

Difret

Cert 12A Ethiopia 2014 99 mins

Crew

Director/
Screenplay Zeresenay Mehari
Cinematography Monika Lenczewska
Film Editing Agnieszka Glinska
Original music Dave Eggar
David Schommer

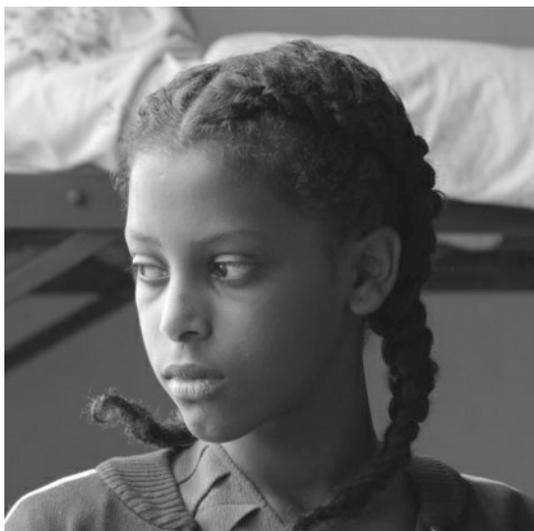
Cast

Meron Getnet Meaza Ashenafi
Tizita Hagere Hirut Assefa

Synopsis

A village near Addis Ababa, 1996. Hirut, a bright 14-year-old girl, is on her way home from school when men on horses swoop in and kidnap her. She grabs a rifle and tries to escape, but ends up shooting her would-be husband - in her village, the practice of abduction into marriage is common.

Hirut is arrested and put on trial for murder, but Meaza Ashenafi, a tenacious young city lawyer, learns of the case and arrives to argue that Hirut acted in self-defence. But Meaza's strategy puts her and Hirut on a collision course between Ethiopian civil authority and village customs, and also jeopardises the future of her legal practice, which supports many other poor women and children in need.



Booking Information

Distributor: Soda Pictures
DVD bookings: contact Hannah Roeg
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www.sodapictures.com

Available: June 29 2015



Reviews

Based on a real legal case, earnestly committed to the promotion of a still on-going social ill, and only the fourth ever 35mm feature to be made in Ethiopia, *Difret* has much to recommend it as a well-meant and significant undertaking. In artistic terms, however, it lacks grace and subtlety, and struggles with its dual ambition to encompass the complexities of real events and translate them into a heroic, Hollywood-style idiom. Still, sterling performances and an unpredictable plotline sustain the attention until the bittersweet end.

...like many a film based on someone's lived experience, it has elicited a degree of controversy in terms of how it has treated its real-life subject [but] both its performers and its source story merit attention and respect.

Hannah McGill, Sight and Sound, April 2015

Zeresenay Mehari's debut feature, *Difret*, is an example of a film with an important story told in an imperfect style ... but [the] niggles are thrown into petty relief by the central struggle and its universal ripples.

Most compelling is the nuance of the social detail. Meaza's figure-hugging Western attire both speaks of her defiance against tradition and makes her seem vulnerable every time she deals with a village man. A man in khakis in a stark outpost of a police station processes Meaza's attempts to take legal charge of Hirut with the bemusement of a cat confronted with an empowered mouse. The danger of being a woman is a dramatic undercurrent that never goes away.

Mehari eschews the temptation of demonising tradition. Lighter scenes show Hirut's parents insisting that these slick city women stay and break bread while Hirut pines to return to her family, her life and especially her younger sister. As well as being a sociologically vital piece of cinema, *Difret* is also a story about the end of innocence and the split-second acts that create irreversible changes.

Sophie Monks Kaufmann, Little White Lies, March 2015

FILM FACTS...

- ☆ *Difret* premiered in competition at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival where it won the World Cinematic Dramatic Audience Award.
- ☆ Angelina Jolie served as the executive producer of the film.
- ☆ It won the Audience Award at the 2014 Berlin Film Festival.
- ☆ In the Amharic language, the word 'difret' means courage - the closest English translation means 'to dare.' But it also has a double-entendre that means 'the act of being raped.'