



fish

Labyrinth of Lies
(Germany 2016)

DIRECTOR : Giulio Ricciarelli

RUNNING TIME : 124 mins

RATING :

Synopsis:

Frankfurt 1958: nobody wants to look back to the time of the National Socialist regime. But recently appointed junior public prosecutor Johann Radmann (Alexander Fehling) comes across some documents that help initiate the trial against some members of the SS who served in Auschwitz. But both the horrors of the past and the hostility shown towards his work bring Johann close to a meltdown. It is nearly impossible for him to find his way through this maze; everybody seems to have been involved. (Based on a true story.)

Review: Andrew L. Urban

It may seem oddly out of time, this drama about a young German prosecutor in Frankfurt trying to catch ex Nazis in order to try them for their crimes. It may even seem redundant after all the films that have dealt with the Nazi era, but it isn't. It begins just 13 years after the end of WWII in 1958, and shows how so many in Germany, certainly the younger generation, were so ignorant of Nazi atrocities that most of them had never heard the word Auschwitz . It ends with the beginning of a historic trial.

The point made in the film through the words of several characters, is that in the process of revealing the truth, the prosecution is making Germany confront its recent past - not just with those who committed the worst atrocities but ordinary Germans whose eyes were closed. "We should have seen/known/acted..." Nothing new in that concept, of course, but dramatized in this film it stings with fresh acidity. Radmann says in one tense scene: "I want this silence to end." Referring to the silence about the most potent subject in the world at the time.

Yet the film is more than another mea culpa: it's a well-crafted piece of cinema with outstanding performances, evocative score and design and powerful cinematography. (Among other accolades, it was nominated for Best Film, Best Screenplay, Best Score and Best Actor, posthumously, for Gert Voss in the 2015 German Film Awards.)

Cont.

FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

10.00 am Sunday 25th June 2017

8.15 pm Tuesday 27th June 2017

Review: (Cont.)

The story, in which not only the relatively minor officers and camp commander are targeted, but Eichmann and Mengele, two of the worst. In that respect there is a touch of the police procedural about the film, but with much bigger stakes. The screenplay develops layers of personal interest and drama, romance and secrets, helping to maintain interest and tension.

Review by: Louise Keller

Nothing is black and white in this powerful drama in which an idealistic lawyer spearheads the investigations into the horrors of Auschwitz nearly 20 years after the end of the Holocaust. Germany's entry in the foreign language Oscar, Giulio Ricciarelli's debut feature is an emotional tour de force, as things become overtly personal for the protagonist lawyer's obsession with 'doing the right thing'. The elements are broad: it's a historical drama, a thriller, a coming of age story, a romance and a story of redemption. Take a tissue: this is a film whose impact creeps up on you.

It is 1957 when we first meet rookie lawyer Johann Radmann (Alexander Fehling, superb) and we can sense his frustration at the prospect of concentrating only on traffic violations for the next two years. The story begins in earnest when Simon Kirsch (Johannes Krisch), an artist who lost his wife and twin girls at Auschwitz in tragic circumstances, recognises a former Nazi stationed there, now teaching at a local school in Frankfurt. Johann is haunted by his father's motto of 'veritas' and his interest and keenness to help results in his appointment. This is a labyrinth, the attorney general tells him; don't lose yourself in it.

For nearly two hours, we watch Johann lose himself - professionally and then personally - in his quest to find some kind of justice, resolution. We understand his disillusionment when moral issues are clouded by nebulous grey; when he thinks they are black and white. Debts are a matter of honour, Johann's fiancé Marlene (Friederike Becht, enchanting) tells him; I like the way Johann's relationship runs parallel to the film's main theme, echoing the sentiments. When he asks Marlene whether his torn jacket can be repaired, the metaphor used depicting their relationship is charming. The circumstances of their meeting (in court) and the development of their relationship is wonderful.

Especially moving is the scene when Simon recalls his guilt when he inadvertently seals the fate of his young daughters. We do not have to hear the stories from the Holocaust survivors; intensity in faces tells us all we need to know. We can understand the sentiments only too well. And just when you think that the issues cannot get any more tense, traumatic and complicated, it becomes personal. All the performances are faultless - from the po-faced attorney general (Johann von Bÿlow) to Robert Hunger-Bÿhler's journalist to Sekretřrin Schmittchen's stenographer, who cannot record the evidence without displaying her emotions.

I was extremely moved by this film - the power of the subject matter coupled by the personal nature of the story and accomplished story telling is a welcome surprise. The Frankfurt Auschwitz trials resulted in more than 20 former SS members being charged under German criminal law - the fact that it was such an uphill battle to achieve this, makes the story even more worthwhile.

Some Thoughts On: *Macadam Stories*

Strange as it may seem, I found this film had a very strong link or connection to our film *A Pigeon Sat On A Branch Reflecting On Existence* which was screened back in March. Both examined in close-up detail the foibles and idiosyncrasies of the human condition, albeit in radically different ways. *Macadam* would have been a lot more accessible for many compared to the absurdist/surreal *Pigeon* and probably more positively received and enjoyed as a result of that.

This film was so funny, moving, insightful and engaging as we shared some very special, (and ordinary), moments with some of the tenants in this microcosm of the world at large. The very human needs of love, acceptance, sharing, understanding, cooperation and intimacy were writ large by a fabulous ensemble of very human characters played so naturally by a terrific cast.

The highlights for me were the way great humour and great pathos were intertwined in equal measure as the wheelchair bound 'photographer' Mr. Sternkowitz sought out contact with the equally lonely night nurse... and, the hilarious visitation of the astronaut. Again humour and touching moments were skilfully combined when a very special bond was formed between a very needy mother, (tonight we eat couscous), and the unexpected visitor. Just like real life some of our best moments are totally unplanned and unforeseen. This was so FISH. I loved it.

Ross Armfield.

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COMING UP:

July	<i>Things to Come</i> (France/Germany)	Sunday 23 rd & Tuesday 25 th
August	<i>Toni Erdmann</i> (Germany)	Sunday 20 th & Tuesday 22 nd
September	<i>The Second Mother</i> (Brazil)	Sunday 17 th & Tuesday 19 th
October	<i>The Fencer</i> (Finland/Estonia)	Sunday 15 th & Tuesday 17 th
November	<i>The Last Hammer Blow</i> (France)	Sunday 19 th & Tuesday 21 st
December	<i>Kumiko the Treasure Hunter</i> (USA)	Sunday 10 th & Tuesday 12 th
February '18	<i>Jimmy's Hall</i> (UK)	Sunday 11 th & Tuesday 13 th

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Farewell and Thank You.

Sadly, this month we lose one of our committee members, Christine Ferguson. Christine and husband Norman are, (reluctantly), moving up to Sydney to be closer to needed medical facilities and their supportive family. We thank Christine for her years of cheerfully given time and energy in helping to facilitate the smooth running of FISH. We'll particularly miss the great sense of fun that Christine brought to meetings making them most pleasurable gatherings indeed.

Christine had recently taken on the task of fielding member's guest enquiries. That task will now be undertaken by Caro Kennewell, whose contact details can be located at the bottom of last page of this newsletter.

We wish Christine and Norman all the very best for this brand new chapter of their lives. It's been our very good fortune to have had both of them in the FISH family. Goodbye, good luck and thank you. **The FISH Committee.**

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Message from the President

So now we approach the final film of the current season, *Labyrinth of Lies*. I think it has been another very good season of films that have entertained, challenged and even provoked really strongly held divergent opinions on a couple of our offerings. Surely, this is what a film society running an alternative program to the mainstream should have as one of its main objectives.

Just a reminder that we will be collecting the current membership cards from you at our two June screenings coming up. If you have recently rejoined FISH for our 17/18 season, your new membership cards will be posted out to you after our final screening of this season on Tues. 27th June. If you have not received your new cards within a week or so, please do not hesitate to contact our membership secretary David Cowie or myself on the numbers and/or email address listed below.

Our film from Germany takes us out for this season. Thank you everyone for the support and feedback over the last twelve months. I look forward to sharing another eleven stories with you in the very near future.

Yours in film

Ross Armfield



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