

Music Box Films Presents

BREAKING SURFACE

Directed by Joachim Hedén

Starring Moa Gammel, Madeleine Martin, Trine Wiggen



82 MIN | SWEDEN, BELGIUM, NORWAY | 2019 | NOT RATED | IN SWEDISH AND NORWEIGAN WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

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Logline

During a winter dive on a remote part of the coast in Northern Norway, two sisters' lives fall into danger; when a rockfall traps one of the sisters on the ocean floor, a battle against time begins in the middle of the wilderness.

Summary

A few days after Christmas, half-sisters Ida and Tuva set out on a winter dive in a remote part of the Norwegian coastline. Towards the end of the dive, a rockslide traps Tuva under water. As Ida surfaces to call for help, she discovers that the rockslide has struck above water as well, burying their equipment, phones and car keys--they are completely cut off from any chance of outside rescue. As the frantic race for survival unfolds, Ida is put to the ultimate test of character and forcefulness. During Ida's fight to save Tuva, a fractured sisterhood is exposed, and when all seems lost, the stakes rise beyond simple survival.

Director's Statement

Joachim Hedén

It feels great to present an original story that is truly cinematic. This is a film that takes you into a new world, but is one with very real and relatable dangers. It's also a bit of extra fun to see two women really go for it in very physical leads in which we usually see "tough guys".

The production was incredibly strenuous: from deep and dark water-tanks in Belgium, to harsh winter conditions on the west coast of Sweden, and to the scenic but intimidating Lofoten which has new snowstorm hiding behind every mountain.

I'm deeply impressed with how the lead actresses Moa and Madeleine have delivered fantastic emotional performances under these extreme conditions. This has really been something completely out of the ordinary for actors, and pretty much all the diving we see in the film is done by Moa and Madeleine themselves without stunt doubles.

I think we've made a movie that can really get the audience on the edge of their seats.

Interview with the Director Joachim Hedén

Q: How did you come up with the idea for *Breaking Surface*?

A: Originally I had an idea of two mountain climbers that lost their equipment halfway up a mountain, but I couldn't really find a "ticking clock" in that situation. Then one day, without knowing that I had this mountain-climber idea, Julia (Gebauer) the producer, came into the office and out of the blue said "Oh, I wish someone could come up with an exciting movie, underwater, with divers." and then I thought -- hey, if I made those two mountain climbers two divers instead...all of a sudden I had the ticking clock.

Q: Why did you cast Moa (Gammel Ginsburg), and Madeleine (Martin)?

A: I had seen Moa in other films and had her in mind while I was writing. And, when she came in to do a screen test, she just blew everyone away with a performance that was both physical and emotional. Madeleine I had also seen in other films, and had always thought that we should work with her if an opportunity presented itself. But, at the time she was in the last year of a very prestigious acting program at the Stockholm Dramatic Arts Institute, and wasn't really available. But after her agent slipped her a copy of the script, she just decided that this was a part she just HAD to have, and we were able to work out a deal with the institute. Madeleine also had a very specific idea of what she wanted to bring to the part, and that's a director's dream.

Q: You shot the film under very difficult conditions. How was that?

A: All the underwater work was of course an enormous challenge, but we had prepped for the underwater shoot for a year and a half. So, once we got on set, we had everything worked out to the smallest detail. We were also working in what has to be the top underwater soundstage in the world. It's a newly constructed underwater studio outside Brussels that was simply perfect for our needs. So, as complex as all the underwater work was, it was actually more difficult to shoot all the exteriors on the west coast of Sweden and in Lofoten Norway. The film is set in wintertime, so we were shooting in February. Not a pleasant time to be on the coastline of Scandinavia... (laughs). There was always another snowstorm coming our way to make things difficult. One of the toughest days for the actors and the crew was when we were shooting on the water surface in the open ocean, in February, and the sea was so rough that the barge that had a portable Jacuzzi for warming up between takes couldn't be towed into place. All that remained was for Moa, Madeleine, and the crew to simply tough it out in the cold and get the shots that we needed.

Q: What is unique about the film?

A: There are not a lot of films that play out underwater like ours do, so of course this is the first thing that comes to mind. But, in addition to this, we also have the stark grandeur of the arctic north of Scandinavia. It's a true adventure: a race for survival that takes place in an environment that few people have seen before.

Interview with Moa Gammel Guinsburg & Madeleine Martin

Q: What's your relationship to water?

A (Moa): I can understand that people like to go diving in warm tropical waters with nice corals and fishes, but being in icy winter waters is not very pleasant. I'd rather not do it again... (smiles).

A (Madeleine): I'm not even a good swimmer; I mostly do the dog paddle... (Laughs)

Q: But you still wanted to do the film?

A (Moa): It's rare that you get to read a script that is a real page turner, and it's a one-of-a kind film that has never been done before.

A (Madeleine): I had wanted to work with Moa for a long time, and in addition to the script being really exciting, it's also rare to get a script with two female leads where the central conflict isn't centered around a man.

Q: Did you have any doubts along the way?

A (Moa): I actually jumped ship at one point. After the first few days of dive training I wrote this crazy e-mail to Joachim (the director) saying it was too scary, that I couldn't make it and that he had to find another actor to do it. But, then I slept on it and when I woke up the next morning I realized I would regret it so much if I didn't do the film just because I was scared. So the production totally reorganized the dive training and set me up with a fantastic dive teacher that also followed me all the way through production. And once I got past my initial fears, I really enjoyed doing all the diving.

A (Madeleine): Sometimes it was scary. My character spends quite a bit of time trapped under water so I had to fight my own claustrophobia, but focusing on the acting, being in the moment with the character and getting into her fears actually helped to push away my own feelings about being trapped under water.

Q: After shooting all the underwater scenes, you also had to spend quite some time in the snow.

A (Moa): (Laughs) ...Yes, we were all so focused on the underwater work, that we had almost forgotten that we had to shoot winter exteriors for a month.

A (Madeleine): The story is set in winter, in the arctic part of Norway. It's such a beautiful place and provides such a dramatic backdrop for the fight for survival that these two characters go through.

A (Moa): But there was always another snowstorm coming...

A (Madeleine): It was tough, but it was worth it.

Q: You play two sisters with a bit of a complicated relationship...?

A (Madeleine): Yes, this was one draw of the story. Underneath all the suspense and action is a story of a broken sisterhood.

A (Moa): At the beginning of the story, the two sisters are quite far from each other, but during these extreme conditions they find each other again as sisters. My character also carries guilt over a near drowning accident from their childhood, and this is what pushes her to make some critical decisions.

Q: Any last thoughts?

A (Moa): I'm really proud of what we've made. It's an action thriller with a lot of heart...

A (Madeleine): (Jumping in) ...And it's a film that really takes you into a new world that not many people has seen before. I'm also so very grateful to have gone on this journey together with Moa.

A (Moa): It's like we developed a sisterhood, the two of us during production.

A (Madeleine): Yes, and I think that is what helped us through this tough shoot. We had each other.

Q: Ok, one last question -- now that the shoot is over, will you go on dive holidays?

A (Moa): No... (Laughs)

A (Madeleine): I think it will be a while before I even go swimming in a pool.

A (Moa): But if we go together, maybe...

A (Madeleine): Maybe, but the water has to be really warm.

Director's Biography

Joachim Hedén (1967) is the writer and director of BREAKING SURFACE. His other work includes the Tribeca Film Festival selection NEW YORK WAITING (2006), FRAMILY (2010), as well as the soccer comedy 10.000 TIMMAR (2014).

Producers' Biography

Julia Gebauer and Jonas Sörensson have recently co-produced the Danish documentary IT TAKES A FAMILY (Susanne Kovács, 2019), and the Danish feature TIL VI FALDER (Samanou Acheche Sahlstrøm, 2018).

Other notable productions are 10.000 TIMMAR (Joachim Hedén, 2014), HOW TO STOP A WEDDING, (Drazen Kuljanin 2014), and NEW YORK WAITING (Joachim Hedén, 2006). Jonas Sörensson also produced the short film PLEASURE (Ninja, Thyberg, 2013), winner of the Canal+ Award at Cannes.

Julia Gebauer is an EAVE Producers Workshop graduate (2016).

Main Cast Biographies

Moa Gammel - Ida

Moa Gammel is a Swedish actress, director, screenwriter, producer and published author.

Gammel made her acting debut at The Royal Dramatic Theatre at the age 12 and experienced her public breakthrough opposite acclaimed actor Michael Nyqvist in Johan Brisinger's drama SUDDENLY in 2014.

Gammel has appeared in more than 40 film and television productions. TOMMY (dir. Tarek Saleh), HEMMA (dir. Maximilian Hult), PUSS (dir. Johan Kling) are a few notable ones along with ITV's JORDSKOTT, for which Gammel was nominated Best Actress at the British Academy Television Awards in 2016.

In 2018, Gammel directed the radio drama SVITEN and was nominated for Best Radio Drama at the prestigious Prix Europa. In 2020, she will release her first feature LASSE MAJAS DETEKTIVBYRÅ – TÅGRÅNERENS HEMLIGHET and her first novel, GERTRUD.

Madeleine Martin - Tuva

Madeleine Martin is a Swedish actress that started her professional career at the age of 17 in the Swedish TV series RIVERSIDE.

Since then Madeleine has appeared in several TV series, and feature films like STUDIO SEX, ETERNAL SUMMER and the internationally renowned films SNABBA CASH/EASY MONEY and SNABBA CASH – LIVET DELUX/ EASY MONEY – LIFE DELUXE.

Madeleine Martin was nominated as a "Rising Star" by The Stockholm International Film festival in both 2012 and 2013 and won "Best Actress" at the Swedish Short Film Festival in 2019.