

QLH-S02E08M: Midsommar

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SPEAKERS

Jessi Chartier, Jen Myers

J Jessi Chartier 00:04
Welcome to Quiet Little Horrors. Here we talk about the films that creep under your skin and take up residence in the dark.

J Jen Myers 00:17
Before we get started, as a reminder, when we talk about movies, we need to talk about everything in the movie. So there will be spoilers involved. If you haven't seen the movie or want to refresh your memory before you listen, you can stop now and do that before coming back.

J Jessi Chartier 00:31
Let's talk about Midsommar. Ooh. Jan, we get to talk about Midsommar.

J Jen Myers 00:36
Yeah, it's about time we have to.

J Jessi Chartier 00:38
Yeah, I mean, we've talked about Hereditary and now we can jump on to another Ari Aster film. I don't know what to even start with. I feel like Oh, where do we start? With Ari Aster. And this film?

J Jen Myers 00:53

Well, I mean, I can throw out that I actually, this was the first Ari Aster film I saw, I actually saw *Midsommar* before *Hereditary*. I don't know why. It's just one of those things that worked out that way. And I just went to go see *Midsommar*, when it was in theaters, because I think I had, you know, some free time and people are talking about it. And I was like, yeah, go check that out. So I didn't quite know what I was in for at least exactly. I feel like if you had seen *Hereditary* beforehand, you might be going into mid summer with a little bit of a better idea of what you're in for. But also I can say I wasn't alone. Because in the theater, I, when I saw *Midsommar*, I've never been in an audience that had so much like, you know, exclamations and like audible, "Jesus Christ," and things like that going on, because that was definitely happening a lot. So I think I maybe had I was slightly prepared. But just because I listened to like film critics and I kind of like knew what the score was going to be. But not not quite. So I kind of just walked in the *Midsommar* and experienced it without much context about the director or the type of stories and it was an experience. Yeah, that's for sure.

J Jessi Chartier 01:58

For those who haven't seen it. This is a film that is very common theme in the horror genre, the thriller genre, this type of psychological thriller, which is, you know, grief, it tackles grief head on. It tackles just trauma, getting through trauma, getting past trauma. And it's it follows again, a female lead. And but this one I feel like is is, I mean, it's considered a film about called, of course, and so I went into it thinking, all right, here we go, these poor Scandinavian people are going to get thrown under the bus and stereotyped and all these other things. And that all happened. Like I don't want to dismiss the reality that that happened. But I think that I was pleasantly surprised, because I expected this to be just another cult film, where it was like, Ooh, look how scary and weird everybody is, and how they, their rituals are gross. And, you know, I just was I was just kind of expecting an over the top. And that all was there. But this is what I liked about it is that this movie, unlike a lot of other horror films, that deals with trauma and grief, the thing that I really liked about this movie versus a lot of those others is that by the end there is a there's like a, there's almost like an indoctrination of the horror into someone's everyday existence. So unlike other cult films or other horror films, where you have this protagonist who is pushing against it, and they succeed, because they escaped from the woods, or they escape, and they do all these other things, this is very different, she becomes to not only accept it, but she becomes part of it, she becomes a very central part of it initially begrudgingly. And then by the end, you can see that she's just she's fully accepted it so she is the last survivor of the group. But it's different because she accepts like the the ritual horrors of what is going on over or as a form of catharsis for her own past. And, and that was unique. The ending for that was really unique in that regard.

J Jen Myers 04:10

Yeah, and, and all those, I mean, I don't want to put too strong meaning behind this, but it's almost kind of a positive ending, or how you talked about how it shows the cult, and everything and almost is kind of like, Oh, here's the reason why they do this in a way, which I know we can dig into this to which obviously, it's not like just black and white conclusion like that. But I always I think it's it reminded me a little bit of *Wicker Man* when we had our discussion of *The Wicker Man* or is kind of like, yeah, obviously, making sacrifices and killing people is not a behavior that we condone. But in the context of *The Wicker Man* you also had this the sense of kind of like, you wonder, you kind of understand where they're coming from. And there's also

they set up the idea that there's something kind of more you know, essential or primal that they're, they're connected to something bigger in a way that modern society is not. And that they're, you know, there's there was almost like this positive aspects of this older, more connected ritual or, you know, behaviors, whatever they go through. And and I feel like Midsommar definitely took some of these to more extreme places, but in the end, it had that same kind of balance and in this, and that's just just the pose to the the modern people coming in who, who don't have that and lack these ways of healing themselves in a way. So it's just, it's just, it's really interesting kind of folklore trope that we see almost kind of like, well, yeah, sure. You know, we're killing people. And there's all this other stuff going on. But also, we're kind of connected into these older ways of healing that modern people or not, so we got that going for us. Yeah, exactly.

J

Jessi Chartier 05:55

I think that the one yeah, there's this beautiful scene where it's not, I mean, it's after a horrible scene, but it's the point in time where the older couple has decided that they will end their life, they are terminating their life. And of course, all of the outsiders are horrified by this. And the matriarch of the area, or at least that's how she appears or the festival, head of the festival. I don't know how to position her but she has a line that says, Did you she says, I love it cause she says, Did you not prepare them as if like, it was almost not this. This wasn't a cult that was sneaky. Like it wasn't a call. I mean, they were very sneaky, right? But it wasn't a cult that was like, we're gonna brainwash you. It was just a cult that was like, This is what we do. Like we needed a we needed a fool to skin. So we found a fool. We needed this. So we found that like, it's it's not subverted it's not malicious. It's just ritualistic. And I think that that's very different. In *The Wicker Man*, where *The Wicker Man* feels very cloak and dagger, right, there's this constant fear of what is happening on versus Midsommar which is just unsettling

J

Jen Myers 07:11

Right, although it is that to continually draw the conclusions, but I do I mean, obviously, I think there's a lot of like connections to *Worker Man* in this. But also in *Wicker Man*, the the person that we're following throughout the movie is not portrayed in the best light, and whatever, he doesn't have his own kind of growth, he's very resistant to change and growth. Whereas in Midsommar, our protagonist is somebody that we're, I think, feel like we're much more on the side of, and we kind of want her to, to heal, to grow to figure this out. And so I think that's, in a way, our desire for that is so strong that we kind of, you know, may have mixed feelings about some of the things that she ends up doing in order to achieve that, because we're I, at least I feel, I feel like I, you know, I was a little bit more on Dani's side. And not just because I definitely had a, you know, relationships like hers with Christian almost to like triggering extremes. You know, we're like, Well, this is way too real. I, and I'm sure there are other women out there who have very similar feelings. But yeah, I definitely identified a lot more with her. And I think that that is an interesting thing that it leads you to kind of not exactly excuse, but you know, maybe maybe see a little bit more nuance and the things that happen.

J

Jessi Chartier 08:29

Yeah, yeah, exactly. Exactly. I think that you said it just right. It's much more real. It's much more like, yeah, this, the characters are more authentic. They're more nuanced. I mean, like

the relationship between Dani and Christian, we could talk about that for just a hot second. Like, the whole reason their relationship is unhealthy is because the two things one they don't communicate and to the codependent. Like those two things are so No, neither one of them has boundaries, and neither one of them is willing to tell the other what they need or want or has emotional intelligence. Like it's just a recipe for disaster. But I say that, and it's probably the most common dysfunction in any relationship. There is right either miscommunication or codependence or a combination of the two. Like, I just think that there's such a great authenticity to it. Like you said, you like it was almost kind of triggering, because it was so real. It's like, I watched that relationship. And I was like, Oh, dang it. I say stuff like that too. Like,

J Jen Myers 09:33
yeah, it Yeah,

J Jessi Chartier 09:34
it's very, it was very, very well crafted.

J Jen Myers 09:37
Definitely. I absolutely agree. I think that was real. And I think that that is part of what kind of well, you know, like I said, I think that's one of the hooks, right? So that like draws you into kind of everything else that goes on which is wild. Like there are things in this movie that is just Yeah, absolutely, absolutely wild, but you wouldn't I don't think that you would have the same kind of resonance You'd be even willing to believe it without that kind of grounding in the emotional states of the relationships and the people and, and all of that going on.

J Jessi Chartier 10:09
Yeah, and what Yes, exactly. I want to shift a little bit if we can to talk about how this movie is perfect for people who don't like gore, and don't like horror for the reason that I feel like, I don't know if this is Ari Aster, or if this was his director of photography, or the editor's choice, but they do a beautiful job of telegraphing all of the horrible moments like the very bloody violent, gross moments that happen. And for those of us who aren't familiar with that telegraph is a gaming terminology, it's actually video gaming terminology, where it's like an enemy does gives an indication of what he's going to do next. And so here in this movie, they do a really nice job of giving you enough, I don't want to say warning, but it's like when you feel like oh god, this is going to happen, it's actually going to happen. And it's not going to be this drawn out suspense, it's going to be at the pace you expect it to be. So it's not this huge level of suspense. So it becomes very easy. If you are a little kind of, you know, timid, around things like actually, like actually watching people break legs and things like that, it gives you the ability to be like, Yep, I'm just not gonna watch this, like, you can do that, and still really enjoy the movie. And I really appreciated that about this particular film, because it just it emphasizes that it's not a movie meant to create sudden shock, like, it's not meant to be a shock, horror. It just emphasizes how strong the storyline of this a nervousness and this taught tension can carry the whole storyline without the need to like, suddenly snap something in front of you. You

know, I just think it's a really, it's a really beautiful example of storytelling when it comes to like, how do you allow a stories, structure to carry the theme and to carry the emotion without needing to leverage cinematic devices to create that?

J Jen Myers 12:17

Right, definitely. And I think that, honestly, I feel like there are moments where I believe that people were shocked. But I think that it's more of an indication that maybe we're not used to kind of paying attention as audiences to that the underlying story structure because you're right, if you are paying attention, it's all there. In fact, why watch this for a second time at home? And in the very, I think, is it in the I think it's in the credits, but you see, like the the murals that are at the village there, and it depicts everything that happens in the movie, like you actually it's like, what's the I know, there's like art forms where you are even just like in Shakespeare, where you get the whole prologue that tells you this is hey, this is what's up. This is the story. This is what's going on, it literally does that it tell you you just don't have the context for but yeah, the whole point of this film is not surprised. And if you are surprised, then then it's almost kind of like the film saying like, hey, there's other stuff here that maybe you missed, and it's just kind of generally pointing that out to you. Or maybe not so gently if you're not paying attention to that.

J Jessi Chartier 13:22

Yeah, I remember seeing that and being like, oh, man, this is good. totally gonna happen. Like they did a lot of visual foreshadowing. Yes. And I do remember thinking, what does the bear have? Who's a bear? Like? Yeah, it was just that I think, again, it wasn't in your face, right? It was beautifully done. And they did a really nice job of all of like, we talked about juxtaposition, really beautiful job of this creating this serene atmosphere, visually, the environment that they're in the landscape, the colors, the light, like all of those things are very bright and very spring based in life coming up, and that it's, you know, pushed with these themes of very violent sacrifice and rebirth and cycle.

J Jen Myers 14:12

Right, you know, well, and that kind of is also connected. So one of the biggest things that I really took away from Midsommar was the just just the idea of catharsis and that it comes from, you know, kind of having not only the expression of the emotion, but the support and like matching of that emotion from your environment and the people around you. So like and then this literally happens in the film. Where is it? Well, third, three fourths of the way maybe closer to the end where Dani just kind of has her screaming breakdown and the whole group of women around her are also screaming and crying with her at the same time and like holding the space for her and actually found it really genuinely moving. Yeah, it's it's it's really in it. Again, you know, kind of going back to saying, Hey, I recognize aspects of relationships and stuff like that. But if you are someone who kind of had to learn how to express yourself, or you know, grew up in from a perspective where you were supposed to be repressing, and you repressed your own needs, and your communication around those needs, and that everything's okay, I'm okay, that's fine. And you know, I'm okay. That sort of thing, the idea of completely letting loose, I think is very powerful. And then not only you being able to do that, but you

being encouraged to do that, and you being supported and matched in those emotions, and is extremely powerful. And I actually think that that is, you know, part of everything you described about the visual sensibility, and the storyline and all of that. It is also that where there's this violence of emotion, but that's the only way to kind of get through it. Right. And I think that's what the whole, the whole deal is here is that there's this there's balance that must be struck, and it requires a price. And are you willing to pay that price? Do you want that balance, that sort of thing?

J Jessi Chartier 16:03

Yeah, I love that scene, and that that pain, that pain and the sense of community around it? Because I think that there is something absolutely beautiful about that. I mean, everything that they do they share? Oh, yes, everything I was about to say, well, yes, they do. Everything, everything, they share everything. And I don't think we've you know, at least in the Western culture, we have, we are often very stifled when it comes to emotion. We are not, we are allowed to have our emotions occasionally. But it makes people uncomfortable. So we can only do it for like, but the the collectiveness that this group provided in a way that was, that's what I think really balanced it out is like you have these really healthy, amazing community things that happen together like that, like that scene where Dani falls apart and give her they give her space, they give her support, they join her in her grief, but then you have these other awful rituals as well. Like, we're gonna join you when you have sex so that we can support you while you're doing that. Like it's just it's very, it's like, yeah, yeah. Oh, maybe not?

J Jen Myers 17:15

Yeah. Yeah, you know, it's one of those things, I don't think that that, we have to say that, you know, the movie is not like telling us a lesson, or anything. Like, we don't have to say, oh, it's saying this or that, you know, but it definitely is kind of pointing out, I think that I do think there is something what I was talking about earlier is like setting this whole fictional world up, as opposed to the way we move through our modern society. I do think there is something there. And I think that the horrific elements of it come out because the gap between the two is so extreme, there's no other way to reconcile them. But it's kind of like, again, it kind of goes back to the burger man thing where it's kind of like, Yes, this is this is all bad. But the man, they're connected into something, though, aren't they? You know, so maybe the only way for them to be connected in the society that is not supportive of them and their community is through these horrific ways. And the you know, if there's anything that can be said, you know, I'd like to kind of make it say it's like, well, you know, if it weren't so difficult for us to have that connectivity in connection with other people that maybe we wouldn't have to do it is that terrific means, you know, that

J Jessi Chartier 18:22

sort of thing. Yeah. And I think that that's what sets this film apart from a lot of other cult like films. And you can see that struggle. Again, with this is one of those cult films where the protagonist becomes accepting of it, she and she becomes part of it. So many other cult films are people pushing against it, you know, and in a future episode, we'll talk about The Invitation, which is also another film about that has a cult theme to it. And in there, it's an ensemble

piece. And so you get several people who are like, well, maybe this isn't such a bad idea. And you get many other people who are like, this is frickin crazy, right? Like, but I think that this did a really nice job of showing us a beautiful, cathartic film about how to deal I mean, most horror films, many I shouldn't say most, but many of them deal with metaphors of trauma of grief of, of emotional states that we cannot express. And that often causes the horrors within us. Right, right. I mean, that's, that's one of the nice things we like about the quiet little horrors that we look at is most of the time, it's an internal horror. It's not an external thing where someone's coming out at us, itself manifested. And I think that this does a really nice job of doing that. Let's talk a little bit about something totally different, though. When it comes to this film that not many people talk about is how hilarious it is. Right?

J Jen Myers 19:45

That was exactly what I was gonna bring up was like not to undercut anything you just said, which is all 100% True. But yeah, no, this film is funny and I don't mean like any light hearted, Goofy, well, it is kind of goofy. I do kind of mean in a goofy way just like this. It's absurd. It is like the true profound meeting of absurdity. And I agree with you that nobody I think it makes people uncomfortable to kind of point out that this is kind of ridiculous in a lot of ways, but it is. It's such a deep part, I think. Yeah, I think this movie is very funny. Tell you the truth.

J Jessi Chartier 20:18

Do you have? Do you have a favorite part? Or most humorous part?

J Jen Myers 20:21

Not? Not really. I just for me, it was really more of a well, well, again, this is one of the things that sound where I would say, the the first time where the movie really does kind of have a shocking twist or when the the first sacrifice happens. Or I guess it sacrifice? Yeah, well, they sacrifice themselves, right. And it's not even that and we are again, we are talking, you know, we're talking in the context of people who have seen this movie, right. So I'm sorry if anybody hasn't been still listening. But when though the one is it, the man who jumps off and it is not killed right away and has to be yes, murder them out. The mallet was funny. And I don't mean that that's when we had to put so I had to put so much layers of context around this. I don't mean it's funny in itself. But in the film, and the fact that they just did that. I'm just like, What are you doing? This is ridiculous. And I think that Ari Aster, there's something about him that understands how close comedy is to horror. And he knows how to use that uncomfortable. It's the same way with like, sometimes when a lot of times when humans are uncomfortable, they will laugh because they don't know what else to do. Right? It is easy to reach for reaction when you are uncomfortable or you don't know what to react, how to react or what to do with a certain feeling, then you laugh. And honestly, I don't know if there's anybody maybe ever who making films who understands that as well as Ari Astor does, and I think he knows how to harness that, this, that discomfort and use it to make this really, really dark comedy.

J Jessi Chartier 22:00

Yeah. I think that that's. I think you know you got it right. And when you're talking about

Yeah, I think that that's, I think, you know, you got it, right. And when you're talking about comedy, we're really talking about absurdist comedy, right? It's, it is very dark, it's very off kilter. But there are moments of like, I kind of find this funny, like, this kind of is hilarious. At the same time as being very uncomfortable. I he does a really great job of bridging those two things. You're absolutely right. Yeah. Well, our next film that we're going to be talking about, let's jump into that is going to be the invitation, which, like I said, also deals with another call and another. It's also a film about past grief, etc. But it's totally different than Midsommar and it's got amazing things all to its own that I'm excited to talk about that one.

J Jen Myers 22:48

Yeah, me too. And I think I think this is honestly I you know, we we always work at our pairings, but I feel like this is a pairing that really came together for so I'm really excited about it.

J Jessi Chartier 22:59

Me too. Me too. So Jen, if people want to learn more about us, where can they go?

J Jen Myers 23:04

You can go lots of places. So we have a website at quietlittlehorrors.com and I have links to all of the podcatchers there. So you can also just find us and subscribe on whatever when you like to use. You can also find us on Twitter at [quiethorrors](https://twitter.com/quiethorrors) and on Instagram at [quietlittlehorrors](https://www.instagram.com/quietlittlehorrors). And if you want to send us an email to give us any feedback or suggest an upcoming film. You can reach us at hello@quietlittlehorrors.com.

J Jessi Chartier 23:32

All right. Well, Jen, thanks for talking about Midsommar. I'm looking forward to next time when we talk about the invitation. Alright, see you then.

J Jen Myers 23:38

Bye, everybody.