

Maelstrom: Intrigue in Norway

"There are way too few good parts for women in television programs these days."

A bold statement especially for someone like Michael J. Bird who became famous mostly by his writing of miniseries dominated by men. Jack Hedley in "Who Pays the Ferryman", Peter McEnery in "Aphrodite's Inheritance" and Peter Egan and Patrick Mower in "Dark Side of the Sun". But Bird claims that he has changed his life for the better. "It's because I took note of the lack of good female roles that I decided to do something about it. I am planning to only create series based on strong and independent women for the time being. This is already the case in "Maelstrom". It is definitely no coincidence that there are so many headstrong women in this series."

In any case, Ann Todd, the 73 year old British film world veteran who appears in every episode of "Maelstrom" except the first, is most grateful for this as, in her own opinion, she has not been offered a decent part since 1979 and has switched to making documentaries. She even went as far as trekking through the Himalaya's with a tent but this was cut short after a nasty fall in her flat during the last year. Michael Bird has admired her for years and asked her to play the part of Astrid Linderman, an elderly Norwegian lady who knows everything but keeps her mouth firmly shut for everyone who tries to prise her secrets from her. Although Ann Todd has seen much of the world, the Scandinavian location for "Maelstrom" was a welcome surprise. "So pleasant, the peace and quiet and all the beautiful spots. And eating fish every day, delicious and healthy as well."

Location

Does this mean that Michael J. Bird has become bored with the Mediterranean? One could come to this conclusion from the fact that instead of Crete, Cyprus or Rhodes where his series Ferryman, Aphrodite and Dark Side were filmed, he chose the Norwegian fjords around the town of Alesund as location for his latest mini series.

Bird has a very strong opinion on this. "The location plays a big part in the story. In this case the place is very beautiful, snow covered mountain tops and crystal clear water in the fjords. However, as much as the outside may look lovely, one knows nothing of the inside. The same applies to the Norwegians. At first glance they may appear to be very friendly and cordial people but they never show their true feelings.

Leading lady Tusse Silberg (37) who was born in Sweden but grew up in England, agrees with him. "The lovely location is very misleading. You wouldn't know it but the fjords are as deep as the mountains are high. These surroundings can be hard and emanate a feeling of hostility, The maelstrom after which the series was named is a gulf stream which has caused many fatal accidents involving people and ships. The same applies to the series where innocent people's lives are ruined by evil powers and events. I play the part of an innocent English girl who is threatened to be sucked down in this

“maelstrom” but I won’t tell you how it ends. You will have to wait and see for yourselves.

Inheritance

To make it easier for the viewers who missed seeing “Maelstrom” on Belgian television last year here are some facts about the series: at the same time as she loses her job with a London advertising agency, 27 year old Catherine Durrell is surprised to hear that she is about to receive an inheritance. A total stranger, Norwegian industrial millionaire Jalmar Jordahl leaves her a factory and two houses in Alesund. On her arrival in Norway she makes the acquaintance of Jordahl’s two daughters and becomes entangled in the family’s history and ensuing intrigues. However, Bird could not entirely avoid using the aid of a strong man to complete his story. Although Catherine may be an independent woman, when she desperately needs help, local journalist Anders Bjornson comes to her rescue.

**Translated from Dutch to English by Anna Pereboom
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