

EO: Donkeys, they're just like us!

Jerzy Skolimowski's EO (2022) recounts the rough and even chaotic challenges that a donkey, named EO, faces throughout his short life. Skolimowski's use of music and varying shots of EO oftentimes alone in a field or staring with blank eyes, evoke emotions from the audience and make us sympathize with an animal that we normally don't think to sympathize with. Throughout the film, EO reminded me of Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh: a dark, gloomy, pessimistic donkey who always comes face to face with obstacles. A plethora of "animal related" films often feel us leaving with this sympathy and compassion, yet these films tend to be related around losing a pet such as dogs, cats, or even cows at most. The artistic choice of using a donkey to invoke these emotions is strange, yet it works. The score and stylistic shots made EO even seem somewhat human, despite the lack of dialogue. We feel sympathy for EO because he, like us, experiences love, loss, pain, and loneliness. Skolimowski is deceptive in how EO is portrayed, but the point of this film, and the point of cinema altogether is finding the relatability in the basic "human" truth, and even though EO is an animal, Skolimowski makes us question is EO just like us after all?

Skolimowski introduces EO in a vulnerable position. He is stuck on his back, eyes wide and weary, legs frozen in the air, and a strobing effect of red light flashes across the screen. At this moment we are EO. Skolimowski makes us feel just as panicked and anxious as him, but from the first shot we are already sympathizing with someone/something we just met. From here on out we understand that EO's life is not going to all be fun and games. We also sympathize with EO because he represents this idea of loneliness throughout the film. When he escapes and runs through the forest, there are haunting and entrancing wide shots of a mysterious foreign place, untouched by EO until this moment. Skolimowski makes this feel so raw because it feels

like we are experiencing EO's life in real time as he is experiencing it. We don't know what to expect and we don't know what will happen to him. This could be a metaphor for our own lives even; constantly wandering from one place to another, unsure of who we will encounter, what they will mean to us, and where we go from there.

One would not expect a film, devoid of dialogue or human interaction, to be the epitome of the human experience altogether. Skolimowski does this in a way for us to not only sympathize with EO, but all animals and living things, showing us that we are not so far from the same. EO represents something within all of us, and yes, the effects such as the music make his life seem more depressing, the lights make his experiences seem more surreal, and the cinematography isolate him and make him this solitary being, but deep down, maybe he is really feeling all of these emotions, and without these aspects Skolimowski produces maybe we would have been too blind to notice at all.