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Stromboli

Stromboli, terra di Dio Roberto Rossellini

ITALY, 1949

English

107 minutes | Black & white/DCP (D-Cinema)

Screenplay: Roberto Rossellini, Sergio Amidei, Gian Paolo Callegari, Renzo Cesana, Art Cohn, Felix Morlion

Cinematographer: Otello Martelli

Principal Cast: Ingrid Bergman, Mario Vitale, Renzo Cesana, Mario Sponza

Preceded by:

The War of the Volcanoes

Francesco Patierno

ITALY, 2012

52 minutes | Black & white/DCP (D-Cinema)

The remote Aeolian Islands became the centre of the world in 1949, when two separate film production crews arrived to shoot on their rocky, treacherous slopes: Roberto Rossellini's *Stromboli*, starring his soon-to-be wife Ingrid Bergman, and William Dieterle's *Vulcano*, starring Rossellini's recently jilted ex-lover Anna Magnani. Featuring exceedingly rare archival footage, *The War of the Volcanoes* explores one of the most explosive love scandals in film history.

Few restoration efforts match the scope and importance of the Rossellini Project, which has recently undertaken to restore ten essential films by the neorealist master.

The scandal over the love affair between Rossellini and Ingrid Bergman broke as they were shooting *Stromboli*, the first film in Rossellini's "Voyage Trilogy," and the film was subsequently denounced or banned in various countries. Since then, it has frequently circulated in dupe, crudely abbreviated and revised versions. Now, this "genuinely great" (Martin Scorsese) work returns, restored to its full elemental beauty.

Once traduced as stiff and polemical, the "Voyage Trilogy" is now frequently vaunted as the equal of Rossellini's epochal War Trilogy; the films' abstract formal beauty, themes of spiritual malaise and transformation, and their metaphoric use of architecture, objects, and landscape, make them an inexhaustible source of contemplation and inspiration. Godard, Bergman, Truffaut, Fellini, Rivette, Resnais, Scorsese, and especially Antonioni are all indebted to Rossellini's second triptych; *L'Avventura*, for instance, clearly looks back to *Stromboli* in its stark Sicilian island landscapes and its central character, a northern woman placed in an alien *Mezzogiorno* setting of unyielding atavistic tradition.

In *Stromboli* Bergman plays Karin, a Lithuanian refugee who marries a fisherman (Mario Vitale) from the volcanic island of Stromboli in order to escape from an internment camp. But the marriage is a different kind of imprisonment, the geography

harsh and inhospitable, and Karin, rebelling against the constraints of peasant society and against a God she seems not to believe in, again attempts to decamp. Critics have long debated whether Karin's climactic, mystical conversion has been adequately prepared for, and whether it is an expression of divine grace or a severe divestiture of ego—not necessarily incompatible, as we know from Bresson—but Martin Scorsese has no such doubts, calling *Stromboli* "an intensely moving exploration of sainthood and spirituality."

JAMES QUANDT



Roberto Rossellini was born in Rome. He came to international prominence with his War Trilogy of *Rome Open City* (45), *Paisan* (46) and *Germany Year Zero* (48). His other films include *Stromboli* (49), *Francis*, *God's Jester* (50), *Europa '51* (52), *Voyage in Italy* (54), *The Taking of Power by Louis XIV* (66), *Socrates* (70), *Blaise Pascal* (72), *The Age of the Medici* (73) and *The Messiah* (75).

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