



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

DISCO BOY (15)

Director: Giacomo Abbruzzese

Starring: Franz Rogowski, Morr Ndiaye, Laetitia Ky, Leon Lučev

France/Italy/Belgium, 2023, 1 hour 39 minutes, French/English/Igbo/Polish + English subtitles

Italian director Giacomo Abbruzzese makes a really stylish debut with *Disco Boy*, a visually thrilling, ambitious and distinctly freaky adventure into the heart of imperial darkness, or into something else entirely: the heart of an alternative reality, or a transcendent new self. This is bold film-making: a movie that wants to dazzle you with its standalone setpieces, but also to carry you along with its storytelling. - **The Guardian**

Disco Boy is a lean but sweepingly ambitious film crafted with formal rigor. Abbruzzese deftly transitions between haunting silence and kinetic energy, a balance supported in particular by Vitalic's pulsating score and the inspired compositions of the cinematographer H  l  ne Louvart. Rogowski pulls it all together with stoic features that emanate so much sorrow and history. - **The New York Times**

One feature of *Disco Boy*, at least, plays as expected: the reliably fragile, fascinating presence of Franz Rogowski, the gifted German actor who, of late, seems to have evolved into a border-busting mascot for European cinema at its most sinuous and supple. As in Christian Petzold's out-of-time 2018 refugee tale *Transit*, Rogowski here plays a man slipping between personal and national identities, shedding past selves in the shadows. He's ironically persuasive in such roles not because of how he blends in but how he stands out. His beautiful, off-kilter features and soft, sibilant voice don't evoke any particular place or personal history; he fits everywhere and nowhere. In this French-Italian-Belgian-Polish production set across two continents, that's fitting enough. - **Variety**

This is a rain-streaked film of rich, burnished colours, psychedelic night-vision sequences and atmospheric power that takes the unfamiliarity and fight-or-flight danger of strange territory as a cue for heightened, sensorial surrealism. It seems, in the vein of *Apocalypse Now* (1979), that the minds of soldiers can do little else than become unhinged on their jungle mission. Villages blaze and oil refinery chimneys blare in a vision of multinational greed and environmental decimation. - **BFI**

Preview courtesy of Conic

Notes compiled by Holly Dennison

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