



Thursday November 30th 2023

Luzzu

Malta/USA 2021 94mins Cert 15

Through his portrait of the changing nature of sea-fishing on the sun-soaked island of Malta, writer-director Alex Camilleri casts his net further, to capture wider issues of identity, loss and the burden of responsibility both to one's past and one's future. It's an impressive feature debut from the Maltese film-maker, making the most of a stunning setting and excellent performances from his largely non-professional cast.

Particularly notable is Jesmark Scicluna, a real-life Maltese fisherman who was chosen by Camilleri to play the lead character - also named Jesmark. Quiet, proud and deeply passionate about his family's fishing roots, Jesmark and his cousin David attempt to make a living with line and net from their colourful 100-year-old wooden fishing boat (the luzzu of the title). Stymied by EU legislation limiting his catch, Jesmark struggles to make ends meet; a situation made worse by the fact that his young son Aiden needs medical attention. Under pressure from his wife and her upper-class family to be more of a provider, Jesmark succumbs to the lure of the local black market and spends more time delivering illegal catches (and bribes) than being out at sea on his boat.

Scicluna's measured performance effectively encapsulates the devastating effect this has on him. His entire life has been lived on the sea and he has no desire to move to another industry, as EU-funded "compensation" is tempting other local fishermen - but his choices are increasingly restricted by red tape, dwindling fish stocks and his desire to provide a better life for his son. He is a traditional man buffeted by the relentless currents of capitalism, and the toll is written all over his weather-worn face.

It's also reflected in the film's evocative visuals. Cinematographer Leo Lefevre captures in intimate detail Jesmark's relationship with his boat, the nets, the sea - opening out, in contrast, to wider horizons that take in the trawlers and cargo ships that are changing Jesmark's life.

Sound design is also effective, capturing the natural sounds of this ancient industry as well as the abrasive chimes of change (the blast of trawler horns, the crunch of boats being destroyed for scrap). In one memorable moment, Aiden's desperate cries merge with the equally desperate shouts of fishermen attempting to sell their catch for a decent price at market - effectively underscoring the tensions between past and future at the heart of this deeply moving film.

At the 2021 Sundance Film Festival, Jesmark Scicluna won the Special Jury Acting Award, while at the Kyiv International Film Festival and the Film Independent Spirit Awards, Alex Camilleri won the Best Director prize, the film itself winning Best Picture at the Athens International Film Festival and the Sofia International Film Festival.

Acknowledgments: Nikki Baughan, *Sight&Sound*

"This [film] is a clear-eyed view of the choices Jesmark and those like him are facing, showing just how complex their situation is, cutting beyond work into community and culture"

Amber Wilkinson, *EyeforFilm*

Leading Players

Jesmark Scicluna
Marta Vella
Timur Ali
David Scicluna
Marcelle Theuma

Jesmark
Mary Grace
Baby Aiden
David
Doctor

Production Credits

Director	Alex Camilleri
Producers	Alex Camilleri, Ramin Bahrani + 11 others
Screenplay	Alex Camilleri
Cinematography	Leo Lefevre
Original Music	Jon Natchez

Coming soon

December 28th

THE LAST WALTZ (USA, 1978, 117mins, Cert U) Martin Scorsese's documentary recording The Band's 1976 farewell concert has been widely imitated but never bettered. Consummately stylish but with dignity and restraint, the film celebrates The Band's 16 years on the road with a plethora of invited guests from Dr John to Muddy Waters, Bob Dylan to Van Morrison, Eric Clapton, Joni Mitchell to Emmylou Harris and many famous names in the country rock pantheon.

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