

'Dream Horse' tells a low-key, true story

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: ««« out of ««««

Running Time: 113 minutes

This feature from Bleecker Street will only be playing in open theaters on May 21st.

Horses are lovely and determined animals, as the creative forces behind the new film *Dream Horse* readily assert. This true story follows a group of amateur racing enthusiasts from Wales who decide to raise and train their own animal, despite knowing little to nothing about the process of breeding. As you may have guessed, their efforts to do so were unexpectedly successful. The film based on this real-life tale isn't a prize-winning effort, but the charming cast does make it an engaging little journey.

In a tiny, picturesque Welsh village, bored housewife Jan Vokes (Toni Collette) is juggling a couple of jobs to help make ends meet. When local Howard Davies (Damian Lewis) boasts to friends in a bar about having invested in a racehorse, Jan investigates and becomes interested in horse-breeding. She convinces her husband Brian (Owen Teale) to help and eventually asks Howard for assistance. While the stranger initially scoffs at her ideas, her enthusiasm for the project soon wins him over and the pair tries to convince locals to invest in a syndicate.

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The recruits end up breeding a potential racer they name Dream Alliance. As time passes, their horse and the group are surprised to find themselves entering the world of professional racing.

This is an inspirational story, which means that there is little about the general plot that's different from any underdog story. Thankfully, this film features some authentic situations and detail about horse-breeding that does make the movie intriguing to watch. Star Collette is always an engaging performer and makes the most of the story's personal conflict as insults are thrown her way for pursuing this expensive new hobby. And the story also draws viewers in as they learn about breeding horses along with the determined, but green protagonist, as well as her fondness for the new animal.

Small British movies like these frequently rely on supporting characters with entertaining quirks. Again, while the basic story is predictable, the oddballs do add a bit of interest to the proceedings as the small-town locals become horse-owners and show up at various high-class events. The feature is also beautifully lit and shot and the human and equine cast members are lovingly photographed. There is a wonderful wide tracking shot early on of Jan walking down the village's main street to her job in the morning.

The movie isn't a masterpiece, but there isn't a cynical bone in its body and it does present a heartwarming true story about an unusual group of people trying something new and outlandish. *Dream Horse* may not be a complete triumph, but it is a decent bet for those searching out a low-key and cute British feature.

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