

ALPHAMALE by BEN WEINER

A Feature Film

Genre: Bromantic Comedy

Runtime: c.90 mins

Budget: Micro / Low

Logline

Lost in the Scottish Highlands, Felix and Paul, 30s, but marooned in adolescence, have to survive the treacherous conditions, their potentially homicidal guide and one another to get home.

Synopsis

Felix (34) and Paul (35) are guileless, emotionally incarcerated man boys, but at least they are not in as bad a state as their Dads. There is some hope in that.

Life experience has led Felix to decide that men are all wrong, especially himself, which means he never takes responsibility for his actions.

As for Paul, he has no faith in himself and looks for answers in all the wrong places, including Felix.

Paul and Felix go for a night out with their fathers, but the night goes catastrophically wrong and the boys are left to pick up the pieces of their fathers' messed up lives. They need to get away. Paul wants to go hunting in the mountains. He is a keen cook and wants to connect with a sense of self by hunting his own food to eat.

Felix is less keen on the mountains. It is winter. It is cold. He really cannot see the appeal of hunting when Ocado delivers, but as soon as Paul starts to probe Felix's vulnerability, Felix agrees to the trip to shut down the conversation. Also, Felix decides that the idea of a Scottish castle and fine malts is not so bad, so he agrees to organise the trip with this in mind.

Problem is that Felix makes a complete hash of the organisation, booking a terrible hotel with an algae infested pool and somehow managing to find a sauna, which is far colder than the rest of the building.

He has not even organised a guide / stalker.

Luckily for the boys, they meet Roddy, the grandson of the indomitable proprietaries of the hotel, Mhari. Roddy ekes out a living as a deer-stalker, but lives an equally joyless existence to Felix and Paul. Life has taught him that you can only trust yourself. Everyone else, even his grandmother, is an inconvenience.

Roddy agrees to take them up into the hills, but hints to his grandmother that he plans to have a bit of fun at their expense. After-all, he does hate the English.

From the first, Felix is desperate to convince Paul that Roddy has it in for them. Paul is not so sure. Cracks begin to appear in the boys' relationship.

Felix fails a shooting test, almost certainly the victim of sabotage by Roddy, which only serves to make things worse.

When the boys find the first deer, Paul impresses Roddy with his determination and ability to follow instructions. That night, they go back to a shack where they will spend the night and have a dinner of venison steak cooked on hot stones by Paul.

It seems they may even open up to one another, but soon, Felix manages to take the conversation into a facile and insulting direction. Paul and Roddy bond. Felix is on the outside.

The next day starts better for Felix when he passes his shooting test. However, things take a turn for the worse, during the day, which includes a long day's hike in terrible conditions in which Felix plunges his feet into an ice-cold stream. This is a long way from a malt in a castle. Felix is not happy.

When they finally find deer, furious and rebellious, Felix has a moment of juvenile destructiveness and shoots the

Alphamale, rather than the lame creature pointed out to him. This sends Roddy into a complete fury.

At that moment, a whiteout blows in. It traps the men in hastily built snow shelters for the night. Paul and Felix are in one. Roddy is in another. Once more, Felix tries to persuade Paul that Roddy, whose behaviour is completely erratic, wants to kill them.

In the morning, Roddy's shelter is lost from view. Felix finally convinces Paul that Roddy has left them in the wilderness to die.

In fact, Roddy is trapped in his buried snow shelter, desperately fighting for his life.

Roddy manages to fight his way free, but by this time, the boys have made their way up the slope. Roddy shoots in the air to get the boys' attention, which convinces Felix and Paul he is trying to kill them. They flee deeper into the hills.

The story turns. Rather than stalking stags, Roddy starts to stalk the men, not a difficult task for stalker in his indigenous habitat. Roddy soon tracks them down. He convinces Paul to put his faith in him. Felix is still mistrustful.

To compound his earlier error, Felix, 'accidentally' injures Roddy's head, leaving him unconscious. Will Felix take responsibility for his actions? At first, it seems not. Felix even suggests leaving Roddy behind in the mountains. Paul will carry Roddy on his own if he has to.

Spurred on by his friend's example and the fact they think that they are going to die in the terrifying environment, Felix finally opens up and begins to take responsibility for his actions.

Finally breaking down his barriers, Felix tells Paul about the secret guilt he harbours for the death of an old friend. Paul tells Felix that the death, however tragic, was not his fault. Slowly, Felix comes to terms with his old trauma, but it opens up all the times he should have felt guilty since. He has some redeeming to do.

He starts by helping Paul with Roddy. Finally hopeful, he encourages Paul that they might just make it.

The situation is bleak. They have run out of food. They are cold. They are supporting a comatose man. They are totally incapable of surviving for long in what for them is an utterly alien landscape.

After an unsuccessful attempt to milk a sheep, Felix spots a way out. A path leads to the bottom of a scree cliff with certain salvation the other side. They just have to get up.

Rocks are falling all around them. In an accident, Paul passes out. Is Felix up to the challenge of getting them out?

With a mixture of grit, strength, tenacity and humanity that he never knew he had he saves both Paul and Roddy's lives, bringing them back to civilisation, with the help of a sleeping matt used as a toboggan.

The boys are all saved both physically, mentally and emotionally. They can start to live their lives the way they want to. Felix has learned to trust himself and everyone else at the same time. Paul has learned he is worth saving. Roddy has learned that you can trust other people.

None of them will ever eat venison again.

Note on tone

Alphamale is a bromantic comedy in the tradition of City Slickers. It relies on the inherent comedy afforded to it by Felix and Paul being fish out of water, as well as the natural male one-up-manship within the story. This one-up-manship inspires some insane moments, which should be memorable, striking, funny and often destructive (or dark).

Underneath this surface though, are three people struggling to make connections with the world. The film relies on the triangular relationships to bring out the inner conflicts of the characters and solve them by giving the boys the relationships with one another they ultimately want and need, hence the bromance.

The film has been described as a light-hearted Deliverance with a happy ending (if such a thing is possible).

Note on audience and stakes

I want to show this film to my brother (56) and my nephew (27) and for them to enjoy it, laugh with it and ultimately make them want to give their best buddy a call after the titles roll so that they can catch up 'properly.'

When you consider that men are four times more likely to kill themselves than women and nine times more likely to kill themselves, the stakes for the characters and for some in the audience too are high.

The film is not preachy, but it is written about men who are suffering through isolation. I think it may also be interesting for women as well as it shines a light on these types of men, of whom we all know many.

Note on the characters' position on hunting:

The idea of trophy hunting would be an anathema to Roddy. It is his job. He takes it seriously and will only hunt those animals that are sick or otherwise infirm.

Even whilst drawn to hunting, Paul is clear it is for food. He wants to connect with something more profound than the food production industry.

Felix does not even want to hunt, and it is his negative urges, which need to be examined that causes him to lash out against the wrong animal.

This is not a film, which glamorises hunting or makes light of serious animal welfare concerns.

Characters

Felix Massant

Force feed a young Daniel Cleaver a soul and you will get Felix. He is in his early 30s and single. He wears absurdly expensive T-Shirts and has his chest hair coiffured. He has the world figured and he figures it's a heinous place. He swears it does not depress him. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. His journey is to discover that other people and maybe even himself are not as bad as he thought.

He lives with his flatmate Paul.

Paul Siecle

Early 30s, single, and with the sense of self-worth of a knackered donkey, Paul dresses in cravats on his days off and has an Adam Sandler temper ready to erupt at any moment. He cooks and eats extraordinary food to cover for his basic feelings of inadequacy. How would it square with Paul's sense of self if even Felix learned to value him? Could he even start to value himself?

Roddy Duncan

35, single, a bit odd, painfully shy, which he covers by being menacing, Roddy lives in the Cairngorms with his grandmother and ekes out a living as a deer stalker. Traumatized by both his brief time in the army as a sniper and by the early deaths of his parents, Roddy trusts no-one, only enjoys testing himself right to the limit against the mountains and singing to himself. Felix and Paul represent almost everything Roddy detests. How will he control himself when he is left alone with them?