

Whiplash

FEATURE FILM · DRAMA · 106 PAGES · CONTAINED BUDGET

A nineteen-year-old jazz drummer at an elite conservatory is taken into the studio band of a legendary, sadistic instructor who believes greatness is forged by cruelty — and destroys his body, his relationships and his stability chasing an approval that may never have been available.

SYNOPSIS

Andrew Neiman practises alone until his hands split. Terence Fletcher listens at the door for eight bars and walks out, and that withheld approval becomes the currency of Andrew's life. Promoted into Fletcher's studio band, Andrew is humiliated, promoted, replaced and promoted again. He ends a relationship on the explicit grounds that she will eventually resent his priorities. He plays a concert with a broken hand, collapses, attacks his teacher on stage and is expelled. Months later, having abandoned the drums, he learns that a former student of Fletcher's hanged himself, testifies anonymously, and gets Fletcher fired. Then Fletcher invites him to play a festival, and calls a chart Andrew has never seen. Andrew walks off stage. Then he turns around, counts the band in himself, and takes the piece.

WHY THIS FILM

It treats artistic ambition as combat and refuses to tell the audience who won. Fletcher's philosophy is given its strongest possible form and is never refuted by another character — the counter-evidence is simply laid beside it: a dead former student, a broken young man, an abandoned relationship. The final nine pages are almost wordless and resolve the plot while declining to resolve the question. Audiences leave exhilarated and complicit.

TOPE AND COMPARABLES

Black Swan for artistic self-destruction as body horror. Full Metal Jacket for the instructor as antagonist. The Master for dominance and discipleship left unresolved. Foxcatcher for the prestige register. The film is a thriller in everything but subject.

PRODUCTION PROFILE

Two principals, four locations, no visual effects, and a performance that cannot be faked in coverage — the drumming must be real. The budget discipline is exceptional: this is the most favourable risk-return proposition in the package, with a strong festival and awards profile and word-of-mouth that reaches far beyond an audience interested in jazz.

FORMAT

Feature film

GENRE

Drama / Music / Two-hander

LENGTH

106 pages · approx. 105 min

BUDGET TIER

Low — contained, performance led

LOCATIONS

4 (conservatory, apartment, club, concert hall)

PRINCIPAL CAST

2 leads, 3 supporting

EFFECTS

None

KEY REQUIREMENT

A lead who can genuinely drum on camera

COMPARABLES

Black Swan · Full Metal Jacket · Foxcatcher

POSITIONING

Awards corridor · festival launch

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