

BILLAL

Short synopsis

The dramatic repercussions of a serious act of racially-motivated violence. The victims are a Lebanese family living in an outer-Sydney suburb. Their teenage son, Billal is run-down by a car sustaining massive brain injury. The film, shot over a period of 15 months, follows the dramatic twists and turns in the life of the family as they slowly come to terms with this traumatic event.

Long synopsis

The Eter family live on a housing estate in an outer-Sydney suburb. One night a fight breaks out involving the Eters teenage sons and those of the Anglo neighbour. Racial insults are thrown and returned. People are hurt, property is damaged and the police are called. The following day sixteen year old Billal Eter crosses the road. A car accelerates. His mother sees Billal flying through the air. She knows it's him by the colour of his pants.

Billal lies in a coma fighting for his life. Meanwhile his parents, fearing possible reprisal action by their other sons, plead with government authorities to move them to another suburb.

While the slow wheels of bureaucracy frustrate the family, Billal regains consciousness. His mother tries to nurse him to good health – believing he will eventually return to normal, while his father grieves, unreconciled to the loss of his son. Meanwhile the filmmakers are able to secure revealing interviews with the protagonist himself.

The Eters are eventually allocated a house, but Billal's recovery slows and his behaviour becomes uncontrollable. The doctors operate, but Billal instead of improving gets worse. The doctors operate again and the stresses on the family intensify.....

Quotes

Billal is a film from the sharp end of the multicultural debate... .and Zubrycki misses none of its complexity. Sympathetic, Political, and above all humane. This is one of his best films.

Paul Byrnes, Sydney Film Festival program

...a brilliant documentary with political, social and cultural ramifications far beyond the immediate story

the Guide SMH

Tom Zubrycki's studies of Australia's disenfranchised have always been potent documentary dramas and *Billal* is no exception.

David Stratton Variety

Check out a new road movie from one of Australia's edgiest documentary makers.....The result – a tight ride through a series of S-bends will blow away your notions of suburbia, family dynamics and racial stereotypes.

Ruth Hessey SMH