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## 'Becoming Astrid' (Unga Astrid) opens at Rheem and Orinda theatres

By *Sophie Braccini*



Image provided

Movie releases at the beginning of the year bring to Lamorinda their load of glossy big productions, heroic tales, bold Sci-Fi releases, all more or less reproducing an expected Hollywoodish format where the storyline could be guessed within a few minutes. Not so with "Becoming Astrid," a breath of fresh cinematographic air that will blow into Lamorinda theaters Jan. 11, based on Astrid Lindgren, the 20th century writer, best known for her creation of Pippi Longstocking and other still popular child heroes.

The film shows 10 crucial years in the life of the Swedish author in the 1920s, where her character was put to the test and where she followed her heart and prevailed. There is nothing very heroic in her story; it is that of an ordinary country girl, raised in a quite rigid and prudish social environment, but animated from the start by an unconventional free spirit, fighting to create a life for herself in her own terms.

Lindgren is not particularly pretty and she does not try to please, but she possesses a wild energy and a talent for writing. Several times during these years where she took risks, she could have sided with convention or chosen an easier path, but she did not, preserving her authenticity and self-worth.

The movie is beautifully shot by Pernille Fischer Christensen, from a script she co-wrote with Kim Fupz Aakeson, which has a strong feminist streak. It was not easy to be a woman in that time period. In an interview with NPR, Christensen said that her film is also a women's history story, and that a lot of similar stories have not been told because of shame. Lindgren is shown as a feminist precursor, but with no societal or political creed, just a desire to break free with no regard for what is considered "appropriate."

In that same interview Christensen said that later in life Lindgren told about this period of her life that "she might have been an author if this had not happened, but ... she might not have been as great an author." It is the difficulties that forced her to fight and become a unique and stronger person.

It is not necessary to be a fan of, or even know, the mischievous character Pippi Longstocking that Lindgren created in her early 40s, or to relate to Lindgren and enjoy the movie. Though looking at young Lindgren there was a lot of that same mischief in her. Alba August, who plays Lindgren, gives a beautiful and very touching performance. She has no fear of being quite unattractive at the beginning of the movie to becoming pretty by the end.

"Becoming Astrid" will play at the Rheem Theatre in Moraga on Jan. 11 for one week, followed by a week at the Orinda Theatre starting on Jan. 18.

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