



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

THE ZONE OF INTEREST (12A)

Director: Jonathan Glazer

Starring: Sandra Hüller, Christian Friedel

US/UK/Poland, 2023, 1 hour 46 minutes, German/Polish + English subtitles

"We have a film that's a family drama, about a man and his wife. They're very happy. They have five kids in a beautiful home, she's a very keen landscape gardener, she enjoys being surrounded by nature. He's got an important job, and he's very good at what he does. They are a complete partnership. And then he gets the news that his company wants to move him to a different city. She's shocked; she doesn't want to come with him. There's a rift in their marriage. He goes anyway. They do the best they can... And then the one thing I forgot to say is that he's the Nazi commandant of Auschwitz. That's where you get the idea of ambient genocide, and also that the story is sort of about us: about seeing ourselves in this, or trying to see ourselves. The thing that we're most scared of, I suppose, is that we could be them." **Jonathan Glazer**

"It became about the wall... The compartmentalization of their lives, and the horror that they lived next door to. That was the entry point, and it grew from there."

Jonathan Glazer

To make the film of the life of Rudolph Höss (Christian Friedel) and his wife Hewig (Sandra Hüller) demanded its own particular methods. The garden took 4 months to create, and in the house, cameras were installed in every room. Once filming started Glazer was watching from a truck on the far side of the wall. This allowed the cast unrestricted movement and use of their perfect home. At the same time creating a reality-tv/big brother surveillance feel.

"It's a very odd way to make a film, but it was the only way that I could do it... Almost anthropologically. I couldn't imagine having a conversation with my cinematographer about backlight or something, about the light not being nice enough on the actress' hair." **Jonathan Glazer**

I needed some light in there as well. I remember on the first of many trips to Poland thinking that I couldn't make the film if there was nothing but darkness. And I met a woman, a ninety-year-old woman who was there at the time, and who was a partisan. She was twelve years old, and she was part of the re-sistance, in the Polish underground. They had children running back and forth. She told me that she would go out and secretly feed some of the prisoners, and she didn't say it with any pride. It was just what happened; it was what she did, the most natural thing for her at her age in those circumstances. She looked out her window and saw people driven and beaten and executed. She lived maybe two kilometers from the camp. Her story stayed with me, and I felt like it was something very holy; not in a religious sense. But she was on the opposite end of the spectrum to the Höss', and she was the light. I felt like I could make the film. She's represented in there with the thermal imaging; she's the one who finds the music and plays it; who gathers apples and pears and leaves them. She's an incredibly important part of the film, and she's not really a character. I thought of her more as an energy."

Jonathan Glazer (All quotes from **The Zone of Interest press pack**).

Notes compiled by Matthew Evans