



ONCE UPON A TIME IN ANATOLIA

(Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da)

Autumn
Season
2012

Release: 2011

Cert (UK): 15

Runtime: 150 mins

Director: Nuri Bilge Ceylan

Cast: Muhammet Uzuner, Yılmaz Erdoğan, Taner Birse, Firat Tanis



We, the audience, spend much of this film peering in at a group of men in cars driving round the Anatolian wilderness. Are they looking for somewhere to kill and bury the handcuffed man in the back seat? In fact it turns out they are searching for a dead body that he has admitted to killing, but he can't remember exactly where.

During this night of searching, we are gradually brought to know more and more about all the men there, mostly from clues in the conversation, until we begin to feel we are part of the team, rather than just watching in.

'Once Upon a Time in Anatolia' is, then, a police procedural, a murder mystery, but it bears little resemblance to any other. We, like the police, know little or nothing about the background to the murder – why it was done is never explained – and we get no help from the plot. Instead we are left to pick up these clues from the conversation. We learn as much about corruption, neglect and inefficiency as we do about the murder.

As the night draws towards morning, we also learn more about the prosecutor and the doctor and we are left, at the end, in the company of the doctor, deciding what to do with some details he has discovered... As the film points out early on, we might remember this night as an anecdote that began 'Once upon a time in Anatolia...'

The director, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, has won major plaudits already for his earlier films ('*Three Monkeys*', '*Distant*') but this, his sixth film, is generally heralded as his best yet with Philip French summing this up in the Observer with '*Nuri Bilge Ceylan is one of the most significant moviemakers to have emerged this century ... His finest work to date, 'Once Upon a Time in Anatolia', is a carefully controlled masterpiece*'. In case you are in any doubt, the Cannes Jury in 2011 voted it the Grand Prize for the best film.

