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Review of Here Lies

Fri, 17 Jul 2015

Our Rating: ★★☆☆☆

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British Film Review: Here Lies

Director: Duncan Ward

Genre: Drama/Arthouse/European



A true hybrid, **HERE LIES**, written and directed by **Duncan Ward**, is a straight split between fly on the wall documentary, straight dramatic narrative and, curiously, a truly art house film that explores and dialogues with a moral dilemma and premise. Intricately woven and faultlessly executed, the three formats however, make uneasy bedfellows, and what could've been a masterpiece falls just a little short, but only just.

The problem with trying to blend so many styles is that something invariably suffers, and in this case it's the story/dramatic structure, which is weak. It is covered by the intricate style format **Here Lies** unfurls into, which although starts to pull the audience right in, doesn't sustain the connection long enough to carry it through to the end

Based upon documenting the life of an artist, as viewed from a 'making of' perspective, **Here Lies** is a look at the brutal world of art, when it clashes with ego and the darker aspects of the human psyche. Nothing new there one might say, but with any story where lurid desires and ego run riot, there also always lies great potential for metaphor and dialoguing with the deeper elements of what it is to search for truth, for love and beauty. It makes complete sense that artists are often at the forefront of this search as truth seekers, and the artist portrayed in **Here Lies** is no different in this respect, so the film treads a well known path, and to its credit, starts off well. However, with no real question posed at the beginning, or dramatic dilemma presented, the audience is left searching, and it is not until way into the film that any sense of where it is all going really emerges at all. By this time, the audiences focus has dulled, and although the events that unfold are interesting, they do not emotionally engage as much as they could, and given their severity, lack the power they should have to really shock us.

This is a shame as the technical aspects of this film are very good. Well produced, directed and acted, there's just the one weak element – The script. This might have benefitted from another draft or some deeper, more pertinent questions asked of it, like, 'whose story is this? Whose point of view are we following? Is it an ensemble cast or not? As a result the story is simply not strong enough to really engage as it could and should.

Beautifully shot, edited, coloured and acted throughout, it's easy to follow along for the first twenty minutes or so, but then the dramatic structure begins to meander in favour of the moral

debate, and unless it happens to be a moral debate that holds fascination on a personal, subjective level for whoever watches it, interest starts to drift and some of the emotional connection that's so much needed in any narrative, is lost. It's all very intelligently done, but for those wanting something to 'happen' there's not quite enough to cling to until late in the film. Good photography, acting and directing, even when added up, have never been and are still not a recipe for dramatic fascination. However, **Here Lies** looks at some very intense issues, and the set scenes are so well acted and crafted that it nearly works. Definitely worth a view if only for the sheer intelligence of its style, **Here Lies** is a curious mixture, but one which deserves to find favour due to what is being attempted if nothing else.

3.5 stars.



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