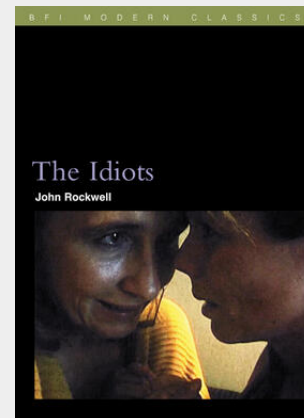


Rockwell

The Idiots

A Dogme film, "The Idiots" is quintessential Lars von Trier and perhaps his most powerful work. John Rockwell shows how it relates to the other two films in the "Good Woman" trilogy, as well as von Trier's Danish television work and his direction of Wagner's "Ring" cycle at the Bayreuth Festival.

Lars von Trier was the wunderkind of European cinema in the 1990s, a guiding light of the Dogme 95 movement, and a filmmaker who, more than any of his peers, divided critics and spectators. In keeping with Dogme principles, "The Idiots" (1998) was shot with a hand-held camera, without ornamental music and on real locations. Set in a commune, the film sparked great controversy for showing a group of young people in search of their "inner idiots". Yet it moved many in its patent concern for showing people in primal states and the tragedies that precipitate and result from those states. As well as being a Dogme film "The Idiots" is quintessential von Trier and, in John Rockwell's view, perhaps his most powerful work. It forms a trilogy - the "Good Woman" trilogy - with "Breaking the Waves" (1996) and "Dancer in the Dark" (2000). Rockwell shows how "The Idiots" relates to the other two films in addition to von Trier's celebrated early work in Danish television and his foray into directing Wagner's "Ring" cycle at the Bayreuth Festival. The result is a rich and illuminating interpretation of the key work of von Trier.



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