



Requiem

Hans-Christian Schmid

GERMANY, 2006
German

93 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
Production Company:
2315 Filmproduktion/
SWR/ARTE/WDR/BR
Executive Producer: Uli Putz
Producer: Hans-Christian Schmid
Screenplay: Bernd Lange
Cinematographer: Bogumil Godfrejow
Editor: Hansjörg Weissbrich,
Bernd Schlegel
Production Designer:
Christian M. Goldbeck
Sound: Dirk W. Jacob
Principal Cast: Sandra Hüller,
Burghart Klausner, Imogen Kogge,
Anna Blomeier, Nicholas Reinke,
Jens Harzer

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Foreign Sales Agent:
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Alternately shocking and meditative, *Requiem* is a bold triumph for director Hans-Christian Schmid and his muse, actress Sandra Hüller.

The film concerns a young woman in the thrall of religious ecstasy and the failed exorcism that ultimately kills her. But this seemingly exploitative subject matter – see last year's screamfest *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* – gives way to a more subtle and interesting idea: Schmid gently suggests that meek Michaela Klinger (Hüller) allowed herself to be overcome by this possession. She welcomed it to avoid confronting the baffling social mores of seventies West Germany and a cruel, abusive mother. The social shifts and pressures of that confusing age in a sense compelled her into a medieval state of being.

Schmid builds his case with a sure hand. The film's extremely attractive camera work both frames and prods the action along. Dreamy, shadowy moments are interspersed with Klinger's shy, tentative social interactions with her peers. Then – BAM! – her (diagnosed as) epileptic episodes spring forth in violent, painful relief.

These discomfiting moments haunt her through her boisterous early days and these scenes perfectly capture the confusion and otherworldliness of her journey. Rejecting psychiatry and medical solutions out of some inner fear, she ultimately turns to a young, crusading priest (Jens Harzer), himself out of place in the contemporary world. As he spins an increasingly dubious and demonic

narrative about her condition, the film takes a more sinister and conspiratorial turn. We can only feel sadness as this lovely young woman and her gormless parents are backed into the horror of a primitive exorcism.

Hatred of the modern world has long been presented as a responsible moral position by socially conservative politicians. The consequences of following these beliefs to their logical extreme are wrought powerfully and painfully in this exceptional film.

■ Noah Cowan

Hans-Christian Schmid was born in Altötting, Germany and studied documentary filmmaking at the Munich Academy for Television and Film (HFF) and screenwriting at the University of Southern California. After directing for television and making documentaries, he made his debut feature, *It's a Jungle Out There* (96). His other features include *23* (98), which screened at the 1998 Festival, *Crazy* (00), and *Distant Lights* (03), which won a FIPRESCI Prize at the 2003 Berlin International Film Festival. *Requiem* (06) won a FIPRESCI Prize and the Silver Bear for best actress for Sandra Hüller at this year's festival in Berlin.

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