

Film Review: Two Days, One Night (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 2014)



It can be just as complex to replicate human hardship in cinema as it is to create other worlds. The stark nature of the human condition is displayed excellently in the latest feature by the Dardenne brothers, starring Marion Cotillard – Two Days, One Night.

A young mother returns to work to discover that her colleagues have opted for a significant pay bonus, in exchange for her dismissal. Unable to survive and raise her children without her job, she spends one weekend convincing her workmates that she simply cannot leave.

Marion Cotillard delivers a riveting performance as a hollow, shattered mother trying desperately to claw her way out of a dire situation. She is the central figure in a film that never leaves her side. Present in every shot, some of them several minutes in length, other characters weave in and out, justifying their decisions to a woman facing potential poverty. For these ninety minutes, Cotillard is not an actress but simply a woman, blurring the lines between performance and real life.

It asks a number of questions in a method that lets it lead only ask one. Time and time again, Cotillard's character asks her employees to rethink their decision. Her words seldom change, if at all, and through this her words begin to draw heavy with desperation. There is very little that could be considered inspiring about Two Days, One Night. It is heavy, lumbering yet wholly rewarding work. It rewrites the meanings of value, hardship and self worth – asking if this woman's

actions are understandable or narcissistic.

Featuring Marion Cotillard's best performance since *La Vie en Rose*, the Dardenne Brothers should be proud of their latest work, both directorial and scriptural. Strenuous and rigid and yet ceaseless and natural, *Two Days, One Night* is a film about how to be zealous when there is very little in the way of reward.

Two Days, One Night opens at Filmhouse, Lothian Road on Friday August 22nd