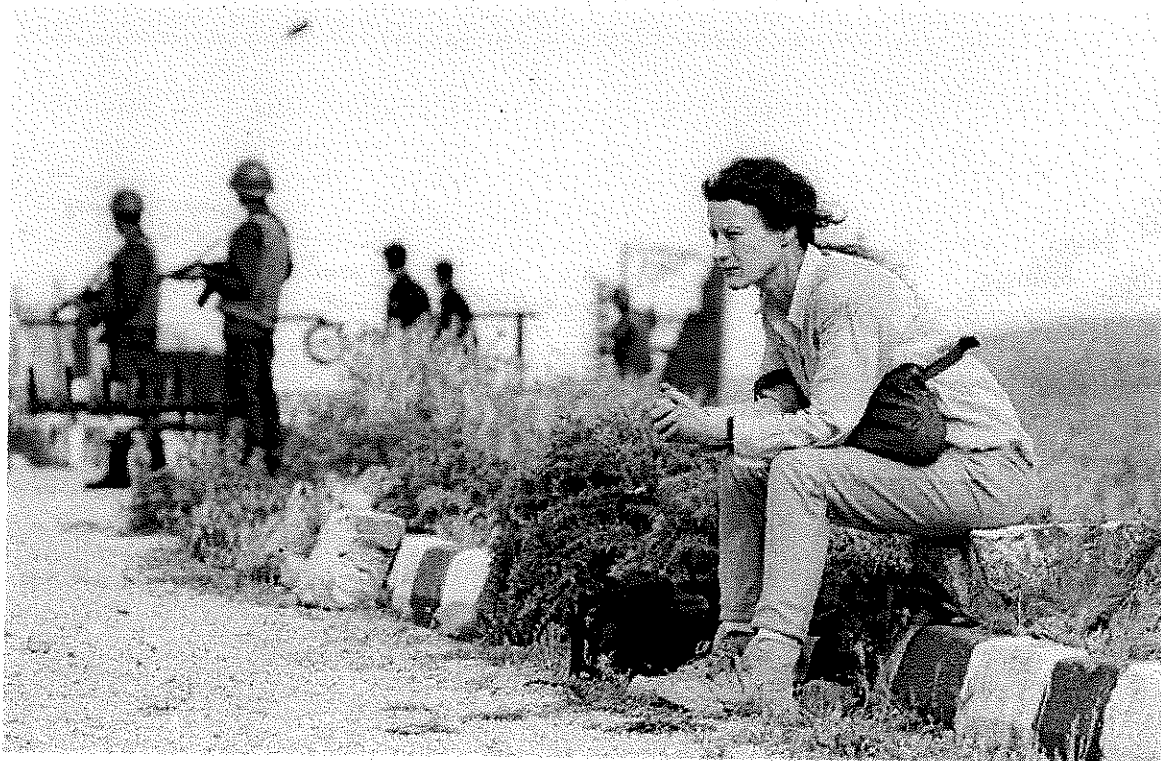


# La Route d'Istanbul (The Road to Istanbul)

[www.theupcoming.co.uk/2016/02/25/berlin-film-festival-2016-la-route-distanbul-the-road-to-istanbul-review/](http://www.theupcoming.co.uk/2016/02/25/berlin-film-festival-2016-la-route-distanbul-the-road-to-istanbul-review/)

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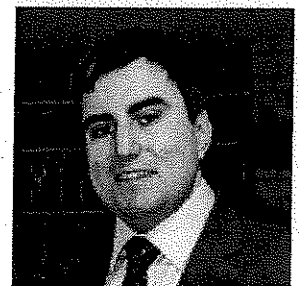
Berlin Film Festival 2016



25th February 2016

James Ager

The latest in a long parade hard-hitting, emotionally draining topical stories to screen at this year's Berlin Film Festival, *La Route d'Istanbul (The Road to Istanbul)* is a poignant drama about a Belgian mother, Isabel, whose daughter converts to Islam and sets out to contribute to the war in Syria. Isabel consequently embarks on her own mission to bring her daughter, Elodie, home. It's a very simple premise but one that is laden with both dramatic and political significance. Foregoing sensationalism, the film presents a relatively reasoned view of the scenario; though told from the mother's perspective, it is skilled at presenting both sides of the conversation, never demonising those who choose to go. It is textbook in its ability to foment intelligent discussion while still delivering emotional gut-punches time and again.



The lynchpin around which the drama of *The Road to Istanbul* revolves is lead actress Astrid Whettnal, in the role of Isabel, who demonstrates astounding emotional range, and is more than capable of bringing to life the perfect mix of steely determination and desperation that feels incredibly genuine. At times, especially through the first 30 minutes, the script can seem a little forced or unnatural, but when given a chance to shine, Whettnal is heartbreaking in a performance that can only be described as virtuosic. The rest of the cast are competent, of course, but largely unremarkable, and ultimately eclipsed by that impactful central role and that incredible realisation.

In other respects, *The Road to Istanbul* is well executed, if not particularly noteworthy. The cinematography is impressive in its ability to balance wider shots, which preserve a strong sense of geography, and illuminating close-ups, which give ample opportunity to appreciate the depth and fidelity of the actors' emotional portrayals. The stark

contrast between the dark and cool colour palette of Belgium and the light and dry tones of Turkey is a tried-and-true but nonetheless effective way of differentiating the two domains. Other elements of the film largely fade into the background, very much playing second fiddle to the emotional heart that beats at the core of this drama.

The Road to Istanbul *does not have a UK release date yet.*

*Read more of our reviews and interviews from the festival here.*

*Watch the trailer for The Road to Istanbul here:*