

Document Citation

Title	The Atlantic
Author(s)	Peter Culley
Source	<i>Vancouver International Film Festival</i>
Date	1996 Sep 24
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	126
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Atlanten (The Atlantic), Röed, Jan, 1995

Sweden



The Atlantic

Atlanten

Sweden, 1994, 76 minutes

Director: Jan Röed, Kristian Petri, Magnus Enquist

Narrator: Max von Sydow

Producer: Jan Röed **Screenplay:** Kristian Petri **Cinematographer:** Jan Röed

Editor: Jan Röed **Music:** Dror Feiler **Production Company:** Charon Film AB

Print Source: Swedish Film Institute **Sales Agent/Distributor:** Charon Film AB

North American Premiere

The Atlantic is a meditation that evokes the vastness of its subject without ignoring the specificities of the lives lived on and around it. Moving from north to south, the film travels from Iceland to South Georgia (one of the Falkland dependencies), stopping at the Azores, Cape Verde, Staten Island and St. Helena. Beginning as a quasi-spiritual disquisition on the nature of islands somberly narrated by Max von Sydow (shades of *Europa!*), the film's real strength lies in allowing both human and geographic events to overwhelm its thesis.

Rarely has the play of light on land and water been so vividly captured on film. From the austere volcanic landscapes of Iceland to luxuriant Cape Verdean forests, Jan Röed's cinematography has an often breathtaking hyper-real clarity and density of texture. What could have been merely aestheticized travelogue is balanced by the filmmakers' attentive and respectful witnessing of the human presence. The Azorean harbour master with the world's largest whiskey collection, the Cape Verdean writer who defines her culture in terms of a poignant longing for rain, the wistful last governor of St. Helena, Britain's last colony—all are among those given an attention appropriate to their singularity.

In the haunting final sequence, the camera roams an abandoned whaling station in South Georgia, and paradoxically finds human traces everywhere, as if the isolated crews of Antarctic whalers and processors had disappeared into thin air. Coming at last to a deserted cinema, the film concludes in images of tentativeness and fragility. It is in this recognition of the marginal and transitory, as well as in its capacity for awe, that *The Atlantic* attains distinction.

Peter Culley

Selected Filmography: *Tong Tana* (89), *Systrarna från Dossitten* (95)