

FISH TANK

UK (2009) 123 minutes

Director/writer: Andrea Arnold.

Cast: Katie Jarvis (Mia), Michael Fassbender (Connor),
Kierston Wareing (Joanne), Rebecca Griffiths (Tyler)



Synopsis

Somewhere in Essex, the present. Fifteen-year-old Mia is warring with the girls on her estate and doesn't get on with either her constantly partying mother Joanne or her bratty, foul-mouthed younger sister, Tyler. Her only passion is dancing, which she practises in secret in an empty flat. She's also obsessed with freeing a hungry-looking horse she encounters tethered to a patch of wasteland.

However, things begin to change for Mia when her mother brings home charming, charismatic new boyfriend, Connor. His likeable presence actually begins to draw the family closer together, particularly when he insists on taking them all for a day out. But is he everything that he seems?

Reviews



Arnold's directorial style is subjective, allowing viewers to spend the entire movie following one character, semi-documentary style, reflecting Mia's inner life. This is especially evident in a heart-stoppingly beautiful scene where Connor carries a pretending-to-be-asleep Mia and puts her to bed. Although Mia has clearly fallen for Connor, the audience is constantly trying to decide whether or not he's a wrong 'un...

Katie Jarvis is nothing short of sensational as Mia. Aside from being a great dancer, she's tough, funny, and, at times, genuinely heartbreaking to watch. There's also strong support from the ubiquitous Fassbender and from Wareing, while Griffiths steals almost every scene she's in...

Fish Tank is an extraordinary film, from the heart-stoppingly delightful direction to the incredible performances – it's also by turns heart-in-your-mouth suspenseful, laugh-out-loud funny and ultimately, deeply moving. Frankly, it's a masterpiece and, as such, unmissable.

Matthew Turner, View London.

Under Andrea Arnold's hand, life on this inner city concrete backwater is suddenly very alive. Banalities become beautiful. Like sunlight through cracked glass. Vibrant, gritty and riveting, but in a way that entertains powerfully. Its momentum is overpowering. We never know what is going to come out of Mia's mouth or where events will lead. Each jaw-dropping new scene surprises yet seems the result of inexorable momentum.

As if that wasn't enough, the story mercifully avoids kitchen-sink drama, excessive violence, drugs, getting pregnant, grand larceny, car crashes and all the other cliché-ridden devices to which cinema-goers are usually subjected. Tightly controlled, Fish Tank attacks with a potent and thought-provoking arsenal of story-telling...

Arnold didn't allow actors to read the script beforehand. They were given their scenes only a few days before filming.

For the part of Mia, she chooses a complete unknown with zero experience. Arnold spotted Katie Jarvis at a train station after drawing a blank with casting agencies. "She was on one platform arguing with her boyfriend on another platform, giving him grief."

However the performance is achieved, Jarvis is electrifying. If Arnold wanted a 'real' person for the role, this seventeen-year-old takes over the screen with raw adolescent power. Says Arnold, "I wanted a girl who would not have to act, could just be herself." I wish all British films were this good.

Chris Docker, Registered User, Internet Movie Database.

FILM FACTS.

- Winner of Jury Prize, Cannes 2009; Alexander Korda Award for Outstanding British Film of the Year, 2010 BAFTA Awards.
- This is Arnold's second film. SFS also screened Andrea Arnold's feature debut 'Red Road' (2006) which was set in Glasgow.

Screening 17th November 2010 at Swindon Arts Centre.

www.swindonfilm.org.uk