

LAMB

Iceland (2021) 107 minutes

Director: Valdimar Jóhannsson

Cast: Noomi Rapace (María)
Hilmir Snær Guonason (Ingvar)
Bjorn Hlynur Haraldsson (Petur)



Screening 15th February 2023 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

A childless couple, María and Ingvar, discover a mysterious new-born on their farm in Iceland. The unexpected prospect of family life brings them much joy but they soon face the equally unexpected consequences of their actions.

Reviews



What Jóhannsson has crafted here is a story entirely unencumbered by the restrictions of reality and feasibility...

Instead, what we get is a brooding, poignant study of grief, parenthood and the unpredictable cruelty of nature. The tragic context of the couple's marital strife hangs over them, refusing to lift like the thick, ominous fog which blankets the valley...

I have my own theory as to what the end of this film signifies and indeed, the whole allegorical lesson this story provides. To delve too deep into this would spoil the fantastic surprise that awaits first-time viewers, but *Lamb* is, simply put, a rich and contemplative portrayal of grief and guilt. It is a film which will surely divide audiences and is very much dependent on both individual interpretation and suspension of disbelief. But it is a film which offers so much thematically, with lots of heart, moments of humour, and an astoundingly well-timed injection of visceral fear.

Jakob Lewis Barnes, jumpcutoonline

Icelandic director Valdimar Jóhannsson makes a coolly outrageous feature debut with this jaw-dropping horror-comedy of loneliness. It is performed with unflinching commitment by its executive producer-star Noomi Rapace, who is first among equals in a great cast of humans, animals and various prosthetic and digital creature effects.

Maria and Ingvar are an unhappy couple with a remote farm in Iceland: it gradually becomes clear they have lost their only child. The drama begins with a strange spirit-visitation in the barn that scares the animals: a ewe becomes pregnant with a bizarre animal-human hybrid and poor, stricken Maria conceives a passionate attachment to this precious being, naming it Ada after her dead human daughter.

As this sweet woolly little thing gets bigger and dressed up in the children's clothes that this couple appear to have bought in advance for their lost human child, their situation as Iceland's Unholy Family becomes ever more macabre, and even more so considering the complete calm and naturalness of their behaviour....

We have to wait to get a good look at Ada and confront the full, horrible truth about what she represents, but Jóhannsson cleverly converts our horror into a stupefied comic bewilderment from the outset. We are not supposed to be scared. What is required of us is compassion and respect for Maria's strange dignity and strength. It's a great performance from Rapace.

Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian

Film Facts

- Official submission of Iceland for the 'Best International Feature Film' category of the 94th Academy Awards in 2022.
- Valdimar Jóhannsson won the Un Certain Regard - Prize of Originality at the Cannes Film Festival 2021.
- Noomi Rapace is a Swedish actress. She achieved international fame with her portrayal of Lisbeth Salander in the Swedish film adaptations of the *Millennium series* (2009): *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest* and went on to make American films.