

All My Loving

Reviewed by Fionnuala Halligan

An immersive study of three middle-class siblings as they face the realities of deep middle-age, Edward Berger's drama is well-crafted and tremendously acted, reinforcing the German director's burgeoning reputation from his feature *Jack* to HBO series *Patrick Melrose*. Although its tripartite structure and concentration on the ebb-and-flow of domestic affairs implies a lack of cinematic urgency, this is a very satisfying film for connoisseurs of fine drama. Actors will again take note of Berger's ability to draw the most tender of portrayals from his cast.

Lars Eidinger, Nele Mueller-Stöfen and Hans Löw are equally strong as siblings, although it is co-writer Mueller-Stöfen who delivers the most heartbreaking scenes that act as the film's dramatic dam-burst at the mid-point. The fact this is a subtitled German film seems to melt away in the universality of Berger's characters and scenario, although that, coupled with the episodic rhythm of the piece, may mean *All My Loving* plays best at festivals and the high-end SVOD/art market, where its easy accessibility will be welcomed.

Intertitles punctuate Berger's loose rhythm. Everyday familiarity brings occasional humour and pathos as we move from Eidinger's man-child airline pilot to Mueller-Stöfen's fragile older sister and Löw's stay-at-home father. Each story is engrossing and recognisable; each character fully coloured-in. A prologue lunch meeting establishes how Stefan (Eidinger) is the confident, self-obsessed middle sibling; Julia (Mueller-Stöfen) has an unhealthy obsession with her dog Rocco; and Tobias (Löw) is a somewhat hapless house-husband with three young children and a thesis to write. Thus, the film is set in motion: Julia will go to Turin for a holiday with her husband, leaving Rocco with Stefan and their parents with Tobias.

Finally, Tobias has to confront his "nightmare" father (Manfred Zapatka) and stubbornly in-denial mother (Christine Schorn) in a chaotic, disintegrating home. An evening where he becomes caught up in a birthday celebration in a local bar provides another small, heartbreaking moment on screen that Berger gently folds into the rest of his story. Reminiscent of the engrossingly rich films of Berger's American counterparts Nicole Holofcener or Lisa Cholodenko, the director shoots entirely at the service of character and story.

PANORAMA

Ger. 2019. 118mins

Director Edward Berger

Production company

Port au Prince Film &

Kultur Produktion

International sales

Beta Cinema,

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Producers Jan Krüger,

Jörg Trentmann,

Raimond Goebel

Screenplay Edward

Berger, Nele Mueller-

Stöfen, Jens Harant

Production design

Cora Pratz

Editing Barbara

Toennieshen

Cinematography

Jens Harant

Music Volker Bertelmann

(Hauschka)

Main cast Lars Eidinger,

Nele Mueller-Stöfen, Hans

Löw, Manfred Zapatka,

Christine Schorn,

Godehard Giese

