



Film Review

Bugonia

By Duncan Forbes



Bugonia is the new film from Yorgos Lanthimos. It stars Jesse Plemons as a paranoid, conspiracy-obsessed man who, along with his developmentally-challenged cousin (Aidan Delbis), kidnaps the CEO (Emma Stone) of the pharmaceutical company at which he works, when he becomes convinced that she is an alien.

Greek auteur Yorgos Lanthimos has proven himself as one of the most exciting directors working today, and *Bugonia* is a worthy addition to his filmography, being as bizarre, uncomfortable, and darkly comic as any of his previous works. In fact, this almost feels like the culmination of his filmography so far, featuring two of his most frequent collaborators (Stone and Plemons), and contrasting the awkward social conflict and horrible actions of *The Killing of a Sacred Deer* with the otherworldly, occasionally whimsical nature of *Poor Things*. Themes of alienation, capitalist greed, mental illness and family, all of which have featured in his prior films, are explored here. Everything about how *Bugonia* is made - from the phenomenal cinematography



of Robbie Ryan to the eerie score of Jerskin Fendrix - is fantastic. The acting is universally great, with Jesse Plemons delivering perhaps his best performance to date, and Emma Stone giving another great turn under Lanthimos' direction. Aidan Delbis, who plays the vulnerable and kind Don, impresses in his feature film debut. While all three main characters aren't especially good people, they are all nuanced and complex, in large part thanks to the emotive and committed

performances. The script is also excellent, with both the twisty story (based on the 2003 Korean film *Save the Green Planet!*) and the dialogue being tremendous. There are a few issues with *Bugonia*, however. The pacing is inconsistent, the violence is brief but shocking, and the ending is destined to be divisive. Some people might not even be able to decide themselves whether the twist makes an already interesting film even more memorable and unique, or whether it basically invalidates everything that came before. Ultimately, this won't be for everyone, just like all of Lanthimos' other films. But those who enjoy his idiosyncratic vision and cringey but enjoyable stories will surely find that *Bugonia* stands among the very best movies of the visionary director's career.

