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1226 N Salsipuedes Unit C 1(805)704-5994 |https://hollywoodglee.com Larry@HollywoodGlee.com

Pleasure (Ninja Thyberg, 2021): Sweden/Netherlands/France

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

This was one of the most interesting, difficult to watch films, Iâ??ve had the pleasure of viewing (pun intended â?? not sorry). Writer/Director Ninja Thyberg nails the opening after the intro titles as the filmâ??s lead character, Bella Cherry, portrayed by Sofia Kappel, is questioned at immigration as to whether she is in the United States for work or pleasure and she demurely coos, â??Pleasure,â?• with a devil-may-care hint of whatâ??s to come.

Unfortunately, after the brief porn-style opening, the narrative got real. Bella has trouble finding a job and eventually shows up to do an adult film audition. Sheâ??s nineteen years old, attractive, with beautiful blonde hair, and is looking for some good times. What transpires is the making of an adult film scene. Itâ??s reflexive filmmaking aka we are aware of a film scene about making a film scene. The camera operator is crude and vulgar as he draws the silent ire of Bella. The male character continues the domineering behavior and Bella is trying her best to perform fellatio yet is quite awkward. Sheâ??s paid $900 for the dayâ??s work.

From this first sex scene, Bella begins navigating the world of adult film. Although she doesnâ??t appear comfortable most of the time, she makes friends. Her Swedish mother calls telling her not to give up, stay the course and become successful. There is some miscommunication as Bella is not working in a dentistâ??s office. Far from it. As the narrative bends into very raw and brutal sex scenes, Bella comes to the realization the adult film industry is about business and comes to the realization that the adult film â??starsâ?• are not as whole and authentic as the B-movie actresses that Bella broke in with.

At times maybe *Pleasure* is a little cliche with its Porn Party where all the stars and industry actors come together at a mansion with a swimming pool and a stunning and expansive view of the surrounding suburban/urban area. Still, *Pleasure* hits the mark. Though Bella is new to the game she brings her own game. She learns to warm up to the more seasoned girls with her boldness and affinity for their affirmations while relying on her instincts to navigate her experiences with the male-dominated sets, predatory managers, and backbiting competitors.

Moreover, *Pleasure* uses its explicit portrayal to expose rather than titillate, offering a highly realistic feel for a no-holds-barred workerâ??s-eye view of the industry. Leading a cast mined from the adult entertainment world, first-time actress Kappel embodies a character who is constantly renegotiating, and re-crafting who she is from the fresh-faced newcomer to the fetish boundary-challenging performer to the ascending industry queen as she expresses herself wholeheartedly and unequivocally to the fullest. It is quite a performance. A must-see!

Pleasure screened in the Midnight Section at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival and honestly, I wasnâ??t expecting Thybergâ??s hardcore approach to illuminating an industry often not thought very highly of and not given much attention. The closest film Iâ??ve seen that delves below the superficial surface of the adult film industry was the 1997 Paul Thomas Anderson helmed *Boogie Nights. Pleasure* goes deeper and is not a suitable film for an audience under the age of 18. With a runtime of 100 minutes, *Pleasure* is highly revealing and highly recommended.

**Contains graphic sexual content and sexual violence. Not suitable for audiences under 18.*

Category

1. #Sundance
2. Sundance
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Tags

1. Bella Cherry
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3. Pleasure
4. Sofia Kappel

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