

Cette article paru dans le Hollywood Reporter à propos de *Black Eyed Dog* à Locarno.

Black Eyed Dog

The Hollywood Reporter Aug. 08 2006

By Ray Bennett

LOCARNO, Switzerland -- A fine central performance by Sonya Salomaa as a woman who has buried her ambitions and an ambitious screenplay by Jeremy John Bouchard that aims for "Fargo" territory go a long way to making Pierre Gang's "Black Eyed Dog" worth seeing. Set in the remote Miramichi region of New Brunswick, one of Canada's Maritime provinces, it's a character study of an individual and the stifling rural society in which she lives.

Following a world premiere in competition at the Locarno International Film Festival, the film could find an appreciable audience beyond the art house circuit with its dark humor and mood of coiled anger.

Salomaa plays Betty, a waitress at a diner in the gloomy town of Riverton whose residents are gripped by fear as a serial killer is on the run in what is being called the country's biggest manhunt. Everyone is jumpy, including the local police and the folks who frequent the diner.

These include Betty's violent ex-lover, Wayne (David Boutin), who refuses to accept his rejection, and his younger brother David (Brendan Fletcher), who is desperate to leave town but can't work up enough nerve to go.

Betty cares for her mother, who is in a nearby nursing home, and fights with her indolent father and single-mother sister Carol (Nadia Litz). Her youthful ambitions to follow her idol, Canadian singer Joni Mitchell, have long been set aside.

In Bouchard's well-constructed screenplay, the specter of the serial killer in the community has the effect on behavior of a full moon or mistral. Betty's mom goes into hysterics, her sister makes a play for a dimwitted bachelor and Wayne loses his tenuous hold on his temper. Betty strives to keep it all together, but a chance meeting with mysterious, intellectual stranger Francois (James Hyndman) leads to a fiery sexual encounter.

Everything comes to a head on Halloween when, with a curfew in effect, most residents gather at the town hall, where a senior police officer relates the latest news on the serial killer and his most recent victims. Director Gang crosscuts to simultaneous events involving the principal characters, including a violent robbery and a clash that leads to murder.

The characters are inventively drawn and some of the dialogue reaches for the comic spark of the Coen brothers. The theme is that real life doesn't usually match the way people imagine it. While that becomes heavy-handed at times, the film has a satisfying resolution.

Gang and cinematographer Daniel Vincelette capture the claustrophobia of the small town and the mirage of opportunity beyond its borders. Boutin makes Wayne's anger convincing, while Fletcher is sympathetic as his younger brother. Hyndman implies mystery and danger as the stranger, and Fred Ewanick does well in the difficult role of a decent cop.

Salomaa carries the film persuasively as a survivor who tones down her beauty, coarsens her speech and toughens her attitude to deal with her bleak existence. As the possibility of salvation emerges from the harrowing situation she finds herself in, the choices she makes become entirely believable.

BLACK EYED DOG

Grana Prods. and Saint GlinGlin

Credits:

Director: Pierre Gang

Screenwriter: Jeremy John Bouchard

Producers: Sam Grana, Louise Jobin, Pierre Gang

Executive producers: Sam Grana, Louise Jobin

Director of photography: Daniel Vincelette

Production/costume designer: Francois Laplante

Editor: Aube Foglia

Music: Claude Fradette

Cast:

Betty: Sonya Salomaa

Francois: James Hyndman

Wayne: David Boutin

David: Brendan Fletcher

Doug: Fred Ewanuick

Carol: Nadia Litz

Andreas: Vlasta Vrana

Roxanne: Anne-Marie Cadieux

Trudy: McKenzi Scott

Eugene: Wally MacKinnon

No MPAA rating

Running time -- 92 minutes