

LAND OF MINE (Under sandet)

Denmark, Germany (2015) 100 minutes

Director: Martin Zandvliet

Cast: Roland Møller, Louis Hofmann, Joel Basman



Screening 20 March 2019 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

In Denmark, in the aftermath of World War II, a group of teenage German POWs are forced to clear a beach of thousands of their own landmines under the watch of a Danish Sergeant who slowly learns to appreciate their plight. A tough, well-made war movie – sometimes shockingly violent – about a little known and very grim moment at the end of the second world war.

Reviews



Denmark 1945. The defeated German occupiers have retreated but have left a cruel parting gift – the beaches of the west coast of Denmark are studded with more than a million landmines. The British and Danish come up with a plan: use German prisoners of war, many of them teenage boys, to clear the beaches. This oppressively tense drama follows one squad of callow, terrified soldiers who have barely grown out of childhood and into their uniforms, and the Danish officer who grudgingly becomes their protector.

It's a handsome film – the palette is all mossy greens and pensive grey-blues – but director Martin Peter Zandvliet's use of sound, or the lack of it, is his most powerful tool. Silence, but for the oblivious buzz of insects, is a vacuum, and tension floods in. That said, the clichéd schematic of the war film – that any character who expresses hope about the future is doomed – holds particularly true here.

Wendy Ide, The Guardian

In 1945, Germany ended its occupation of Denmark, leaving hundreds of thousands of land mines buried on the beaches of that country's western coast. The dangerous job of clearing them was given to German prisoners of war, a punishment that seems at once intuitively fair and obviously cruel. That ethical tension — between justice and vengeance — is the subject of Martin Zandvliet's *Land of Mine*, a tight and suspenseful film that was one of the five nominees for the foreign language film Oscar.

Filled with picturesque, windswept shots of sand and surf, *Land of Mine* focuses on the fate of about a dozen young captives, some of whom look more like boys than fighting men. They are billeted in a shack near a coastal farm, under the command of Sgt. Carl Rasmussen (Roland Møller), a Clark Gable-handsome martinet with a square jaw, a neat blond moustache and very little patience.

Mr. Zandvliet doesn't flash back to the sergeant's wartime experiences. He doesn't need to, since Mr. Møller's haunted eyes and weary countenance make it clear that his character has witnessed and suffered terrible things.

A. O. Scott, New York Times

Film Facts

- The film was shot at historically authentic locations, including in Oksbøllejren and areas in Varde.
- It is believed that more than 2,000 German soldiers were forced to remove mines, and nearly half of them lost their lives or limbs.
- The actors were trained in mine clearance 'anno 1945' at the Military Training Compound Oksbøl. During training they found a live mine. It had been there for seventy-plus years - and was in fine working condition. The mine was removed and disarmed by the Danish de-mining experts.