



**SEEN & HEARD: DARING FEMALE COMING-OF-AGE FILMS**

# Mustang

## **Deniz Gamze Ergüven on 'Mustang'**

*Five years ago you were at the Cinéfondation workshop for young filmmakers at Cannes, struggling to develop Kings, a script about the Los Angeles riots. Then your classmate Alice Winocour motivated you to write about something you know, so Mustang came about. Is it easier to talk about something closer to you?*

*Kings* was extremely close to me, but I had a hard time explaining it to people because I hadn't lived that story. *Mustang* was a deliberate choice of me saying, 'OK, I'm not going to freak people out anymore. I'm going to do something with girls who look like me and speak like me and everyone will easily understand it.' *Kings* was based on historical events, so I had to read everything, go through archives and meet people, then write the film. With *Mustang* that work was already done. The material was already 'mine'. The structure was worked out before I even started to write.

*As a child, your idea of Turkey was formed by going there for the summer holidays and discussions you had with your relatives. Did that distance from the subject help?*

Definitely. Being able to zoom in and out of the experience and also knowing how it was to be a woman in other places, was constitutive to the way I articulated the question in the film.

*How did your Turkish experience and heritage affect you while growing up?*

That's a difficult question. Maybe I am slightly more conservative than my European friends. Just that.

*Is the situation Mustang describes representative of what it means to grow up as a girl in rural Turkey?*

The situations that are the basis of each scene are real. They are either things I've lived or seen around me or documented and the way the girls react is the place where fiction enters. For example, the little scandal the girls trigger at the beginning of the film is something we lived in our family. The prevalent feeling was shame, so even if we felt injustice we didn't say anything. When the girls later start breaking the chairs in the yard saying, 'These chairs were touched by our asses,' that's where fiction enters.

And then it's a film told as a fairytale and it's quite condensed. Nobody can say it is the exact life of this person. There are reflections with real-life characters and a lot of real events, but it's fragmentary. Being emotionally truthful is very important to me. The chairs incident shows what the girls feel, their desire to revolt.

*Has the film helped trigger any positive discussions around the issues it raises?*

When the film came out, reactions were polarised. There were people who, when they didn't like the film, would either attack me by saying, 'She's not Turkish,' or the film by saying, 'The script is so bad, the actresses are so bad, it's so boring.' You would look at the page of the person on social media and it said 'AK party' [the ruling, socially conservative Justice and Development

Party]. I didn't have the impression that discussions about the film were always honest intellectually. But there's been a lot of press and people say, 'It's a gloomy time in Turkey and this is good news.' It makes them happy, so it's good.

Anyone who doesn't agree with the current government is called a terrorist. For us, it's the same, albeit at a smaller scale. Our legitimacy is questioned. In a way, the film's success and the Oscar nomination shut the mouths of everyone who attacked it.

*Hopefully younger audiences will see it, at least.*

The actresses who play the girls have accompanied the film a lot. It was surprising that they see the values of the film as normal, whereas some things said in it are socially not so acceptable. For them, being courageous, fighting for your rights, being a bit insular when you need to be – all those things – have become normal. They become more and more like the characters.

*Can cinema help change the way women are perceived?*

It's not a question of equity, it's much bigger than that. When you look at the world through the eyes of women, cinema is an extremely powerful meta-language. We can say things through film we can't say any other way – exchange experiences and points of view, and generate compassion, empathy, knowledge and perspective. In cultures where women are in a very different position, it objectifies them and for some men generates a complete inability to project themselves into the mind of a woman. But even people who hate the film, who feel antagonised by it, even they, for an hour and a half, have seen the world through Lale's eyes. That is quite a leap. Just that exercise is such a little revolution of perspective and potentially it can trigger that little breach.

A film is like a little military column and the director is the leader. There is something animal about not trusting a girl who at face value doesn't generate the energy of a dominant alpha male. A few weeks ago in the US we were sitting with my fellow directors from the Oscars short list. The guys were all sitting with their legs spread and their arms on the sofa and spoke with deep and manly voices. I was the only one sitting straight, with my knees touching each other, having a low, soft voice.

People don't think I'm going to kick their ass. I do when I need to, and I'm strong when I need to be, but it's not written on my forehead. It's animal. Three weeks before the shoot I was dumped by *Mustang's* [original] woman producer. She knew that I had just discovered I was pregnant. It's like me, when I see a woman pilot, I'm ashamed for myself. We are just a product of our time. There is progress; eventually we are going to go somewhere.

**Interview by Despina Ladi, *Sight & Sound*, June 2016**

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## MUSTANG

*A film by:* Deniz Gamze Ergüven

©: CG Cinéma, Vistmar Filmproduktion, Uhlandfilm, Bam Film, Kinology

*Co-production:* CG Cinéma,

Vistamar Filmproduktion, Uhlandfilm, BAM Film, Kinology

*With the participation of:* Canal+, Ciné+, ZDF/ARTE

*With the support of:* Eurimages, Turkish Ministry of Culture, Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée, Filmförderungsanstalt FFA, Film und Medienstiftung NRW

*With the participation of:* Doha Film Institute, Aide aux Cinémas du Monde, Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Institut Français

*Supported by:* Eurimages Conseil de l'Europe, Turkish Ministry of Culture

*Recipient of a post-production grant from:* Doha Film Institute

*Presented by:* CG Cinéma

*In co-production with:* Vistmar Filmproduktion, Uhlandfilm, BAM Film

*In association with:* Kinology

*Executive Production Turkey:* IFP

*Produced by:* Charles Gillibert

*Co-produced by:* Frank Henschke, Anja Uhland, Mine Vargi

*Line Producer:* Violaine Gillibert

*Associate Producers:* Sadik Ekinci, Emre Oskay

*Location Manager:* Samet Dogan

*1st Assistant Director:* Marie Weinberger

*Script Supervisor:* Louise Ahrex

*Casting Director:* Harika Uygur

*Written by:* Deniz Gamze Ergüven, Alice Winocour

*Directors of Photography:* David Chizallet, Ersin Gok

*Editor:* Mathilde Van de Moortel

*Art Director:* Serdar Yemisci

*Costume Designer:* Selin Sozen

*Make-up and Hair Stylist:* Susanne Fiebig

*Music:* Warren Ellis

*All Music Performed and Recorded by:* Warren Ellis

*Sound Recordist:* Ibrahim Gok

*Re-recording Mixer:* Olivier Goinard

*Sound Editors:* Damien Guillaume, Emmanuel Bonnat

## Cast

Günes Nezihe Sensoy (*Lale*)

Doga Zeynep Doguslu (*Nur*)

Tugba Sunguroglu (*Selma*)

Elit Isçan (*Ece*)

Ilayda Akdogan (*Sonay*)

Nihal Koldas (*grandmother*)

Ayberk Pekcan (*Erol*)

Bahar Kerimoglu (*Dilek*)

Burak Yigit (*Yasin*)

Suzanne Marrot (*Aunt Hanife*)

Erol Afsin (*Osman*)

Enes Surum (*Ekin*)

France/Germany/Turkey/Qatar 2015©

97 mins

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## SEEN & HEARD: DARING FEMALE COMING-OF-AGE FILMS

### Thirteen

Wed 2 Feb 20:40; Fri 11 Feb 18:10

### House of Hummingbird (Beolsae)

Sat 5 Feb 20:20; Sat 26 Feb 17:40

### It Felt Like Love

Sun 6 Feb 18:00; Wed 16 Feb 20:30

### Fish Tank

Thu 10 Feb 20:30; Sat 19 Feb 20:40

### Mustang

Fri 11 Feb 20:30; Sat 26 Feb 13:40

### In Between Days

Sun 13 Feb 18:30; Sat 26 Feb 20:40

### Rafiki

Mon 14 Feb 18:20; Fri 18 Feb 18:00; Wed 23 Feb 20:30

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