

JOYLAND

Pakistan (2022) 126 minutes

Director: Saim Sadiq

Cast: Haider (Ali Junejo)
Mumtaz (Rasti Farooq)
Biba (Alina Khan)
Fayyaz (Sania Saeed)



Screening 3rd January 2024 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Joyland is an Urdu-Punjabi drama in which a husband, struggling in the confines of his extended family, becomes enamoured by a trans-sexual dancer.

Reviews



At the core of the film is a love triangle, between Haider (Ali Junejo), the gentle son of an overbearing father; his smart, independent wife Mumtaz (Rasti Farooq, terrific) and Biba (Alina Khan), the feisty trans-woman dancer who gives him a job. But the picture transcends the tragic romance narrative, to achieve something rather more complex and satisfying.

Richly detailed and superbly acted across the board, the film casts a scathing eye over the rigid social constraints that ensnare anyone who fails to conform. Of the three, Biba is perhaps the most comfortable with her own identity. But then Biba is also the most vulnerable to the hate that spews towards anyone who doesn't fit the norm. Her defence mechanism is a lacquered layer of ruthlessness. Haider, with his guileless puppy eyes and passivity, is smitten by Biba, but as much by what she represents as who she is. And Mumtaz, reluctantly pregnant and watching helplessly as her freedoms are stripped away, despairs of the future.

Wendy Ide, The Observer

For a first feature it is handled with great assurance, but Sadiq is the writer too, sharing that credit with Maggie Briggs, and it is the quality of the screenplay that stands out together with the ability of an excellent cast to bring it fully to life...

...The complicated relationships depicted could in lesser hands have taken on an air of melodrama but, just as the production design carries a sense of authenticity in the home scenes of the Rana family, the tale has the potential to be a tragedy touchingly realised in the key of everyday life...

Mansel Stimpson, Film Review Daily

Film Facts:

- The first Pakistani film to premier at Cannes Film Festival in 2022 where it won Un Certain Regard Jury Prize and Queer Palm.
- The first Pakistani film to be short-listed in the Oscars International Feature Film category.

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