



RE-RELEASES

Ratcatcher

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Director: Lynne Ramsay
©: Pathé Fund Limited, Les Productions Lazennec
Production Company: Holy Cow Films
Presented by: BBC Films, Pathé Pictures
Presented in association with: Arts Council of England, Les Productions Lazennec, Le Studio Canal+
Supported by: National Lottery through the Arts Council of England
Developed in association with: BBC Scotland
Developed with the assistance of: Moonstone International
Executive Producers: Andrea Calderwood, Barbara McKissack, Sarah Radclyffe
Producer: Gavin Emerson
Co-producer: Bertrand Faivre
Associate Producer: Peter Gallagher
Pathé Development Executive: Ruth McCance
BBC Scotland Production Executive: Christine MacLean
Production Co-ordinator: Su Bainbridge
Location Manager: Pauline Ogle
Post-production Co-ordinator: Francesca Dowd
1st Assistant Director: Nick McCarthy
Assistant Directors: Anneli Downing, Mark Murdoch, Tracey Skelton, John Armstrong
Script Supervisor: Karen Wood
Casting Director: Gillian Berrie
Screenplay: Lynne Ramsay
Director of Photography: Alwin Küchler
2nd Unit Camera Operators: Tom Townend, Nick Barrett
Visual Effects: The Magic Camera Company
Model Maker: Ian Kettles
Editor: Lucia Zucchetti
Production Designer: Jane Morton
Art Director: Robina Nicholson
Storyboard Artist: Derek Gray
Costume Designer: Gill Horn
Wardrobe Supervisor: Elaine Nichols
Make-up/Hair Designer: Anastasia Shirley
Titles Design: David James Associates
Titles: Malcolm Webb
Music Composed by: Rachel Portman
Score Conductor: David Arch
Score Orchestrator: Rachel Portman
Music Recording/Mix Engineer: Chris Dibble
Sound Supervisor: Paul Davies
Sound Recording: Richard Flynn
2nd Unit Sound Recordist: Stuart Wilson
Dubbing Mixer: Tim Alban
Dialogue Editor: Richard Flynn
Foley Artists: Felicity Cottrell, Jack Stew
Foley Recordist: Jens Christensen
Foley Editor: Jens Christensen
Stunt Co-ordinator: Paul Heasman
Animals: Creature Feature
Animal Trainer: Derek Anderson
Cast:
William Eadie (*James Gillespie*)
Tommy Flanagan (*Da*)
Mandy Matthews (*Ma*)
Michelle Stewart (*Ellen Gillespie*)
Lynne Ramsay (*Anne Marie Gillespie*)
Leanne Mullen (*Margaret Anne*)
John Miller (*Kenny*)
Jackie Quinn (*Mrs Quinn*)
James Ramsay (*Mr Quinn*)
Anne McLean (*Mrs Fowler*)
Craig Bonar (*Matt Monroe*)
Andrew McKenna (*Billy*)
Mick Maharg (*Stef*)

Set in and around a Glasgow tenement block during a dustmen's strike in the mid-'70s, Ramsay's marvellous first feature centres on a 12-year-old (Eadie) who, haunted by a secret, retreats into a private world of solitude, strange friendships and consoling dreams. A bold lyricism combines with gritty realism to create an impressive and intriguing character study shot through with tenderness and wit.

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Lynne Ramsay hated her first year at the National Film and Television School. 'I was like a fish out of water,' she remembers. 'My training was in fine art photography. I could only take static shots and I used the same lens all the time.' With no preconceived notions of what cinema should be, Ramsay devised her own offbeat visual vocabulary. Experimental but accessible, it's this distinctive style that distinguishes the 29-year-old director's striking first feature.

Shot in her native Glasgow and set during the refuse workers' strike of the 70s, *Ratcatcher* is the story of 12-year-old James Gillespie (William Eadie) who playfully pushes his friend into the canal one day, then watches him drown. As the rubbish mounts among the tenement blocks, his father drinks and his mother waits to be rehoused, the guilt-ridden James withdraws from his family and becomes a silent observer. Morbidly drawn back to the canal, he befriends Margaret Anne (Leanne Mullen), a gawky 14-year-old whose loneliness leads her into casual sex with the local gang.

Awkward but tender, the loving relationship that develops between these mismatched outsiders is characteristic of the way in which Ramsay constantly wrongfoots audience expectations. Despite its dark storyline, *Ratcatcher* has a vein of robust humour that prevents it from becoming too gloomy. 'What are you staring at, you wee pervert?' snaps James' older sister as she puts on Ma's lipstick. Out in the yard, meanwhile, as other kids are clubbing rats to death, James' animal-loving pal Kenny (John Miller) is sending his pet mouse into space, dangling from a birthday balloon.

Ramsay's compassionate but unsentimental approach to her working-class characters may call to mind Ken Loach, but she eschews kitchen-sink realism for a more lyrical impressionism. 'I wanted to make a film that was driven by emotion and images rather than narrative,' says the director, who was inspired to go into film-making after watching Maya Deren's avant-garde classic *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943). Seen through the eyes of its 12-year-old protagonist, *Ratcatcher* shares that film's poetic subjectivity and its atmosphere of surreal, slightly sinister reverie.

Like Deren, Ramsay's approach to storytelling is both symbolic and oblique. Using a collage of carefully composed images, Ramsay pieces together a jigsaw of James' world. In one wordless scene his hand scuffs away at the shiny leather of his new sandals (an unwelcome gift from the mother of his

James Montgomery (*Hammy*)
Thomas McTaggart (*Ryan Quinn*)
Stuart Gordon (*Tommy*)
Stephen Sloan (*Mackie*)
Molly Innes (*Miss McDonald*)
Stephen King (*Mr Mohan*)
John Comerford (*insurance man*)
Jimmy Grimes (*Mr Mullen*)
Anne Marie Lafferty (*Rita*)
Bess McDonald (*elderly lady*)
Leanne Jenkins (*kitten girl*)
Ian Cameron, Brian Steel (*soldiers*)
Dougie Jones, Joe McCrone (*scavengers*)
James Watson (*bus driver*)
Stephen Purdon (*boy on bike*)
Marion Connell (*Jesse*)
Robert Farrell (*boy*)
Donnie McMillan (*Artie*)
Lisa Taylor (*Anne Marie's friend*)
UK-France 1999
93 mins
Digital

A Park Circus re-release

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dead friend). In another, he finds freedom and solace in the clean shell of a half-built house. But the fragility of his dream becomes apparent when he pees in the unplumbed toilet and we see the dark stain leaking out onto the concrete below.

Building on a technique she first tried in such shorts as *Small Deaths* and *Gasman* (which both picked up the Cannes Prix du Jury), Ramsay combines naturalistic performances from non-actors with a stylised visual look that includes long takes, odd angles, jump cuts and a wonderful way with objects. Together they capture the richness of everyday life. While James' father is smartly groomed for the pub, the rest of the family scratch away at their head lice. Squalid poverty is set against the swooping optimism of Tom Jones' 'What's New Pussycat?'

'I've always relished contradiction,' says Ramsay. 'Performances, cutting, camerawork, I like them all to work against each other.' Like her films, Ramsay resists categorisation. After this highly personal first feature, she wants to 'move on'. As we speak, she's holding out for final cut on her next movie, an adaptation of Alan Warner's novel *Morvern Callar*.

'I don't want to become the person who makes films about 'gritty Glasgow'. I don't want to be called the next Scottish filmmaker or the next woman filmmaker. If I come from any tradition it's a European cinema as opposed to an American one, but I'm not much of a film buff either. My approach to filmmaking is not high-concept at all. It's actually quite anti-intellectual in some respects. It's not that I improvise – the images and the dialogue are written very clearly in the shooting script – but I am intuitive. I'm constantly experimenting, finding out where I want to go. I still feel like a film student. I hope I feel that way for the rest of my life.'

Interview by Liese Spenser, *Sight and Sound*, October 1999