



## NEW RELEASES

# The Outrun

### The Outrun

Directed by: Nora Fingscheidt

Production Companies: Brock Media,

Arcade Pictures

In co-production with: Weydemann Bros.,  
StudioCanal

Presented by: Stage 6 Films, BBC Film,

Screen Scotland, MBK Productions

Executive Producers: Claudia Yusef,

Kieran Hannigan, Maria Logan, Anne Sheehan,

Luane Gauer, George Hamilton, James Pugh,

Janina Vilsmaier

Produced by: Sarah Brocklehurst, Dominic Norris,

Jack Lowden, Saoirse Ronan

Co-producers: Jonas Weydemann,

Jakob D. Weydemann, Shirin Hartmann

Post-production Supervisor: Sandra Neundorf

Casting by: Caroline Stewart, Kahleen Crawford

Screenplay by: Nora Fingscheidt, Amy Liptrot

Screen Story by: Nora Fingscheidt, Amy Liptrot,  
Daisy Lewis

Based on the book by: Amy Liptrot

Director of Photography: Yunus Roy Imer

Editor: Stephan Bechinger

Production Designer: Andy Drummond

Costume Designer: Grace Snell

Hair & Make-up Designer: Kat Morgan

Music by: John Gürtler, Jan Misserle

Cast:

Saoirse Ronan (*Rona*)

Paapa Essiedu (*Daynin*)

Stephen Dillane (*Andrew*)

Saskia Reeves (*Annie*)

Nabil Elouahabi (*Samir*)

Izuka Hoyle (*Gloria*)

Lauren Lyle (*Julie*)

Danyal Ismail (*Pascal*)

UK-Germany-France-USA 2024

118 mins

Digital

A StudioCanal Release

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Saoirse Ronan's bracing performance as a young alcoholic in recovery who returns home to Orkney is the focal point of Nora Fingscheidt's poignant adaptation of Amy Liptrot's award-winning memoir.

When 30-year-old Rona's alcoholism causes the dissolution of her long-term relationship with Daynin and derails her promising career in biology, she leaves her ragged London life to dry out where she grew up, in Orkney. On her father's farm, she begins to inch towards inner peace and sobriety, while tackling some hard truths about his bipolarity and why her mother left for the mainland. Flashbacks flesh out the details of how despairing Rona's existence had become grappling with the demon booze, while her path to sobriety is far from linear.

Amid a career in which Ronan has been recognised as one of the finest screen actors of her generation, *The Outrun* marks a vertiginous zenith. The aching torment and heartbreaking disgraces of addiction are rendered with pin-sharp verisimilitude, while Fingscheidt's sympathetic direction conjures a piece of great humanity.

Lou Thomas, BFI Digital Production Editor

In movies, a character's drastic change in hairstyle tends to signal a cry for help, a splintering of the narrative timeline or, as repeatedly proves the case in *The Outrun*, some itchy balance of both. Scottish heroine Rona – an alternately spiralling or recuperating alcoholic played with nery, glitching intensity by Saoirse Ronan – doesn't get a liberating pixie bob à la Gwyneth Paltrow in *Sliding Doors* (1998); instead, Nora Fingscheidt's film instead marks her staggered progress via the paintbox hues applied to Ronan's locks.

At her most chaotic, living the boozy high-low life in east London, Rona's hair travels through variously faded, distressed stages of coral-pink, sea-green and aquamarine – a visual tie to her calmer roots in Scotland's remote Orkney isles. There, as her introductory voiceover whimsically suggests, she may as well have washed ashore as a selkie: a mythical drowned human turned seal turned human once more, adrift between worlds, caught by the tides even on dry land. When she returns up north to go cold turkey, her hair is dyed a blazing chemical orange, differentiating Rona from the cool expanses of landscape and weather that she impatiently fled as a younger woman; wherever she goes, as she attempts to lose herself in islands off islands off other islands, she remains stubbornly resistant to the background.

Adapted and lightly fictionalised by the German director Fingscheidt and Amy Liptrot from the latter's 2016 recovery memoir, *The Outrun* rests heavily on such metaphorical tensions between erratic, volatile human will and the stabilising, sometimes overruling structures of time and nature. Liptrot's book doubled as a kind of Orcadian environmental survey, tracking the minutiae of the region's flora, fauna and water as a means of stilling her own restless spirit. In the film, Rona has a degree in biology and takes a post-rehab job with an ornithological preservation society monitoring the area's endangered corncrake population – the broken-bird parallels write themselves, though the film holds off saying them out loud.

## NEW RELEASES

### Sing Sing

From Sun 1 Sep 17:45

### Starve Acre

From Fri 6 Sep; Sat 7 Sep 15:00 + discussion with filmmaker Daniel Kokotajlo and novelist Andrew Michael Hurley

### My Favourite Cake

 Keyke mahboobe man

From Fri 13 Sep

### In Camera

From Fri 13 Sep; Preview Thu 5 Sep 20:35 + Q&A with director Naqqash Khalid and actors Nabhaan Rizwan, Amir El-Masry and Rory Fleck Byrne

### The Substance

From Fri 20 Sep

### The Outrun

From Fri 27 Sep

### The Goldman Case

 Le Procès Goldman

From Fri 4 Oct

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Even at its most sentimental, there's something bracing about *The Outrun's* consistent lean toward the symbolic, even the poetic – in a genre often geared toward strenuous, grimy realism. The film's London-set scenes are its most familiarly gritty, tracing the escalating unmanageability of Rona's addiction and its corrosive effect on her relationship with patient but increasingly exhausted boyfriend Daynin (Paapa Essiedu, underused but hitting just the right note of careworn tough love). But Fingscheidt (back on the energising form of her 2019 debut *System Crasher*, following the tepid Sandra Bullock vehicle *The Unforgivable* in 2021) ensures we experience these in short, heady bursts, courtesy of a fragmented flashback-and-forth structure that draws some jagged short cuts through the long, arduous and, in reality, often tedious process of getting sober.

More significantly, the agitated, shattered-glass chronology that Fingscheidt, Liptrot and editor Stephan Bechinger have arrived at makes the point rather elegantly that rehabilitation never follows a smoothly curving story arc: within the context of Rona's quiet Orkney exile, each sudden, jangling pivot to her ruinous London past signals the risk of an intrusive thought, a fragile break in routine. Here, a swift, cruel cut separates recovery from relapse, or they can be more abstractly enmeshed, as when the roaring swirl of an icy ocean wave dissolves into a woozy, blue-lit recollection of drunken nightclub euphoria. Later, these trains of thought collide to more rousing effect: standing tall and healed on the outrun of the title – a narrow clifftop outcrop of her parents' farm where land meets sea, and where Rona's disparate selves are finally reconciled – she conducts the crashing, foaming waves like a cathartic symphony.

Some secondary character nuance is lost to this subjective sensory approach: Rona and Daynin's romance is only an outline, while another, quite different film could be constructed around Rona's fractured relationships with her reborn-Christian mother (Saskia Reeves) and, in particular, her bipolar dad (Stephen Dillane), both only glancingly drawn. As an inward study of self-redemption, however, *The Outrun* has a defiant, angular power – and, in Ronan, the right actor to convey it. Flinty and frail in equal measure, her gaze as fixed as her hair is changeable, she's equally disarming as the intractable party girl determined, countless drinks deep, to make her problems everyone else's – and, in the cold light of sobriety, as the wary, watchful recluse seeking a break from herself altogether.

Guy Lodge, *Sight and Sound*, October 2024