



Sundance 2023: "Rye Lane" Is a Flawless Story About a Blossoming Black Love



BY [SHELLI NICOLE](#)
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This review of *Rye Lane* contains mild spoilers.

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I was very nervous to write this review. I had/have so much to say about it, am so proud and excited that a film like this exists, and loved it so much — but I only have a limited amount of words to put all that emotion into. I also wanted to make sure that I said everything just right so that as you read this you understood my complete and utter obsession with this film.

I walked into *Rye Lane* as my last screening on the evening of a very long day. Excitement can be tiring, and with all the excitement I've been feeling during Sundance, I am fucking exhausted. *Rye Lane* woke me up and gave me the push I needed to get me through the rest of the night AND the festival.



Yas (Vivian Oparah, *Teen Spirit*) and Dom (David Jonsson, *Industry*) are strangers, both with hearts at different degrees of broken. One early afternoon they meet at an art show where they are supporting different folks in one couple. As they leave the art show – fatefully heading in the same direction – they chat while walking down South London’s Rye Lane. Yas finds out that Dom is on his way to meet up with his ex and that sets into motion what will turn out to be one hell of a day for them both.

Writers Nathan Byron and Tom Melia, and director Raine Allen-Miller came together to knock this film out the fucking park. The story is smooth, leaves no gaps, and doesn’t skip a beat. The camera work is stunning and adds to the story to keep you invested in where everything is going. Especially in the tight shots when Dom and Yas are facing each other, you can see the want in their smiles – not to be naughty – but to just keep going, to keep moving, to keep learning each other, and do what it takes to not let whatever this day is turning out to be, end.

My heart rate went up and my cheeks were sore with the passing of each scene. I love love and holy fuck did I love this film. Every scene, every moment, every minute of this film is so well done, wonderfully written, and beautifully shot, that I almost begged to sit in the theatre and watch it again from the top. In fact, I also had 5 hour digital access to the film so the next day – I watched it twice.



We talk so much about representation and diversity in films, we have panels and [write articles about what can be done](#), but the pace to achieve it all seems so slow-moving. *Rye Lane* is the first film in a while that made me feel like someone is **actually** listening. They managed to show the beginnings of Black love thru a comedic lens that's not slapstick but still funny, not traumatic but still honest, and then the cherry on top was that both leads (and the majority of the cast) were VISIBLY BLACK.

I don't care that after all these years, I still want to see myself in films. We have to start admitting that **some** of what connects us to the pop culture we love, is that perhaps unknowingly, we're looking for ourselves. The song you love that inspires you so much is 'cos it tells a story you want to make your own, that piece of art that moves you so is 'cos it evoked some feeling in you that you've been searching for. Yes — we can like things just to like them but if you explore just a bit more, maybe there is something else there.

I saw myself in Yas, in the physical way yes, but [also so far outside that](#). She compliments strangers, loves fashion, and is an introverted extrovert who has a softness that only a select few get to see. She's corny and a bit nosy, she's secure but scared, and she willfully helps and encourages others but is still getting a grip on doing just that for herself. Like, who told these writers all my business?!

This film is a tad queer (I WON'T TELL YOU WHERE 'COS IT'S A SURPRISE), and even tho it's not deeply queer it's still very important to me. I don't need queerness in every film to love it or to see myself — there is so much more to me than being a dyke — but I do need more films that reflect parts of who I am. *Rye Lane* did that and reminded me that I'm not asking for too much.

This is 100% the best film to come out of Sundance for me, and I can say that full well knowing that I'm still here for a few more days with 20 or so more films to watch.

The soundtrack (Stormzy is on it!), the colors (deep oranges, strong greens, and lusty browns!), the writing (witty and romantic!), the costume design (expressive and fly), and the fact that it *mostly* takes place all in one day (my FAV sub-genre of films) all made this a phenomenal film going experience for me.

A perfect film with a perfect pair of strangers. I can't wait until it's out in theatres 'cos all I wanna do is take another stroll down *Rye Lane*.

Rye Lane | Official Trailer | Searchlight Pictures UK



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Shelli Nicole is a Detroit-raised, Chicago-based writer. Her work has appeared in Bustle, HelloGiggles & Marie Claire. She is terrified of mermaids and teenagers equally.

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