

Film Notes: Season 2025–26

5th February 2026

Dreams (Norwegian: Drømmer)

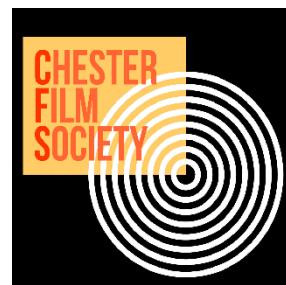
Cert 12A | 1h 50m

Country: Norway, 2024

Director: Dag Johan Haugerud

Stars: Ella Øverbye, Selome Emnetu, Ane Dahl Torp

Language: Norwegian



Synopsis

A 16-year-old girl, Johanne, becomes intensely infatuated with her French teacher and documents her feelings in a private diary. When her mother and grandmother discover the writing, they are shocked by its intimacy yet captivated by its literary quality. Their fascination leads them to consider publishing the diary, inadvertently taking ownership of Johanne's emotional world. As the story unfolds, Johanne confronts the gap between romantic fantasy and lived experience, navigating desire, vulnerability, and the loss of control over her own narrative.

Context and Craft

Dag Johan Haugerud's *Dreams* is part of a trilogy exploring sexuality, longing, and social norms in contemporary Oslo. The film sits between *Sex* and *Love* in Haugerud's thematic cycle, each entry examining human relationships through moral fables and existential comedy. Haugerud's background in literature and psychological drama shapes the film's tone: intimate, observational, and grounded in everyday emotional complexity. Cinematographer Cecilie Semec employs a naturalistic visual style that mirrors the film's focus on interiority, while Anna Berg's music underscores the tension between adolescent idealism and adult ambivalence. The screenplay's blend of humour and seriousness reflects Haugerud's interest in autofiction-like storytelling, reminiscent of Norway's literary tradition of introspective realism.

Critical Reception

- “Vividly captures the dizzying highs and lows of first love,” and highlights Haugerud’s “rich trilogy of films exploring modern relationships.” — **Sight & Sound**
- “A teenager’s crush on her teacher cues a complex but light-handed investigation of romantic awakening, power imbalance, and creative catharsis.” — **Hollywood Reporter**
- “A complex but light-handed investigation of romantic awakening, power imbalance and creative catharsis.” — **Variety**

Conclusion

Critics have praised *Dreams* for its candid portrayal of teenage desire and its nuanced handling of ethically fraught material. Provocative and tender, *Dreams* stands out as a thoughtful, quietly daring exploration of adolescent longing and the ways adults project their own desires onto the young. Haugerud's restrained direction and the film's layered performances (particularly Ella Øverbye and Selome Emnetu) create a work that is emotionally rich without sensationalism. As part of Haugerud's trilogy, it deepens his ongoing examination of intimacy, autonomy, and the stories we tell about ourselves, and the stories others try to tell for us.