



TIFF Next Wave Review: 'Boy 7'

Boy 7

(The Netherlands/Hungary, 90 min.)

Dir. Lourens Blok, Writ. Marco van Geffen, Philip Delmaar

Starring: Matthijs van de Sande Bakhuyzen, Ella-June Henrard, Yannick Jozefzoon, Tygo Gernandt, Halina Reijn

The Netherlands is a police state in the not-so-distant future and the youth, the nation's future, are its prisoners. One young man, Sam (Matthijs van de Sande Bakhuyzen), finds himself at the centre of this strange, powerful, and corrupt system when he awakens in a daze on the city subway with nothing other than a backpack, a mysterious girl named Lara (Ella-June Henrard), whom he faintly recognizes, and a swarm of po-po pursuing him as if he's a wanted terrorist. Kids have an innate sense of how to navigate dystopia now that moviegoers between the ages of ten and twenty-five find themselves within the family tree of Katniss Everdeen and Tris Prior, but Sam, renamed 7 in his depersonalized world, navigates a dangerous situation from which even a mockingjay might have trouble fleeing the coop. Take *Boy 7* as a Euro *Hunger Games* or as a Dutch *Divergent*, and this fast-paced adventure into a haywire future is a pretty wild romp.

There might not be anything besides language that differentiates *Boy 7* from American dystopian teen cinema—it's even based on a bestselling book!—but the intersections between the films are bound to make it an easygoing ride for most audiences. (Amen to you, Katniss, Tris, and Sam for working together to make subtitles cool!) *Boy 7*, like its Hollywood counterparts, envisions a dark, cold, and steely world where the youth are guinea pigs for a larger experiment in social control as Sam discovers when he retraces the shards of his memory back to a hacking stint that landed him in prison. The prison, however, is really an elaborate charade for experiments and training regimes that turn mildly delinquent youths into drones and pawns.

Director Lourens Blok creates an evil atmosphere of cyber-coded sterility as the prison guards and government players manipulate the inmates. Everything is white and muted—there's not a shred of character to be found in *Boy 7*'s compound except in the seeds of

rebellion that begin as Sam (re)discovers his love for Lara. *Boy 7* frequently ruptures the chronology with blips in Sam's memory that remove him from the test tube of the prison and help him return to reality. Cameras and microchips are everywhere as Blok creates a moody world in which people are prisoners of their own digital devices, but just as apps and codes can program humans into drones, they're also man-made systems that Sam can outmanoeuvre just as sharply as Katniss fires an arrow. His lessons and his innate ability to decipher social codes make him the ideal rebel to break the machinery of the Dutch Big Brother state from the inside.

Blok offers some efficient action sequences amidst the character-driven game of memory and identity. This handsomely produced film boasts impressive visuals and crafts, **especially the cinematography by Jasper Wolf** and an energetically pulsing techno score by Jorrit Kleijnen and Alexander Reumers (better known as the duo Paraphrase). *Boy 7*, as speculative cinema goes, is both smart and entertaining as it nimbly meets the bar set by the latest international phenomenon in teen-targeted film and fiction. It's stylishly tapped in to our plugged-in and digitally-driven culture.

Boy7 is the Dutch version of "Hunger Game" and "Divergent", won the Best Cinematography Award at Boston Sci-Fi Film Festival and was featured at U.S.A Fantastic Cinema Film Festival.



