



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Goodbye Julia was a film upon which we felt we were taking a risk. We were rewarded with much praise. It was well reviewed but a first film for the director. We are glad we took the plunge. We have all lived through the "forgotten conflict" (quote from the Red Cross) of Sudan but it was valuable to put it in historical and personal context.

We can also think about how we can all contribute to make our lucky Australia an even better place. We aren't perfect, but aren't we lucky?

Our next film, *Mad About The Boy*, is less serious (please try not to sing during the screening) but has a small light on the British class structure.

Please have a wonderful Christmas, with best wishes from your committee,

Roz Garwen



FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

President: Roz Garwen 4886 4142 & 0414 820 890

Guest Enquiries: Deborah Blay : 0400 411 004

TEXT ONLY minimum 24hours notice

Website: www.fish.org.au

Email: fishfilmsadmin@gmail.com

Membership: Fishfilmsadmin@gmail.com

Membership is closed

Enquiries: fishfilmsadmin@gmail.com

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ACE INTERNET SERVICES HIGHLAND CREATIVE

**FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS
INC 10.00 am Sunday 8th December 2024
8.15 pm Tuesday 10th December 2024**

Mad About the Boy

[UK 2023]

Spoiler alert : You may prefer to read this review after the screening

DIRECTOR : Barnaby Thompson

RUNNING TIME : 95mins

RATING :

Synopsis:

A documentary released to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of Noel Coward's death.

Review: Greg King

This well-researched, revealing and entertaining documentary profiles Coward, the debonair "quintessential" English man and prolific writer, songwriter, actor and film director known for his quick wit and flamboyant style.

The film celebrates Coward's prodigious life and career; and how he revelled in his image as the sophisticated playboy. The film traces his life from his humble origins to become feted on the world stage. In his heyday, he was one of the highest paid writers in the world. During his long career, Coward wrote over 60 plays, including arguably his most famous works *Blithe Spirit* and *Private Lives*, and some 500 songs notable for their witty lyrics. He co-wrote and co-directed the WWII drama *In Which We Serve* with his good friend David Lean, and was nominated for an Oscar for writing the 1945 classic romance *Brief Encounter*. He was nominated for two Tony awards and won a special Tony for his overall contributions to the theatre. When he died in 1973 all the theatre lights in London's West End were turned off in his honour.

Mad About the Boy is written and directed by Barnaby Thompson. The film is thoroughly researched and detailed. Thompson crams a lot into its brisk 90-minute running time. He has drawn upon lots of archival footage and snippets of television interviews to provide some insight into Coward, all of which is deftly edited together by Ben Hilton. There are also some brief snippets from the 60s classic *The Italian Job* in which Coward famously played the notorious crime boss Mr Bridger. But Thompson has also accessed plenty of vintage home movie footage shot by Coward himself.

Thompson also looks at how Coward was no longer welcome at home in his native Britain and made his way to America where he was celebrated. We learn about Coward's residency in Las Vegas where he was feted by the likes of Sinatra; his work as a spy for British Intelligence during WWII where he set up a spy network in Paris; he lived in Jamaica near author Ian Fleming, but he turned down an offer to play the eponymous villain in the first James Bond film, *Dr No*.

Thompson also delves into the contradictions of his life. Homosexuality was illegal in Britain until the late 60s, and Coward had to keep his sexuality a secret for fear that it could ruin his

career. But he could also boast famous friends, including the Queen Mother who apparently was instrumental in arranging for his knighthood in 1970.

The documentary is narrated by Alan Cumming, while Rupert Everett provides the voice for Coward while reading excerpts from his letters and diaries and his autobiography.

Source: www.theblurb.com.au ~ Greg King May 2024 Edited Extracts Accessed 2/9/24.

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Some Thoughts on: *Goodbye Julia*

This was a wonderful film. Thank you so much FISH for taking us into Sudan for the very first time.

A simple plot, made with obviously low production resources, the emotional connection with the cast and the themes depicted, were of the highest, most effective levels.

What a rich demonstration of human strengths and frailties. Was Mona's kindness to Julia from the heart, or done just to salve her guilt for the car accident which hurt Julia's son and led to her husband's death? So many moral dilemmas were involved in this film. Lying, corruption, loyalty and fidelity and even murder. Our emotional support for characters was often challenged, for example, our reaction to Mona for her accident repercussions, and then sympathy, for her desire for children and the coercive control she endured from her husband.

The real power of the film came from the massive national issues of religious intolerance and violence, and political division being demonstrated by this microcosm of real life, day to day existence of ordinary people.

This wonderful, engaging cast and effective director, have made a moving and important film for our current times. Such conflicts are being waged in dozens of countries around the world right now, some based on intolerance going back hundreds of years.

Ps. Did anyone else notice the slow drip in the house early on that was remedied by a cup, that later became a much greater streaming flow? The approaching storm/ division perhaps?

Thank you for the insight FISH.

Ross Armfield.

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More Thoughts on: *Goodbye Julia*

I was engrossed from the start of this film: the opening scene of Mona in her kitchen, preparing breakfast for her husband, subtly shifted from a peaceful quotidian moment to a tense and ominous one: Mona's husband Akram was displeased with the breakfast offerings, and above the two characters in their lovely home, the ceiling was leaking - a metaphor for the secrets Mona would try to keep for the film's duration. [Cont.]

Goodbye Julia is the first film from Sudan to be presented at the Cannes Film Festival. The director has said he made the film to expose the social dynamics that led to the secession of the South, and to call for reconciliation.

The call for reconciliation can be seen in small moments in the film, which were my favourites: in the opening sequences of Mona and Julia alone in their kitchens - one wealthy, one poor; and later in the film, the layered images of the two women almost in foetal position, in separate places experiencing separate sources of pain, brought together by the story in their suffering.

The theme of revelation, hidden things coming to the fore, repeated throughout: the ID card stashed away in the teapot, to be uncovered; the portrait painting removed from the wall and hidden in a wardrobe was found in the end; and, of course, the truth about Julia's husband. The film seemed to be entreating the people of Sudan and South Sudan to be open about the past, to stop hiding things.

Goodbye Julia ended on an open note: the two women shared a scene that appeared to clear the air, and they parted on reconciled terms, Julia and her son returning to South Sudan by boat and Mona returning to singing. However, the final frame I recall was Julia's child in a truck with what I assumed to be separationist army members. The little boy is holding a gun, which to me was a harbinger of unrest and violence to come.

The film invites us to see and ponder the differences and similarities of the experiences of Mona and Julia, and leaves an opening for us to draw our own conclusions. I value this in comparison with many contemporary, particularly American films, where the conclusions are unequivocal.

I thank the FISH committee for screening this most moving and educational film.

Poppy Dowsett.

**Thank you as always, to Ross Armfield who has contributed so many engaging & insightful reviews over the years. Thanks also to new contributor Poppy Dowsett for her review, which we hope will be the first of many. [Ed.]

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COMING UP

February '25	<i>The Road to Patagonia</i> [Aust.]	Sunday 16 th & Tuesday 18 th
March	<i>Citizen Kane</i> [USA]	Sunday 16 th & Tuesday 18 th

