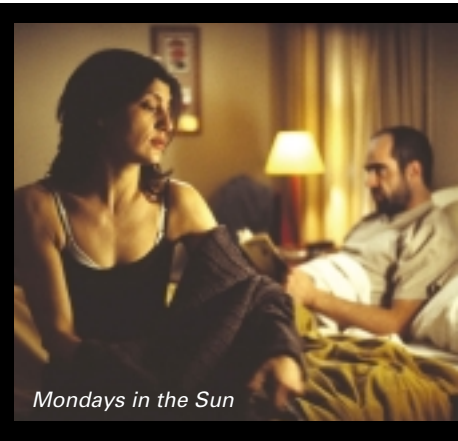


Of Wives and Men



Marooned in Iraq



Mondays in the Sun

TWO DEBUTS
FROM THE 12TH
PHILADELPHIA
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL

MONDAYS IN THE SUN/
LOS LUNES EN EL SOL

SPAIN, 2003, 113 MINUTES
DIRECTED BY FERNANDO LEÓN
DE ARANO. WRITTEN BY
FERNANDO LEÓN DE ARANO
AND IGNACIO DEL MORAL.

One might think that *Mondays in the Sun* is a Spanish *Full Monty* in its exploration of the bruised

psyches of out-of-work men, but to do so would miss what makes the film so Spanish: There are no quick fixes and no feel-good finales. Instead, we are folded into the lives of three men from economically hard-hit Galicia, in Spain's Atlantic northwest. All three have been laid off from a shipping company, and each deals with his situation differently. Santa (Javier Bardem) gets angry and launches philosophical attacks on the company. Lino (José Ángel Egido) pretends he's going to work every day — he hasn't told his wife — while fruitlessly applying for jobs that seem to be going to the younger digital generation. And José (Luis Tosar) nearly sabotages his marriage by neither aiding his wife as she works full time in a fish cannery nor looking for employment. A decidedly non-American film move is that the one "looker," Ana (Nieve de Medina), is a tired but savvy woman in her 40s who smells of fish.

Although the film deals with heavy issues, there is still a sense of humor, often dark, sometimes gorgeously vulnerable, that holds the whole film together.

At root, *Mondays in the Sun* explores the bonds that hold people together while they respond to their situation in a very Spanish way — by getting on with their lives. The directing and the lensing are ever searching out those tensions and boundaries that define a person's dignity. In the end, the principals are literally left floating, as the men attempt to take control of their lives and instead find themselves marooned on a boat in the middle of Vigo Bay,

reflecting the pathetic situation that they all once worked on a ship but never learned to steer one.

Beebe Bahrami, Editor

MAROONED IN IRAQ/AVAZHA-YE SARZAMIN-E MADARI-AM
IRAN, 2002, 97 MINUTES

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY BAHMAN GHOBADI

Having received a plea for help from one of his former wives, an elderly Iranian Kurdish musician persuades two of his sons by other marriages to accompany him to Iraqi Kurdistan. Their adventures along the way are both specific to time and place and representative of the human condition in war and peace.

The director is clearly fond of his characters — Kurds are tough, men and women both. Characters go off in snow and cold with only the clothes on their backs, but somehow they always meet up with people who can help. The ominous sound of airplanes flying overhead permeates the movie. As a teacher in a refugee camp explains to his young charges, airplanes have two functions, to transport people and goods and, on the negative side, to drop bombs. By Hollywood standards, the movie's allusions to the horrors of war are discreet, but they give context and poignancy to the many funny moments.

Given that Iran's film industry is government supported, Americans might be surprised that the only government representatives depicted — a mullah and two policemen — are foolish, as is a Kurdish profiteer. One of the musician's sons is always on the lookout for marriageable women (he has seven wives!). As he sets off for Iraq, one wife calls out to him, "No foreigners!" If he brings back another wife, she had better be Kurdish!

From an archaeologist's perspective, scenes showing brick making, ruins (unfortunately recent), and a burial ceremony provide unusual glimpses of the material record.

In the end, beyond the politics, beyond the ethnography, and even beyond the personality quirks of the characters is the human truth that survival of cultures and individuals depends on relationships...and a little bit of luck.

Naomi F. Miller, MASCA Senior Research Scientist