

CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

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The Tribe (*Plemya*) 2014

Ukraine 132 min

Director: Miroslav Slaboshpytskiy

Writer: Miroslav Slaboshpytskiy

Cast:

Hryhoriy Fesenko - Sergey

Yana Novikova - Anya

Rosa Babiy - Svetka

Oleksandr Dsiadevych - Gera



There tends to be a lot of hyperbole tossed around about certain types of movies being a ground-breaking, one-of-a-kind experience, but that statement actually rings true for **Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy**'s debut feature film *The Tribe*. Devoid of any spoken words, music, voice-over or even subtitles, the film is communicated through sign language and all the characters are deaf. This provides a unique challenge for any audience member not versed with how to sign, as the filmmaker provides no direct explanation of what characters are actually saying. While this may initially seem daunting, a viewer's patience and keen observation is rewarded by a haunting cinematic voyage that truly is unlike anything else one is bound to witness in a theatre this year.

Set in a specialized boarding school for young deaf adolescents, the singular lens focuses primarily on Sergey, a down-on-his-luck teenager seemingly abandoned by his family and left to find refuge in an environment more conducive for the handicapped. Upon arriving to the austere institution, the setting seems oddly welcoming, with students and teachers participating in some type of celebratory ceremony. However, as soon as Sergey attempts to get comfortable in his dormitory, the hierarchy of the so-called 'tribe' of students quickly becomes apparent, as he is thrust into a twisted version of survival of the fittest.

First, the school is run by a gang of thuggish students who bully those weaker than them, sometimes quite violently. Their despicable actions are facilitated by a group of corrupt teachers who in turn take advantage of these students, from having them smuggle in contraband to pimping out underage girls to have sex with weary truck drivers late at night, ultimately profiting from their misery. As Sergey struggles to move up the ranks of this sordid teenage mafia, he falls in love with one of the girls, Anya, who is being used as a prostitute. Their love affair is captured vividly and Slaboshpytskiy

is not shy about allowing his actors to bare their souls in order to achieve a richer, more complex vision of their warped modern romance.

Stylistically, the film is shot in stunning, unbroken long takes reminiscent of Cristian Mungiu, Nuri Bilge Ceylan and even Bela Tarr (minus the black and white). While there is a formality to this type of cinema, the mise-en-scène feels stripped down and more apropos to a gritty crime film, akin to something like Jacques Audiard's *The Prophet*. Yet the scope and ambition of the mild-mannered narrative propels it to something more grandiose like *The Godfather*. Keep in mind that with all this going on, the film still demands one's utmost attention if there's hope to glean any of the subtleties and nuance of what is actually happening, thus making the emotional investment in the characters that more potent. As the film spirals to its horrific climax, the performances of these young actors are a marvel to witness, channelling painful truths of Ukrainian culture. Easily the most intense movie experience of the year, **The Tribe** is an unsettling examination of how the oppressed can become the oppressor.

Fantastic Fest 2014 Review (Raffi Asdourian)

Our previous presentation:

Based on the feedback slips returned on the night, you rated **Kimiko The Treasure Hunter**, screened on 22nd March, 3.08 stars out of 5.

Do please continue to leave your response slips after the film and/or register your comments on the Discussions page (<http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk/discussion/>) on our website.

Our next presentation:

The New Girlfriend will be shown on 26th April, starting at 8:00pm.