

## “OUTCAST” (Film Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
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Amidst a genre constantly spawning substyles and movements, the most interesting are often the least expected. This year alone, three notable horror films—Darren Aronofsky’s *BLACK SWAN*, Phillip Ridley’s *HEARTLESS* and the subject of this review, Colm McCarthy’s *OUTCAST*—beautifully and successfully mix the raw, handheld presentation of city-centric and urban environments with the surreal, magical and supernatural. And by filming such topics in a realistic and confrontational manner, rather than lush, soft and more traditionally, the three filmmakers have all created unique and fascinating films worth seeking out.

*OUTCAST*, playing this Sunday at the [New York City Horror Film Festival](#), concerns young Fergal (Niall Bruton) and his mother Mary (Kate Dickie). The two lead a nomadic lifestyle, always on the run from their past and, more specifically, a man named Cathal (James Nesbitt), who’s been charged with hunting down the boy and killing him. It’s evident from her sacrificial rituals, symbol paintings and general behavior that Mary is some sort of witch, and the two are deeply entrenched in something beyond our world. As Fergal and his mom settle into a new estate in Edinburgh, Scotland, they begin to face dark troubles from a beast prowling the area, Fergal’s dangerous blossoming of first love with new neighbor Petronella (Hanna Stanbridge) and their final confrontation with Cathal.



There’s a certain trepidation that comes with seeing a filmmaking approach similar to that employed by Aronofsky on *THE WRESTLER*, or in documentaries (this isn’t a POV-style film, however) used in a tale of the supernatural, and truth be told, it’s probably used least in *OUTCAST* as opposed to the other two aforementioned films, but nonetheless, the rawness is definitely present. In this, his first film, McCarthy makes the urban decay and concrete

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surroundings just as atmospheric as any sprawling countryside—and, surprisingly, makes the magic at hand feel more tangible. The fantasy isn’t elevated here; instead, it both blends into and confronts a very real depiction of our modern world.

OUTCAST isn’t exactly groundbreaking, as there are elements you’ve no doubt seen before, but like any classical story tropes, as long as they’re done right, they still work. One such aspect is Fergal’s coming of age; Mary makes much fuss over his relationship with Petronella, and the threat of what will happen if he doesn’t restrain his more primal and sexual feelings for her. The film is obviously asking you to wonder if Fergal is the beast (I won’t spoil that here), and there’s a strong parallel drawn between the monster and the young man’s coming to terms with more adult situations and the changes his body and mind are going through as he grows.

The ensemble really sell the film, especially Dickie as the stern, spiritual and protective Mary and Nesbitt’s Cathal, who along with Dickie play the grey area between good and evil tremendously well. McCarthy, who wrote the film with his brother Tom, comes mostly from the television world, but seems to have had no trouble crafting a highly cinematic debut. OUTCAST has been picked up by Indomina Releasing for U.S. distribution at some point next year, and you would do well to check it out.



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