

Limbo (Members' Choice)

Director: Ben Sharrock. UK, 2020. 104 min. (12A)

With: Amir El-Masry, Vikash Bhai, Ola Orebiyi, Kwabena Ansah, Kenneth Collard, Sidse Babett Knudsen



In only his second feature-length film, after 2015's Basque-language *Pikadero*, the Scottish director Ben Sharrock crafts a darkly-comic tale of bureaucracy and humanity set on a Hebridean island where four refugees find themselves trapped between their past and future lives, waiting on the decisions of a British state that is both physically and emotionally distant.

While the *mise en scène* might evoke *Waiting for Godot* or even *Casablanca*, there are also echoes of such Scottish classics as *Trainspotting* and *Local Hero*. Mostly shot in a letterboxed 4:3 aspect ratio, this is a film that is intimate and domestic, with the wind-blasted landscape and big skies providing a contrast to human frailty and modest ambitions.

Says Sharrock, who has experience of the Middle East and working in refugee camps: "The film is a world that has one foot in reality and another in the surreal and absurd, and a balance of absurdity but also social realism, so it's still real and authentic and truthful, but is not perhaps what we're used to seeing from stories about the subject matter".

Pre-recorded intro for WFC by director Ben Sharrock

"[This is] film-making with a bold view on the world but also as gentle and intimate as a much-loved sitcom. It reminded me at various moments of Aki Kaurismäki or Elia Suleiman or Bill Forsyth, with a distinct touch of Bruce Robinson's Withnail And I." Peter Bradshaw, *Guardian*.

"El-Masry's performance as Omar is absorbing throughout; Bhai's as Farhad achieves nuance and pathos with remarkably little dialogue. The pair carry the film with aplomb. Ola Orebiyi and Kwabena Ansah deserve praise too, capturing both the tired anger and playful resistance that are coping mechanisms for the stranded men." Rebecca Harrison, *Sight & Sound*.

BAFTA Scotland: best film, director, writer & actor (Amir El-Masry); Cairo International Film Festival: best film; Brussels International Film Festival: grand prix du festival.

Please rate the film out of 5* (5 = top score) at the screening room door as you leave.

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