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CF George Ryga's HUNGRY HILLS

Rob King

Description

A haunting and dark take on the western, George Ryga's HUNGRY HILLS is adapted with depth and beauty by screenwriter Gary Fisher and director Rob King from the acclaimed novel by George Ryga.

Snit Mandolin (Keir Gilchrist) just wants to go home. After two years in a welfare residence for boys, where daily survival literally means a fight, he is eager to get back to the family farm in Saskatchewan. But the only people happy to see him are his Aunt Matilda (Gabrielle Rose) and another young outcast, Johnny Swift (Alexander De Jordy). When Snit is unable to cultivate his family's rock-strewn fields, he turns to Johnny's bootlegging operation to get the farm back into working order. However, the tough-as-nails local cop Roy Kane (John Pyper-Ferguson) is on the lookout for the person who's been brewing moonshine, and all he needs is one more reason to send Snit back to the home for boys. Already on the run from a community that doesn't want them, Snit and Johnny take drastic steps to escape the foothills.

In classic western fashion, HUNGRY HILLS follows an outlaw and his sidekick as they are hunted by a local sheriff, their flight set against a stunningly photographed natural landscape. Instead of lush valleys and rock formations, this is a barren wasteland, and their desolate surroundings provide a stark reflection of financial desperation. Immaculate art direction transforms the fifties into a character of its own, crowding the people and forcing their actions. Sterling performances by the cast support the film's gorgeous and memorable visual palette.

More than forty years after the book was initially published, George Ryga's story feels fresh again in this cinematic form. The film offers a grim portrayal of the decay of morality at the hands of money, and its themes of survival and dogged determination are perfectly situated in the current global context. In the vein of modern westerns like *There Will Be Blood*, heroism and redemption are only revealed after grisly events, and George Ryga's HUNGRY HILLS finds these qualities in unlikely places and people. This is among the most inventive and polished Canadian literary adaptations in recent memory.

Jesse Wentz



Rob King is a writer, director and founding partner of Minds Eye Entertainment. He has worked as a director on several television series, and has been nominated for a Gemini Award for his work on *Corner Gas*. His television films include *Without Malice* (00) and *Moccasin Flats: Redemption* (08). His first feature, *Something More* (99), was nominated for the Claude Jutra Award at the Genie Awards. *George Ryga's HUNGRY HILLS* (09) is his latest feature.

Credits

Production Company: Hungry Hills Productions Inc.

Executive Producer: Jennifer Jonas, Leonard Farlinger, Gerard Demaer

Producer: Avi Federgreen, Rhonda Baker, Rob King, Gary Fisher

Screenplay: Gary Fisher, based on the novel by George Ryga

Production Designer: Garv Varro

Cinematographer: Ken Krawczyk

Editor: Jackie Dzuba

Sound: Rob Brvanton, Steve Hasiak, Dan Canfield

Music: Todd Brvanton

Principal Cast: Keir Gilchrist, Alexander De Jordy, John Pyper-Ferguson, Gabrielle Rose, Alexia Fast



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