



fish

Far From Men
(France 2014)

DIRECTOR : David Oelhoffen
RUNNING TIME : 102mins
RATING : M

Synopsis:

It is 1954, the war is beginning and village schoolteacher Daru (Viggo Mortensen), an ex-French Army soldier, is caught in the crossfire. Born in Algeria but Spanish by lineage, he's a man out of time and place, perceived as alien by both locals and colonisers alike. So when he reluctantly agrees to escort the dissident Mohamed (Reda Kateb) to a regional police station to face trial for murder, a series of incidents and revelations force the question of where Daru's loyalties truly lie.

Review: Louise Keller

It is with great subtlety that this affecting tale of courage and honour plays out. Based on Albert Camus' short story *The Guest (L'Hôte)* and set on a western backdrop, director David Oelhoffen has effectively crafted a drama about morality. The landscape is remote and barren, allowing the characters' dilemmas to be isolated from society as a whole. Donning the mantle of a decent man, Viggo Mortensen is remarkable - in part because of the absence of remarkability of his character, a humble village schoolteacher forced to the crossroads, quietly displaying his despair of killing, respect for humanity and gratitude for living. Mortensen is always remarkable, not withstanding this is his first French language film, delivered (together with Arabic and Spanish) with consummate ease.

When the film begins, we meet Daru (Mortensen) teaching geography to a group of young children in a lonely schoolhouse. It is Algeria in 1954 and the schoolhouse is nestled in a small valley surrounded by stark, rocky mountains. The setting is striking; it looks as though an artist has splashed his paint on the sky canvas. But it is an unforgiving world in which Daru lives, which we quickly learn, when a lawman brings a prisoner - tied up like an animal and yanked behind his horse. He is accused of killing his cousin - something about which we later learn. There's a sharp contrast between the way Daru treats Mohamed (Reda Kateb) and that of his captor: Daru treating him with humanity and respect. Kateb has a wonderful presence - much is conveyed by his physicality and the way he communicates.

Cont.

FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

10.00 am Sunday 26th June 2016
8.15 pm Tuesday 28th June 2016

Review: Cont.

After refusing to escort Mohamed to the court in the nearby town of Tinguit and insisting he will not become involved, there is a moment when this changes. It's done subtly: we see Daru glancing at a photograph hanging on the wall - of a woman. The photo is not in focus but in that moment everything changes. Daru agrees to take Mohamed to his destination, treating him not as a prisoner, but as a guest or equal.

Once the two men are on their way, the dynamic changes due to the circumstances around them. With rebels and soldiers pursuing them, they are suddenly fugitives, accomplices, prisoners and hostages - bound to help each other in order to survive. It is when they are hostages with rebel soldiers that we begin to learn a little bit more about Daru and his background. Little by little we learn key things about him. Meanwhile the relationship between Daru and Mohamed develops. They even share jokes at the most surprising times and the scene in which Mohamed admits he has never made love to a woman and asks Daru what is it like, is touching.

Both men give each other something invaluable - in both cases it is offered and accepted graciously. There is little dialogue and these key emotional moments are all the more affecting due to their sublime understatement. Guillaume Deffontaines' cinematography showcases the harsh landscape with grandeur, while the music score (by Nick Cave and Warren Ellis) reflects the difficulty of the film's journey, with scratchy strings, pizzicato and irregular musical sounds to embrace the solitude and dilemma.

This is a gem of a film, bursting with things to say and whose characters become more and more meaningful as the road is travelled. Mortensen is superb.

Source: www.urbancinefile.com.au accessed 31/7/2015

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The Algerian War : a brief overview

Also known as the Algerian War of Independence, the conflict aimed at obtaining independence from France lasted from 1954–62. The movement for independence began during World War I (1914–18) and gained momentum after French promises of greater self-rule in Algeria went unfulfilled after World War II (1939–45).

In 1954 the National Liberation Front (FLN) began a guerrilla war against France and sought diplomatic recognition at the UN to establish a sovereign Algerian state. Although Algerian fighters operated in the countryside—particularly along the country's borders—the most serious fighting took place in and around Algiers, where FLN fighters launched a series of violent urban attacks that came to be known as the Battle of Algiers (1956–57).

French forces (which increased to 500,000 troops) managed to regain control but only through brutal measures, and the ferocity of the fighting sapped the political will of the French to continue the conflict. In 1959 Charles de Gaulle declared that the Algerians had the right to determine their own future. Despite terrorist acts by French Algerians opposed to independence and an attempted coup in France by elements of the French army, an agreement was signed in 1962, and Algeria became independent.

Source: www.britannica.com *Algerian War* Edited Extracts / Accessed 1/6/16

Some Thoughts On: *The Mafia Kills Only in Summer*

Thankfully, Michele and I visited Palermo in the Autumn. That explains the lack of explosions and gunfire. Seriously though, the film was a flawed piece of cinematic art. It's always challenging for a filmmaker to mix comedy, romance, satire and social statement, and thread it through a storyline that spans several decades.

In the end, I felt that 'Pif' Diliberto didn't quite know what the film wanted to be. As the narrative progressed, the humour became thinner and the juxtapositioning of light romance with gruesome murders was jarring, rather than an effective and affecting filmic device. Most of the characters became caricatures, thus our emotional investment in them was limited.

However, the docu-drama elements of the film, during which we were able to fleetingly encounter a cross section of the mafia's real world victims, did bring home the terrible sacrifices that so many people made - and still make - to fight the scourge of the Mafia. This authenticity served to, in part, counter-balance the film's deficiencies.

I commend Pif and the risks that he and his collaborators must have taken, and thanks to the FISH committee for bringing this film and its important message to us. **Paul Williams**

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Black comedy is a very hard genre to do well. The difficulty in combining humour with extremely violent or serious themes is that the two elements can have the effect of almost cancelling each other out if not done really carefully. As I watched this film I thought the light hearted, whimsical, almost 'Amelie'- type form was not working with the dark underbelly of the Mafia revelations. I felt they were being somewhat trivialised. Enjoyable enough as the story was, I felt the film was not significantly 'giving' us anything.

The final ten minutes then turned me right around. I found the young family visiting the actual memorials of those brave incorruptibles, if somewhat sentimental, extremely moving and bringing the previous real footage back into sharp focus. The humour in the film was then like a representation of the denial in the community, from the general populace up to high levels of government, to actually acknowledge or take seriously the evil violence that was all around them. Despite many flaws, (see Paul Williams review), ultimately, and narrowly, ~ for me, this film 'worked'. **Ross Armfield.**

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COMING UP:

July	<i>Rams</i> (Iceland)	Sunday 24 th & Tuesday 26 th
August	<i>A Family Affair</i> (Greece)	Sunday 21 st & Tuesday 23 rd
September	<i>The Crow's Egg</i> (India)	Sunday 18 th & Tuesday 20 th
October	<i>Tanna</i> (Australia)	Sunday 23 rd & Tuesday 25 th
November	<i>Tehran Taxi</i> (Iran)	Sunday 20 th & Tuesday 22 nd
December	<i>Alex & Eve</i> (Australia)	Sunday 11 th & Tuesday 13 th
February '17	<i>The Nightingale</i> (China)	Sunday 12 th & Tuesday 14 th

Message from the President

Many thanks to those of you who have returned your membership renewals for the upcoming season of FISH so promptly. The committee will be meeting very soon to process all your details and post out your new membership cards. Please don't throw your current cards away just yet. They are still required when you attend our last film of the season on either the 26th or 28th June. We usually collect them at the door of the cinema as you enter for the final screening. They will then be 'expired'. It will be at this point that your new card becomes valid. Once again, please take great care with your new card when you receive it in the very near future.

Lots of thanks too in relation to the showing of the short documentary, *On the Edge*, by the *Friends of the Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby* at our two screenings at the end of May. We would like to thank Chris Pryor and Melinda Norton from the 'Friends' for introducing the film and making themselves available for questions after the screenings. Thanks also to the Empire for agreeing to the 'curtainraiser' and then making it happen. Finally, thanks to you dear members for your warm responses and feedback to the 'short', with a special mention for our Sunday members who were able to vacate the cinema so promptly allowing the Empire's normal programming to resume on time at 12 noon sharp. It was a close run thing, but we made it.

So now we find ourselves at the tail end of another season, a season that I think has been particularly strong. That strength continues with our final offering, *Far From Men*. I know many members are looking forward to this film with great anticipation, yours truly included. I eagerly await seeing it and being with you all towards the end of June for what will hopefully be, a wonderful finale to a tremendously diverse season.

Yours in film

Ross Armfield.



FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

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