



## NEW RELEASES

# Love Lies Bleeding

### Love Lies Bleeding

*Directed by:* Rose Glass  
©: Crack in the Earth Rights LLC,  
Channel Four Television Corporation  
*an Escape Plan/Lobo Films production*  
*Developed in association with:* Film4  
*Presented by:* A24, Film4  
*Executive Producers:* Ollie Madden, Daniel Battsek,  
David Kimbangi, Susan Kirr  
*Produced by:* Andrea Cornwell, Oliver Kassman  
*Unit Production Manager:* Susan Kirr, Jake Pohluda  
*Location Manager:* Deborah Wakshull  
*Post-production Supervisor:* Jeanette Haley  
*2nd Unit Director:* Peter Collister  
*1st Assistant Director:* Susan Fiore, Scott Rorie  
*Script Supervisor:* Anastasia Cummings  
*Casting by:* Mary Vernieu,  
Lindsay Graham Ahanonu  
*Written by:* Rose Glass, Weronika Tofilka  
*Director of Photography:* Ben Forderman  
*A Camera/Steadicam Operator:* Twojay Dhillon  
*Still Photographer:* Anna Kooris  
*Visual Effects by:* Time Based Arts  
*Special Effects Co-ordinator:* Werner Hahnlein  
*Editor:* Mark Towns  
*Production Designer:* Katie Hickman  
*Art Director:* Kendra Tuthill  
*Set Decorator:* Jess Coffey  
*Graphic Designer:* Alan Chao  
*Costume Designer:* Olga Mill  
*Make-up Department Head:* Frieda Valenzuela  
*Hair Department Head:* Megan Daum  
*Title Design by:* Matt Curtis  
*Digital Colourist:* Vanessa Taylor  
*Music by:* Clint Mansell  
*Music Supervisor:* Simon Astall  
*Sound Mixer:* Rose Bladh  
*Re-recording Mixer:* Andrew Stirk  
*Supervising Sound Editor:* Paul Davies  
*Stunt Co-ordinator:* Derik Pritchard  
*Digital Intermediate Provided by:*  
Goldcrest Post Production  
*Cast:*  
Kristen Stewart (*Lou*)  
Katy O'Brian (*Jackie*)  
Jena Malone (*Beth*)  
Anna Baryshnikov (*Daisy*)  
Dave Franco (*JJ*)  
Ed Harris (*Lou Sr*)  
Eldon Jones (*Billy*)  
Catherine Haun (*gym woman*)  
Orion Carrington (*O'Riley*)  
Matthew Blood-Smyth (*Dave*)  
Keith Jardine (*Chester*)  
Jerry G. Angelo (*Mikey*)  
Tait Fletcher (*Nate*)  
Jamie Javier Guerrero (*henchman*)  
Roger Ivens (*blindfolded man*)  
Kim S. Monti (*nurse*)  
David DeLao (*Officer Mike*)  
Mikandrew (*Stoney Owen*)  
Hilary Fleming (*Sharon*)  
Lontrell Anderson (*Vegas cop*)  
USA-UK 2023©  
104 mins

A Lionsgate UK release

### Content warning

Contains graphic violence, gore detail, drug use, flashing images and distressing scenes

A crime and a romance – those American institutions that've animated the movies since the very beginning – *Love Lies Bleeding* is a fugitive tale that breaks the mould, at once dreamy and nightmarish, lurid and funny, laced with poison and lit with the magic of the high desert and the open road. Rose Glass's gleefully cinematic story follows Lou, a lonely gym worker who collides with an aspiring female bodybuilder-turned-outlaw, setting off a wild chain reaction in a small New Mexico town. The plot audaciously defies predictability as much as the filmmaking; Glass and a cast including Kristen Stewart, newcomer Katy O'Brian, Ed Harris, Dave Franco, and Jena Malone mix samplings of black comedy, queer crime, steamy pulp, family dramas, and revenge thrillers to explore the destructive and intoxicating forces of excess, ambition, and mad love.

This assured and wickedly enjoyable film is British filmmaker Glass' second feature, and the first set against an American landscape, a landscape that in her hands is both familiar and newly strange. She first emerged onto the scene with a completely fresh, fully formed vision in 2020, when her debut feature, *Saint Maud*, garnered major critical acclaim as a tour de force of freak-out terror, one that was also a guttural exploration of faith and madness. Nearly upstaged by the pandemic, the film has since become a new cult classic.

On the heels of that introduction, Glass's rule-breaking instinct was to do a 180. Rather than return to the same sandbox, the soft-spoken and fiercely imaginative writer-director's urge was to break way out of it. With her friend and fellow filmmaker Weronika Tofilka, she began writing a screenplay nearly the polar opposite of the chilly, claustrophobic, hyper-focused *Saint Maud*. Plying the wide-open spaces of the American West, this literally muscular thriller would be sweat-soaked in dusky humour, in epic, archetype-twisting characters, and in a love of genres beyond horror (though moments of horror abound), all filtered through Glass's own heated, defiantly human vision. It follows the story of Jackie, a charismatic ingenue and newcomer to town whose quest for stardom at a Las Vegas bodybuilding competition brings her into Crater Gym. There she meets Lou, sparking their dark, antic odyssey of lovelorn desire, bloody vengeance, and sly escape.

The scale of the film, involving large set pieces, VFX, and sudden eruptions into fantasy, meant it was almost like starting over. Glass is reflective about why she switched gears: 'It felt like a healthy challenge to try something different. In terms of the story itself and deciding to co-write it, collaboration always brings something new and exciting to the table. I knew I wanted to make something kind of pulpy and bombastic with lots of dark humour.'

While the setting couldn't be more different, Glass sees both films as sharing thematic links. 'They're both about people trying to transform themselves and the power dynamics of very intimate relationships. Except this time it's like, "if you think being lonely is difficult, then try being in love!"' laughs Glass. 'So often romantic love is held up as the ultimate aspiration, the thing that will transform you for the better, but the reality is more complicated. *Love Lies Bleeding* plays around in that grey area – the self-serving, parasitic qualities of love and the ways it can make you feel excited, sick and terrified all at the same time.'

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Glass was interested in upending cinematic truisms, and admits the film is 'somewhat sending up the idea of the "strong female character" and questioning what people actually mean by that. I knew I wanted to make something about a bodybuilder, an individual with undeniable strength, both mentally and physically, who then finds that strength harnessed and manipulated by those around her.'

Of choosing the relatively unexplored world of 80s bodybuilding as a backdrop, Glass explains, 'We ended up setting the film in the 80s because it felt like the ultimate decade of excess, poised right on the cusp of the nihilism of the '90s. It felt like excess was just reaching a peak before it inevitably fell apart. The bodybuilding, along with the steroids Jackie does, became a way to reflect the dangers of artificiality and ambition for ambition's sake, strength for strength's sake.'

Glass and Tofiliska placed their story in a locale rife with squalid Americana, in two sweltering realms chock-full of perspiration-slick metal: a seedy box-style gym and a desert gun club amidst the craggy red rocks of New Mexico. The landscape and surroundings mirror the jagged interior lives of the main characters. 'It took a while to settle on America,' Glass says. 'We briefly toyed with the idea of Scotland but what with all the muscles and guns America just made the most sense; the melodrama of the story fit nicely in that world. It's a pretty warped, heightened version of America – like the whole film, I guess it has a foot in reality and a foot up in the clouds. Neither Weronika or I are from the states so the version you see in the movie is very much concocted from our imaginations and the omnipresent influence of American films and TV.'

While one can trace an encyclopaedic range of cinematic references in *Love Lies Bleeding*, it stands entirely apart in the way it exposes the places where pastiche and reality crash into each other, transforming both. While preparing to shoot, Glass crafted a list of movies for some of the film's cast and crew to screen, ranging from Paul Verhoeven's re-assessed erotic thriller *Showgirls* to David Cronenberg's wreck-filled *Crash*, to Shinya Tsukamoto's cyberpunk tale of destructive sexuality *A Snake of June* to Wim Wenders' atmospheric Southwestern road-trip of yearning, *Paris, Texas*.

The cast was keen to soak up all the influences. But what drew them was Glass's own originality. 'Few filmmakers are making movies as cinematic, lively, and stylised as Rose,' says Kristen Stewart. 'She makes movies that don't emulate other movies, even though you can see her inspirations. What she does comes from somewhere so truthful that the framework, architecture, and voice of the movie become distinctly hers. I think she wants to scare people and scare herself in a way that is not for titillating purposes, but really to make you turn around and look at yourself.'

Adds Dave Franco, 'This is a story where you truly can't predict where it's going. The vibe is at once weird and scary and human and full of crazy family drama. And what I love about Rose is she doesn't ever hold back. You realise anything can happen in this movie, which keeps you excited and on your toes every step of the way. And yet, even though things are very heightened, and the characters very flawed, I think a lot of people can relate to things they're going through.'

Production notes