

THE GUILTY (Den skyldige)

Denmark (2018) 85 minutes

Director: Gustav Möller

Cast: Jakob Cedergren (Asger Holm), Jessica Dinnage (Iben)



Screening 12 February 2020 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

When police officer Asger Holm is demoted to desk work, he expects a quiet shift. That all changes when he answers a desperate call from a kidnapped woman. Asger, confined to the police station, is forced to use others as his eyes and ears as the severity of the crime slowly becomes more clear.

Reviews



Discarding the rules that require him to simply relay the information to field officers, Asger resolves to stay on the case, , frantically using his detecting skills while concealing his efforts from the dispatchers around him.

Jeannette Catsoulis, The New York Times

Like the best podcasts and radio plays, the stripped-down Danish thriller ***The Guilty*** paints such vivid pictures with words that, afterward, we're not exactly sure what we saw and what was merely imagined.

Imagination, though, is so rarely asked of movie audiences these days that the daring of the first-time feature director, Gustav Möller, can hardly be overstated. Locking the viewer in two cramped, drab rooms, he builds suspense with little more than a single character and a few voices on a telephone. But the ingenious screenplay reaches beyond the solving of a mystery to paint a psychological portrait of the man at its centre.

That would be Asger Holm (an astonishing Jakob Cedergren), a resentful police officer demoted to emergency-response telephone duty while waiting for an unspecified disciplinary proceeding. Calmly contemptuous of his callers' minor crises, Asger snaps out of his boredom when a terrified woman contacts him, claiming to have been kidnapped by her ex-husband.

The opening moments of ***The Guilty*** might feel like mere wheel-spinning until the "real story" kicks in but they're essential to why the film really works. In them, we meet Asger Holm, a Danish police officer embroiled in a bit of a controversy, and so stuck at an Emergency Services (their version of 911) call centre until it blows over. We get snippets of conversation about a testimony tomorrow and learn that he no longer lives with his significant other, but we don't know the details—these are just elements that add to the fabric of tension, and reveal that Asger is under a lot of stress so when he gets a call that will change his life, we know that he's already imperfect—and that could impact how the night unfolds.

The Guilty is a complex examination of how commonly we make assumptions about other people—how easily we can take a limited amount of information and fill in the gaps in a way that's not always right.

Brian Tallerico, rogererbert.com

Film Facts

- Winner of 7 awards from the Danish Film Academy including best film, best actor, best actress in a supporting role and best director.
- This is Gustav Möller's directorial debut.
- Some of the calls in the film are transcribed almost word for word from calls Möller heard whilst researching a real life emergency call centre.