

Incendies

Cert 15 Canada/France 2011 130 mins

Crew

Director	Denis Villeneuve
Screenplay	Denis Villeneuve
Based on a play by	Wajdi Mouadad
Cinematography	André Turpin
Editor	Monique Darton
Original score/music	Grégoire Hetzel
Music	John Hopkins

Cast

Lubna Azabal	Nawal Marwan
Mélissa Désormeaux-Poulin	Jeanne Marwan
Maxim Gaudette	Simon Marwan
Rémy Girard	Jean Lebel
Abdelghafour Elaaziz	Abou Tarek

Synopsis

Quebec, the present. Nawal, the mother of twins Jeanne and Simon has recently died.

In her will, she leaves her children two letters - one for the father the twins have always believed was dead, the other for an older brother they didn't know existed.

Nawal's dying wish is that these letters be delivered by Jeanne and Simon. And so they set out on a seemingly impossible mission to the Middle East in search of their roots.

Through their journey we discover the story of their mother's origins - and the devastating events that shaped her into the distant and, troubled woman that her children grew up with.

BFFS BOOKING SCHEME

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Reviews

.....Set against the backdrop of a fictional - but devastatingly familiar - civil war, *Incendies* dabbles in massive themes, tackling them on a wrenchingly intimate scale. While evocative images of broken buildings and bombed-out buses stoke the anti-war flames, it's Belgian actress Azabal who burns the brightest.

As a mother who's suffered overpowering trauma - and been unable to explain it to those closest to her - Azabal is a revelation. She plays both the younger and older versions of her character, and drives the narrative with a fiery passion; we feel every trembling lip, every pang of uncertainty as Nawal pitches from one disaster to another.

True, the film's second half loses energy without her; as the story shifts to focus on her children's increasingly bizarre expedition, the pacing begins to slow. But in place of Nawal's dramatic back story emerges a far more disturbing exploration of her children's own origins. As the twins learn truth after devastating truth about Nawal's tragic upbringing, their own tale is afforded depth and detail.

It's a downer, to be sure. Credit to director Denis Villeneuve as well, then, who ensures that his slowly unfolding mystery is carefully measured out, and lifted by across-the-board terrific performances. The result is utterly absorbing, revelling in dusty visuals and intimate framing. *Incendies* never falls into the trap of becoming just another movie about the futility of war, refusing to overtly comment on the heartbreak of conflict, while letting its upsetting content speak largely for itself.

Josh Winning, Little White Lies, June 23 2011

.....Through Nawal's experiences, the film paints a compelling portrait of incitement to political radicalism, as well as the scorching scars of civil war, as suggested by the title; and it's refreshing to see a film that approaches Lebanon's complex political past not through straight military or historical drama, but by using family as allegory, and focussing primarily on its impact on mother and daughter.

If that sounds abstract or academic, *Incendies* certainly feels it at times, and finally it only works if viewed as such - not least because the eleventh hour revelation on which the film hinges (a twist tragic enough to make Oedipus count his lucky stars) would be pretty hard to swallow otherwise.



Film website:

www.trinityfilm.co.uk/films/incendies/

Sophie Ivan, Film 4