

Kira Huland

East is East : Background information on the director and writer

Director: Damien O'Donnell

Born 1967, Irish, living in Dublin

"East is East" was his directorial debut

The producer of "East is East", Leslee Udwin, Chose him, because he liked O'Donnells short film "35 Aside"

Wasn't sure if he was right for the job because he wasn't familiar with the topic, almost rejected the offer

Really liked the Story, challed it "a gem of a script"

Writer: Ayub Khan-Din

More interesting for us, because the story is autobiographical, based on his personal experiences

Born 1961, father Pakistani, mother English, 8th of 10 children

Grew up in Salford, Manchester, family owned fish& chip- shop

Children rejected father's world view

Left school when he was 16, worked as a hairdresser

Went to Mountview Drama school

Played in Kureishi's films "My beautifull laundrette" and "Sammy and Rosie get laid"

He felt stigmatized as a "black actor", couldn't find work

When his mother died, he started to write "East is East" (as a stageplay), as a Tribute to her and to understand his past

"East is East" was played first in 1997 in London Royal Court Theatre, succesfull,

Producer Leslee Udwin say it and became interested to make a film

Khan-Din wrote Story as a screenplay

1999 in British cinemas, surprisingly successfull, Evening standart award for best film in 1999

Mostly positive Feedback, but also some criticism because of "stereotypical presentation"

From: Interesting quotes of Ayub Khan-Din:

The parents are drawn directly from my own family. The youngest boy, Sajid, is me as a child. All the arguments in the film, all the theories behind the father's way of thinking, are my own arguments and theories which I developed from writing the first draft of the stageplay to the last draft of the screenplay. The different issues, the different aspects of different relationships - they're all very similar to my own background.

I've made a point in the film of not making it offensive or irreligious at all, so there's nothing they can point to. It's like walking on egg shells. I'm sure people will have some criticism about how I portray my father. But at the end of the day, I'm portraying my father, he's not a Pakistani everyman. To a certain extent, this is a man who abandoned his culture and married an English woman, and then decided that his children should marry Pakistanis. So you know, there was huge hypocrisy there. I made a point of not going to any Q&A sessions after the play because I didn't want to have to start justifying what I'd written. It was a personal story. I wasn't writing about any specific community, I was writing about my father.

This was our Pakistani life; this is how we existed outside Salford. A life none of my friends knew or could understand...I think in [East is East] I came as close as possible to understanding my father's motivation in the way he tried to bring us up.