

*Enys Men* Review: Mark Jenkins Slow and Complicated Descent into Madness  
Hayley Croke

Mark Jenkins' sophomore premiere of his new psychological thriller, *Enys Men*, leads its audience through a one hour and 30 minute state of psychosis. Prior to the screening of this Director's Fortnight entry, Jenkins was asked to introduce the film. He took this time to explain the Cornish origins of the film's title, explaining it translated to "Stone Island". As for any context to what the film was about or what he wanted to convey with the piece, he said the film itself was the only statement he desired to make and provided no further detail.

The film centers on a woman (Mary Woodvine), only referred to in the credits as "The Volunteer", studying wildlife on an isolated island in April of 1973. The first roughly half hour of the film takes the audience on her mundane, yet strange daily routine of waking up, making breakfast, checking on the wildlife she's there to study, throwing rocks down a small opening of a mine, checking her radio for correspondents and writing reflections of her studies- the only note being there is no change.

There are various micro focuses on smaller details of her day, such as a hyperfixation with her power generator or the length of time she spend looking at the symbolic stone the island is said to be legendary because of, but overall after the viewer sees the first few days go by it's understandable why the lack of variety in this daily routine would lead anyone to absolute insanity.

As the journal entries begin to approach May, the days begin to warp into one another, new characters are introduced in a psychedelic state and the viewer, as well as The Volunteer, begins to doubt what is real and what is imagined while in this state of extreme isolation.

The film often cuts between past and present without letting the viewer know. When Jenkins was asked about the concept of time in his piece, he explained that we live with the guarantee that the sun will rise and set each day and time will move on no matter what. His inspiration for the piece comes out of the curiosity of what would happen if that guarantee no longer existed.

The film is an ambitious venture that shows Jenkins' clear talent and the passion he puts into his work. Too often, however, he seems to get in over his head with the red herrings he plants to create the state of psychosis Woodvine very skillfully conveys. The impact of the film would have been greater if the message wasn't so muddled by the confusion the audience experiences while trying to decipher both what is actually meant to be symbolic and what the symbolism of these motifs are.

The film had a solid concept, a stellar performance from Woodvine and the type of lovingly, intentional filmmaking that Cannes celebrates; however, its delivery proves that Jenkins is still in the process of nailing down his voice as a storyteller. He intentionally does not spell out the meaning of his work, as seen through his prescreening comments introducing the film, but more needs to be done to ensure the viewer can get from point A to point B in order to appreciate the work he has made.

Film Credits:

**Enys Men (2022)**

91 minutes

**Cast:**

Mary Woodvine as *The Volunteer*

John Woodvine as *The Sailor*

**Written and Directed by:**

Mark Jenkins

**Produced by:**

Deborah Boden

Kate Byers

Ben Coren

Lauren Dark

Johnny Fewings

Kingsley Marshall

Denzil Monk

Linn Waite