

= The Wanderers (1979 film) =

The Wanderers is a 1979 American drama film ; it was written and directed by Philip Kaufman , and stars Ken Wahl , John Friedrich , Karen Allen and Toni Kalem . Set in the Bronx in 1963 , the film follows a gang of Italian @-@ American teenagers known as the Wanderers and their ongoing power struggles with a rival gangs such as the Del Bombers .

The film is based on the novel of the same name by Richard Price ; its screenplay was written by Philip Kaufman and his wife Rose . The film had a troubled development stage ; after unsuccessfully trying to obtain finance for The Wanderers from Alberto Grimaldi , Kaufman directed other films . After filming the remake of Invasion of the Body Snatchers , Kaufman went to New York and successfully pitched The Wanderers to Martin Ransohoff . The film 's budget is unknown , but Kaufman said it was relatively low .

After an advance screening , The Wanderers premiered on July 13 , 1979 , to mostly positive reviews . The film was a financial success , grossing \$ 23 million at the worldwide box office . On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes , the film has a rating of 89 percent . Peter Stack of the San Francisco Chronicle praised Kaufman 's directing and the performances of Wahl and Tony Ganios .

The film 's increasing popularity and cult status led to The Wanderers being given a theatrical re @-@ release in the U.S. by Warner Bros. in 1996 . According to Kaufman , " it took a long time for [the film] to find [an] audience " .

= = Plot = =

Joey and Turkey are members of the Wanderers , an all @-@ Italian street gang . In the Bronx , Joey tries to dissuade Turkey from joining a rival gang , the Fordham Baldies . Before Turkey can ask , Terror 's girlfriend Peewee overhears Joey insulting the Baldies , calling them a " bunch of pricks with ears " . Joey and Turkey flee and the Baldies chase them . Richie ? the leader of the Wanderers ? and Buddy come to help but they also flee from the Baldies . After being cornered , the Wanderers are helped by a tough stranger named Perry , who has recently moved to the Bronx from New Jersey . After much persuasion , Perry joins the Wanderers .

In school , the Wanderers get into a racial dispute with another gang , the Del Bombers who are all African @-@ American . Both gangs agree to settle their dispute , seemingly a street fight , but the Wanderers struggle to find a gang willing to back them . With no other options , Richie asks his girlfriend 's father , local mafia boss Chubby Galasso , who agrees to help solve the gangs ' dispute .

During a game of " elbow @-@ tit " , Richie gropes a woman called Nina . He feels ashamed of himself , apologizes for his actions and persuades Nina to accept Joey 's telephone number . The Wanderers then decide to follow Nina in Perry 's car .

After Perry becomes lost , the Wanderers are attacked by a gang from Long Island called the Ducky Boys . They escape after Perry 's arm is broken .

While drunk , the Baldies are tricked into joining the Marines . Before reporting for training , they decide to crash Despie 's party , where Turkey ? who has recently joined the Baldies ? is told to draw the Wanderers outside . After drawing them out , Turkey realizes the Baldies have abandoned him . He tries to chase them but fails . Upset , Turkey visits a nearby Catholic church . After being spotted by a member of the Ducky Boys attending mass , Turkey is chased down the street and beaten to death .

In school , while the Wanderers are mourning Turkey 's death , the rest of the gang oust Richie for sleeping with Joey 's date Nina . After the assassination of President John F. Kennedy , Richie rekindles his relationship with Despie . When Chubby discovers his daughter is pregnant , he accosts Richie into marrying her .

In the climax , we discover the Wanderers and the Del Bombers are settling their dispute not with a street fight but with a football match organized by Chubby . Richie uses the opportunity to make amends with Joey . A member of the Ducky Boys interrupts the match , as the Wanderers

momentarily turn their heads , hundreds of Ducky Boys invade the field . Many of the Wanderers and the Del Bombers flee , but some stand their ground . The remaining players join forces with spectator gangs in the stands , including once called the Wongs and even Emilio . After a long and bloody battle , the Ducky Boys flee .

After being physically abused by his father Emilio , Joey decides to spend the night at Perry 's apartment . Perry tells Joey he is planning to leave the Bronx and move back to New Jersey . Joey asks Perry if he can go with him ; after an initially skeptical response , Perry agrees . Emilio , drunk , enters Perry 's apartment and fights with him ; Joey knocks Emilio unconscious with a glass bottle . Joey and Perry quickly leave the apartment and head to Richie 's engagement party . They say an emotional goodbye to Richie ; when they leave , Richie realizes things will not be the same . At Richie 's party , members of the Wanderers , the Del Bombers and the Wongs embrace one another while singing " The Wanderer " . The movie ends with Joey and Perry traveling to California .

= = Cast = =

Additional actors include Olympia Dukakis as Joey 's mother ; the novel 's author Richard Price as a hustler ; and Wayne Knight (uncredited) as a waiter .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Philip Kaufman and Richard Price unsuccessfully tried to pitch the project to Alberto Grimaldi . Because of this , Kaufman signed on to direct what would have been the first motion picture based on Star Trek : The Original Series ; called Star Trek : Planet of the Titans . Allan Scott and Chris Bryant were hired to write the film 's screenplay , but their attempt was rejected and Kaufman tried to write the screenplay himself . Before he could finish the screenplay , Paramount Pictures abandoned the project , saying there was no market for science @-@ fiction movies . After the Star Trek project was shelved , Kaufman directed the remake of Invasion of the Body Snatchers . When filming finished , he went to New York and successfully pitched The Wanderers to Martin Ransohoff . According to Kaufman , " the pieces somehow fell together " , partly because of the increasing popularity of gang movies .

= = = Writing = = =

Kaufman 's wife Rose wrote the screenplay 's first draft . It took her several years to complete ; she found adapting the entire novel difficult . Some of the characters and stories from the novel were either changed or given retroactive continuity . Despite the differences , Richard Price approved of Kaufman 's adaptation , saying , " I love that picture . It 's not my book , and I don 't care . The spirit is right , and the way Phil Kaufman directed it showed me another way of looking at my own book . "

= = = Casting = = =

The casting process , which Kaufman described as " arduous " , began in New York City . He said teenagers from across the city wanted to audition . Academy Award @-@ winning producer Scott Rudin was the film 's casting director who found Erland van Lidth and Linda Manz . There was no character named Peewee in the novel . Rudin had organized an interview with Manz . Kaufman and Price were present ; they all thought she had " great character " . Manz was so convincing that everyone assumed she was a real member of a street gang . Because of this , the character Peewee was specifically written for her .

Many of the film 's actors were unknown at the time of casting . The film was the acting debut of

four cast members ; Ken Wahl , Tony Ganios , Erland van Lidth and Michael Wright . It was also the feature film debut of Toni Kalem , who had previously acted on television . Kaufman intentionally cast unknown actors ; Wahl was on his way to a job in a pizza parlor when someone sent a photograph of him to Rudin , thinking he could play one of the smaller roles in the film . Kaufman felt Wahl was talented so he cast him in the lead role instead .

To cast the role of Perry LaGuardia , Kaufman telephoned every gymnasium around New York asking for a " six @-@ foot , four inch , 18 year @-@ old kid " . He was put into contact with Ganios , who he cast in the role . Ganios said :

After a mysterious phone call , [my uncle] politely asked me to stop training and get dressed . He ' insisted ' that I accompany him downtown to what was supposed to be a commercial audition , [but it later] turned out to be an interview for The Wanderers . I thought acting was for sissies , but I went anyway .

= = = Filming = = =

Filming of The Wanderers began in September 1978 , most of which occurred in the Bronx . Kaufman said that during filming , " [This] Puerto Rican motorcycle gang came pushing its way through the crowd ; wanting to see what was going on " , and " they pushed everyone aside " . They walked away after bumping into van Lidth . The crew also encountered trouble from former members of the " real " Baldies , who complained the film portrayed the Baldies incorrectly , saying : " [The movie] is a lie ! This was not a bad neighborhood . There was no crime , no robbery . Murder , yes , but no crime ! " Rose Kaufman eventually told them to " fuck off " , which nearly resulted in a brawl between the former gang members , Wahl and several other actors .

The final battle with the Ducky Boys , which takes place during a football game , was filmed in Van Cortlandt Park . Kaufman compared this scene to a " brutal British soccer brawl " ; Ganios compared it to the Battle of Mons Graupius . When asked further about this scene , Ganios said :

The final fight with the Ducky Boys was absolutely wild , [and] for all practical purposes it was real . For an entire week hundreds of screaming , stunted madmen ? armed with real baseball bats , axe handles , and chains ? hurled themselves at us in wave after wave of unabated Celtic fury . It got totally out of hand , with the mayhem sometimes continuing for a full five minutes after [the director] yelled cut . Some of the actors and camera crew were seriously injured and had to be hospitalized .

= = = Editing = = =

During editing , Kaufman removed six minutes of footage from the film .

= = Release = =

The Wanderers was released theatrically on July 13 , 1979 , by Warner Bros. Kaufman said the film initially had a " very small , limited " release . The director 's cut premiered at the Telluride Film Festival in 1995 . This was followed by a 1996 theatrical re @-@ release in the U.S. due to the film 's popularity . In 2012 , the director 's cut of The Wanderers was screened to the Film Society at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts .

= = = Critical reception = = =

The film 's initial reception was mixed . After an advance screening on December 31 , 1978 , Variety magazine praised it , saying that " despite " the " uneasy blend of nostalgia and violence " , The Wanderers " is a well @-@ made and impressive film " . The Kaufmans were also complimented for their script , which was described as " accurately " capturing the " urban angst " of growing up in the early 1960s . Janet Maslin , of the New York Times criticized the film in her 1979 review , saying " the movie never attempts to tell a single story " and instead " settles for a string of

boisterous vignettes , which are heaped carelessly atop one another without any consistent scheme " .

A number of critics praised the film , including Peter Stack of the San Francisco Chronicle , after its 1996 theatrical re @-@ release . Stack noted Kaufman 's talent for effectively changing the film 's tone and praised the acting abilities of Wahl and Ganios . He also complimented the film 's soundtrack .

As of August 2015 , the film has a rating of 89 percent on Rotten Tomatoes (based on 18 reviews ; 16 " fresh " and two " rotten " ? with an average rating of 6 @.@ 8 out of ten) , indicating mainly positive reviews . Time Out magazine praised the film , saying it " deliver [s] some great , gross , comic book capers . And rock history gets its most intelligent illustration since Mean Streets . "

= = = Box office performance = = =

The Wanderers made \$ 5 million at the U.S. box office and \$ 18 million overseas , for a worldwide gross of \$ 23 million . When asked about the financial success , Kaufman said the film had done " very well " .

= = = Legacy = = =

Since its initial release , The Wanderers has gained a significant cult following . In 1988 , Danny Peary said the film 's " sensitive depiction " of teenagers coming @-@ of @-@ age was partly responsible for its cult status . Placing The Wanderers seventh in his list of " lesser @-@ known " cult films , Neil Evans describing the film as a " lost masterpiece " . Another writer described the film as a " near masterpiece " and called it " one of the best coming @-@ of @-@ age [films] ever made " . On the film 's popularity and cult status , Kaufman said :

It took a long time for [the film] to find [an] audience . It 's great to see that now ? however many years later ? [that] it went to a brief re @-@ release by Warner Bros. [in 1996] because of the cult following . Bravo says it 's the most popular film they 've shown in the New York area . [The film was also shown] at the Telluride Film Festival . All [of] the people who run the festival are members of The Wanderers fan club , all wear Wanderers jackets , and [they] know every line in the film . They show the film at least twice a year up there [in Colorado] . There were about 1000 people outside , under the mountains and watching the film . It was a great night .

= = Soundtrack = =

Kaufman and Price compiled the soundtrack themselves . The film features Bob Dylan performing " The Times They Are a @-@ Changin ' " , but the song was not included on the soundtrack album .