

Review: Oscar-winner Riz Ahmed stuns in short film 'Dammi'



CHENNAI: Short film “Dammi” made a splash at the Toronto International Film Festival before it headed to Saudi Arabia to screen at the Red Sea International Film Festival this month.

Filmmaker Yann Demange, who grew up in foster care and struggled to connect with his Algerian-Muslim roots, handpicked Oscar-winner Riz Ahmed to play a part that is in many ways a reflection of the director’s own experiences.

Lead character Mounir arrives in Paris as an unhappy man, whose relationship with his Algerian father is broken.





Filmmaker Yann Demange photographed at the Red Sea Film Festival in Saudi Arabia. (Getty Images)

However, he manages to connect with a French Algerian woman, Hafiza (Souhelia Yacoub), who is partly of Persian descent. Mounir admires her level of comfort with her identity and takes an immediate liking to her as he works to form his own sense of self. The work uses visual metaphors — such as the recurring motif of drowning — to describe its protagonist's struggle in finding himself and Ahmed is superb as a man trying to find who he is. His longing for his father is also brilliantly etched out, however, the most enduringly touching scenes are those between Ahmed and Yacoub who play off fabulously against each other.

Despite its mere 16-minute runtime, the film lends itself to myriad interpretations, and the shots of Paris are visually alluring. There is every chance that some may find “Dammi” helpful in finding the meaning of their own existence.

This short treat gives us hope for Marvel Studios' “Blade,” starring Oscar-winner Mahershala Ali, that Demange will direct. If he can pack this much heart into 16 minutes, here's to hoping the Marvel epic will also showcase the director's talents.
