

Guilt, Grief Wrapped Up in Mystery of ‘The Silence’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 14, 2013 - 11:32am

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – With echoes of “The Vanishing” and “Memories of Murder,” Baran bo Odar’s dread-filled “The Silence” is a character-based thriller that focuses more on the people wrapped up in its web of perversion and murder than the crimes themselves. It’s an accomplished debut with a notable German cast that falters only a bit in terms of plotting and pacing but still heralds the arrival of a confident director who works well with both actors and visual composition. “The Silence” can be punishingly bleak and even depressing but it’s undeniably well-made and performed at the same time.

Two men – Peer (Ulrich Thomsen) and Timo (Wotan Wilke Mohring) – sit and watch a film in a darkened room. Timo’s stunned, ashamed reaction makes it clear that the film is not a happy one. They get in a car and drive off, passing a young girl named Pia on a bike. They double back and head after the girl. Peer gets out of the car and brutally, sexually assaults her, before killing her. Timo is shocked but silent. He even watches as Peer dumps the girl’s body in the lake.



The Silence

Photo credit: Music Box Films

23 years later and the community still reels from the fact that Pia’s killer was never found. Pia’s mother (Katrin Sass) and stepfather (Burgart Klausner), who happened to be the investigating officer on the case, still live under the heavy blanket of grief. So does Timo, having done nothing to stop the crime nor report on the murderer who still lives in the same apartment where they watched the film that inspired him to kill. Timo has a family now and daughters of his own but the past lingers for everyone.

And then the past becomes the present when another girl goes missing with clues of murder found in the same spot where Pia was killed. Is the new disappearance related? How could it not be? An obsessive police officer (Sebastian Blomberg) begins putting everything together and it seems clear that the new murder will help solve the old one.



The Silence

Photo credit: Music Box Films

Working from a book by Jan Costin Wagner, Baran bo Odar is clearly a filmmaker more concerned with issues like grief, guilt, and the emotional impact of loss than he is about the specific plotting of a crime thriller. These thematic elements are woven into every aspect of "The Silence" from the helicopter shots of a landscape where a body could be missing for days or even weeks to the dark interiors where secrets are hidden.

Some of the plotting of "The Silence" feels a bit forced (like the cop's superior who puts up roadblocks even against every obviously correct avenue of investigative exploration) and the vast array of characters might fit a longer format like AMC's "The Killing" better than a feature film. However, there's a degree of honesty in the characters here that's rarely seen in Hollywood feature thrillers. Blomberg's commitment/obsession, Klaussner's grief, Mohring's guilt, Thomsen's malevolence – these are all elements that lesser filmmakers would ignore in favor of the mystery of the piece. Odar's film works because it's made by a filmmaker who dares to suggest that it's not the crime but the people impacted by it that makes for great drama.

"The Silence" stars Ulrich Thomsen, Wotan Wilke Mohring, Katrin Sass, Sebastian Blomberg, Burghart Klaussner, Karoline Eichhorn, and Roeland Wiesnekker. It was written and directed by Baran bo Odar. It will be released at the Music Box Theatre in Chicago on March 15, 2013.



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