

Poor Things: Emma Stone's Bid to Win the Oscar [C1]

Il nuovo film di Yorgos Lanthimos ha vinto il Leone d'Oro ed è stato molto applaudito all'ultima Mostra del cinema di Venezia. Interpretato da una brillante Emma Stone, è un adattamento del romanzo dello scozzese Alasdair Gray.



POOR THINGS

EMMA STONE
RAMY YOR

BLUMENFELD PICTURES PRESENTS A FILM BY YORGOS LANTHIMOS
EMMA STONE RAMY YOR
POOR THINGS
CASTING BY JESSICA HARRIS
PRODUCTION DESIGNER JAMES HARRIS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JAMES HARRIS
PRODUCED BY JAMES HARRIS
WRITTEN BY JAMES HARRIS
DIRECTED BY YORGOS LANTHIMOS

Based on the 1992 novel by Scottish author Alasdair Gray, *Poor Things* is the new movie by Greek director Yorgos Lanthimos. The black-comic horror film, with a retro-futurist or steampunk Victorian [setting](#), won the Golden Lion award at the Venice International Film Festival in 2023. US actor Emma Stone, who also [featured](#) in Lanthimos' Oscar-nominated movie *The Favourite*, stars as Bella Baxter, a Glaswegian woman who is revived from an attempted suicide by a scientist, Dr. Godwin Baxter, played by Willem Defoe. She then goes on a [sex-fuelled quest](#) for equality and liberation, which takes her around Europe, to Northern Africa and Central Asia. The cast also includes comedians Ramy Youssef and Jerrod Carmichael, plus actors Margaret Qualley and Mark Ruffalo.

ABSURDIST

Filmed in Lanthimos's [signature](#) absurdist style, the movie features strange hybrid animals and extravagant costumes and [hairpieces](#). It was filmed in London and Budapest in Hungary, where advanced production industries exist. There, the [crew](#) built sets of all the locations of the film. In a press conference at the festival, the director spoke of his decision to bring Gray's novel to the screen twelve years after he originally planned to do so. Australian playwright Tony McNamara wrote the screenplay. Gray's book, illustrated by the [late](#) author, is full of [plot twists](#) and literary tricks, with [diversions](#) from reality into fiction, before the story has even begun. It also includes [found materials](#), including fragments of images from Gray's *Anatomy*, not the TV series, of course, but the classic reference book of human anatomy written by Henry Gray, illustrated by Henry Vandyke Carter, and first published in London in 1858. Lanthimos began by talking about the way the novel was adapted for the screen. **Yorgos Lanthimos**(Greek accent): We had to change the structure, elements that were more novelistic. There's [are] some parts of the novel which are almost like an [essay](#) and more political about specific themes that Alasdair Gray was interested in. But [early on](#) we decided that it was going to be her story, her point of view. That's what [drew](#) me immediately to the material, like this character, unlike any other character that I've read, this mind that can start free without any shame, prejudice, just experience the world in [on] [her own terms](#). We felt that this is [was] the line that we need to follow to make this into a film. Also the humour in the film, the tone of the film, many of the characters... a lot of it, and a lot of the essence of the novel is there.

FEELS CONTEMPORARY

The book was written in the 1990s, the standards of which are applied to the Victorian era. Lanthimos was asked if anything has changed in society since it was published. **Yorgos Lanthimos**: It feels extremely contemporary. Speaking about freedom and the way we think and the way we perceive the world, the position of women in society or, you know, men as well, the relationship between men and

women... That's still, you know, very contemporary. Things have changed slightly, we have new tools to identify things. The book was written in the 90s, so it's funny that not much has changed since then.

THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Emma Stone plays Bella Baxter. She talks about her character in the film, which she also produced. Emma Stone (American accent): I am playing Bella Baxter in the film. She is understanding what it is to be a member of society. The more autonomous she becomes, the more challenged men seem to be by it. Bella's sexuality, it's an incredibly important part of the story. The human experience is fascinating to her. Sex is a major part of that. I wanted to play Bella because it felt like acceptance of what it is to be a woman, to be free, to be scared and brave.

INTIMATE ENVIRONMENTS

Bella's sexuality plays an important role in her evolution as a character. Lanthimos talked about how the intimate environments of the novel were recreated on an open film set. **Yorgos Lanthimos:** First of all, it was an intrinsic part of the novel itself: her freedom about everything including sexuality. And secondly it was very important for me to not make a film which was going to be prude [[prudish](#)], because that would be completely [betraying](#) the main characters. Although we were working on big studios and [on] sets that we built and there was a lot of [crew](#) and lights, we still managed to maintain the same kind of atmosphere that we had on location with natural light, by lighting the sets as much as we could from the outside, from windows. That created a very comfortable, intimate environment.

PROFESSIONAL HELP

However, an intimacy coordinator was [hired](#), as is now standard in the movie industry, to help actors feel more comfortable with the sex scenes. **Yorgos Lanthimos:** I have to credit our intimacy coordinator. In the beginning this profession felt a little threatening, I think, to most filmmakers! But, it's like everything, if you work with a good person you realise that you actually need them. So she made everything so much easier for everyone. Her personality is great for that kind of thing that she does! So she made everyone feel very comfortable.

Glossary

- **betraying** = tradire
- **signature** = caratteristica
- **plot twists** = colpo di scena
- **drew** = attirare
- **her own terms** = nei propri termini
- **found materials** = materiali di varie provenienze
- **featured** = comprendere, includere
- **sex-fuelled** = alimentata dal sesso
- **crew** = produzione, squadra
- **late** = defunto
- **hairpieces** = parrucchino
- **diversions** = deviazione
- **essay** = saggio
- **hired** = assumere
- **setting** = scenografia
- **quest** = ricerca
- **early on** = all'inizio
- **prudish** = puritano