



In a Glass Cage

Overall rating: ★★★★★

Anonymous Review from
Epinions.com

Review Summary

Agustin Villaronga's *In A Glass Cage* is sickening, yet fascinating.

Author's Product Rating

★★★★★

Pros

A unique and distressing look into the realm of human madness

Cons

Probably one of the most disturbing films you'll ever see

The Bottom Line

Definitely not for sensitive viewers, *In A Glass Cage* is a film that will provide much thought for the intellectual viewer. My highest recommendation for this one.

Full Review

Plot Details: This opinion reveals major details about the movie's plot.

First off, before I set into the review for this long forgotten film, I should warn anyone at all interested in the film that at the end, there is a disclaimer that states that no children were harmed during filming. Knowing that, you should have some vague idea of what to expect during the film, and even so, you'll

probably be downright disgusted (and rightly so) by the content of the Spanish film IN A GLASS CAGE, a.k.a. TRAS EL CRISTAL.

Agustin Villaronga's debut film is truly one of the handful of films out there that simply defies the standards of good taste, and yet remains a fascinating look at some of the more demented aspects of the human psyche. TRAS EL CRISTAL is well made, but contains content the likes of which are nearly unheard of anymore, especially in the whitewashed world of American studio films. In the end, I think films like this are what society needs more of to show just how awful humans can be to one another and, by detailing these atrocities, hopefully can deter individuals from imitating them. Despite the heinous content, after viewing this film, one would earn a greater appreciation of human life and mortality.

TRAS EL CRISTAL begins with a scene of a middle-aged man in a room. We are shown a naked young boy strung up with ropes from the ceiling across the room, being photographed by the older man. After a round of photos, the man picks up a board and viciously, but implicitly, strikes the boy across the back with it. The man, now appearing to come to terms with what he has done, climbs a staircase to the top of the building and prepares to throw himself off the ledge. This whole time, we watch the scene from the perspective of an unseen third party, who finally picks up the man's sketch book, presumably filled with stories of his torturous escapades.

Jump ahead to a future date. The man, after falling from the tower, has been paralyzed and is confined to a huge iron lung to keep him alive. We learn that this man was a Nazi during WWII who was responsible for torturing and molesting scores of young boys during his tenure in the German regime. Now confined to this "glass cage," the man, Klaus, is at the mercy of those around him to keep him alive. His wife, fed up with the daily toils of making sure the iron lung is operating properly, is trying to find someone capable of caring for her husband so she and her young daughter can carry on with their lives.

A mysterious young man appears on the scene, telling the wife that he is prepared to care for her husband. The wife doesn't trust the young man, Angelo, but her paralyzed husband insists that he stays, setting up the basis for the twisted story of TRAS EL CRISTAL.

To put it simply, TRAS EL CRISTAL belongs in the same league as Pier Paolo Pasolini's SALO, OR THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM in that most critics would instantly dismiss the film as sensational garbage without fully grasping what is actually being implied and suggested by the film. There's no way that writer/director Agustin Villaronga is advocating this kind of behavior or, God forbid, using the offensive material in this film simply to sell tickets on the basis of sensationalism. To anyone actually using their brain, the material is obviously an indictment of the horrors propagated by human beings against their own kind. CRISTAL deals with elements of child molestation and torture, presented in graphic detail, and often using young children in the film, who obviously were subjected to some type of physical or psychological abuse during the making of the film. There simply is no way that this abuse could not have happened, especially when we see a couple of young boys stripped down and forced to engage in sex acts with the former Nazi or his newly acquired caregiver. Although none of these acts are shown graphically, to the films credit, the implications that are given are just plain horrendous; a flashback shows Klaus offering a young boy money and then forcing the youth to fellate him; another instance shows a young boy having gasoline injected into his heart to gradually end his life. Obviously, this film goes WAY above what you'd see in your average film, but in doing so, shows just how cruel and barbaric humans can be, and how far they will go to satisfy their twisted sexual desires.

In the story, Angelo, who was one of the youths Klaus molested during the war, goes completely insane, taking over all operations in the house and eventually continuing in Klaus's hideous obsessions. Klaus at this point is completely against continuing these fantasies, and to his credit, appears to have realized the horror of what he once did. Due to his condition, however, Klaus is forced to suffer through Angelo's sadistic excesses without any way to stop him.

It's a shame that most audiences would instantly dismiss this film as exploitative garbage, or simply stop viewing it, after they begin to understand the dynamics of the storyline. If given the chance, TRAS EL CRISTAL becomes one of the only true horror films ever, not in the sense that there is a faceless killer

slaughtering teens, or a hideous monster on the loose; in the case of this film, the monster is an otherwise normal human being who commits such indescribable crimes against humanity that the end result is one of the most horrific stories ever committed to film, and one of the only times a viewer would get the opportunity to see such a thoroughly disgusting and repulsive story.

I really can't begin to express my disappointment in the failure of the majority of audiences to stomach this film. A film like this deserves to be seen no matter what the viewer's moral boundaries are: in viewing a film such as *TRAS EL CRISTAL* one would come to realize just how horrendous the ability of the human to commit such acts really is. There is really nothing that is past the capability of some individuals, and by viewing the worst that the human could accomplish, a viewer hopefully would come to realize his or her responsibility to fight against such atrocities. Say whatever you want about such films as *SCHINDLER'S LIST*; in my opinion, *TRAS EL CRISTAL* is the most powerful film about the horrors of the Nazi regime ever, illustrating just how savage and completely inhuman war can be.

The film itself is filmed in a way that makes all this hit home even more. First, none of the more graphic sexual acts in the film are ever shown graphically. We are instead left to imagine the worst in our own minds, making *CRISTAL* all the more disturbing. Second, the film itself has a grainy consistency that makes it look more authentic than your average big budget Hollywood blockbuster. Again, this works to *CRISTAL*'s advantage. The acting in this film is simply incredible. None of the actors in this film were incredibly well known, and all give very moving and true-to-life performances that make the story here work. Especially impressive are Gunter Meisner ("Slugworth" from *WILLY WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY*) as Klaus and unknown actor David Sust (in his acting debut no less) as Angelo. Finally, a haunting music score by Javier Navarrete complements the action perfectly. This whole film is very poignant in an all-encompassing manner.