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'Gentle Monster' Review: Léa Seydoux Gives A Committed Performance In Cluttered Story Of A Family Torn Apart – Cannes Film Festival

By [Stephanie Bunbury](#)

May 15, 2026 3:20pm

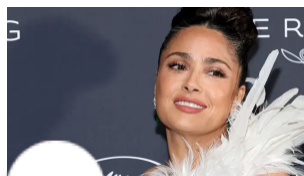


**'Gentle Monster'**

MK2 Films

In 2022, Austrian director [Marie Kreutzer](#) released [Corsage](#), the excellent feminist re-reading of the life of 19th century Empress Elizabeth, known as Sissi, with Vicki Krieps as the eccentric, anorexic empress and Florian Teichtmeister as her philandering husband, Franz Joseph I. The following year, Teichtmeister was arrested and pleaded guilty to possession of child pornography: 76,000 files spread over 22 devices. Teichtmeister received a suspended sentence, which outraged many Austrians horrified by this crime committed by a prominent cultural figure. Inevitably, Kreutzer's film was tarnished by association and even withdrawn from cinemas.

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accusations. Léa Seydoux gives a very committed, unaffected performance as Lucy, an experimental pianist who must deal with the dawning knowledge that her beloved husband Philip (Laurence Rupp) has a second life online as a pedophile pornographer.

Lucy, Philip and their small son have moved away from the concert circuit to a beautiful old farmhouse in Bavaria, where Lucy hopes a slower pace of life will smooth away Philip's panic attacks. The two worst things for a female artist, her mother (Catherine Deneuve) tells her, are to have children and live in the country. Lucy snickers ruefully. She gives every impression of arranging her life around the endearing Philip's frailties.

Nothing has prepared her, however, for the moment when a special unit of the Munich police arrive on their fully renovated doorstep. Only the day before, they had been discussing ditching their phones altogether in favor of a landline and more time spent together in their happy bubble. In one clean sweep, all Philip's devices are gone. As expected, they find tens of thousands of images of child pornography stored on them, just as they did in real life with Teichtmeister. There are violent images. There are images Philip has made himself. There are pictures of their son.

With something so monstrous at its center, this is hardly a story that needs gussying up with subplots, secondary characters and flashbacks. But, like a busy detective, Kreutzer has a lot of files on her desk. Detective Kühn (Jella Haase), the lead investigator, is a terrier fixed on a single quarry, firmly uninterested in sympathizing with snowflake wives. Fine. But less fine is Kreutzer's decision to make Kühn's own domestic challenges a parallel story, set up in clumsy counterpoint with Lucy's. Kühn's father (Sylvester Groth), a passionate philologist, has dementia. It hasn't yet dulled his appetite for pedantry, but his inhibitions have long since flown the coop; he won't stop groping his carer, who is threatening to leave.

Kreutzer cuts clunkily and repeatedly between the ongoing crises in two households, presumably implying that the men in these women's lives are all tarred with the same patriarchal brush. If that is the point, it's both banal and wrong, since there is no equivalence between them. Maybe she's just pointing out that everyone is hurting underneath, but there's not much sign of that either; Kühn's stony boss-girl mien never weakens.

Also distracting is a long flashback sequence harkening back to happier sun-drenched days, when perhaps there were signs of trouble that Lucy failed to spot. In a more conventionally dramatic film, this would be a culminating scene when all is revealed; instead, it proves to be one of several false summits, as mountaineers say, that feel like endings but turn out not to be. The end, when it does come, is anti-climactic. This feels true, at least; Lucy's illusions are not so much shattered as

led, little by little, until nothing is left.

If only the narrative had been as uncluttered as Kreutzer's cleanly defined framing; she pays



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to be so over-egged is baffling. On top of everything else, the film is a muddle of languages — French, German and English — depending on who speaks to whom. Francophone Lucy and German Philip speak their own respective languages to their child and to each other in English, their shared second language. Lots of couples do the same, but in this context, you can't help hearing the leaden thud of a dull metaphor. We talk, but we don't really know each other, do we? Well, yes. Obviously.

Title: Gentle Monster

Festival: [Cannes](#) (Competition)

Director-screenwriter: Marie Kreutzer

Cast: Léa Seydoux, Laurence Rupp, Jella Haase, Catherine Deneuve

Sales agent: MK2 Films

Running time: 1 hr 54 mins

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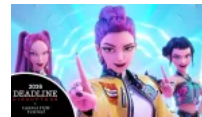
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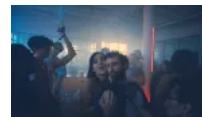
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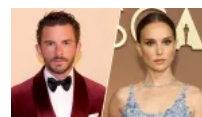
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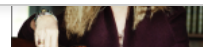




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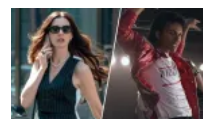
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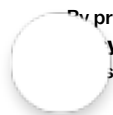
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