



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

BERGMAN ISLAND (15)

Director: Mia Hansen-Løve

France/Belgium/Germany/Sweden, 2021, 1 hour 52 minutes

Bergman Island, written and directed by Mia Hansen-Løve, was filmed in 2018 and 2019, and had its World Premiere at Cannes Film Festival in July 2021. The cast includes Vicky Krieps (*Phantom Thread*) as Chris, the filmmaker struggling to write the screenplay that emerges, and Tim Roth as her husband Tony, a more established filmmaker. Mia Wasikowska and Anders Danielsen Lie play Amy and Joseph, the main players in Chris's film. This is a film within a film, with the added dimension that both Hansen-Løve's film and Chris' are set on the island where Ingmar Bergman worked and lived for many years.

That island, Fårö, in the Baltic Sea off the southeast coast of Sweden, is the eponymous Bergman Island. A stark and barely populated setting in many of Bergman's films, it has assumed iconic status, and is a place of pilgrimage for filmmakers and Bergman fans, a source of inspiration, but also a profitable theme park. Chris and Tony are staying on the island to work and relax. *Bergman Island* is both a homage to and critique of the legacy of Bergman. That ambivalence is discernible in the relationships that are explored in the film, that echo and challenge the concerns of many of Bergman's films, such as *Persona* (1966) and *Scenes from a Marriage* (1973). The arresting cinematography of Denis Lenoir is also notable for its implicit dialogue with the ghosts of Bergman's (and Sven Nykvist's) own films.

From a seemingly conventional beginning, *Bergman Island* becomes a fluid interplay between Chris's own story of writing the film, and the screenplay itself: 'the plot oscillates, seemingly at whim, between Chris's story and that of her fictional creation, Amy . . . by its end, *Bergman Island* melts fully into metanarrative' (**Annie Geng**). In its layers, the film focuses less on Bergman, and far more on the creative questions facing all makers, specifically female makers, the gendered distinction pinpointed in a conversation where Chris queries how Bergman could attend to his nine children adequately while producing such an impressive filmic output. Hansen-Løve herself wrote the script on a visit to Fårö in 2016, and there is clearly an autobiographical dimension to the emotional and existential dilemmas of both Chris and her character Amy. While the ending of the film is unresolved, Hansen-Løve is clear in setting out the blurred relationships between past and present, what was and what might have been, reality, fiction and fantasy. Her film suggests that for the female artist, the impossibility of boundaries – and the inevitability of layers – is insistent.

Preview courtesy of MUBI

Notes Compiled by Catherine Neale