KINOnik

CUL-DE-SAC (1966)

Directed by Roman Polanski

WEDNESDAY October 8th 7PM

SATURDAY October 11th 7PM



“This is a film in which the characters are imprisoned in a circle defined by the shores of an island, and are ultimately faced with the option of departure or death.”

In his second English feature, Roman Polanski channels Beckett: **Cul-de-Sac** (1966) is an absurd black comedy brimming with psychosexual obsession and mounting madness. Building on key elements such as isolation and power imbalances from previous films and ratcheting them up to the next level, resulted in the closest Polanski felt he ever got to “pure cinema”. It's Polanski at his strangest, forgoing more classical camera techniques in favor of a responsive, active cinematography that entrenches the piece in imbalance.

The premise is both straightforward and bizarre: two criminals, injured and on the run, take refuge in a castle occupied by a peculiar British man and his flighty second wife until their mob contacts can rescue them. A surprise dinner party threatens their efforts to stay incognito, and the tense web of secrets, power plays and sexual advances spins the film into a uniquely bleak bacchanalia rife with eggs, milk, and violence. The antipathy between characters wasn’t merely acting: overlong shoots, personality clashes, and miserable weather escalated tension behind scenes to the point that the actors staged a mutiny and Polanski considered giving up directing.

The final cut made it all worth it. Many involved cited it as one of the best projects they ever worked on, and Polanski continues to rate it among the best of his career. A film that cannot be explained so much as it has to be experienced, we are lucky to have a fantastic 16mm print that will let you sink right into the absurdity. It is a film you can bring something new away from each time you see it: a new joke caught here, a strange dynamic shift there, each character reduced to their base psyche and let run loose for the audience’s unease and entertainment.