

Irina Palm

von Thelma Louise Freedman

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Regie: Sam Garbarski

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Irina Palm is a movie that goes back and forth between two totally different worlds. The one world portrays family, responsibility and good values, and the other world the sordid, self-contained atmosphere of a sex bar where people are detached and impersonal. Maggie's (Marianne Faithfull) young grandson is dying of cancer and the last shimmer of hope is a treatment available only in Australia. Because of the long illness money is scarce. Maggie no longer owns her house and the bank turns her down for a loan. She is humiliated at an employment agency where she is declared too old and unskilled to apply for a job. Naively, Maggie inquires about a "hostess wanted" sign in a London sex club. It turns out that the job description is very much different than the coffee making that Maggie had imagined. Club owner Miki (Miki Manojlovic) promises an incredible salary though and out of desperation Maggie agrees. Very soon her smooth hands make her famous and men are standing in line to be Irina Palm's (alias Maggie) customer. Not even an attack of "penis elbow" deters her. (For more details, see the film!). Adapting to her circumstances, Maggie eventually even finds rapport with Miki.

This is very much a film women will identify with – the portrayal of an emotional mother/grandmother who is willing to make great sacrifices for the sake of her family. When the source of her money is discovered and Maggie is treated with such indignity by her son and the local villagers, she is forced to question whether it is necessary to remain on the same path one has always followed or whether new situations which were previously unacceptable could actually become acceptable.

Marianne Faithfull is a wonderful actress. Hearing her voice in the film reminds you of the good songs this former pop singer has recorded. Also dominant is an interesting guitar score. At one point when Maggie was walking home alone with her confused thoughts and the guitar was throbbing, I was reminded of music in an old western and a cowboy walking slowly toward a shoot out.