

Disturbingly Refreshing, Jake Gyllenhaal in ‘Nightcrawler’ is an Anti-Hero You Can’t Stop Watching

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on October 31, 2014 - 5:20pm

- [Adam Fendelman](#) [2]
- [Bill Paxton](#) [3]
- [Dan Gilroy](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Jake Gyllenhaal](#) [6]
- [James Huang](#) [7]
- [Kent Shocknek](#) [8]
- [Leah Fredkin](#) [9]
- [Marco Rodriguez](#) [10]
- [Michael Papajohn](#) [11]
- [Movie Review](#) [12]
- [Nightcrawler](#) [13]
- [Open Road Films](#) [14]
- [Pat Harvey](#) [15]
- [Rene Russo](#) [16]
- [Rick Garcia](#) [17]
- [Riz Ahmed](#) [18]
- [Sharon Tay](#) [19]



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “No one talks like that,” I kept thinking to myself about this noir thriller. But that said, “Nightcrawler” is driven by just about the most entertaining dialogue from one person I’ve seen all year.

Despite the fact that he’s living in a warped alternate version of the reality you and I know, you can’t stop listening to the way a narcissistic, zombie-like Jake Gyllenhaal puts people in their place. You know immediately that this typically 180-pound man – who shed 20 pounds to become the gaunt Lou Bloom and is hungry both literally and figuratively – is more than an odd bird. He clearly exhibits sociopathic behavior and that side of him is certainly disturbing, but there’s another side I actually find refreshing.



Jake Gyllenhaal stars as Lou Bloom in “Nightcrawler”.

Image credit: Chuck Zlotnick, Open Road Films

He doesn’t sugar coat because he doesn’t know how to. He speaks so decisively and matter-of-factly. His words are the epitome of being blunt, straightforward and never beating around the bush. You’d feel sorry for him, but you never get the sense that he’s in touch with his feelings. Lou writes his own rules, never takes no for an answer and is always moving up – no matter what he has to do to get there.

We meet Lou between odd jobs. Desperate for money and even more so for work where he can feel purposeful, we first find him stealing wire fences and manhole covers to sell under the table. Following a convincing speech, he asks his buyer for a job. “No,” he says. “I won’t hire a thief.”

For the purposes of this film, a “nightcrawler” isn’t an earthworm, a band or a Marvel Comics superhero in “X-Men”. Preferring to work under the guise of the night’s shadows, Lou fortuitously witnesses car crash victims and the fast-paced arrival and departure of video stringers. Listening to police scanners and using GPS to get there quickly, they tape the gruesome scene and sell it to the highest-paying TV station for airing in the early morning.



Jake Gyllenhaal as Lou Bloom and Rene Russo as Nina Romina in “Nightcrawler”.

Image credit: Chuck Zlotnick, Open Road Films

Immediately fascinated with the voyeuristic job, Lou buys a cheap camera and police scanner. He’s a fast learner, he says repeatedly and robotically, and he learns all the police codes. He’s so committed to learning this craft that he’s only interested in *recording* humanity at its worst – murder, car crashes, fires, etc. – but never *protecting* it. Peeping through the lens of writer and director Dan Gilroy (“The Bourne Legacy,” “Real Steel”), never once do you see Lou’s sadness about the misery he’s capturing.

But where he truly blurs and then crosses the line of TV journalism is in his timing and eventually his fabricated creation of the scenes. TV journalism always feels the pressure of timeliness and getting there first. For job-hopping news director Rene Russo, more brutality means better ratings for her poorly rated local news station. She’s interested in the question “can we really show that?” and flirting the line between what’s appropriate and what’s “compelling” TV.

Rene Russo as Nina is an unexpected match for the younger Lou Bloom, but they codependently use each other. She needs him for compelling and timely video sequences; he needs her for the money and to move his way up the video-stringing ladder with the aim of eventual recognition as the leader of a “professional video news service”. Their relationship even takes an odd turn into the erotic – not because they fall in love, but because they’re orgasmically fascinated with the kill and the exciting power felt by being the best.



Writer and director Dan Gilroy (left) with Riz Ahmed (middle) and Jake Gyllenhaal on the set of “Nightcrawler”.

Image credit: Chuck Zlotnick, Open Road Films

While Gyllenhaal could very well be Oscar nominated as Best Actor for this chilling, cutthroat and unforgettable role, Riz Ahmed is equally memorable. Ahmed, who has already been nominated by the Gotham Independent Film Awards as a Breakthrough Actor, plays Lou’s employee and sidekick. Rick is homeless, soft spoken and equally desperate for money. He is Gilroy’s critical contrasting character because he has emotion, common sense and a heart.

Lou is all about getting the shot – no matter the costs – whereas Rick is about making more money, getting promoted (within Lou’s two-man operation that he makes seem bigger than it is) and about balancing risk with reward. Lou only sees the reward and never concerns himself with the risk.

Bill Paxton plays another important role in this well-written and visually exquisite film, which keeps you constantly captivated for 117 straight minutes. Paxton as Joe Loder is Lou’s only competition when he rushes to the scene for the shot. At one point, he even wants to team up. Lou is a lone wolf, though, who doesn’t want to work for someone else. “You have to make the money to buy a ticket,” he repeats over and over again.



Jake Gyllenhaal as Lou Bloom in “Nightcrawler”.
Image credit: Chuck Zlotnick, Open Road Films

While the film doesn’t feel a minute too long and your eyes are locked in from beginning to end, your mind might shoot holes in the plot days later. Why is there primarily only one other stringer at the scene instead of crowds of them? Why is Lou let off so easily after a dramatic police interrogation following his biggest aired video – capturing murders in progress – that was obtained by arriving even before the cops?

Nonetheless, they’re forgivable because the film is so consistently interesting, Jake Gyllenhaal is at his best leading it – both entertaining and repulsing you – and the healthy balance of Riz Ahmed equals out his insanity.

“Nightcrawler” stars Jake Gyllenhaal, Riz Ahmed, Rene Russo, Bill Paxton, Michael Papajohn, Marco Rodríguez, James Huang, Kent Shocknek, Pat Harvey, Sharon Tay, Rick Garcia and Leah Fredkin from writer and director Dan Gilroy. The film, which has a running time of 117 minutes, opened on Oct. 31, 2014. It is rated “R” for violence including graphic images and for language.



[20]

By [ADAM FENDELMAN](#) [21]
Publisher
HollywoodChicago.com
adam@hollywoodchicago.com [20]

© 2014 Adam Fendelman, HollywoodChicago.com LLC

Source URL (retrieved on **Mar 28 2024 - 1:08pm**):
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/24721/disturbingly-refreshing-jake-gyllenhaal-in-nightcrawler-an-anti-hero-you-cant-stop-watching>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hollywoodchicagocom>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/adam-fendelman>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/bill-paxton>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/dan-gilroy>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jake-gyllenhaal>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/james-huang>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/kent-shocknek>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/leah-fredkin>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/marco-rodriguez>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/michael-papajohn>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/nightcrawler>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/open-road-films>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/pat-harvey>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/rene-russo>



[17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/rick-garcia>
[18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/riz-ahmed>
[19] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sharon-tay>
[20] <mailto:adam@hollywoodchicago.com>
[21] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#ADAM>