

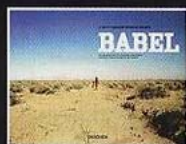


Heavy Weight

Postcards from Iñárritu's edge...

BABEL

Photographs by Mary Ellen Mark, Patrick Bard, Graciela Iturbide & Miguel Rio Branco. Taschen, £19.99 ★★★



Befitting a prestigious, humanity-under-a-microscope project like Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Babel* is this weighty, meditative companion piece. It's both factual montage of the film's around-the-world production cycle and an impressionistic barrage of strange, unusual sights. There are also

striking portraits of Iñárritu and cast at work, including Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett in Morocco, shot by top American documentary photographer Mary Ellen Mark.

Interspersed throughout are brief comments and anecdotes by the director, as weighted with profundity and compassion as *Babel* itself. Don't expect to find any laughs here – apart from Iñárritu's incongruously amusing dig at a chubby Mexican boy: "The fatty in the photograph never, in the three visits I made to his house, lifted himself out of his armchair." Indeed, as handsome as it all is, the gravity saturating every page does get a bit wearing, to the point that you might

spend more time flicking through the throwaway snaps at the end, just to see cast and crew smiling.

Not so funny, either, but still frank and insightful, is a Q&A with Iñárritu, in which he runs through *Babel's* long, winding history, from meeting Pitt for the first time on a jeans commercial in Japan to why he kept religion out of the movie despite his strong beliefs. Serious man, serious movie, serious book.

QUOTE "In *Babel*, it was God who created the confusion and man who has to find the solution. God is missing in this equation."

Matt Mueller