

Feedback for *Under the Fig Trees*

Loved the tasters we were given in each exchange about what was going on in all their lives without spelling it out; so much power in what was left unsaid. The end too when the “girls” went off and got dolled up emphasised a lovely contrast to the older women’s social norms.

Very gentle and beautifully filmed. A Tunisian episode of *The Archers* under the fig trees.

I enjoyed the gradually unfolding story and it was beautifully shot, particularly the beginning and end sequences. However, it was a bit too long and slow moving for the amount of content! Would have made a perfect short film.

A snapshot of life for fruit-pickers living in rural Tunisia sumptuously filmed and beautifully acted. The close-up footage which accounts for a lot of the film underlines the intensity of the relationships but also the claustrophobia of the rural environment. It took me back to when I was a 14-year-old and used to pick fruit on a local farm. It also reminded me of the many differences between people's lives across the globe. I enjoyed it.

It was a fascinating look at the relations between men and women, those who work and those who make profit and those who left and those who stayed in the community. Both warm and serious, it was a very enjoyable film. The last scene with the joyful singing was so uplifting.

I wanted to love this but it was way too slow.

It was quite nice to look at but I found it rather inconsequential. I liked the ending best!

While it was in many ways a delightful film, with charming characters, nicely acted, I felt it was lightweight and for that reason unmemorable. But I'm glad you showed it and that I was able to see it.

Too slow and too much time devoted to picking figs! Admittedly at one point I dozed off but I couldn't see a thread to the film.

Beautifully shot film with lovely little views into the characters' lives and nice exploration of their different aspirations. The actors came over so naturally, I particularly loved the end where the women were singing in the back of the truck.

Very well shot and well-acted, the interactions between the fig pickers was fascinating and very believable. It evoked the fragility of such an existence, the inequalities and the dangers but also the joy as the work is finished and the day is done.

Lovely camera work. Lovely scene. Lovely characters. Lovely music. The whole film was art at its very best in my humble opinion.

I score it a OK. Partly because the subtitles weren't clear and partly due to the film being a bit long for the story content. I enjoyed the film but it certainly wasn't as interesting as others we have seen.

While an interesting view of ordinary Tunisian villagers, marginally touching on Tunisian history, as well as being slightly educational about the harvesting of figs (although I'd have liked to have found out where the crates of figs go to on the next stage of their journey), the film was pretty boring. Just

a day in the orchard with nothing much happening, no plot and not much character development. Perhaps the message was 'our teenagers are as dumb as yours'. Their elders suffered the kids' behaviour and attitudes, probably thinking that they'd buckle down in due course, like they had themselves. So just like us too.

A simple topic and reminds me of *One day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. A micro view into one day of life. Strangely a film that stays with you.

A gentle film - a little slow and meandering in the first half but picked up towards the end.

Lovely to have a gentler, more upbeat (and sunnier!) film after the gloom of *Plan75*. I don't remember seeing a film before with just one setting but found it rather calming and a beautiful backcloth to the intricate personal dramas and emotional turmoil of the workers. I would have liked to have heard more from the older women and their lives and I did get a bit confused with who was who with the younger cast, particularly the men. But overall, a good choice of film and great to have such a variety of films this term (as ever).

I quite enjoyed this film although I found it a little slow. I loved the countryside views and was pleased to see the women workers standing up to the boss, who tried to take advantage of them!

An interesting idea, perhaps if there had been more depth and detail relating to a smaller number of characters it would have been easier to engage with their stories. However, it did provide some insight into the lives and relationships of people in the community.

Additional note: - A huge 'Thank You' to all the team at RFS for a great set of films this autumn, your work is very much appreciated. Thanks also for the Christmas Party... great fun. HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

A fine film, addressing some age-old themes but in an original way. Very good photography.

A beautifully constructed film, in which the fig trees of the title provide a backdrop and a neatly symbolic setting. The unvarnished hopes of the young girls contrast with the world-weary experience of the older married women. A whole lifetime of hopes and disappointments are crammed into one day under the boughs. Another excellent film.

This was enjoyable and held my interest. It was quiet, funny in parts but also raised important issues.

It was a good snapshot of the lives of the young fig pickers with some excellent moments, for example, the payments to workers at the end of the week but was rather slow and left a lot of storylines unfinished. It lacked the depth of other films about poor people this season from Bhutan and Somalia.

When the film finished, I thought: why did they make it? Interesting seeing all the figs but what else? Unresolved relationships? Reliability of boyfriends? I don't think I got it!

A universal tale which could be underneath the apple tree, grape vine, coconut palm etc. Young love and flirtation bearing fruit or not. Middle aged disappointment leading to stunted growth and a bitter song. Calm and drowsy on the surface with so much else going on beneath. The boss misusing power, the Girl Power fighting back. Enjoyable overall.

Although this film had a slow pace and there wasn't really any plot it was nonetheless absorbing and entertaining. Everything was dappled with a yellow light evocative of the heat of a Tunisian day.

As a cultural insight it was really interesting with more possible plot lines (sexual harassment, bullying/abuse of power, family feuds over land, relationships) than *East Enders*. As a film I found it dull.

Another very interesting film, showing us the situation in a developing country. Lovely performances.

An interesting insight into the rural working lives of the young and old men and women in Tunisia today. Their problems were cleverly introduced throughout the film, particularly of the very elderly women with their health and financial difficulties and also the young men trying to find their place in the world. There were a series of plot lines, some more interesting than others so that about a third of the way through the film I rather lost the plot because a sort of monotony set in and I felt bored. However, after that the characters (and I) and the storylines perked up so I became engaged with the film once more. I liked the ending with the young women making up their faces and doing their hair, becoming friends again and then singing their hearts out on the way home from a long and hard day picking figs.

Despite its rather discursive, disjointed narrative, this film conveys a vivid picture of the nature of rural life in Tunisia. The generation and gender gaps among the workers become clear. When one old man talks about men driving the French out, one of the young women adds that women were involved as well. The differences are underlined by attitudes to marriage, clothes and use of mobile phones. The work is tough and the boss unrelenting but the final scene with wages being paid shows how long-term village relationships can sometimes soften ruthlessness. Unlike many post-colonial films from Francophone African countries, this one contains no written (e.g. road signs, notices) and only one example of spoken French: the acronym for C.E.O.; PDG (Président-Directeur Général). Eating figs will be a different experience in future!

A sweet gentle unfolding tale of life among the fig tree workers. Quite enjoyable.

Definitely worth watching, beautifully shot and observed but didn't get a sense of where the story was going.

It was slow to start with but it developed into a portrayal of the human condition compressed into a small world under the fig tree, the freedom enjoyed by the younger people against the traditional behaviour expected by the older generation, power dynamics in the workplace and exploitation, unrequited love and regret, all were amplified beautifully. A gentle yet thought provoking film.

A gentle film - a little slow and meandering in the first half but picked up towards the end.

I thought this would be a cheerful light-hearted film but it was actually quite dark with hints of exploitation, harassment and sadness.

The fig orchard had everything or nothing. Exploitive gang labour, land rights disputes, patriarchy, sexual harassment, sisterly love and sisterly rivalry all present but were we just seeing a slice of everyday life play out in a new location. Personally, I saw little new here, opinions may differ.

Another film where nothing happens very slowly.

Interesting to see the lives of others but not enough happened to keep me fully engaged.

A lot of delightful scenes and interactions but not quite enough to hold my interest all the way through.

Stunning to look at with a documentarian feel, *Under the Fig Trees* started well. Gorgeous landscapes (at least for those of us well away from the place that are not farm workers) and close-ups of expressive faces, the script felt undeveloped and at times the film felt like art cinema pastiche. One thing that struck me was what could not be said, I suspect because of the conservative and repressive social and religious mores of the country and with economic poverty and people living hand to mouth, with a lack of education and work opportunities, mostly impacting on the women, added to which there's a real bastard of a boss and young women using their sexuality to their advantage, you have a veritable cauldron of feelings ready to explode. A good film which at times felt hackneyed and clichéd. Again, I could not help wondering what kind of audience the producers had in mind.

I felt it was a beautifully crafted film with all sorts of things to think about (working conditions, male/female relationships, role of older women) and the landscape (especially at dawn) evocatively created but the pace was so slow and it often felt like a snapshot or a human tableau rather than the developing story I'd been hoping for. I enjoyed it more thinking about it afterwards than I enjoyed it at the time.

An interesting and thoughtful film, dealing with various important issues: religion; the attitudes of men towards women and vice-versa; the interaction of workers and employers. However, despite the topics covered, I didn't think that the film quite delivered.

The film had a documentary feel to it and although it was beautifully shot and offered a credible slice of the life of fruit pickers in Tunisia it didn't really engage me at all and at times I felt quite bored. I found the musical score interesting because it seemed to keep offering a big reveal of something but again this just didn't happen. Disappointing.

It was nice to see real people with characterful faces but its lack of narrative arc meant that it was difficult to engage with it.

I thought the setting was creative with the metaphor of selecting the best figs and for the girls, the best husband, quite inventive. The exploitation of labour and the gang-master also, unfortunately, carried a universal message, 'twas ever thus. For me, the final scene of driving off into the sunset with all the problems of the world cast-off jarred a little, being somewhat unrealistic. As an aside, in 1969 I lived in Libya and often saw open trucks with many women workers sharing the flat-bed space with squatting camels!

Rather slow in places but it was also charming and original. I only wish we'd had some of those wonderful figs for the Christmas Party!