



Two films by Tsai Ming-liang

DAYS AFTERNOON

Tsai Ming-liang: Taiwan/France 2020/2015; Second Run; region-free Blu-ray; 2 discs; in Mandarin with English subtitles; Certificate 15; 127/137 minutes; 1.85:1. Extras: two interviews with Tsai Ming-liang; interview with Lee Kang-sheng; short film *Wandering* (2019); teasers and trailers; booklet.

REVIEWED BY HANNAH MCGILL

Tsai Ming-liang's unique body of work explores both bodies and work, as well as solitude, privacy and the impactful vagaries of weather and desire. Though he is often aligned with other purveyors of 'slow cinema', like Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Béla Tarr, the eroticism, humour and offbeat visual observations that recur in Tsai's work are identifiably and powerfully his own. Authorship indubitably extends to actor Lee Kang-sheng, who has appeared in all of Tsai's features and with whom he platonically shares his domestic life.

In *Days* (*Rizi*, pictured above), one of Tsai's most admired fiction features, Lee plays a lonely man with a chronic neck injury, who finds respite in an ambiguous relationship with a Laotian masseur (Anong Houngheuangsy). *Afternoon* (*Naxia wu*) also explores pain, solitude and solace, but through documentary: one long conversation between Tsai and Lee about their relationship and work together. These are wonderfully complementary films, each of which demands focused attention through subtlety and slowness, but rewards it in spades. If *Days* allows us to see kindness and fellow-feeling emerge in a relationship that initially appears merely transactional, *Afternoon* depicts an unquestionably intimate personal and professional bond, the power balance of which seems an ever-shifting conundrum. Tsai may be the boldface artistic name, but his is also the vulnerable posture – "I feel like I can only enter my inner world through you," he tells his muse. Lee, by contrast, plays the heartbreaker: of 22 years of Tsai's home cooking, he says, "Nothing has dazzled me yet." It's a conversation that abounds in such deadpan laughs, but which also presents a fascinating account of Tsai's career and emotional life to date, and is recommended with particular fervour to anyone with an interest in director/actor relationships.

DISC: These exquisitely detailed films have been exactly presented and look magnificent. Tsai is a winning, generous interviewee, so accompanying interviews with him are welcome too – the one with Lee Kang-shen had not yet been added when we went to press. The package also includes Tsai's 2021 short film *Wandering* and a booklet essay by the ever-insightful UK critic So Mayer.