

# Wild Rose (15)

Directed by Tom Harper



'18 UK 1hr 50mins

Fri 12 March for at least one week

Jessie Buckley stars in this uplifting, heartfelt drama about a Glaswegian single mum who dreams of leaving her dreary life for the bright lights of Nashville.

Fresh out of jail and with two young kids, Rose-Lynn (Buckley in a seriously knockout performance) is bursting with raw talent, pure cheek and a dream to escape Glasgow for life as a country singer in Nashville. Forced by her mum (Julie Walters) to face up to her responsibilities, Rose-Lynn gets a cleaning job for the posh Susannah (Sophie Okonedo), who soon becomes an unlikely champion for the wannabe star...

**A star is most certainly born in the shape of Buckley, who is seriously incandescent, hitting the highs and lows of her character and belting out all the dazzling songs herself. Wild Rose is a total breath of fresh air, a brilliant, uplifting story about sacrifice, love, and home, the stuff country music lyrics are made of - and what a toe-tapping joy it is.**

*This article by Sarah Bradbury featuring and interview with actor Jessie Buckley originally appeared on [inews.co.uk](http://inews.co.uk) in April 2019.*

"When I first read the script, what came to mind was, 'That's excellent. I want to be in a female prison break film,'" says Jessie Buckley. "That sounds like a brilliant idea."

The Irish actress emanates warmth and authenticity as she sits next to me, cross-legged and pretension-free, on a Soho Hotel sofa, talking about her latest project, Wild Rose. Tom Harper's film follows 24-year-old Glaswegian Rose-Lynn Harlan, who is determined to get out of Scotland to make it as a country singer – via Nashville, Tennessee – despite being newly released from jail and with two young kids to raise.

It's a wild ride, and one Buckley breathes fire into at every turn. "I'm basically screwed for the rest of my life," she says, "because it was just such a fun job."

After making her mark on stage, in Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*, then as Princess Marya in the BBC adaptation of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (also directed by Harper, and where she met her ex-partner, James Norton) and the quietly potent *Lorna Bow* in *Taboo* opposite Tom Hardy, it was in Michael Pearce's 2017 unsettling indie thriller *Beast*, that she proved to be a revelation.

As Moll she stirred up a complex yet palpable chemistry with a rugged Johnny Flynn and won a British Independent Film award and a Bafta nomination in the process.

We are delighted that local country band Ponchartrain will be performing in the Café/Bar after the 19:50 screening on Wed 17 April. The band will play from 21:45 - 22:30 and 22:45 - 23:30 so come and join us for a Wild Rose party - free entry; ticket holders to the Wed 17 April screenings will get priority entry.

As cowboy-boot shod and blue-eyeliner-caked Rose-Lynn, she's bold, brazen and reckless yet continually lovable in her magnetic charisma – even as she messes up time and again.

"She's just a fun, raw, real, humane, complex woman. I felt angry at her, I felt emboldened by her, I felt I wanted something for her. Nicole Taylor, who wrote the script, is just amazing at getting to the root of where people are running from."

I venture that the demands of the role, singing her heart out on stage, to live audiences, may not have been so much of a stretch given her first professional appearance – on television singing competition *I'd Do Anything* as a fresh-faced 17-year-old in 2008. "Yes I suppose. Though I'm not a convicted criminal. Never been in prison. Don't have kids," she grins.

Her preparation was extensive: "For the months leading up to it I just did everything I could to get as deep into the Glasgow mindset, the boldness of Rose-Lynn, the accent, the country music – I just drowned myself in it," she tells me. "I'd no real relationship to country music until I started the job."

She was brought up to speed by Neill MacColl, who came on board as a guitarist and "comes from a lineage of country and folk and writing – his dad wrote 'The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face' and his sister is Kirsty MacColl".

For four months all she listened to was Emmylou Harris, Bonnie Raitt, Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson, Hank Williams and Tom van Sant. Indeed, she became so immersed in the music, she eventually wrote six of the songs that appear on the film's accompanying album with Taylor.

She performed all the tracks that feature in the film live: "It was important to Tom and Nicole to keep that aliveness and that electricity inherent to Rose-Lynn," explains Buckley. "If I'd done it with a piece in my ear, miming, it would have been a different film."

Buckley's electric vocal performances are the glue that bind Wild

Rose and elevate her Rose-Lynn to an everyday person capable of something magical. Channelling the vivacious Glaswegian protagonist helped with any nerves.

"It's easy when you're doing it from behind a character because it's all coming from them. For Rose-Lynn that was her escape, that's where she felt most free and most alive. So actually, performing was like freedom."

Though her absolute dedication to the role did mean she had her wobbles: "On the last day on set we were recording something and I got like this huge panic attack before I started singing – I was suddenly really scared I hadn't done a good enough job. I felt this pressure of not capturing something honest and truthful and full. There was a lot at risk because I had fallen so much in love with her, in the whole story, that I wanted to do it justice."

Buckley is supported on screen by a pair of strong women: Julie Walters is reliably pitch-perfect as Rose-Lynn's life-toughened mother Marion, and Sophie Okonedo resists cliché as the affluent Susannah, whose comfortable existence has left her dissatisfied.

"I think a lot of people can relate to the mother-daughter relationship, the fear of seeing yourself in your mother, your mother seeing themselves in you. How you're always dancing around those spaces with each other."

Wild Rose ultimately resists giving clear answers to any of the questions it raises, about motherhood and identity, about reconciling one's desires with one's responsibilities; each character must make and learn from their own mistakes. With hints of *The Full Monty* and *Billy Elliot*, it's about ordinary people reaching for the extraordinary.

"Through this film I've fallen in love with people's foibles. I feel provoked to continue to find that in my work," says Buckley. "I find the sheen boring, vacuous and unrelatable. When you see film-makers like Lynne Ramsay or Ken Loach or Sean Baker who are going to the darkest and most painful and most humane parts of what it is to be a person, that's just so exciting for me."

The actress reflects she's "bloody lucky" to have had Moll in *Beast* and now Rose-Lynn come into her life. "It makes me excited that those kinds of characters are being made for women. I don't think I'll be getting into some kind of Marvel catsuit anytime soon. Much to everybody's joy..."

Each of her characters has left a trace: "My vision of the world has changed because of these women. People say, 'How do you get out of character?' But I don't ever want to, they're like friends, you know. They come in, they sit down, they get you drunk, they tell you what you're doing wrong with your life, they give you a hug. They're your best friend, they're your sister. I don't ever want to lose them."

If success has come incrementally since she was plucked from her quiet Irish town to be named runner-up in the Andrew Lloyd Webber singing competition – "I can't believe 11 years has gone by! I feel like a cat that's had nine different lives" – this year feels like a sudden surge for Buckley.

This month she'll appear in the Channel 4 series *Chernobyl* with Emily Watson. Next she'll co-star with Renée Zellweger in the Judy Garland biopic *Judy* and with Robert Downey Jr in *The Voyage of Doctor Dolittle*.

On the horizon is the comedy-drama *Misbehaviour* with Keira Knightley, about the 1970s Miss World pageant and, just announced, a further role alongside Toni Collette in Oscar-winning Charlie Kaufman's (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*) adaptation of best-selling novel *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* for Netflix.

"You're going to be so bored of me!" she laughs self-deprecatingly. If *Wild Rose* is anything to go by, I very much doubt that.

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