

Realistic Portrayal of the Hardship of Delivery Workers -- Movie Recommendation: Sorry We Missed You

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In the past months, the revenue and user numbers of online food delivery platforms have experienced an exponential surge as citizens are strongly advised to stay home during the coronavirus pandemic. While waiting for their food leisurely after the click of a button, probably no customers question if the delivery workers are fairly treated by their companies. Their main concern is whether the takeaways arrive fresh and full of flavor. If you are a frequent user of these apps, you may have second thoughts about such services after watching “Sorry We Missed You” (2019), a British film about the routine of a delivery driver, Ricky.

Ricky loses his job in the aftermath of the financial crisis. As a poorly-educated blue-collar worker, he has no choice but to work as a self-employed delivery driver. At first, despite feeling physically drained after working for fourteen hours without rest every day, he is able to make ends meet and see the hope of paying off his debt in a couple of years. Good times never last, however. Ricky needs to take a few days off after his rebellious son is detained due to misbehavior in school. Instead of comforting him, Ricky’s supervisor only asks if he has found a substitute worker, or he will be fined.

Sadly, it never rains but it pours. A few weeks later, Ricky is robbed and attacked when making his deliveries. Again, his supervisor raises the same question and even demands that he should pay for the damaged scanner, when the injured Ricky is still waiting for his medical report at hospital. Both scenes have vividly portrayed the cruelty and apathy of capitalism. Under this system, workers are like the screws in a machine. In order to guarantee the smooth running of the machine, immediate actions have to be taken once any of the screws fails to function well. In this case, everyone is disposable if he/she is reluctant or unable to fit in. In the film, the supervisor values the inanimate object much more than the life of his subordinate. “Who cares about the life story of a delivery man? Nobody!” the supervisor yells. Isn’t it ironic?

At the end of the movie, not being able to afford the fine again, Ricky, who is still badly injured, insists on going to work the next day regardless of the objection from his family. This implies that the vicious cycle will keep going. The background of this story is set years after the financial crash in 2008. Nevertheless, it perfectly coincides with the current situation, especially in the view that many people will become unemployed due to the economic downturn after the pandemic.

Next time you order food online, instead of grumbling about the slow delivery, say a sincere “thank-you” to the delivery man. This can help boost the positive energy, which is a much-needed element in our community at the moment.