Before We Die Credit: ZDF Enterprises

When describing a show from another country’s vault having to do with the labyrinthine realms between the two cultures. What elements were more difficult to translate into an English-speaking culture?

At its core, "Before We Die" is built around universal themes: the power but sometimes complicated bond between mother and son, the meaning of family. In my opinion, it outstripped our broadest boundaries. These elements were very easy to adapt and recast in such as it would appeal to audiences all over the world. The only element that we immediately knew would not resonate with an English-speaking audience was the story of the toll gates, which is a recurrent trope of most Greek crime thrillers. In Scandinavian thrillers, gate tolling has a very specific resonance with the context of the criminal underworld and the same that Martin was a key point of the criminality in Italian films. However, this does not apply to the UK. In this context, the toll gates have a completely different cultural significance, so we knew that storyline would need to be removed — but the power of the central narrative line was greatly enhanced as a result.

Could you comment on your decision to focus on the mother-son relationship, a decision that profoundly changes the adaptation, making it vehicle for different sorts of thematic exploration.

When we decided to adapt the series, it became immediately clear to us that the show was a psychological family drama built around the architecture and grammar of a road race action packed crime thriller. The mother and son relationship was the stand out. The thematic exploration around the family drama is an essential part of the story and the crucial part of the narrative, especially when exploring the meaning of family, which I believe is so central to the story. When we started analyzing the premises from that perspective, it became clear to us that the story was effectively the perfect vehicle for different tropes against each other. That is why we added two mothers and two sons — engaged in a lethal battle of survival. It is like a motor with two faces, and this dynamic symmetry became the key theme of our adaptation and allowed us to show the story in a completely different direction emotionally.

Both shows feel immensely different due to choices in editing, art direction and overall direction. One standout aspect of "Before We Die" is also its rich cinematic retelling, that finds texture, depth and color in every set-up....