

The theme for One World Week 2003 is
moving stories
Stories about moving.
Stories that move us...
and motivate us to take action.

One World Week is a development education programme under the auspices of the World Development Movement Trust. It is an agency of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and a member of the Development Education Association.

OWW is supported and sponsored by the members of the Churches World Development Network and currently has funding from the Department for International Development. United Nations Day (24th October) falls in OWW each year.

2003 is the 25th anniversary of One World Week, and WNCC marks this by screening a double bill of films that highlight the movement of people from country to another, be that in an attempt to improve their economic well being or to save their lives and culture.

ASYLUM STATISTICS: Jan to March 2003

The Home Office received 16 000 applications in the above period. This represents a 32% decrease on the previous quarter, when asylum applications were at their highest, and is 18% lower than the same period in 2002. Other EU countries (apart from Italy) also saw a reduction in the number of applications they received.

2013 applications were received in the quarter from Iraq, the fifth consecutive quarter that applications from that country topped the list.

Source: Refugee Council

A MORI poll carried out in May this year asked respondents what word the media most uses when referring to asylum seekers and refugees. The top answer, mentioned by 64%, was 'illegal immigrant'. 'Bogus' was cited by 22% of respondents.

This comes as no surprise when you take even a cursory look at the British press, which is liberally peppered with the use of negative language and, many contend, misinformation around the issue of asylum in the UK. Indeed, the same poll showed that respondents generally felt the media is negative on the issue.

Last Resort

UK 2000

Certificate 15

Running time 77 minutes

Director and screenplay: Pawel Pawlikowski

Producer: Ruth Caleb

Executive producers: David M. Thompson, Alex Holmes

Photography: Ryszard Lenczewski

Music: Max de Wardener, Rowan Oliver

Cast:

Dina Korzun	Tania	Adrian Scarborough	Council official
Paddy Considine	Alfie	David Auker	Second council official
Artiom Strelnikov	Artiom	Bruce Byron	Police officer
Lindsey Honey	Les	Jim Trevellyan	Station guard
Perry Benson	Immigration officer	Marcus Redwood	Café owner
Katie Drinkwater	Katie	Zoe Sharpe	Gang girl
Dave Bean	Frank	Daniel Mobey	Danny

The resort in question is Margate – renamed ‘Stonehaven’ in the script, but prominently mentioned in the end credits. Not that it’s likely to do much for the tourist trade: Last Resort presents the town as almost unremittingly bleak, a gulag for drop-outs and misfits, and a ‘holding area’ for ‘asylum seekers’ who’ve arrived via the ferry port at nearby Dover, or Heathrow airport. Under the government’s “dispersal” programme, such would-be immigrants are prevented from making their way to London, and instead sent to various far-flung corners of the country while their applications are processed – a bureaucratic marathon that, in most cases, drags on for over a year.

Pawlikowski’s said of his film in an interview in Yahoo! Movies: “Last Resort is not a passionate social plea. It highlights the refugee problem, but as an aside. A socialist realist drama about the misery of refugees would be much more dull. With a love story, you can hook the audience in - everyone can relate to falling in love. What I like was the clash between the bureaucracy of the immigration process and the love story. The very nature of bureaucrats and their mechanical, impersonal way of dealing with people is the antithesis of a passionate love affair.”

Although not obviously critical (Pawlikowski’s commented on the portrayal of the police “I didn’t want to show them as nasty because they are just doing their job - I suppose that’s just the nature of Western bureaucracy. Others might enjoy the power but I wanted them to be human”) the film as a whole peels back the layers of misconception about the asylum situation and attempts to reveal the dismal, human reality at the centre of the crisis.

Pawel Pawlikowski won the Carl Foreman Award for Most Promising Newcomer to British Film at the British Academy Film Awards, and ‘Last Resort’ also won the Michael Powell Award for Best British Film at the Edinburgh International Film Festival. When accepting the award at the 2001 Baftas, Pawlikowski commented “Funny to be called a newcomer at 40.” Having been making documentaries and dramas in the UK since the mid-1980s, this was the second feature of this Polish born director and, in spite of tight budgetary constraints, it is a thoughtful work.

This is a beautifully acted and photographed piece, with not a wasted word, shot or scene. According to the director “It had a documentary budget of around £320,000, a lot more has been spent since, but that meant that I had complete freedom, we were also very sparing with extras and we couldn’t afford too many anyway. So because we didn’t have any sort of production design budget we just stripped it down and shot it in a particular way.”

Why can't there be more films like *Last Resort*? Films that take an important, fiercely topical subject, then dramatise it a way that seems effortlessly simple: straightforward, strong script; straightforward, strong performances; straightforward, strong direction. What could be easier? Against the trend for smartly dressed gangster pictures and badly written Northern feelgood movies, this film surely points the way forward for young movie-makers, yet it avoids the anger and reproach of Ken Loach, and has none of Mike Leigh's satire. It says something devastatingly simple: go and look at the lives that are lived here.

One of the strongest and most poignant British films in recent memory, *Last Resort* is a simple but wonderfully affective film that lingers in the memory long after the final shot.

It should be compulsory viewing for anyone in any position of power regarding asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants – or any kind of people in need.

PS if any one thinks they have seen the actor playing Les elsewhere, then I am not sure what that says about you, since according to Pawlikowski "You know that he's a real pornographer don't you? Ben Dover. This was his first acting role and he really wanted to be directed, I mean he does his own thing but it was a pleasure to work with him. The BBC couldn't pay him obviously because he has a criminal record but he was incredibly competent and he's great material to work from. Then I wanted to take him a step further, push the story a bit so that he becomes a real character."

Blackboards (Takhté siah)

Iran/Italy/Japan 2000

Certificate PG

Running time 84 minutes

Director: Samira Makhmalbaf

Screenplay: Samira Makhmalbaf and Mohsen Makhmalbaf

Director of Photography: Ebrahim Ghafouri

Editor: Mohsen Makhmalbaf

Music: Mohammad-Reza Darvishi

Cast:

Said Mohamadi	Said	Saman Akbari	Group leader
Behnaz Jafari	Halaleh	Ahmad Bahrami	Marriage registrar
Bahman Ghobadi	Reeboir	Mohamad Moradi	Match maker
Mohamad Karim Rahmati	Father	Karim Moradi	Old man
Rafat Moradi	Ribvar	Hassan Mohamadi	Child
Mayas Rostami	Young boy storyteller	Rasool Mohamadi	The boy porter
		Somaye Veisee	Little girl

In the brutal mountains of the Iran/Iraq border, two nomadic teachers, Reeboir and Said, roam the landscape in search of pupils. They carry their blackboards on their backs, sometimes using them as shelter, camouflage and as shields from gunfire.

In this, her second film, Makhmalbaf creates a visually powerful and insightful depiction of a people on the edge of a country and a society.

As Members may recall, twenty-year-old old Samira Makhmalbaf made her directorial debut in 1998 with *The Apple*, which was screened by WNCC to mark One World Week in 2000. With her latest film, *Blackboards*, she became the youngest filmmaker to win the prestigious Prix du Jury at

the Cannes Film Festival 2000 and it's easy to see why. This is a startling film that gives you a fascinating view of Iranian rural life close to the Iraqi border.

Samira introduces the blackboard in a variety of situations - as an alternative to a washing line, a stretcher, a door (when Said wants to some privacy with his wife), and even a shield against Iraqi bullets. It gets little use in the education department, for as Said discovers, the people he is trying to educate have a greater priority - self-preservation. With Kurdish dialogue, the film conveys the nomadic lifestyle of that community who live in the harsh physical environment.

The mountains of Iran offer stones and more stones. This may well be the first film where there is not a single image of a tree or even a green plant. The mountains are made of rocks, and the homes are made of rocks, and most of the characters in the film spend their time climbing up, down, and between the rocks.

Her new film that was shot with a handheld camera and a few professional actors among some 200 local amateurs, centres on two itinerant teachers carrying blackboards seeking pupils in the remote mountainous areas of Iran's Kurdistan province near the Iraq border. One meets a group of boys who smuggle contraband (much of it almost too heavy for them to carry), the other a group of Iraqi refugees trying to cross the border, fleeing a chemical gas attack by President Saddam Hussein, all constantly in danger of air and ground attack from border guards.

Using mostly non- professional actors and a hand-held camera it records their encounters with a variety of people in this remote region, ranging from smugglers to Iraqi Kurds It has been described as "an epic tale of three generations of displaced Kurds adrift in the mountains".

As is sometimes the case with Iranian films, operating under a strict censorship code, Blackboards can seem a little slow-paced, allowing your attention to wander at times. Censorship on "ideas" still firmly existed, said Makhmalbaf. "But it is getting better. My movies can be shown - if they are not censored," she added. "At the beginning, there was a much different way of censoring films. For example, they would see a film six or seven times before deciding it could be shown. Now, it is just one time, after you make your movie. At least you can do the filming. Then the government examines it."

This wonderful movie demonstrates the power of cinema to communicate circumstances and situations that are totally alien to those of us watching in comfort in the West. It is perhaps surprising bearing in mind political (and indeed military) events in this part of the world, how little information we in the west receive on this region.

I hope that tonight's double bill both entertains, informs and educates.

Iain McGlashan
Chairman