

Runners

UK : 1983 : dir. Charles Sturridge : Hanstall / Goldcrest / Cinegate : 106 min
 prod: Barry Hanson : scr: Stephen Poliakoff : dir.ph.: Howard Atherton

James Fox; Jane Asher; Kate Hardie; Eileen O'Brien; Robert Lang; Ruti Simon;
 Shay Gorman; Bernard Hill; Max Hafler; Peter Turner; Bridget Turner; Paul Angelis

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⌘	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5976	1.5	5	0	889	-	-	-	-	-	No	unseen

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"Distraught parents try to trace their missing children in London. Heavy-going realistic drama with apparent inner meanings which are not brought to the surface."

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"Runaway children, in fact, and a Nottingham factory manager (James Fox) meets a Reading woman (Jane Asher) in London as they scour London for his daughter and her son. Like many another thriller, it's full of contrivances, and you're left at the end with a man seemingly not too unhappy about a 14-year old alone among the dangers of London. This may be giving too much away, but the author, Stephen Poliakoff, gives too little, in contrast to the director, who paints a memorable portrait of some of the seedier parts of London. *"

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"How does it feel when your teenage daughter goes missing? "RUNNERS" poses a question that even a heartless tabloid hack might hesitate over, but looks forward two years after Rachel's disappearance, when sympathy has waned. Her father (a role well suited to Fox's seedily neurotic screen manner), alone in his conviction that she is alive, and encouraged by a self-help group where he meets Asher, a woman who has similarly lost her son, goes to London to find her. The amazing thing is that he does - briefly - and what seems to be just a behind-the-headlines story of an obsessive odyssey becomes an impressively ambiguous

thriller. The unfancy realism of Sturridge's directing emphasises that this is a small film; but unlike, say, a TV drama-doc, it doesn't just flesh out a contemporary social problem. Rather, schadenfreude gives way to shaggy dog as writer Stephen Poliakoff weaves a quirky tale out of the loose ends of the here and now."

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

"There are a lot interesting ideas in "RUNNERS", but they're never really shaped into a coherent film. It's evident that directing "Brideshead Revisited", the rambling TV series with which helmer Charles Sturridge secured international acclaim, was not the best education in cinematic structure.

The meandering plot follows a father, played by James Fox, who searches for his daughter long after everyone else, including his wife, have given up. Tracking her down to a car hire firm, rather than some perverse religious sect [sic] as he had expected, he is horrified at her reluctance to return.

Along the way, the father strikes up with a woman from a different social class who is hunting for her son. There are some interesting nuances in this relationship, but eventually it is the trivial details of the hunt that dominate the screen.

One is two thirds of the way through the film before the question is even raised of why this girl fled. Fox and Jane Asher give as much to the roles as they can."

The British Film Catalogue 1895-1985 listing:

"Drama. Nottingham father and Reading mother search London for their runaway children."

Cast:

Rachel LindsayKate Hardie
Tom LindsayJames Fox
HelenJane Asher
Gillian LindsayEileen O'Brien
Lucy LindsayRuth Simon
PCMax Hafler
PCPeter Turner
TeacherBridget Turner
WilkinsRobert Lang
IrishmanShay Gorman
Tony GavinPaul Angelis
DeborahSarah London
ManagerTim Faulkner
GirlHolli Hoffman
Trevor FieldBernard Hill
ConradChris Tummings
ProstituteJune Palmer

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Stephen Poliakoff later became the darling of TV producers with a series of hit dramas – "**The Tribe**", "**The Lost Prince**". His starting premise here – man searching for runaway daughter meets woman searching for runaway son – seems far from original. "**THE HAPPY ROAD**" (56), with Gene Kelly and Barbara Laage, took essentially the same premise. In 1983, however, the "child abuse" hysteria was already in full cry in the US and UK, and one would expect Poliakoff to milk that hysteria for all it was worth – "be a hooker for Jesus" cults, rent boys, child pornography, the whole Murdoch shebang. He seems to have applied a twist to the story to confound audience expectations, on the other hand, but that twist itself – was James Fox the reason the daughter ran away in the first place? – may simply be pandering to the same tabloid agenda. One would need to see it to know whether these suspicions are warranted. The film has additional interest, from the archive's vantage point, in that both James Fox and Jane Asher were once British child stars themselves. Fox (as William Fox) starred in "**THE MAGNET**", Asher in "**MANDY**" and "**THE GREENGAGE SUMMER**". The ages of the son and daughter here are not disclosed.

See subject index under **RUNAWAYS / STOWAWAYS**.