



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

ALL OF US STRANGERS (15)

Writer/Director: Andrew Haig

Starring: Andrew Scott, Paul Mescal, Claire Foy & Jamie Bell

UK, 2023, 1 hour 46 minutes

"An enormously satisfying and effecting experience" - **Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian**. Andrew Haig's latest film is a romantic-fantasy masterpiece that reveals its mastery quietly and with great strength.

Adam (Andrew Scott) is a screenwriter in the early listless stages of depression, when Harry, emboldened by a little too much drink, approaches him. They have been aware of each other for some time, seemingly the only residents of the same Ballardian tower block. The new relationship and his old grief push Adam to revisit his childhood home, where he finds his mum, Claire Foy, and dad, Jamie Bell (who both died in a car crash when Adam was 12) living and apparently unphased by their son being the same age they still are. Adam is welcomed effortlessly home. Finally, he has the opportunity to come out to his parents, and, no, they hadn't spotted it. It is their reactions keep them anchored like the music, in the 80s.

Adapted from the Japanese novel *Strangers* by Taichi Yamada, Haig weaves his tale of loss, grief and love with authority, enjoying the build up of tension and emotion. 'Meanwhile, the film's soundtrack pays glorious tribute to the queer sensibility then hiding in plain sight in the charts: Erasure and Alison Moyet pop up while lyrics to Frankie Goes to Hollywood and Pet Shop Boys hits are woven into the screenplay to poignant, devastating effect.'

The performances are complex and absorbing. "There are striking levels of intentionality, vulnerability and desire ... between... Scott, rueful and pensive, and Mescal, puppyish and volatile. By contrast, Foy and Bell, also excellent, depict a couple who appear to be driven by convention more than intention. They are loving and decent but not inclined to question or reshape their world, let alone recognise its capacity to harm their son." - **Ben Walters, BFI Sight & Sound**

British director Andrew Haig has previously written and directed four award winning feature films: *Lean on Pete* (2017) exploring an abandoned childhood, *Looking* (2016) a movie finale to a TV series about gay friends in San Francisco, *45 Years* (2015) and *Weekend* (2011). All focus on stories where characters define themselves in context of their past and their present relationships. And in this film the present web of surprise and change, is tangled and stretched by the past, to breaking point.

Notes compiled by Matthew Evans

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MONSTER (12A) - Hirokazu Kore-eda (*Shoplifters, Broker*) returns with an exquisitely layered conundrum that is a both coming-of-age film and thriller – who or what is the monster of the title?

LA CHIMERA (15) - From Alice Rohrwacher (*Happy as Lazzaro*), a tale of lost love and an ethereal spiritual journey.