

Son of Rambow

Budget	£4,000,000 (estimated)
Release date	April 4, 2008 (United Kingdom)
Filming locations	Ashlyns School, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, England, UK
Production companies	Hammer & Tongs, Celluloid Dreams and Good Film Productions
Certificate	12A
Run time	96 mins

Garth Jennings' directorial roots were established primarily in music video, with some work in advertising too. His innovative approach to filmmaking can be seen in some of those early music videos, such as Blur's *Coffee and TV*, Fatboy Slim's *Right Here, Right Now*, and REM's *Imitation of Life*.

Son of Rambow is not Jennings' first feature film, but the idea for the film does predate his directorial debut, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which was released in 2005. *Son of Rambow* is based on Jennings' own experience as a child growing up in Epping. He says "First Blood came out when I was about 12 and it blew my socks off because it was the first film I'd seen that wasn't meant for my age group, and it was also a brilliant, brilliant film . . . It struck so many chords that my friends and I decided we should make our own film. It was sort of my production: we got my dad's video camera, even though we had no idea how to use it, and we made this action movie called *Arran, Part 1*. It was a tremendous hit! It was a day shooting, it was 10 minutes long, it was cut in camera."

Some 20 years or so later *Arran, Part 1* became *Son of Rambow*. Initially funding for the film was difficult to find as investors were sceptical. Jennings recalls being told "Adults are not going to see a film with children in it" but the success of *Billy Elliot* a few years earlier belied these concerns and eventually he and his key collaborator, Nick Goldsmith secured the funds to make the film. The director's emotional connection to the film is evident and consequently the youthful exuberance of Jennings' early life is woven into the film, from start to finish. It's authenticity is probably the key to the film's success.

Son of Rambow is set in the 80s and the joy of the film is rooted in its technological nostalgia. It makes one yearn for the pre-digital era. It is the story Will Proudfoot (Bill Milner), a naïve young teen who is sheltered from modern evils by his family who belong to a Christian sect. A chance encounter with the mischievous Lee Carter (Will Poulter) introduces Will to the wonders of movies – and specifically *Rambo: First Blood*. His unlikely friendship with Lee develops through their attempt to make a *Rambo* sequel movie, but this threatens to cause a rift between himself and his religious family.

This low budget independent film has been described as "a charming crowd pleaser with great performances from its two young leads" and as "smart, sweet and funny in its nostalgic recollection of Britain in the 1980s". Jennings creates a vivid and colourful world for his young protagonists and, like them, shows so much passion for movies that it is infectious for the audience.

Sources

IMDB (Internet Movie Database)

Filmmaker Magazine (May 2008) interview by Nick Dawson

BBC Kermode Uncut interview (found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqiGH717GGY&t=122s>)