

Edinburgh International Film Festival – Tomorrow at the festival



by Ryan McNeely

Pusher

A week in the life...

In this English-language remake of Nicolas Winding Refn's 1996 debut, Richard Coyle stars as Frank, a small-time coke dealer in London. Over the course of seven increasingly frantic days, Frank goes from the good life to staring death in the face.

There have been so many London-set crime films over the last decade that they have almost become a self-parody. At least this one doesn't star Danny Dyer. Instead, it has the pedigree of Refn's electric source material (with the Dane acting both as executive producer on this version, and as Dutch Bob in a brief cameo) and a tone more reminiscent of Layer Cake than anything else. Coyle's Frank and Daniel Craig's nameless dealer could almost be two sides of the same person, in an alternate world.

The performances brought out by director Luis Prieto (in his first English-language feature) are stunning across the board. If you only know Richard Coyle from the sitcom Coupling then this will blow your mind. You can see every flicker of fear and doubt and anger in his eyes as his week from hell continues. He is in every single scene and he owns them all. Zlatko Burić reprises his role from the Danish trilogy as Milo, Frank's supplier, flipping convincingly from put-out friend to mortal enemy in the blink of an eye. The biggest

surprise for me was the model and occasional singer Agyness Deyn as Frank's stripper girlfriend Flo. Yes, she's beautiful, and she's also a talent to watch.

Simon Dennis' cinematography is devastatingly effective at taking you inside the mindset of a desperate man who happens to be coked out of his nut. He pulls out all the tricks – super-close-ups, speed-ramping, flickering – but never gratuitously, and the original soundtrack by dance legends Orbital really sets the time and place of the story perfectly.

Pusher has its World Premiere at the EIFF on Thursday 21 June 2012, with a second screening on Friday, then a wide release across the UK from 12 October.

✘ **Lovely Molly**

Be careful. She'll screw you.

Tim and Molly are a young couple, newly married. Molly has had some problems in the past, but that's all behind her now. Her old family home has lain empty since her father died, so Molly and Tim move in and start to settle down. It's not long before things start going wrong. With Tim on the road driving a truck all the time, Molly starts to hear things go bump in the night. But is it real, or all in her head?

In the thirteen years since his record-breaking debut, writer/director Eduard Sanchez has never been able to recreate the success of *The Blair Witch Project*. That film's main legacy now is as the instigator of the oft-maligned 'found footage' subgenre. With *Lovely Molly*, Sanchez brings it all full circle, borrowing considerably from the filmmakers he inspired – in particular Oren Peli. Like in Peli's *Paranormal Activity*, this flick features someone using a camcorder to try and prove that their house is haunted. Luckily for us though, the camcorder is just an occasional treat; the bulk of the movie is filmed traditionally. While this is an effective

little chiller for the first hour or so though, it is undone by the last two scenes.

If this film is to be remembered at all, it deserves to be remembered as the debut of Gretchen Lodge. In an absolutely fearless performance, she shows Molly's increasingly steep descent from a normal life to complete madness. This is one of the most effective portraits of insanity I have seen since Catherine Deneuve in *Repulsion*. The other stand-out of the movie is sound designer Matt Davies. With Sanchez eschewing visual effects almost entirely, all the fear in *Lovely Molly* is in the throbbing and droning soundtrack. This sort of approach is so rarely taken these days but it harks back to the days of classic psychological horror: what you can imagine is always scarier than what you can see.

It is unfortunate, then, when Sanchez decides to fluff the landing. Or does he? A late revelation about Tim (a sympathetic and relatable turn by Johnny "Halfsack" Lewis) makes no sense, and a story that was leaning towards psychological terror seems to take a turn into supernatural territory right at the climax, or it could be Sanchez deciding to finish off with a glimpse into Molly's own delusion. You can make your own mind up when *Lovely Molly* gets its UK premiere on Thursday night as part of EIFF's Night Moves strand. It's screening at the same time as *Pusher* on Thursday, but will be shown again within EIFF on Sunday 24 June 2012, then is officially released on Friday 29 June 2012.

Ryan writes for [his own film review site here.](#)