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SCREENDAILY

Shifty

9 April, 2009 | By Fionnuala Halligan



Dir. Eran Creevy. UK. 2008. 90 mins.

Made for £100,000 in 18 days under a Film London initiative ('Microwave'), *Shifty* is an accomplished debut for Eran Creevy. Like its protagonists, it may look strapped for cash, but there's not much in the script, direction, acting or editing to betray its low-budget origins. *Shifty* has an energy and relevance that could even see it approach the more-polished *Kidulthood's* \$1m-plus box office haul when it goes out in the UK on April 24 on 50 prints, and it marks Creevy out as a UK talent to watch.

While set very clearly in London's more unappealing suburbs - a fictional 'Dudlowe' - *Shifty* is reminiscent of recent urban French cinema such as *Khamsa*, and should be considered by festivals searching out hard-to-find grassroots British cinema, although its ending does have a shiny topspin which hints to a more commercial future for Creevy.

Its subject matter is familiar enough: 24 hours in the life of small-time drug dealer Shifty (Ahmed), working the local estate and its inhabitants. But Creevy gives it some spin. Shifty (Ahmed) is a Muslim of Pakistani extraction, the brightest boy in his class with four A-levels and living with his tough but loving older brother Rez (Ganatra) in a very comfortable middle-class home.

His childhood best friend Chris (Mays) returns from Manchester, ostensibly for a party, after a four-year absence, and there are hints as to some tragedy which may have forced Chris to flee.

But in the meantime, Shifty has a days' dealing ahead of him: picking up his goods from local hood Glen (Flemyng, in a particularly startling nylon green v-neck jumper) and dealing them out to his customers who include a crack-addicted granny (Annis in an amusing cameo).

And then there's Trevor (Simpson), father and hopeless addict, whose performance gives Shifty a frightening edge.

Ahmed is good in the lead role, while Mays' character always seems as if there's more there which is never voiced, even after the denouement. But it's the characters on *Shifty's* vital edge, from Ganatra to Simpson to Flemyng, that make the piece worthwhile.

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Production companies

Film London/Microwave

Between The Eyes

UK distribution

Metrodome

International sales

Protagonist Pictures

Producers

Rory Aitken

Ben Pugh

Cinematography

Ed Wild

Production design

Erik Rehl

Main cast:

Riz Ahmed

Daniel Mays

Jason Flemyng

Francesca Annis

Jay Simpson

Nitin Ganatra

