

Film Notes

by Justyn de Looze

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Director: Nathalie Biancheri

Starring: Lauren Coe, Cosmo Jarvis, Sadie Frost

Nocturnal

Described by *Little White Lies* as a 'portrait of flawed, inarticulate masculinity', *Nocturnal* is the atmospheric first fiction feature film from documentary maker Nathalie Biancheri.

The film follows 16-year-old Laurie (Lauren Coe) as she adjusts to life in a new area: having grown up in Dublin, she's moved to her single mother's hometown, a small place on the Yorkshire coast, where she struggles to fit in with her new classmates. While taking part in intensive training sessions in the athletics club, she's observed by Pete (Cosmo Jarvis), a thirtysomething painter and decorator who's carrying out work at the school. Laurie becomes aware of his gaze, strikes up a conversation, and the two outsiders tentatively start a friendship. But what are the man's intentions towards the much younger girl? With their glaringly obvious age difference, this is a question asked by her mother, played by Sadie Frost, veteran of stage, television, and film, whose many credits include *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) and *Love, Honour and Obey* (2000).

Italian-born Biancheri's career started at the BBC. Since leaving the organisation, she has gone on to

make award-winning short documentaries, including *Xavier Corbero: Portrait of an Artist in Winter* (2017), a study of the late Spanish artist. She also contributed to *24H Europe: The Next Generation* (2019), a 24-hour documentary in which 60 young people from across the EU shared their lives and dreams. *Nocturnal* is her first foray into fiction filmmaking, which she described to *Cineuropa* as 'like a constant heart attack. We shot in 17 days, with no rehearsals. When I was filming documentaries, I always had more time and space.'

Biancheri developed the screenplay for *Nocturnal* alongside writer Olivia Waring, on whose original story the film is based. The title 'made me think of a certain mood or atmosphere of the night,' she explained to *Cineuropa*. 'In the UK, you often go to small coastal towns and that's when they transform. All these little lights go on, there is mist hanging.' It was a desire to create this atmosphere that led to the two main characters interacting mostly at night: 'Laurie is still in school, so it made sense for them to meet after hours, with the night protecting them.'



Excellent

Fair

Poor

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here:

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Despite the nighttime setting and potentially gloomy subject matter, Biancheri and cinematographer Michal Dymek 'a desaturated colour-wash as a sign of supposed kitchen-sink authenticity,' writes Tim Hayes for *Sight & Sound*. 'Instead *Nocturnal* picks out the sharp colourful glare of amusement arcades and shop fronts illuminated at dusk.'

As the film unfolds, we follow the two outsiders as their platonic friendship is forged on booze-fuelled evenings. But as Laurie becomes more forward with Pete, we begin to question what we think are his obvious intentions and ask why he becomes more distant towards her. Jarvis here follows on

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from his mesmerising performance in Nick Rowland's *Calm with Horses*, which we showed at last year's FilmBath Festival. His is a hulking presence in nearly every scene, the physical performance of an inarticulate man struggling to communicate.

As the film explores the developing relationship between the central characters, the performances of Jarvis and Coe make it compelling viewing. *ScreenDaily* said of the two that 'the quality of the central performances guarantees your investment in these two lost souls and whether they might reach safe ground and the possibility of change.'

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We hope you'll join us next year for (a hopefully more normal) FilmBath Festival 2021!



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