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CAT & MOUSE

A film by Maartje Seyferth & Victor Nieuwenhuijs
90 min, NETHERLANDS, 2014
Colour, 2:35, HD & DCP

SHORT SYNOPSIS

“Cat & Mouse” is a surreal film-noir that takes place in an unidentified European landscape. The film questions if we can trust our memories or will our memories more and more deceive us when time passes? It is the story of an adolescent girl and how past and present tangle together in an inextricable world, for her and for the people that surround her.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Belle, a young girl is growing up amidst the ruins of long forgotten events. Unknowingly, cycling through the forlorn and romantic fields around her isolated community, she rediscovers her shameful family history that lies at the root of her existence.

Her playful character and young innocent love for her boyfriend Max become stained by a nonverbal tension that envelops the small town. And threatens her sexual awakening. The death of her aunt, whom she lives with, unleashes memories which entangle her in complex, unspoken feelings. When her estranged mother returns there is no way back. Cat and Mouse is a surreal drama about unconditional love ruined by manipulation and lies.

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DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Since 1984, Maartje SEYFERTH and Victor NIEUWENHUIJS work in the cinema industry. With their production company, Moskito Film, they produced their own short movies, documentaries (talking about painting, sculpture, music, architecture, poesy) and feature films : "Venus In furs" (1995), "Lulu" (2005), "Crepuscule" (2009), "Meat" (2010) and of course "Cat & Mouse" (2014).

Maartje used to be an actress in plays or stage director before being as a painter as a director till nowadays.

Victor, after studying politic sciences, studied painting, photography and cinema.

CAST

Carlijn van Zijtsveld, Dirk Roofthoof, Gonny Gaakeer, Hendriktje Ruiten, Hilt de Vos, Jérémy Segard, Joy Ckili, Michael Helmerhorst

CAST BIOGRAPHY

CARLIJN VAN ZIJTSVELD

Known for "Cat & Mouse" (2014) and "Lover of Loser" (2009) by Dave Schram

Dirk ROOFTHOOF

Known for "Pleure pas Germaine" (2000) by Alain de Halleux, "Rosie" (1998) by Patrice Toye or "Hombres complicatods" (1998) by Dominique Deruddere.

Hilt De VOS

Known for "Blind" (2007) by Tamar Van den Dop, "Venus in Furs" (1994)

CREW

Director: Maartje SEYFERTH and Victor NIEUWENHUIJS

Scriptwriter: Maartje SEYFERTH and Victor NIEUWENHUIJS

Cinematographer: Victor NIEUWENHUIJS

Production Designer: Vassilis ECONOMIDIS, Catherine HENEGAN, Billie LELIVELD

Sound: Mark GLYNNE / anthill Productions

Music (composer) : Rogier BOSSCHAART, Eric LENSINK, Jeroen TENTY

Editor: Vima KARA - Tarek

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RECENT REVIEW

As they did in their previous film *Meat* (Vlees, 2010), filmmaking duo Maartje Seyferth and Victor Nieuwenhuijs continue the development of their signature style in their new project *Cat and Mouse*. The contours of this style were set out in their earlier works *Venus in Furs* (1995) and *Crepuscule* (2009). From their earliest works, classical film noir has been a guiding influence, but starting with *MEAT*, they more clearly connected with European experimental film. Their works are outgoing and dreamlike in a Lynchian way, but also confrontational like realistic dramas. They have a personal (Dutch) identity, related to (Dutch) independent cinema, a niche which has become more visible over the past few years thanks to filmmakers such as Urszula Antoniak, Nanouk Leopold and Alex van Warmerdam. The films of Seyferth and Nieuwenhuijs are recognisable in their rapturous engagement in stylistic and formal experiments, while their plots are often revealed in (poetic) fragments.

While the duo set out their directorial vision with their first two films – *Venus in Furs* (1995) and *Lulu* (2005) – *Cat and Mouse* offers new perspectives on their usual themes of eroticism, voyeurism, and desire. Incorporating a European experimentalism, elements of realistic drama transform into a seductive tale in which imagination, dreams and flashbacks become indistinguishable. Maartje Seyferth developed this surrealist approach because *Cat and Mouse* is based on a childhood memory. At heart, the screenplay is about what influence a memory can have in our lives. Is it possible to disconnect from it at all? The story of *Cat and Mouse* is driven both by curiosity and a willingness to investigate the memory ('mouse') and detachment and eagerness to get away from the memory ('cat').

As the screenplay and teaser show, the overarching theme of *Cat and Mouse* is the duality between recollection (observation) and memory. To give shape to this abstract idea, Seyferth and Nieuwenhuijs have engaged with subthemes that have always been vital to their work: love, identity, and 'the other'. The main character of *Cat and Mouse* is Belle, a young girl growing up amidst the ruins of long forgotten events. The memory of a shameful family history lies at the foundation of her existence, standing amidst her community, the village where she lives, like a silent 'monument'. Belle, a teenage girl trying to find her own identity (physically, sexually and spiritually), becomes entangled in the complex, unspoken feelings, the source of a nonverbal tension that envelops the small town. They become obstacles in her connection with her aunt Johanna, with whom she lives, with her first love Max and her estranged mother Olga. The detachment and/or jealousy that is caused by this “ruins unconditional love through manipulation and lies”, to paraphrase the film's logline.

In that sense, this logline has a double meaning: the question of memory (and its influence on us) is given shape through a formal experiment with a surreal structure. Thus, Belle's perception (and that of the audience) transforms over the course of the film: what is the difference between Belle's reality and the memory? The answer to this question is presented to the viewer through the subthemes love and identity – in other words: the influence the memory has on Belle, and on us.

In the film, these themes will shine through not just in the dramaturgy, but most prominently in the landscapes and locations as captured in cinematography and mise-en-scène. The teaser for the film clearly shows this approach and the resulting atmosphere. The farmlands form the memory of this lonely village at the edge of a forest. The inhabitants are its conscience: Olga and Johanna carry a history within them which Belle does not yet know. Standing on the threshold of her womanhood, she seeks security and affection (among others from Max). While her body and mind are engulfed by

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the transformation from teenager to adult, her curiosity ('cat') hunts after her mother's past ('mouse') to find answers. As we see: who is the hunter and who the hunted? These constant shifts in assigned roles dominate the second part of the film.

As Alfred Hitchcock tickled our fear and empathy in order to create anticipation, so Cat and Mouse's surreal tale invites the audience to determine what they feel and understand of a memory (the family history). Like they did in *Meat*, Seyferth and Nieuwenhuijs will personally engage the audience. To that end, the characters are more kaleidoscopic (subjective, composited) than archetypal ('drawn from life'). The filmmakers look for images that encompass the dialogues. As such, characters can play out various different meanings through their actions. Belle is both curious and detached, both kind and cruel, both in love and apathetic. These dualities create a tension that does not need to be elaborated in the spoken word.

The image tells the story. The game, between cat and mouse, entrances.