humor

By JAMI BERNARD

IT'S yet another feature film debut in a year full of them, as Stacy Cochran writes and directs "My New Gun," a laconic, deadpan story about how a suburban housewife's life is changed when her husband gives her a handgun to protect herself.

"My New Gun" is a celebration of not so much a style as an attitude, and it sustains this special attitude perfectly with the help of a creeping, jazzy soundtrack and well-blended performances by Diane Lane as the housewife Debbie and James LeGros as Skippy, the strange neighbor who drops the way.

Cochran has an eye for getting

humor out of the most implausibly straight situations. For example, Debbie and her husband (an amusingly uptight Stephen Collins) are on the terrace of their cookie-cutter, semi-detached suburban townhouse, discussing Debbie's new gun. She doesn't want it, but it's too late, he's already bought it; they need protection, he says. The camera observes the conversation from a stationary position at a good distance; from that view, the couple can be seen as barricaded, practically jailed in their fortress.

The gun immediately causes problems. It is borrowed, waved, traded back and forth. Its cham-

## MY NEW GUN

★ ★ ★

Debbie ..... Diane Lane  
Skippy ..... James LeGros  
Gerald ..... Stephen Collins  
Kimmy ..... Tess Harper

IRS Media presents a film written and directed by Stacy Cochran, produced by Michael Flynn, photographed by Ed Lachman, edited by Camilla Toniolo. Running time: 89 minutes. Unrated. At the Angelika.

ber is spun, it shoots someone in the foot. It wards off or invites trouble. Most of all, the very danger of its perversity releases Debbie from her suburban drudgery.

In the very first scene, her husband drops the martini pitcher; all things safely suburban are going to crack.

Most of the characters start off ambiguously, with that very ambiguity turning into a shared character trait even after their motives are explained. In this way, their suburban landscape is not devalued or used for cheap laughs, but incorporated into the pattern of their lives.

It's a given that the layout of one house will be exactly the same as the layout of the next, so that everyone has something in common — even if in one house there's a marriage on the rocks, in another,

## MOVIE review

a mother and son with a skid. Skippy may or may not be a generous killer, but he has a set of golf clubs just like anyone else in town. And Debbie is not to try on a new life for size, but still has her traditional matron honor dress ready for her friend's approaching wedding.

"My New Gun" is not as loud as directorial debut as, say, Quentin Tarantino's "Reservoir Dogs" last week, yet it shows Cochran's cool control over pace, style, and her actors' performances. See it on date night, later.