



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome back to FISH for our 2025 screenings. We must now make an effort to remember the day of the week and the date as the holidays are over.

Some of us may have gone to Peru with Paddington during the break and now all of us are going to Patagonia on a motorbike!

Best wishes to all from your committee,

Roz Garwen.



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ACE INTERNET SERVICES HIGHLAND CREATIVE

FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

10.00 am Sunday 16th February 2025

8.15 pm Tuesday 18th February 2025

The Road to Patagonia

[Aust. 2024]

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

DIRECTOR : Matty Hannon

RUNNING TIME : 90mins

RATING :

Synopsis:

Director/cinematographer Matty Hannon documents his own life experiences across 16 years. Initially he heads to the top of Alaska on a pre-journey before starting the 'real' 50,000km trek from Alaska's northern tip down, down to Patagonia.

Review: Hamza Ali Khan

The Road to Patagonia opens with Matty Hannon telling how he's headed to the top of Alaska, which if you know your American geography, is distinctly away from Patagonia, which encompasses the southern end of South America. But worry not, the title is not a metaphor nor figurative. Hannon is simply on the 'pre-journey' to the start of the 'real' journey.

So often, documentaries are approached in reverse; what the concluding message is decided first, then the camera is aimed as is helpful to clarify the point. *Patagonia* reverts the process. See, *Patagonia* truly documents Hannon's own life experiences across 16 years. To even begin to attempt to condense that down into an hour and a half of runtime seems almost impossible.

Guided by his intuited feelings shaped through animism, Hannon sets out. Animism, defined simply as an attribution of spirit to animals, plants and nature, seems obvious to some and ridiculous to others. Had I been forced to define this film in plain terms, it'd be as a clash between such forces. But to do so would be to suggest Hannon is guided by a very intentional message and to do that would be to group him in with prior reverse documentarians.

There is no message, nor 'purpose', greater than passion. From the beginning to end, *Patagonia* flows as a river; powerfully onwards, but should the river erode the ground to unearth a new path, then all flow is redirected and the river flows assumes its new direction. Characters often appear and disappear in the voiceover in tandem with their presence along Hannon's journey.

In watching, you will notice that plenty of the voiceover are questions: "Could community include everything we're in relationship with?" Other lines of the voiceover are closer to conversation between Hannon and those he meets along the way. The camera is aimed at the now, some shots of fantastically green forests and others of the trash industrial manufacturing has spat back onto the land. Hannon covers such expanses and varieties of landscape and biomes; it becomes almost a game seeing them fight for adequate screen-time.

These vast landscapes are often traced and felt-out by Swedish singer-songwriter Daniel Norgren's understated emotions. Never do they outgrow Hannon's storytelling. They simply communicate the feelings of the environment, whilst leaving you room to read the hills and valleys and desert as only you might do.

I think however, the foremost strength of *Patagonia* is Hannon's relatability. Not because he describes certain behaviours we can relate to, and not necessarily because he makes observations that we too might make. Rather, it's the vulnerability in simply pointing the camera at himself in his surroundings, no matter his state, no matter the location or what might have just happened. This is almost bashful filmmaking; so little attention is brought to all the bright and colourful things lesser documentarians might include simply for the spectacle. We relate to his self-assuredness; when Hannon opens his mouth and speaks the language of the locals, nothing brings your attention to the fact, other than the English subtitles at the bottom.

The Hannon you are seeing on screen has very much no idea what the Hannon of three minutes screen-time in the future will be doing. And in that we allow ourselves to just feel the journey, to not "[forget] about intuition and feeling" that maybe should guide us.

My feeling is that you can watch this and think no lesson has been taught and come away enlightened, that even without a 'The End' title card you may feel fulfilled. You may look at Centennial Parklands and see the forests of Alaska, or you may see Mount Kosciuszko and swear it's the Andes. I may think of *Patagonia* as spiritual enlightenment, and you may see it as a surfing trip.

There is this almost philosophical question I have seen asked before; why did Leif Erikson set out aimlessly on the oceans knowing that there could be not a thing out there to be found? He ended up being the first non-native to land on North America, but he didn't know that before embarking. So, I implore you to ask yourself; why did Matty Hannon ever bother to book a one-way ticket to Alaska simply to travel all the way south to Patagonia? Go and watch *Patagonia* and I assure you that we will all have completely different answers.

Source: www.theaureview.com ~ Hamza Ali Khan 1/5/2024 Edited extracts Accessed 15/7/2024

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COMING UP

March

Citizen Kane [USA]

Sunday 16th & Tuesday 18th

Some Thoughts on: *Mad About the Boy*

Not being a great fan of Noel Coward's plays, I surprised myself by feeling very engaged by this documentary and its surprising details about his life. I had no idea of his wartime spying for Britain, nor of his huge success in America. But most of all, I had mistaken the surface for the essence, not realising the extent to which the persona of "the quintessential Englishman" was just that, a persona, a mask. Behind that seemingly endless self-confidence and charm and wit, there must have been great insecurities which required constant box office success and adulation to keep him steady. I can only imagine, and not really know, the horrors of having to keep his homosexuality secret, even though in theatre circles, it must have been an open secret. But the depression he went through in his 20s despite huge success is instructive, and then again after WW2 with his plays being panned and the stringencies of post-war life in Britain. His box office successes seem not to have been mirrored in his love life, nor in his management of his finances.

His patriotism seemed to me to have an almost naïve quality to it, in the sense that it was uncritical, trusting and whole-hearted. The 1942 film, *In Which We Serve*, is a stirring piece of WW2 propaganda and belongs to a completely different genre to his usual plays with what seemed a heartfelt performance as a RN captain. The fact that he was castigated for his seeming indifference to Britain's war efforts despite his actually being a secret spy for British intelligence must have been an arrow to his heart and I can understand why the American confidence and can-do attitude of the post-war years was so attractive. And yet...and yet...even from the beauty and peace of Jamaica with its array of constant famous visitors to his home, he seems to have longed for some reconciliation with his homeland. I was glad for him that this did come; revivals don't always do so well but he seems to have learnt a lot about pace and upbeat directing from his American experiences. It was fascinating to hear Maggie Smith say in the 60s, that his plays seemed as relevant then as they had 40 years previously.

Finally, I had no idea of the enormous range of his talents. Plays I knew about, and songs – but not the huge number, and certainly not the numerous other skills he developed. It's difficult to believe that he never learned to read or write music; what an incredible ear he must have had.

I was, despite myself, completely drawn in by this documentary. Thank you to Fish to bringing it to us, and to the Empire for their usual generosity and benevolence to us.

Trish Topp