



# SOMERS TOWN

Autumn  
Season  
2008

A teenage runaway hooks up with a young Polish immigrant in London's Kings Cross, in Shane Meadows' delightful coming-of-age drama.

As product placements go, it's a doozy: measuring 394 metres long, 2.81 meters wide, attaining top speeds of 207.9mph at 148 feet below sea level. That's right - the shadowy star of Shane Meadows' featurette is a Eurostar train.

Surprisingly, *Somers Town* was originally conceived as a 12-minute plug to mark the train service's move to St Pancras International station in 2007. "We didn't want an advert," Eurostar's marketing director told 'Variety'. "We were after something cultural." Long-time Meadows collaborator Paul Fraser penned a script, and Meadows started shooting - and shooting, until he eventually presented his bankrollers with a near-feature length film.



Naturally, Meadows' decision to share a sleeper carriage with *The Man* has proved somewhat controversial, especially among certain frothing film critics looking to make names for themselves. Frankly, if product placements give them such coronaries, for the sake of their own health may they never be allowed anywhere near *Sex And The City: The Movie*. While heaven forbid they should ever find out that Mike Leigh, Ken Loach - and yes, Shane Meadows - have all made McDonald's ads in the past.

Compared with taking the clown's shilling, the Eurostar hook-up seems more like patronage (in the old-fashioned sense of the word) than branding; Meadows insists they were very hands off - even given a slightly cringey scene in which one character waxes lyrical about those wonderful trains that go under the sea. Most movies are rarely wholly 'independent' anyway, so the ethical issue arising here is in charging cinema prices to view something calling itself a feature film. Well, fine: call it a commercial then. It's a four-star commercial. And it's bloomin' lovely.

"A beautifully crafted film from the finest British director working today"

Ali Catterall

Named after the area between the three main northbound train stations in London, *Somers Town* paints an interesting picture of the area and is beautifully shot throughout, with crisp black and white cinematography courtesy of Natasha Braier.

The performances are great too: Turgoose proves that *This Is England* was no flash in the pan, demonstrating fantastic comic timing and a gift for improvised dialogue. He's also extremely funny, particularly when he's complaining about something (which is pretty much all the time).

Matthew Turner