

Ben X

By Lauren Parkes

Ben X, inspired by true events, is a touching tale of teenage hardship and unexpected triumph. Its writer-director, Nic Balthazar, follows Ben, a young man diagnosed with Asperger syndrome (a form of autism) through his daily life as he interacts with his family, his schoolmates, and the world around him.

Every day at school, Ben is subjected to the terror and humiliation of bullying. His awkwardness and inability to fit in make him a particularly vulnerable subject in the eyes of the school's bullying ringleaders. Every minute spent within its walls is a horrifying nightmare for Ben, as he is relentlessly picked on by people who claim to be his friends. Totally alone and misunderstood, Ben takes refuge in the video game he is utterly dependent on, *Archlord*. In the game, Ben becomes Ben X, a powerful, influential character hailed by the entire gaming world. Scarlite, his online healer, ally, and only friend, is a source of sanctuary for Ben. When Scarlite comes to life, Ben's life takes an unexpected path.

The target audience, those fifteen and over, will benefit greatly from the appropriateness of Balthazar's message. *Ben X* shows what many other works have failed to; the themes portrayed within this 'in your face' film are powerful and relative to today's society. Add the jumpy beat of hip-hop editing and some creative camerawork and *Ben X* is an art all of its own.