



THE BRIDGES OF
MADISON
COUNTY



Bridges Over Madison County

(1995, d. Clint Eastwood)

When Francesca Johnson, from a small town in Iowa, dies, she asks to be cremated and her ashes scattered from a local bridge. Her children are puzzled but read their mother's journal and discover an episode in her life many years earlier.

Alone, after seeing off her husband and children to the state fair, she encounters a travelling photographer, Robert Kincaid, on an assignment to photograph for National Geographic the bridges of Madison County. He has asked for directions. She invites him in and then back again for meals. They have a four-day affair.

When asked by Robert to leave with him, Francesca refuses for the sake of her family and avoiding a scandal. He understands and leaves. However, she never forgets him and, when her husband dies, she tries to contact him only to find that he has died some years before



and his ashes sprinkled from the local bridge. He had also published a book of photos dedicated to Francesca. The children decide to follow their mother's wishes after they read her journals.

From a very popular, brief, best-seller by Robert Waller, this is a very moving adaptation by Richard La Gravanese (Fisher King, Unstrung Heroes, Living Out Loud). Meryl Streep gives yet another excellent performance and Clint Eastwood is sensitive (and pleasing when he smiles) and has directed the film with unfussy style.

The basic plot outline is familiar: a relationship between a middle-aged Iowa woman and a travelling photographer. But the film offers more, beginning, as it does, with the woman's death and the audience sharing her children's discovery of their mother's journals. Knowing the aftermath gives a moral perspective on the central four days of their relationship, the separation and the action of the woman when her husband dies, trying to get in touch with the photographer. This is a film of great humanity offering much for reflection.
