

Bullhead



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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The superb Flemish-Belgian Bullhead (Rundskop) shows that it's impossible to be compassionate in a world of ignorant fools and a misguided loner who does not know how to vent the anger that consumes his humanity.

The film tells of a young Limburg cattle farmer Jacky Vanmarsenille (Matthias Schoenaerts) who is approached by an unscrupulous veterinarian to make a shady deal with a notorious West-Flemish beef trader. But the assassination of a federal policeman, and an unexpected confrontation with a mysterious secret from Jacky's past, sets in motion a chain of events with far-reaching consequences.





It is a gentle film, brilliantly scripted and skilfully directed by Michaël R Roskam. His vision is extraordinary and he perfectly captures Jack's intimate anguish and desperation. If there's one reason to see this film, it's for the unique symbiosis between Roskam and Schoenaerts, injecting a moving honesty and emotional depth into a man who's imprisoned by a tragic past and whose future is clouded by misfortune.

It took six years for the film to be made and during this time Roskam and Schoenaerts worked intensely on the development of Jacky Vanmarsenille, with Schoenaerts having to bulk up an extra 27kg to bring this unforgettable character to life. In particular, cinematographer Nicolas Karakatsanis masterfully captures the world of the story and shady characters, allowing viewers to journey into the darkness of serenity, and the vividness of a carefree past.

Evil and malevolent human nature

Although most small-town farming communities may look completely desolate and innocent, in Bullhead it is fuelled by evil and malevolent human nature that rebels against the tranquillity. It is not always possible to express our emotions or communicate our fundamental desires; in Bullhead this tragic flaw leads to an unfortunate chain of events that turns everyone's world upside down and strips innocence bare.

When you leave Bullhead you will see a new and different world. You will also see people differently and realise that brutes have souls and all they need is love and understanding.

The film is screened in Limburgish with English subtitles and is showing exclusively at Cinema Nouveau.

Behind the scenes

"After I read the first draft of the script, I had this image of a half-man, half-bull kind of figure," said Matthias Schoenaerts, who graduated from the Conservatorium Toneel Dora van der Groen school of acting in 2002, and who has starred in a number of award-winning shorts and feature movies. "So I thought his physical appearance was very important in evoking a lot for the spectators, to make them see this kind of Frankenstein being. And, at the same time, I knew that once I got his physical appearance I could focus more on the vulnerable part of the character, which to me was more the core. I think that Jacky moves through life through a deep existential pain and that, to me, was the most important thing. Bullhead is a grotesque tragedy about fate and how our lives are sometimes determined by events over which we have no control," Roskam said about his debut film. "It is a film about people being driven to extremes. It is not about cowboys and Indians, about good or evil, but about how seemingly small events can sometimes have huge consequences for the people involved. Their fate is also their destiny."

Read more at www.writingstudio.co.za/page2264.html

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za
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