

scenarios: rescued from boats in the Mediterranean and taken to Italian relocation centers, being placed in Jordanian camps, swimming ashore on Greek islands, and trying to survive in makeshift enclaves in Eastern Europe or on the French coast. The stories they tell are heartbreaking; one man tearfully describes how nearly a third of his family members died along the way. Weiwei interacts with the refugees, commiserating as a displaced person himself, and his artist's eye is very much apparent in carefully composed and elegantly shot images. Especially notable are sequences of refugees marching in long lines under official supervision, shot from an angle far above in what might be called a divine perspective. *Human Flow* is arguably too beautiful for its subject, but it effectively conveys the size and urgency of today's refugee problem. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

I Dream in Another Language ★★★

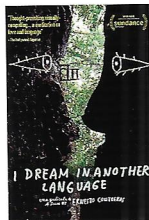
FilmRise, 101 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95

Mexican director Ernesto Contreras's Sundance award-winner follows university researcher Martín (Fernando Álvarez Rebeil), who travels to a remote village to record and register Zikril, an indigenous language in danger of extinction. Martín discovers that only two Zikril speakers survive, and there is a significant problem: Isauro (José Manuel Poncelis) and Evaristo (Eligio Meléndez) are elderly men who had a falling out over a woman nearly 50 years ago and have refused to speak to each other ever since. Flashbacks detail the circumstances that led to the dissolution of the men's friendship, and there is a subplot regarding a budding romance between Martín and Evaristo's granddaughter (Fátima Molina), who teaches an English instructional show on a local radio station. *I Dream in Another Language* deals with heady themes, from the ephemeral state of culture, to the lingering wounds of betrayal, to the power of language (even a dying tongue). And while the romantic elements—especially Martín's unlikely foray into affairs of the heart—are sometimes clumsy, the strong performances by Poncelis and Meléndez as old foes (coupled with the beautiful cinematography by Tonatiuh Martínez) more than compensate. Recommended. (P. Hall)

In Harmony ★★★

Icarus, 90 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99

Loosely based on the life of equestrian stuntman Bernard Sachsé, Denis Dercourt's film stars Albert Dupontel as Marc

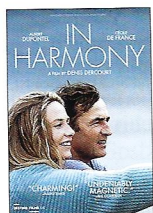


Guermont, who suffers a devastating spinal injury while filming a scene with his horse. Rendered paraplegic and confined to a wheelchair, Guermont is pressured to accept a one-time payment by insurance adjuster Florence Kernel (Cécile de France). He refuses, considering the amount inadequate, and Florence, who comes to believe that her company is trying to cheat him, suggests he consult her lawyer friend. The two gradually develop a romantic relationship—although she is married—and they both become determined to take charge of their lives, with Marc aiming to ride again, and Florence wanting to return to the career she abandoned as a concert pianist. There is unquestionably a hint of formula here, but Dercourt's approach is refreshingly unsentimental, and the stars give nuanced and committed performances—Dupontel actually did his own stunts, and de France mastered enough fingering to play a portion of a Liszt étude. The two bring genuine feeling to what could easily have degenerated into a crudely maudlin exercise (cue Hollywood remake). So while undoubtedly designed to be uplifting, *In Harmony* retains a sense of straightforward honesty that seems characteristically French. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

In Syria ★★★

Film Movement, 86 min., in Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

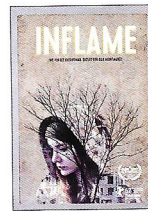
A harrowing, sometimes hard-to-watch drama set in the confines of a middle-class apartment in war-torn Damascus, *In Syria* reflects the contemporary horror facing ordinary Syrian civilians living under the daily threat of bombs and bullets. Hiam Abbass gives a complex, mesmerizing performance as Oum Yazan, a tough matriarch caring for her children, wizened father-in-law, an unrelated teen, a housemaid, and a young couple with a newborn baby, while her husband is out somewhere in his capacity as a medic or anti-government insurgent. Writer-director Philippe Van Leeuw masterfully conjures an atmosphere of imminent, dangerous possibilities, where ordinary tasks such as preparing food take on a dark urgency, water is scarce, and knocks on the front door create moments of suspense and dread. When the father of that baby slips out into the street to prepare for his family's nocturnal escape from the city, he meets a fate that will subsequently be kept secret from his wife (Diamand Bou Abboud), who in turn will experience her own hell before the day is through. Van Leeuw puts the viewer through some tough watching, but the real tragedy of *In Syria* is that this is just another day of trying to survive for these characters. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Inflame ★★★1/2

FilmRise, 94 min., in Turkish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95

With an echo of Roman Polanski's classic *Repulsion*, this Turkish film centers on a young woman who retreats from a rapidly changing society into her own home, where hallucinations and paranoia are rife. Hasret (Algi Eke) works as a video editor in an Istanbul television news station. When Turkish president Erdogan's crackdown on free speech and the press commences, Hasret is pressured to broadcast pro-government propaganda. When it becomes too much, she retreats into her apartment, where the growing tyranny outside and visible destruction of her historic neighborhood (which is officially due for rebuilding) are causing her to panic. Hasret feels the walls burning with heat, is plagued by auditory hallucinations, and begins obsessing over the 20-year-old death of her artist parents in a car crash, drawing parallels between their fate and the recent rise of oppression and censorship under Erdogan's tightening grip. Filmmaker Ceylan Özgün Özçelik's feature debut has a fine premise, but the central conceit is difficult to sustain for a full movie without some redundancy and a thinning out of the main themes. Still, Özçelik is a director to watch. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)



Ismael's Ghosts ★★★

Magnolia, 134 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$26.99

French filmmaker Arnaud Desplechin's *Ismael's Ghosts* is ostensibly the story of a filmmaker named Ismael Vuillard (Mathieu Amalric), whose personal and artistic lives are both thrown off track by the sudden reappearance of his former wife (Marion Cotillard)—who disappeared without a word for 20 years. The narrative jumps abruptly back and forth in time and between biography, fiction, and dreams, blurring the line between the lives of its characters and the creative re-imagining of them through Ismael's new film about his estranged brother (Louis Garrel). Wife and brother are Ismael's ghosts and nightmares, afflicting him in manic visions that appear to stem from sleeplessness, drinking, and even filmmaking itself. *Ismael's Ghosts* is a fragmented and sometimes confusing film, but it is also an impassioned drama about powerful emotions—a raw, funny, angry, and loving tale with rich, complex characters and relationships, as well as an interesting perspective on storytelling as both artistic endeavor and personal psychological work. Likely to appeal to fans of challenging and

