

Film Notes

By Alice Clarke

Ponyboi

2024 | 103mins

Director: River Gallo

Starring: Dylan O'Brien, River Gallo, Victoria Pedretti

      @FilmBathUK



Plus **Forgive Me For How This Ends**

Ola Akomolafe | 6mins

Before screening *Ponyboi* we are delighted to share with you a debut short from new British writer-director, Ola Akomolafe. Sheffield born and bred, Akomolafe is passionate about creating films that speak to her experiences whilst exploring relationships and dynamics. *Forgive Me for How This Ends* follows Alex as he navigates falling out of love with his long-term girlfriend Jasmine, realising that his love for her is no longer what it seems.

In 2019, River Gallo became the first openly intersex actor to play an intersex person in a film as the titular character in *Ponyboi*, the short film they also wrote and directed. Now, 2024's feature length *Ponyboi* builds on this short, resulting in an exciting, sleek and sweaty crime caper.

Set over an intense 24-hours, we follow Ponyboi, an intersex sex worker on the run whilst navigating their identity in a world which demands binaries and labels. We meet Ponyboi's best friend Angel (Victoria Pedretti), and Ponyboi's pimp and part-time lover, Vinnie (Dylan O'Brien). After a fatal incident involving a client and a batch of dodgy drugs supplied by Vinnie, Ponyboi panics and flees with a briefcase full of cash, a gun and the furious pimp in tow. Over the course of the subsequent hours, the titular character's adventure is a neo-noir, dreamline exploration of the underbelly of New Jersey with both a sense of dread and hope.

Director of Photography Ed Wu utilises other worldly, luminescent neons juxtaposed with shadows and sultry lighting more recognisable to the thriller genre to create an immersive Jersey. Visually and structurally it is easy to draw parallels with Scorsese's comedy *After Hours* (1983) or the Safdie Brothers' *Good Time* (2017), with the city stepping up as a character.

Representation for intersex or gender non-conforming people is few and far between in film. Hand-in-hand with a familiar crime-thriller structure, the film also explores the systems which exploit, control and oppress individuals like Ponyboi. Our protagonist bumps into an old friend in a bar who tells them "hormones didn't tell me who I was. That part was my job". *Ponyboi* is a story of identity and discovery framed within the backdrop of your typical, American crime film.

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

Please add any further comments here

Excellent

Fair

Poor



Did You Know?

- *Ponyboi* is the world’s first narrative film to be written by and starring an openly intersex actor in cinema history.
- The film was shot in various locations across New Jersey

‘Reminiscent of the Wachowskis’ *Bound*, *Ponyboi* is a queer cinema genre pastiche that understands a movie can be artful, emotional, and incredibly entertaining’
-Autostraddle



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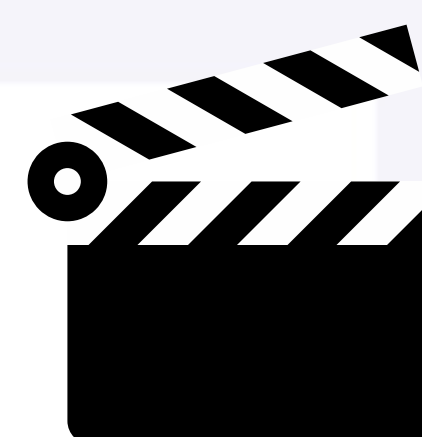
Continue Your Journey...

If you enjoyed this film, you might like:



Stranger by the Lake (2013)

When the narrator witnesses his lover drown a man, tensions arise.



Sauvage (2018)

A male sex worker longs for love and connection, while abusing drugs.



Excellent

Fair

Poor

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

Please add any further comments here

Please detach this from your Film Note and drop it into the box or hand it in at the end of the screening. Thank you!