



Julia

JULIA ERICK ZONCA

A DANGEROUS JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY

THE DANCING FOREST BRICE LAINÉ

Stunningly shot and brilliantly directed by the clearly very talented Brice Lainé, *THE DANCING FOREST* is a hugely refreshing documentary about Africa, offering a lot more than the usual negative stereotypes of Africa that we are so often bombarded with by the media. The film is beautiful and the Togolese women and men that feature in it are portrayed lovingly as exceptional people, proud of their work and achievements, enjoying the new type of life that the Centre International pour le Développement Agro-Pastoral (CIDAP) – a development project created by a villager – has given them.

Not only does this informative documentary show us a new way of thinking about and approaching development in Africa, but it is made even more interesting by the evidence of social change and

gender liberation that the CIDAP project appears to be bringing to the women (and, subsequently, the men) of Baga. Through the acquisition of modern techniques of agriculture, learning to work as individuals and as a collective, and sharing this knowledge with others, the Bakote women are the driving force behind development in this small village in north Togo.

The specially recorded soundtrack serves to remind us of the village's blending of traditional beliefs with modern enterprising thought, which is key to the CIDAP project and ensures its success. International development agencies, along with Western and African governments should take note of this film: there are many lessons to be learned from it.

BECKY HAWKETTS

THE DANCING FOREST is screened on Saturday 20 September at 5.45pm and Tuesday 23 September at 3.00pm.

Starring Tilda Swinton in its title role, *JULIA* is the story of a troubled narcissistic alcoholic who spends her life constantly intoxicated and sexually carefree. However when her neighbour Elena carries her in from the street and they talk, the opportunity to finally earn some cash sets Julia's selfish mind racing with criminal ideas.

Julia conspires to extort money from a rich family by kidnapping their ten-year-old boy, but before she even manages to snatch him, events spiral out of control quicker than the inebriated Julia can comprehend. Fuelled by debt, loneliness and the desperation for security, her deluded naivety takes her on a dangerous journey of self-discovery of unexpected proportions.

JULIA is a cinematic treasure, something we see too little of in contemporary cinema. Swinton's performance is masterful, rich in layers of complex emotion and confused

psyche; she is utterly compelling in her portrayal of a character bordering on obnoxiousness. By the film's conclusion we learn to sympathise, as we witness the journey has changed and matured her, forcing her to finally accept adult responsibility. An incredible transformation, we see a new Julia, seemingly sober and at last capable of forming rational decisions, providing audiences with a satisfyingly thought-provoking finale.

With some stunning location shots, (particularly during the crossing into Mexico), an intelligent script and brilliant performances all round, director Erick Zonca has created a wonderful and powerful drama about a desperate 21st century woman during her darkest hour, following her through her greatest curve of self-discovery.

SCOTT HOMER

JULIA is screened on Saturday 20 September at 5.00pm.

SLEEP FURIOUSLY GIDEON KOPPEL

Something sublime comes slowly to the boil in *SLEEP FURIOUSLY*. At face value a pastoral documentary shot in 35mm film, ideas and themes bubble around in the background to an increasing intensity. Yet much as a microwaved dish continues to heat after it comes out of the oven, so too does this film. The finale sets the flourish to which the rest of it is almost reappraised. At which point the furious bit happens. To explain...

Set around Trefeurig, a Welsh village allegedly 50 miles north of Dylan Thomas' Llareggub, nothing very much happens. The height of interest is a lady making the most gloriously delicious Victoria sponge. It really is! You see her using jam straight out of a pot and everything. The film has fleeting shades of *ETRE AT AVOIR*, the French documentary about a countryside

school, with which this film shares a producer.

It's delightful how *SLEEP FURIOUSLY* avoids pulling any particular story from all of this and yet it survives intact as a riveting experience. The Aphex Twin-penned score plays its part, but the kicker which spins a deeply thoughtful documentary into great pondering beyond is the finale.

First the seasons arrive. However deftly *SLEEP FURIOUSLY* avoids patterns, here is a natural one. Where a narrative film might have a plot twist, *SLEEP FURIOUSLY* has a calm deeply filmic one. Wisful slumber is turned on its head for an imaginative brilliance that hits you after the film has drawn to a close. With a fury.

DAVID PERILLI

SLEEP FURIOUSLY is screened on Saturday 20 September at 8.15pm and Monday 22 September at 12.30pm.

