

Film Reviews

Locke at the Venice Film Festival



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Tom Hardy plays Ivan Locke with so much anguished drama that you can't look away for a second
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One man. A Car. A telephone. And a 90-minute journey. These humble ingredients add up to the most gripping, formally bold piece of cinema of the festival so far. Tom Hardy stars as Ivan Locke, the softly spoken Welsh foreman of a major building project whose life slowly disintegrates over the course of one fateful journey.

At 5.25am, more than 200 trucks of concrete will arrive. Ivan should be there to supervise the pouring of the foundations. One tiny mistake could result in the building folding in on itself like a house of cards. Instead, Ivan is burning down the motorway to the bedside of a virtual stranger who is about to give birth to his baby.

Ivan juggles phone calls with his wife, his soon to be ex-employers, his second-in-command and the woman who is giving birth to his child. Hardy is never off screen; the supporting cast, which

includes Olivia Colman as mother-to-be Bethan and Andrew Scott as the hapless concrete rookie Donal, are heard on the phone only.

It's a testament to Hardy's masterful performance that even a heated exchange with an unseen colleague about the consistency of concrete is utterly, breathlessly compelling.

Speaking with the soothing melodic cadences of Richard Burton, Hardy's Ivan is a man who is used to calming a crisis. This time, however, the crisis is of his own making. One indiscretion with a lonely colleague seven months earlier and now Ivan is watching his hard-won life slip away. He knows better than most that the cost of one small error can be catastrophic; but as the son of an absentee father, Ivan has sworn to do the right thing by his unborn child, whatever the cost. And the cost is high. Ivan has resigned himself to losing his job, but is hoping to cling on to his marriage.

This is a brilliantly constructed drama. The writer and director Steven Knight (*Dirty Pretty Things*) has a knack for layering even seemingly mundane dialogue exchanges with substrata of hidden implications. His pacing is nail-chewing perfection. The drama unfolds in real time, but never once does this feel like a gimmick.

However strong the writing, however daring the conceit, this film could not have worked without the remarkable performance from Hardy. The interior of a car at night is not the most varied or cinematic backdrop, but there is so much anguished drama playing out in Hardy's eyes that you can't look away for a second.