



The Main Feature

Season 41 – Issue 5 - Screening 11 November 2021

Bait

UK 2019

89 mins. Certificate 15

Written & Directed	Mark Jenkin
Cinematography	Mark Jenkin
Film Editing	Mark Jenkin

Cast

Edward Row	Martin Ward
Giles King	Steven Ward
Isaac Woodvine	Neil Ward
Mary Woodvine	Sandra Leigh
Simon Shepherd	Tim Leigh
Jowan Jacobs	Hugo Leigh
Georgia Ellery	Katie Leigh
Wenna Kowalski	Chloe Endean



Close your eyes and think of Cornwall.

I'm fairly sure our images would be largely positive, informed by family holidays, endless celebrity travelogues trailing the county's delights and several popular small screen series. Cue a technicolour montage of golden beaches, picturesque harbours, wild surf, rugged countryside pockmarked with old mine workings, tricorn hats and an unconventional doctor treating quirky locals. Plus of course the age-old dilemma that all visitors face – is it clotted cream or jam first on the scones? (Just so you know – it's jam then cream in Cornwall, but the reverse in Devon).

There is of course another less glamorous side to Cornwall.

Measured by average household income, the county is amongst the poorest in the UK. The historic mainstays (tin & copper mining, china clay extraction; fishing; farming) have been in long-term decline, and the buoyant tourist industry (now around a quarter of the economy) tends to be relatively low paid and seasonal. At the same time, parts of the county, especially near the coast, have high house prices, inflated by demand from relatively wealthy retired incomers, second-home owners and holiday lets¹. Locals are crowded out from living in many parts of the county.

¹ The Office for National Statistics published their 2020 housing affordability survey earlier this year, which showed a ratio of local house prices against gross local full-time earnings at 9.2x for Cornwall, against an average for all England & Wales of 7.8x.

Tonight's film *Bait* deals with the tensions between locals and 2nd home owners in a once-thriving fishing village.

Martin Ward (played by local actor & comedian Edward Rowe) is a cove fisherman without a boat, living alone in a small house above the harbour. He is perennially sullen. He scrapes a living selling his meagre catch of beach-netted fish while filleting away £20 notes in a biscuit tin towards a new boat. He resents his brother Steven (Giles King) who has re-purposed their late father's vessel as a tourist tripper and takes rowdy, moneyed visitors on 30-minute sightseeing trips around the harbour. Furthermore, he blames Steven for the sale of their harbour side family home to incomers Tim and Sandra Leigh (Simon Shepherd and Mary Woodvine), who have redecorated it with clichéd nautical tat. "All bloody ropes and chains. Looks like a sex dungeon," Martin seethes. His irritation ratchets up a further notch when his ramshackle van gets clamped for parking in the now-reserved spaces outside his former family home. Meanwhile, the incomers' teenage daughter (Katie) becomes involved with Steven's ruggedly handsome son Neil, whilst her disapproving (and gormless) brother Hugo is suspected of raiding Martin's sole lobster pot.

It does not end happily.

Shooting locations included Gooninnis House in St Agnes, Charlestown and West Penwith, all in Cornwall.



The film was a labour of love for Newlyn-based Mark Jenkin, who had previously made several locally-set shorts. It was shot (in black and white) on grainy 16mm film stock using a 1970's vintage clockwork Bolex cine camera, with all the sound synched in later. The film was hand-processed, creating ghostly glitches and scratches on the print (and a couple of scenes glitter – apparently from pollen that wafted into the developing room). The soundtrack is sparse and ethereal.

It was first exhibited at the Berlin Film Festival in early 2019, and then played to appreciative audiences at independent cinemas across the South West. It won the BAFTA Award that year for Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer.

On Rotten Tomatoes (the website that aggregates cinematic critical opinion) it currently scores a "100% favourable" rating with glowing reviews from the Guardian, the Times and Empire amongst others. Mark Kermode, writing in the Observer, was particularly enamoured claiming "it's a genuine modern masterpiece, which establishes Jenkin as one of the most arresting and intriguing British film-makers of his generation," noting that "Jenkin has crafted a 21st-century feature that carries within its DNA the evolution of the moving image" and concluding that "*Bait* looks set to become one of the defining British films of the year, perhaps the decade."

Reviews from "ordinary punters" on imdb.com were rather more mixed, with user "Emperor's New Clothes" speaking for many when (s)he wrote..." another waste of lottery money on a film with no audience outside of the deluded critics who always hype such rubbish."

So watch and decide!

Eugene Smith



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Films in Cornwall: Eugene Smith assesses how the county has been represented on screen

Extract from the Guardian

Laura Snapes - interview with Mark Jenkin in August 2019

Being from Cornwall, I found his writing as striking as the film's aesthetic. Too often, the county is portrayed as a dopey backwater or a picturesque backdrop to Poldark's peccs; its people easy punchlines speaking in a generic "Mometerset" accent. Jenkin's ear for local cadence is part of *Bait's* spellbinding rhythm. Take this exchange between Martin and a taxi driver: "All right?" "Spot on." "Ideal." What probably sounds gnomish scans as a whole conversation to locals.

"Generally, it's awful," Jenkin says of Cornwall on screen. "I'm careful not to sound too precious about it – and it's the same for a lot of places – but it's laziness on the part of film-makers. If you want a stupid character, rather than writing a complex character that's a bit stupid, just give them a Cornish accent."

Fair comment? Consider these films set in Cornwall

Fisherman's Friends (Chris Foggin/2019/12A/112 mins) also dubbed *The Anti-Bait*
Filmed in Port Isaac

True story about a group of Cornish fishermen (led by James Purefoy) who achieved a top 10 hit with their debut album of traditional sea shanties. Charming & gentle, it plays up the Cornish clichés to great effect. A sequel (set at Glastonbury...) is apparently in production.

Ladies in Lavender (Charles Dance/2004/12A/104 mins)
Filmed near Helston and Cadgwith
Two elderly sisters (Dames Judy Dench and Maggie Smith) befriend a

mysterious foreigner who washes up on the beach of their 1930s Cornish seaside village. Captivating and touching. Shown by WNCC in 2006 (rating not recorded!).

Straw Dogs (Sam Peckinpah/1971/X/113 mins)
Filmed in St Bunyan, Penwith
A young American (Dustin Hoffman) and his English wife (Susan George) face increasingly vicious harassment from the local villagers. Graphically violent film that suggests Cornish men are inbred brutes with few redeeming features.

Saving Grace (Nigel Cole/2000/15/93 mins)
Filmed in Port Isaac
A widow (Brenda Blethyn) staves off bankruptcy by growing and selling marijuana. Described as "Cheech and Chong meets Benny Hill." Notable for the first appearance of Martin Clunes as Dr Bamford, later renamed *Doc Martin* in 71 episodes (and counting) of the ITV/ITV3 staple, also filmed in Port Isaac.

Blue Juice (Carl Prechezer/1995/15/90 mins)
Filmed in St Agnes
JC (Sean Pertwee) has to decide between surfing/being with his mates (including Ewan McGregor) and his girlfriend (Catherine Zeta-Jones). Slight but fun coming-of-age drama. With waves.

Jamaica Inn (Alfred Hitchcock/1939/A/108 mins)
Filmed on Bodmin Moor/across Cornwall
Daphne du Maurier's tale of pirates and ship-wrecking smugglers. Charles Laughton hams it up. Remade several times – the last version (BBC, 2014) was roundly criticised for atrocious accents (when you could hear them!). Perhaps this was the example Mark Jenkin was thinking of....

There is also a long list of films that use Cornwall for location shots, often

doubling for other areas. One example was *Die Another Day* (Lee Tamahori/2002/12A/133 mins) – Pierce Brosnan's last film as 007. Some (North Korean) beach scenes were shot at Newquay: the Eden Project doubled as an Iceland diamond mine.

More films/Cornish locations at

<https://www.cornwalllive.com/news/celebs-tv/45-tv-shows-movies-filmed-3676313>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornwall_film_locations

Comments and reactions to: **Permission**

No of reaction slips received = 20

Average score = 6.60

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	~	~	1	4	7	1	4	3	~

An excellent choice of film for One World Week. Sadly, the message of the film was that nothing will change on women's rights in Iran **Gutsy**
There but for the grace of God go I *We need more films like this and so glad it was made in Iran*
Good choice for film club *Could be called 'fast 'n' furious subtitles'*
Thought-provoking *Eye-opener, we are lucky to have freedoms*
I always enjoy One World Week for films I wouldn't see otherwise
I didn't like the character Afrooz. I felt she got what she deserved
One can only hope the husband has an awful life in future
Good to have this insight into Iranian culture, though the outcome seemed inevitable from the start
Tedious, lacked nuance. Clearly indefensible male behaviour but too black and white
Either the law should apply to everyone, or those that define it should stand down
Wonder how a similar film made in late '60s in the UK would have looked? The British Medical Journal in 1972 still referred to a husband's consent being required for a hysterectomy. It took until late 1970s for the practice of demanding a male guarantor on a female mortgage application to die out in the UK.

Position	Film	Average score
1	Nomadland	7.13
2	Parasite	7.07
3	Permission	6.60
4	Baby Driver	6.19

Forthcoming attraction: 25 November 2021 – **The Farewell**



A headstrong Chinese-American woman returns to China when her beloved grandmother is diagnosed with terminal cancer. She struggles with her family's decision to keep grandma in the dark about her own illness as they all stage an impromptu wedding to see grandma one last time.
 imdb

In sharing her story with us, director Lulu Wang achieves a masterful tonal balance throughout

The Farewell. She's made a film about death that's light on its feet and never mawkish. She's told a story about cultural clashes without ever leaning on wacky stereotypes or lazy clichés. She finds a variety of moments for her actors to shine within a large ensemble cast. And she's pulled off one of the most perfect endings you'll ever see. The entire film is pretty perfect, actually, and it's one of the year's best. RogerEbert.com