

MUSTANG

FRANCE/TURKEY 97 MIN

DENIZ GAMZE ERGÜVEN

Deep in rural Anatolia, five teenage sisters start to test out their sexuality, like foals taking their tentative first steps on unsteady legs. And the conservative community around them responds with panic, in this terrific, Oscar-nominated first feature. Their collective beauty automatically makes them morally suspect. And in a culture in which a woman's worth is still measured by her marriageability, this is a serious blow to their prospects. The grandmother who has raised them since they were orphaned bows to pressure from the men in the family and locks down the girls' freedom. After subjecting the three oldest to medical inspections to check their purity, the windows are barred and the house turned into a "wife factory". One by one, the sisters are brokered for marriage like stock animals; meanwhile, the youngest, Lale (Günes Sensoy), who narrates the film, dreams of taking charge of her own life and escaping to Istanbul.

With its rooted sense of place and community, and rebellious spirit, this is an accomplished and engaging debut. Writer-director Deniz Gamze Ergüven and her co-writer, Alice Winocour, approach the material with a light touch – the most shocking scenes always take place off-camera – and enough humour to deflate the anger that builds on the girls' behalf. The restless camera captures both the tactile intimacy of the sisters – they sprawl lazily, limbs entwined, as their fates are decided elsewhere – and the mounting tension as they start to chafe against the lives that have been ordained for them.

Wendy Ide, *The Guardian*

Full of life even as it depicts lives in lockdown, *Mustang* is a stunning debut feature by Deniz Gamze Ergüven about five sisters in rural Turkey. Confined to their grandmother's house, the girls bridle against losing their freedoms in a story grounded in both laughter and tears, and above all in the resilient strength of these girls against soul-deadening strictures.

The supposed sin of Lale, the narrator, and her four sisters (ages extending into the teenage years) was to romp with boys at the beach on the last day of school. Their real offense is being girls with uncontrollable independent spirits in a patriarchal culture. The anxious grandmother and uncle who look after the sisters forbid them to leave the house, and turn the place into a "wife factory." Lale, Nur, Ece, Selma and Sonay keep on pushing, sneaking away to see a soccer game, and boys, and the walls keep on closing in. Virginity tests are administered by a doctor; bars are put on the windows; prospective husbands are entertained over tea.

Ms. Ergüven, who was born in Turkey, brings deft timing and an unapologetic appreciation of beauty to the story, qualities missing from other, schematic portrayals of clashes with traditional mores, Turkish or otherwise. Feather-light camerawork by David Chizallet and Ersin Gok is matched by a nimble screenplay written by Ms. Ergüven with Alice Winocour. The ensemble of young actresses is a constantly restless and real presence, the perspective filtered mostly through the cheeky Lale but also through the group as a loving crew.

Nicolas Rapold, *The New York Times*

WRITERS: Deniz Gamze Ergüven and Alice Winocour **CINEMATOGRAPHY:** David Chizallet and Ersin Gok **MUSIC:** Warren Ellis
CAST *Lale* Günes Sensoy | *Nur* Doga Zeynep Doguslu | *Selma* Tugbu Sunguroglu | *Ece* Elit Iscan | *Sonay* Ilayda Akdogan

VOTING FOR *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* A84 | B25 | C4 | D0 | E0 | Rating 92.7% | Attendance 115

Next screening | ***A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence*** | Tuesday 4 April 2017. 8.00pm

'...it's about doom and death and the ineffable weirdness of human experience, and it made me laugh until I wept...'