

The IndieFest Review

Independent Reviews of Independent Productions



FAULTLINES

A documentary film
by Eylem Kaftan

FILM REVIEW
by Victoria Kyoko

In August 1999, a magnitude 7.4 earthquake shook Turkey for an unbearable 47 seconds, killing 40,000 people and devastating cities. Director **Eylem Kaftan** quickly assembled a skeleton film crew and returned to her home town of Cinarcik – the quake's epicentre – to find it in shambles. *Faultlines* is the resulting 45-minute documentary film.

The first thing that strikes you about the film is its honesty. There are no tricky camera angles, no soft filters, no night scenes for dramatic effect. This is raw, naked footage of the complete devastation of a city. Buildings, ripped apart by the force of the quake, are left either half standing or completely buried in rubble. A dramatic aerial shot reveals how the large domed buildings of the city tumbled randomly like a set of child's blocks. One man points

to the area where his apartment once stood – all that is left is the bathroom sink, still attached to the tiled wall.

Walking amid the devastation is the citizenry, unwitting survivors of an unthinkable catastrophe. They have lost all material possessions; some have lost their entire family. They are frustrated by the disorganized efforts of the poorly trained and under-equipped Civil Defence rescue teams and by the lack of social assistance to the victims of the disaster. 45 days after the quake, victims no longer expect any help from their government and instead turn to self-reliance in order to survive. One year later, they are still living in makeshift tent cities, hoping their government will remember their plight.

Victims blame systemic corruption, unregulated development and shoddy construction as silent contributors

to the disaster. The Turkish government publicly minimizes the effects of the quake to avoid declaring a state of emergency, and squanders international relief aid on unrelated projects. Unified in their belief that the government abandoned them during and after the disaster, some survivors organize a resistance movement.

"Look, father state, I sent my son to army when you asked me to, I paid my taxes. Now, it is your turn."

– *Earthquake Victims Association*

Even though she was born in Cinarcik and obviously retains a personal connection to the plight of the people here, Kaftan has managed to put together an unbiased, factual but moving documentary without involving her own personal compassion. Instead of neatly scripting a packaged performance, she wisely chose to let the story tell itself through a series of interviews, raw footage and news clips, carefully filmed and edited with a keen eye for composition and balance. As her first documentary, *Faultlines* is a gripping testimony to her potential as a filmmaker. Kaftan and her co-producer **Craig Segal** were forced to use their own

resources to get this powerful story on film, which in itself makes a statement about the heart and soul poured into this documentary.

Excerpts from Kaftan's filming diary can be viewed on the film's website WWW.GEOCITIES.COM/JUNIORDELL. She describes the difficulties she experienced while filming and editing the raw footage as well as the life lessons she learned while making an independent film.

One year after the disaster, the Turkish government declares the relief efforts a success. But people are still living in tent cities, and contractors are still building apartments on faultlines; says Kaftan, "We are repeating the same mistakes."

Faultlines is a powerful and moving documentary on the physical and social aftermath of a terrible disaster. This film will not be popular with the Turkish government... but it will force the rest of the world to take a closer look at its existing social systems in order to prevent such tragedies in the future. Δ (VK)

Faultlines will be exhibited as part of the Planet Indie Film Festival in Toronto at 7:00 pm on Wednesday September 18, 2002 at the TRANZAC Club, 292 Brunswick Avenue, just south of Bloor. For more festival info, visit WWW.PLANETINDIE.COM.