

THE ZONE OF INTEREST

USA-UK-Poland (2023) 105 minutes

Director: Richard Glazer

Cast: Christian Friedel (Rudolf Höss)
Sandra Hüller (Hedwig Höss)



Screening 13th November 2024 at Swindon Art Centre

Synopsis

Rudolf, Hedwig and their family live the perfect suburban dream with their beautifully ordered house and garden. But audible from behind the wall are the sounds of mechanised death, for Rudolf Höss is the commandant of Auschwitz. Jonathan Glazer (*Birth*, *Under the Skin*) offers his most ambitious film yet, displacing the usual tropes of the Holocaust drama to depict the pampered life of executioners inhabiting the bubble of bourgeois denial, keeping the reality of genocide hermetically sealed on the outside.

Reviews



In *The Zone of Interest*, Glazer doesn't simply tell a story; in his use of art-film conventions he provides a specific frame through which to watch it. This is clearly part of its attraction as is the breathing space his approach creates: it is scary, but not too much.

These conventions can create a sense of intellectual distance and serve as a critique, or that's the idea. They also announce (fairly or not) a filmmaker's aesthetic bona fides, seriousness, sophistication and familiarity with a comparatively rarefied cinematic tradition. They signal that the film you're watching is different from popular ones made for a mass audience. These conventions are markers of distinction, of *quality*, which flatter film-makers and viewers alike, and which finally seem to me to be the biggest point of this vacuous movie.

Manohla Dargis, New York Times

This chilling drama from the director of *Under the Skin* is an extraordinary and unsettling work that won't easily be forgotten. Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss lives with his family in a comfortable home next door to the camp. His wife Hedwig busies herself tending to her 'paradise' garden, while the couple's children laugh and play in the sunshine. The family carry on with their lives, disturbingly detached from the terrible sounds that creep over the garden wall.

Inspired by Martin Amis' 2014 novel, Jonathan Glazer's unsettling examination of Nazi mentality successfully adopts an unorthodox perspective. He observes the domestic rhythms of daily life, recording the activities of the family, their friends, the servants who work for them and the officers who occasionally visit. Life would seem unremarkable if it weren't for the sounds that come from the adjoining camp, a place the film never enters. Johnnie Burn's sound design, coupled with a sparing but chillingly effective score by Mica Levi, emphasises the frightening psychology of Höss and those who are driven by such a pernicious ideology. The result is both a powerful exploration of inhumanity and a brilliant work of cinema.

Kimberley Sheehan, BFI

Film Facts

- *The Zone of Interest* won the Academy Award for *Best International Feature Film* (2024) and the Festival de Cannes *Grand Prix* (2023).
- The sound designer, Johnnie Burn spent a year building a sound-library before filming began.

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