

Smukke Dreng

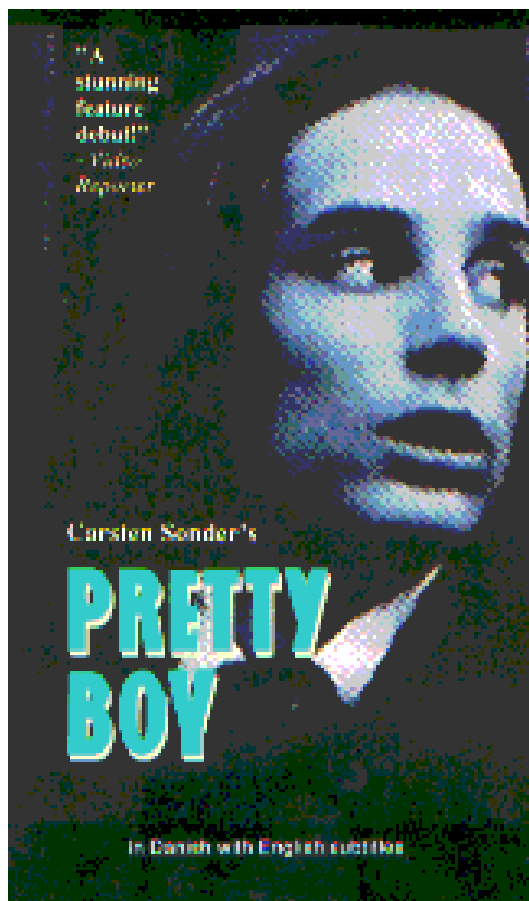
("Pretty Boy")

Denmark : 1992 : dir. Carsten Sonder : Zentropa
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

: c86 min

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 Christen Tafdrup

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	KBytes	Ω □ € Z ☺	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Source: Award Films International

Variety International Film Guide 1994 note:

"First time director Carsten Sonder's "PRETTY BOY" ("SMUKKE DRENG") is a tough, realistic description of young male prostitutes' grim and violent life in Central Copenhagen, which contrasts sharply with popular actor Per Pallesen's first try at directing, the lame and

unwitty comedy "HELP, MY DAUGHTER WANTS TO MARRY" ("HJÆLP - MIN DATTER VIL GIFTES")"

Gay video distributor - Award Films International - website review:
www.gayweb.com/106

"Unflinching and harshly poetic, "PRETTY BOY" chronicles a 13-year old runaway's coming-of-age as a Copenhagen street hustler. Danish director Carsten Sonders's first feature is a compelling, in your face exploration of innocence plundered and lost¹. Alienated by his mother, Nick flees his dysfunctional home. Fatherless, he actively seeks out the companionship of older men. A closeted middle age astronomer treats Nick kindly and allows him a place of temporary refuge.

Adopted by a band of violent street hustlers², Nick finds refuge again - and unexpected first love. Led by an androgynous girl who masquerades as a boy, Nick and his gang friends engage in vengeful acts of escalating physical violence. Nick thrives in this environment, but his growing fascination with sadomasochism ultimately alienates him from the others. Torn between his passionate affection for the gang's leader and the apparent rejection of an older friend, Nick is manipulated into a tragic, irrevocable act.

Riveting and unforgettable, Christen Tafdrup's portrayal of the troubled Nick is deft and

¹ I believe I'm about to throw up...

² or a gang of thugs, as we say in English



Source: Award Films International

multi-layered, a haunting mix of vulnerability and sadistic street smart. Tightly scripted, crisply edited and exquisitely photographed. Ranks among the most powerful explorations of teen prostitution ever rendered on film. Unrated. Viewer discretion is advised. Contains graphic language, nudity and a mature sexual theme. In Danish with English subtitles. Running time: approximately 86 minutes. Item #80048 - \$59.95."



If he's thirteen I'm a Chinaman!

Source: Award Films International

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]



...but he did win runner-up prize in the Bjorn Andressen lookalike competition (the actor who played Tadzio in "DEATH IN VENICE")

Source: Variety International Film Guide 1994

No further information currently available. Look carefully at the video jacket image, and compare it with the stills overleaf. It seems clear to me at any rate that the "pretty boy" pictured on the video jacket is not the lead character at all, but his girlfriend – the "androgynous girl who masquerades as a boy". It seems they didn't think their "pretty boy" was quite pretty enough to sell the product!

But wait a moment – rewind that slyly equivocating review. Where did "innocence plundered and lost" come into it? The central runaway, we're told, has a penchant for sadomasochism, and thrives amid "vengeful acts of escalating physical violence". Then he's hardly a Shirley Temple hauled off in shackles to a Turkish brothel, is he? Adolescent boys in Western cities who embark on homosexual prostitution of their own volition do so often enough with an intent to exploit paedophile men (usually translated as "gay men", here translated as "a closeted middle age astronomer"), or else to feed their own gay sexual appetites without the discomfort of coming to terms with a gay identity. To such adolescents, so far from it being a horrifying last resort to which they're driven out of hunger or desperation, it's frequently regarded as "easy money", money which can always be augmented by blackmail or mugging of their "punters". "Innocence lost?" Pull the other one.

Of course that is to generalise too far - not all "rent-boys" are callous and exploitative - but the realities of the rent-boy scene are very far from the young victim/adult predator paradigm we hear so often from TV and the press. All prostitution to some degree is a matter of *mutual* exploitation, and "street smart" boys of 13 who resort to it do so with their eyes shrewdly open. Note how the hero here (surprise surprise) chances to be heterosexual - or at least the review is slanted to suggest he is, just like the rent-boy in "**CHRISTIANE F. - WIR KINDER VOM BAHNHOF ZOO**" (80). Even in Denmark, it seems too radical a proposition that boys who seek sex with men for money might incline that way for a reason. He prefers boyish girls, we're told, so that's alright then, we can apply the rhetoric of Victimology after all.

But why then this film should have any interest to mainstream gay culture - which has so loudly protested its disgust at man/boy sexual relationships - is far from clear. "H" is not only for "homosexual". "H" is for "hypocrites" too.

For other recent treatments of teen prostitution (where the "boys" are typically in their late teens to mid twenties) see "**MY OWN PRIVATE IDAHO**", "**DAFYDD**", "**J'EMBRASSE PAS**" or "**BODY WITHOUT SOUL**", from the US, Wales, France and the Czech Republic respectively. Denmark was the source of another brave little title released in the same video collection - "**DU ER IKKE ALENE**" ("You Are Not Alone"), a rather slight parable designed to reassure young adolescent boys it was OK for them to be gay too. Made in 1978, it was at least imbued with a sense of tolerance and healthy commonsense about puberty and its preoccupations. Its central thesis would be nothing short of bald-faced heresy in today's sex-negative climate. Today we prefer our 13-year olds "plundered innocents" than well-adjusted homosexuals. Nothing else is known of Christen Tafdrup.

See subject index under **CRIME / DELINQUENCY, SCANDINAVIA, SEX & SEXUALITY, STREET KIDS** and **WOMEN AS BOYS / GIRLS AS BOYS**.