

Feedback for Gravedigger's Wife

A sad story, well-acted, but overall, I found it underwhelming.

Vivid, realistic and as excruciatingly painful at times as life in Somalia actually must be, this film was captivating. Perhaps a bit clunky to start and seemed to lack pace and meander in the first 20 minutes or so, this was countered by the "overcoming the odds" plotline as the film progressed and how well it was portrayed by all three main cast. I questioned whether the fact that both protagonists lived was the Hollywood ending the filmmakers felt they needed to deliver to have any chance with the film in the West – it was jarring that the film was unremittingly realistic in its horrors right up until the point when a random doctor somehow decided (for reasons not properly explained) to operate and managed to do so without loss of life and, simultaneously, a pick-up truck appeared, seemingly from nowhere, to convey our hero back to his home, having miraculously survived a beating and heat exhaustion. A tad unrealistic perhaps?

A film I thought about a lot after it was shown. Of the three "third world" films we have seen so far and my impressions of life in those countries as in where would I least like to be, this one had to take the biscuit in the sheer misery stakes easily beating Pakistan and Bhutan seemingly a beacon of stability and cohesion. The film that came to mind whilst watching this was Bicycle Thieves, though with the desperation of the situation here far outstripping that. I liked the style of the director's neo realistic film making and the lead characters were engaging. I just wonder how many people got to see this in Somalia or was it made with bourgeois international audiences in mind who are able to safely wallow in exotic poverty and other people's economic misery, a form of cinematic slumming it? One theme that struck me was Guled's and Nasra's love story, which appears doomed because of his economic irrelevance and overall ineffectiveness. \$5000? It might as well be a million. In the end, there is a morsel of hope due to the kindness of the doctor that operates on Nasra and the truck driver that saves Guled with the first vulture already circling above and with their son having more enterprise than his father has ever shown. A good choice.

This dark, gentle and sad film is beautifully shot with breathtakingly beautiful scenery. You can feel the dryness of the barren landscape and taste the dust. But it has some genuinely funny moments too. All the way through the love story between Nasra and Guled feels very real as they fight against abject poverty and trying to keep her alive. What felt a little discordant to me was the actors' pristine appearances in what looked like freshly laundered outfits and Hollywood smiles. I would have preferred more realism to make it more credible. Although I enjoyed the film it won't be one of my top choices.

I found it absorbing with excellent acting from the two main characters and difficult to watch insights into the life of the poor in Somalia. The ending was cheering, if somewhat unbelievable.

It was very moving, heartbreaking in fact. The performances were stellar and the African setting of grinding poverty a reminder of the dire conditions endured by so many there, despite the stark beauty of the harsh terrain. Who sent the truck to find the father by the way? Will he survive? Will his beautiful sick wife? Who will pay the hospital bill? who knows but their son was happy & the football a symbol of hope, perhaps.

The scenery was stunning and the acting very good. However, a bit slow at times.

Lovely film visually and we enjoyed that.

Another rich and affecting film (after the wonderful Yak) that immersed us deeply and unflinchingly in a whole alien way of life and celebrated our common humanity, A necessary message for our times. Khosi sikilele Africa!

A well-crafted and acted drama, which underscored the problems of poverty in Africa.

This was a beautifully made film with some stunning scenery and shots. I liked the moments of humour too. However, I found it rather depressing. It was difficult to decipher the ending but my friends tell me that Guled was smiling when he was hit by the football, so I guess, he did eventually get that stroke of luck.

Really enjoyed this film which was so different and touched themes of poverty, love, family and community. A minor point but I couldn't help feeling the actors didn't reflect the true poverty these people found themselves in as they had great teeth! The wife also seemed to have a very good wardrobe.

Excellent portrayal of life in poverty but still maintaining love and dignity of humanity.

The best I can say is I loved the colours, the pastel colours together with the brown and rust were quite beautifully put together.

Incredible, impactful story very clearly told which has great depth and compassion. Stunning cinematography. So glad that the Richmond Film Society showed this film as was incompletely unaware of *The Gravedigger's Wife*.

I felt the film lacked oomph. Filmed beautifully with a heart-wrenching storyline but for me it was disappointingly slow and long drawn-out.

Lovely film, very moving.

Why was this film called *The Gravedigger's Wife* and not *The Gravedigger*? Can a member of the committee explain please? If I were to describe the film to someone, I'd say it was about a man who works as a gravedigger and the lengths he's prepared to go to in order to save his wife, rather than a film about his wife. It's a love story and a tale of abject poverty, and what a symbol of penury is a single flip flop! Life is harsh and relentless but rather than ending in his wife's death, which seems inevitable, it ends in hope and what looked like a smile on the gravedigger's battered face as he returns to his family in the back of a pick-up truck, unaware that his wife is safe.

Still as powerful as on my first viewing. So tender and a happy ending.

Understated, but very powerful with incredible dignity. What price a human life.

A sad and sometimes stark but touching film. Good acting and some good shots.

Beautiful film and very thought provoking.

A simple but gripping tale, beautifully done. Fine performances by the three principals.

A thought-provoking film on the fluctuations and hardships of life in a very poor area and the moral dilemmas that occurred. For me, a very well-made film.

Excellent film, beautifully filmed well-acted. I was charmed by the tenderness between the couple.

It was very interesting to see a film set in Somalia and comprehend the extreme poverty of the characters portrayed in the film. It was very touching to witness the enormous effort but ultimately unsuccessful attempts Guled made to raise the money for his beautiful and elegant wife Nasra's essential operation. It was wonderful that, through the kindness of the doctor, she was able to have the lifesaving treatment she needed and that the injured Guled was rescued from the desert.

A sensitive film with some wonderful photography. It was made with great empathy and insight. An excellent film!

Simple, moving and timeless story. Beautifully filmed and told.

This was beautifully filmed and held my attention from the start to the tragic end.

The story was simple, in a good way and showed very well the resilience and courage of the couple and their son, as well as the great love and devotion that the gravedigger had for his sick wife. Really enjoyed this film.

A beautiful rendition of a depressing story, I rarely cry in movies but this set me off.

Well, the couple had made a lifestyle choice. I'd advise anyone still contemplating voting Conservative to watch this film before the next election. I thought it was a heart-warming film, well made and very well acted. Perhaps it would have been more realistic had the heroine been less beautiful but I don't want to quibble. It's also very warm-hearted, the leavening of humour and the manifest love of husband and wife for each other, are an admirable correction to facile political comments like the ones I typed above.

Like the superb Bhutanese film (which it complemented nicely) it took us to a different world but whereas the Bhutanese film had a pretty positive take on the simple life, community etc. this one whilst having great scenes of love and friendship had the nightmare of a husband being unable to help his dying wife as he had no realistic way of raising \$5,000. I suspect the audience might have found it for such a worthy cause. Another brilliant film that made you think.

Interesting to see urban and rural scenes in Somalia but film seemed very slow and in parts quite unbelievable (e.g. walking in damaged flip flops with little water). The soundtrack seemed too loud and volume aside, repetitive and intrusive.

An inspiring tale of the love of Guled for the very beautiful Nasra, with their son, his friends and her doctor rising to the challenge. I was struck by the contrast between their lives and the looming background of modernity with giant port cranes, pylons, phones, highways and ultimately the operating theatre that saves Nasra's life.

I enjoyed the film but was confused by the ending. How would they repay the medical bill? But I loved it overall. So, I'd say it was a 1.5 - very good.

An engaging film engendering empathy with all of the characters. I was interested to get some sense of the physical environment in this part of the world and the contrast between the degrees of affluence of the people who live in it. (Yes, I know it was fiction, but I still left wanting to know if the husband recovered!).

No doubt about it, it's a good film. *The Guardian* review says "shrewd and charming" but despite the uplifting message about the wife's successful operation - in terms of the human condition - I found it to be seriously depressing.

Interesting to see a film about the lives of others and the awful problems faced by some. However, overall lacked impact and rather slow.

An unvarnished account of the plight of the illiterate poor in a developing country in the Horn of Africa. A couple who defy village Islamic traditions and run away to marry for a love which proves to be lasting face the consequences when the wife falls ill. The husband in desperation ignores her advice not to return to his village; the brutal consequences of that mean that the wife will almost certainly have to take her own advice and be the stronger of the two in an even more difficult time. The one thing available in abundance is sunshine. The use of scenery and background as an aid to narrative was outstanding.

A good little film. It illustrates the hazards of poverty in country without a health care system. The iniquities of arranged marriage within a patriarchal society and the importance of good footwear.

I give it between 2 and 1...more a 2. But it was absolutely lovely, the depiction of love and compassion and caring was beautifully done. The landscape is awesome... Thanks for organising it.

A harrowing film showing how harsh life can be and the choice or lack thereof.

The film was slow moving but it was helpful to experience the issues as if in 'real time' and the endless grind of finding any work to literally survive. The casting was excellent. The young boy was watchful, maybe overawed by the unfolding tragedy and partly resigned to his hard life. The football falling into the back of the van was a little master stroke of plot, to bring the film towards a conclusion, which I felt was left open-ended. Who would survive and for how long? The wife's clothes were rather clean and aesthetic!? but served to enhance her beauty.

Really enjoyed it. Seeing the contradictions of that part of Africa. All the physical beauty and the space, the strong personal relations juxtaposed with such poverty, so much difficulty and the thin line between life and death. The main protagonists were beautiful and beautifully acted and you really felt for them as they tried to make a good life whilst dealing with a medical condition that the NHS would probably deal with in an afternoon!

It was very well shot, well produced and evoked the hardships of the developing world, lifted by a sprinkling of hope. But it was a little bit slow.