



# Timbuktu

Autumn  
Season  
2015

Release: 2014

Cert (UK): 12A

Language: French and Tuareg

Runtime: 97 mins

Director: Abderrahmane Sissako

Writers: Abderrahmane Sissako, Kessen Tall

Cinematographer: Sofian El Fani

Cast: Ibrahim Ahmed, Abel Jafri, Toulou Kiki



'The African film Timbuktu begins with an antelope racing to escape hunters and ends with a young girl similarly on the run. Both animal and child are, by implication, Mali itself, a country struggling to survive the repression of its culture by Islamic militants. This extraordinary film by the Mauritanian director Abderrahmane Sissako premiered a year ago in Cannes, but

has gone on to become, if anything, more timely and urgent.

Timbuktu is a cri de coeur against violence and intolerance, but what makes it so unusually compelling as a protest film is that it's also a richly poetic work of cinema – witty, beautiful and even, sobering though it is, highly entertaining. Mischievous and imaginative, Timbuktu avoids the worthiness and emotional manipulation of so much current affairs cinema. The film is a panorama that constantly slips between stories and characters, building up its effect elliptically, all the better to hit us in the end with the full weight of its message.

One of the most appalling aspects of the Islamic militants' campaign in Mali is the suppression of music, of a tradition that in recent years has given us countless world-class artists, including singer-songwriters Rokia Traoré (a Cannes jury member this year) and Fatoumata Diawara, who plays a small but telling role in Timbuktu. The soundtrack is fantastic.

The photography is beautiful with the warmth of desert light on buildings, dunes and faces. There may be little that's cheering in the conditions depicted, yet Sissako's film revels in the joy of people, of music and of film, making Timbuktu a formidable statement of resistance in itself.'

Mainly from Jonathon Romney – The Observer