

Learning to Drive – Review

In Isabel Coixet's **comedy** of clashing cultures, Patricia Clarkson stars as Wendy, **who** works successfully in the literary world in Manhattan. Ben Kingsley, meanwhile, is Darwan, an Indian driving instructor (and devout Sikh) who she meets on the **night** her **marriage** of 21 years **disintegrates**.

The Barcelona-born director won a Goya Award for her debut feature, *Demasiado viejo para morir joven* in 1989. This is the second time she has worked with Clarkson and Kingsley, the first being 2008's *Elegy*, an adaptation of Philip Roth's novel *The Dying Animal*. The two films share some

themes - **adultery** and the **complexity** of romantic relationships - but the **tone** here is generally sweeter than in the **previous** film, and Kingsley's performance very different.

Wendy and Darwan are completely different human beings, but in **each** other both find a **decency** and **intelligence**. While Wendy has lived a life of words and **theory**, Darwan favours function and old-fashioned hard work. Darwan finds it difficult to understand the **catastrophe** that Wendy's marriage resulted in, while Wendy can't comprehend Darwan's decision to enter into an arranged marriage with Jasleen, a recent immigrant who he has only just met.

Their **relationship** - and their ability to fully **invest** you in their characters' struggle - is the **heart** of *Learning to Drive*, in which Darwan, as he teaches Wendy how to manage an automobile, begins to teach her about **life** itself. Wendy, too, influences Darwan, and both learn important lessons regards love and friendship in this **touching** picture.

