



## NEW RELEASES

# Bird

### Bird

Director: Andrea Arnold

©: House Bird Limited, Ad Vitam Production, Arte France Cinéma, British Broadcasting Corporation, The British Film Institute, Pinky Promise Film Fund II Holdings LLC, FirstGen Content LLC, Bird Film LLC

Production Company: House Productions

In association with: Red Head Films

In co-production with: Ad Vitam Production, ARTE France Cinéma

Presented by: BBC Film, BFI, FirstGen, Access Entertainment

International Sales by: Cornerstone Films Limited

Producers: Lee Groombridge, Tessa Ross, Juliette Howell

Production Manager: Jack Knott

1st Assistant Director: Adam Lock

Written by: Andrea Arnold

Director of Photography: Robbie Ryan

Editor: Joe Bini

Production Designer: Maxine Carlier

Costume Designer: Alex Bovaird

Make-up Designer: Lisa Mustafa

Extra Music by: Burial

Sound Recordist: Nicolas Becker

Supervising Sound Editor: Rashad Hall-Heinz

Cast:

Nykiya Adams (*Bailey*)

Franz Rogowski (*Bird*)

Barry Keoghan (*Bug*)

Jason Buda (*Hunter*)

Jasmine Jobson (*Peyton*)

Frankie Box (*Kayleigh*)

James Nelson Joyce (*Skate*)

UK-France-USA 2024©

119 mins

Digital

A MUBI release

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Andrea Arnold's return to her British social-realist roots is warm, exuberant and absolutely soars. Twelve-year-old Bailey is a tomboy who lives in a busy squat in North Kent with Bug, her young father. While he spends his time cooking up get-rich-quick schemes and prepares to marry his girlfriend of three months, Bailey escapes to the nearby pocket of nature, filming birds on her phone. While there, she meets a mysterious man searching for his family and embarks on an adventure of her own. Arnold's thrilling return to the big screen is a singular coming-of-age tale. The beauty of nature intersecting with industry, the details of working-class communities and the subtleties of human interaction are all captured by Robbie Ryan's luminous, tactile cinematography. Barry Keoghan is delightfully on form as Bailey's brash but big-hearted father, while Nykiya Adams is the latest remarkable find by a director at the top of her game.

Kimberley Sheehan, Film and Events Programmer

In her masterful short, *Wasp* (2003), British director Andrea Arnold told the story of Zöe, a single mum who doggedly keeps a romantic date going as her small children prowl, scavenge, and wait, in a pub car park. Some 20 years after *Wasp* earned Arnold an Oscar, she remains devoted to portraying characters saddled with hardscrabble lives whose desire for love and genuine connection outstrips their dejectedness.

Bailey (Nykiya Adams), the 12-year-old heroine of Arnold's new fiction feature, *Bird*, could very well be a budding version of Zöe. She lives in a dilapidated house with her hapless dad, Bug (Barry Keoghan), and older brother, Hunter (Jason Buda), with a private space that consists of a sleeping bag separated from Hunter's room by a gauzy curtain, and she's starting to realise life isn't turning out so great. It's not clear how Bug makes his money, though his latest scheme – a frog that he coaxes to produce pricey hallucinogenic slime by playing it Coldplay's 'Yellow' and other 'earnest music' he normally hates – encapsulates his shaky prospects. Meanwhile Bailey's mom, separated from Bug, isn't better off, caring for three small children.

If Bailey's family is big and loving, it's also a source of constant worry. Trouble brews as early as the film's opening, when Bug announces he's soon to marry, and the bride and her little girl are moving in. Bailey's stubborn refusal to be a bridesmaid, provoking Bug's anger, is clearly only the tip of the iceberg of dire tensions between a rebellious daughter and the father whose actions seem to her selfishly haphazard. Meanwhile, drugs are casually taken in both parents' homes, Hunter styles himself as a neighbourhood vigilante, and mum's dating a new, violent boyfriend, who increasingly petrifies Bailey's young and defenceless siblings.

In turmoil, Bailey bolts and runs away, a whirlwind of impulses. Only when in nature does she slow down. Her iPhone's camera becomes her greatest ally. Though sometimes it documents aggression and violence – such as when Hunter brutally attacks an enemy, or when mum's boyfriend threatens Bailey and her sister – it also captures fleeting, bewitching moments, like a horse grazing in a meadow, a butterfly landing on Bailey's finger, or seagulls taking flight. In the scenes of Bailey projecting her videos on the walls of her room, or when her little movies run through her mind, in a constant relay of past and

## NEW RELEASES

### Anora

From Fri 1 Nov

### No Other Land

From Fri 8 Nov

### Bird

From Fri 15 Nov

### All We Imagine as Light

From Fri 29 Nov

### A Night of Knowing Nothing

Sun 1 Dec 18:20; Mon 2 Dec 20:50;

Tue 3 Dec 18:20

### Rumours

From Fri 13 Dec

## RE-RELEASES

### Point Break

From Fri 8 Nov

### The Umbrellas of Cherbourg

Les parapluies de Cherbourg

From Fri 13 Dec

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present, Arnold encapsulates the magic of cinema as a sensory tool for discovering and staying connected to the material world, and dreams.

One such dream literally blows into Bailey's life, propelled by a strong wind, it seems: after running from home, she wakes up in a field, to meet a peculiar young man, Bird (Franz Rogowski). Bird is looking for his family, and though wary, at first, Bailey decides to help him, finding his mysterious ways – spending days and nights perched atop the roof of an apartment block – slowly growing on her. Their bond ripens into a friendship that's rooted in a sense of otherworldliness, in sensing that there's another, gentler, way to live.

In Robbie Ryan's tactile cinematography, the camera stays glued to bodies, with partially obstructed frames, so that viewers are plunged into uncertainty and disorientation along with the characters. At times, the shaky visuals, and Joe Bini's fluid cutting, also convey Bailey's perceptual blur, and giddy thrill – as seen during Bailey's carefree ride with Bug on his scooter – when the city's arteries, flushed with life, open up to her.

Newcomer Nykiya Adams triumphs as Bailey, commingling edginess, tenderness, and introspection; so do Barry Keoghan, whose Bug is as big-hearted and droll as he is hapless, and Rogowski, who delivers Bird's stoic poise with a wispy softness. Rogowski's also convincingly birdlike. By the time his character literally spreads his wings – as a half-man half-beast, an incarnation of a kindred spirit, or a messenger from another world – it's not too off-putting. His figure rather comes off as manifesting Bailey's belief in her innate power, and perhaps also her last bid at the safety of childhood, with its array of protective fantastical beings. In some respects, *Bird* fits in line with gritty contemporary fables such as Benh Zeitlin's *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012). Regardless of what viewers make of Bird's duality, as both a man heartbroken over his family and an animal endowed with supernatural powers, Arnold grapples with the very real dilemma of how to keep one's senses, and spirit, alive, against uncertainty and pain.

Ela Bittencourt, *Sight and Sound*, December 2024