

Movie review

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Zero Kelvin

Rodrigo Arellano

This Norwegian film is like those 'Magic Pictures': if you stare at it for long enough, you begin to see its three dimensionality. The hard work is having the patience to wait for something to happen, but when it does, it strikes hard, and lures you into its illusionary world like a fat fish on a hook. This may explain why Zero Kelvin won Best Film at this year's Norwegian Film Festival and First Runner Up to Most Popular Film at the 1996 Sydney Film Festival .

The story is about a poet who signs up for a year long furtrapper expedition to Greenland in 1925. Leaving behind his girlfriend and a world of joviality and optimism, he is taken to an isolated cottage occupied by two hunters—one of them also a scientist. The personalities of the hunters are stereotypes; the scientist is symbolic of all that is rational, while the hunter represents the basic in humans, our essential needs, our base emotions, and all the ugly bits most hope they've left behind some where in the long, winding road of the evolution of 'Modern Man' . . . and 'Modern Woman'.

The contrasting personalities of the three protagonists are sometimes unbelievable, incomprehensible, almost too irrational. But that is what the film is about: it draws an imaginary string—with the peaceful artist at one end, the rational scientist in the centre, and the crude, aggressive hunter at the other end—picks-up the string, makes a circle with it and, hence, suggests that the distance between the two extremes is not as great as it may appear.

Most of the film was shot on an unnamed island about two hours boat travel north of the northernmost settlement in the world, Ny-Alesund (population:25). Local weather conditions were extreme and unpredictable. At times the crew was split up for days because of bad weather. While one side was holding the lights, props

and make-up, the other would have the cameras and actors. It was in this uncertainty and freezing conditions that, for six weeks, the entire crew with dogs, sleds, props and equipment settled down to work and complete this sad film.

I do not know how accurate the film is in its presentation of human nature... but it did manage to leave this viewer in that sweet, detached state of melancholy only a good film can provide. This film is not so much about entertaining as about scratching the intellect and bruising the soul. It is not about action, but reaction . . . *your* reaction.



Stellan Skarsgard (Randbek) in a scene from Petter Moland's ZERO KELVIN