



69th Festival de Cannes

The 2016 Short Film Corner

Emma Lindley

Red River

United Kingdom

12'

Muni is a schoolgirl who lives by the river. Her family want her to marry a much older man, Sami. Both are unsure. Muni protests but when her mother insists, she runs away.

Muni has to choose between freedom and her family, Sami, between honour and desire.

Hi Emma congratulations on having *Red River* part of this years Short Film Corner, how do you feel ahead of the festival?

I'm really excited to to be going to Cannes with our film, it's a great place to see films, talk about them and see where the industry's heading in the next year or so.

What does it mean for you to be able to have *Red River* in the Cannes Short Film Corner?

It feels great to have been accepted into SFC, which is a unique marketplace for short films from around the world. It also acts a starting point when I talk to co-producers and financiers about my new feature, 'Save Me', which we're raising money for in Cannes.

Tell me a little bit about *Red River* how did the film come to life?

Red River is about Muni, a young British Asian schoolgirl who is also engaged to a much older man. When her family try to force her to get married, she runs away and is pursued by her fiancé. I got the idea from a talk by *Human Rights Watch* about child brides, and then won funding from the *Directors UK Challenge Alexa* competition sponsored by Arri to make the film. We cast in London and found some wonderful actors like **Goldy Notay** (*Sex in the City 2, It's a Wonderful Afterlife*) and **Munir Khairdin** (*Spooks, Hustle*), along with 11 year old newcomer **Nikhita Mani**, who did a fantastic job of bringing the characters to life.

What was the most challenging scene for you to film?

Shooting a chase sequence on the River Thames, we got caught out by the rising tide and had to move really fast to stop our actors and kit getting wet! Co-ordinating stunts with boats is always tricky but I hope you agree the results were worth it.

Looking back is there anything you would do differently on this film?

You always wish you had more time on a shoot but we had a great crew and cast so we got it all done. I would love to shot a more ambitious piece on the river - my new feature 'Save Me' is set on a Houseboat so there'll definitely be some underwater sequences in that!

Has it been hard to let go of this film?

I don't feel it's over yet as the film has a new life once you show it to audiences and we've had a great time taking it to London Short Film Festival and now to Cannes. We just won an audience award for Best Non-Multiplex Film which really means a lot as it means people are responding to the film and the story.

What has been the biggest lesson you've taken from making this film?

That you're only as good as the people around you. It doesn't matter how experienced you are, every time it's like starting anew and your actors, director of photography and editor, along with everyone else who works on a film, they all collaborate with you to tell the story and get it right.

Have you always wanted to be a filmmaker?

I've always written since I was young, and there was a dodgy moment where I wanted to act but luckily I didn't go through with that - for the sake of everyone else! I have always told stories, and discovered I liked film best. It's also in the family as my Dad is an editor and my mum was an actress...!

How has your approach to filmmaking changed since you started out?

I do things more from instinct now and develop a shorthand with people I'm working with so you don't have so many big discussions on set. I value economy and style, but most of all

emotional content. If something moves me when I'm watching, then hopefully it will move others too. And if it moves the crew then you know you've got something really good!

Who have been your biggest influences?

Lots of things affect me - stories in the real world, people I meet, and I see a lot of films and plays I like too. I think **Tobias Lindholm** (*The Hunt, A War*) is a really brilliant writer as he pares everything back so it is very simple, yet deals with really complex themes in disguise.

Now you can be reflective what advice would you offer a fellow filmmaker?

Just keep making the films you want to see. And don't give up. It's always worth it.

And finally what do you hope people will take away from your film?

The desire to see it again? (kidding). I don't know, maybe that life isn't simple but that generally, given the choice, people will do the right thing.