

"BEAST" (SXSW Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
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The dissolution of a marriage is inherently frightening. An often anxiety-ridden and sobering act of disillusion, it's of course prime material to filter through genre, perhaps most amazing and grandly explored in Andrzej Zulawski's POSSESSION. Existing on a similar plane of paranoia and our darker natures, Christoffer Boe's somber and unnerving slow burn BEAST is probably best left to those confident they won't be signing papers anytime soon.

The film is only briefly interested in the momentary happiness of main couple Bruno (Nicolas Bro) and Maxine (Marijana Jankovic), quickly peeking in on the day they purchased their gorgeous home, lit up by the possibilities of life together, before we understand it's now a private hell harboring the eponymous creature, one growing inside Bruno.

The beast itself, encompasses a whole lot, being a physical entity within and more metaphoric representation of jealousy, narcissism, psychosexual desire and communication breakdown. Bruno plays a sick head game with his wife and her lover (she returns the favor) as Boe assuredly takes us on a frigid journey around Copenhagen, allowing him to quite physically showcase the sneaky and hidden nature that arises when honesty and affection fall by the wayside, but an aggressive territorial attitude remains.



Boe is wonderful at balancing the more external expression of these ideas and fears, and more abstract and surreal moments of pure horror. BEAST feels Lynchian in the way its grim atmosphere of weirdness isn't hard to cut through, but rooted in simple concerns and broken up by beautiful establishing looks at the very chilly, empty streets of Copenhagen. Despite its fairly short running time, BEAST is deliberate, but compelling nonetheless, with turns into the realm of body horror feeling not only earned, but just as sharp, biting and rough as, well, the end of a marriage.

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