

Everybody's Spectacular ***Under Influence* under the direction of Sidney Leoni**

What just happened? I stepped out from the screening of Sidney Leoni's *Under Influence* and could by no means put what I just saw into words. It took quite a while to understand the film and as a matter of fact I am still trying to figure it out. Even so, the sensation that stayed with me was especially clear, as if I knew exactly what had just happened. It reminded me of waking up from a surrealistic dream. The movie is about Julia, an actress (Halla Ólafsdóttir) that plays the role of Rose acting on set in *Being Kate Winslet* (Life after Titanic). Julia, acting Rose, finds herself in a struggle and tries to change the character. She imagines different scenes, becomes another person and reacts quite inexplicably, so that it was impossible to keep track. I am certain that it is precisely that which succeeded so well. Because of this I had to surrender and let myself follow. I could only rely on my own sensation. Julia's imagination was an interesting view on our perception of reality. The imagined world was somewhat more surreal but just as crisp. It was surprisingly easy to relate to Julia, Rose, April (Halla), perhaps because she is not one but three characters. Most of us are more than just one character and we all have different roles. We jump from being a student, to parenthood, to being a son or daughter.

(...)

Julia in *Under Influence* appears to lose control of her situation and goes back and forth between fiction and reality. It's up to the audience to make a distinction between the two. Leoni works with the sensations and experience of the audience. He brings the audience into a vision of a dream only to grip them back to reality with a shot of Julia turning against the director on set. There is a very thin line between the fictional and the real in the film. (...)

Julia attempts to kill the crazy woman within her but realizes that it is impossible. We all have many roles to play and even though it becomes difficult when they clash, it is in no way easier to erase parts of ourselves. We are all of these characters. Everybody's spectacular. Everybody's remarkable, characters of many layers, each with a role of its own. The festival seems to have chosen pieces that introduce a separate reality, whether it is a person revealing other sides of herself or whether we get to peek into a parallel world.

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