

MAIDEN

Monday, September 16, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Lindsey Bahr / Associated Press Rated PG 97 Mins.

Just over 30 years ago, a woman named Tracy Edwards had the idea to lead an all-female crew in the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race. It wasn't exactly met with a groundswell of support, or any support, for that matter.



The thing is, for a pastime that has so many feminine terms associated with it, there was a lot of ingrained sexism among its participants. The idea of even having one woman on board who wasn't doing the cooking and cleaning was seen as a liability. They're too weak! And Edwards herself, who everyone points out is a slight "wisp of a woman," was regarded as a nothing more than a side-show by the competitive yachting community and the journalists covering the sport.

But in 1989, at age 24, she did it.

Her unlikely journey from misfit teen to feminist symbol, despite her distaste for the term, is exhilaratingly chronicled in the documentary "Maiden," from director Alex Holmes. Told through interviews with the now 50-something Edwards, her crew, the men she raced against and the journalists who covered her at the time alongside riveting footage from their harrowing trip around the world, "Maiden" is the best adventure film of the year so far.

The story is so inherently cinematic you have to wonder why some enterprising Hollywood producer hasn't scooped up the rights to make an epic scripted film out of it already. Daisy Ridley is right there! But maybe the world just needed a little (re)introduction to Edwards and the tale of the Maiden.

It was quite a feat for these women to even get the chance to compete at all. Edwards spent two years looking for sponsorship to offset the costs of the pricey endeavor and was met with hundreds of declines, even from those who supported the mission. Companies were genuinely afraid that the women would all die and

worried about the optics. They weren't wrong that death was a possibility. As Edwards says, the ocean is "always trying to kill you," but somehow the male competitors were able to convince corporate sponsors to deal with the risk.

In a move she seems to regret now, she finally found support from King Hussein of Jordan who arranged for Royal Jordanian Airlines to support Maiden.

"Maiden" is not presented through rose-colored glasses either. There was a lot of conflict among Edwards' crew before they even set sail, and she ended up firing the most experienced sailor she'd recruited.

It is a delight watching these now middle aged women recount the details of their big youthful adventure, not to mention hearing from the men who doubted and dismissed them at every step. For the women, their gender was a non-issue. They were simply athletes in competition who wanted to win. For everyone else, it was all they could see. One journalist, Bob Fisher, is reminded of how he called them a "tin full of tarts" in an article. A contemporary admits that while his coverage wouldn't pass modern standards that he wasn't "quite as chauvinistic as Bob Fisher."

Edwards said in a 1989 interview that she hates the word feminist and doesn't consider herself one at all, while also basically giving the textbook definition of feminism (she just wants equal treatment). Whether or not she knew it at the time, her little personal rebellion in this insulated community was something that affected people, and truly tore down a barrier.

By the end of their journey you really feel like you've been through something significant. "Maiden" is simply magnificent storytelling and a must-see for all ages and genders.



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THE SOUVENIR

Monday, September 23, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by A. O. Scott / New York Times Rated R 119 Mins.

"The Souvenir" is one of my favorite movies of the year so far, but I almost want to keep it a secret. Partly because it's the kind of film — we all have a collection of these, and of similar books and records, too — that feels like a private discovery, an experience you want to protect rather than talk about. A direct message like this, beamed from another person's sensibility into your own sensorium, isn't meant to be shared.

That other person, in this case, is Joanna Hogg, who wrote and directed. (Her previous features are "Exhibition," "Archipelago" and "Unrelated," all very much worth seeking out.) But there's also something specific to the manner, mood and subject of her tale of amour fou and artistic aspiration in early '80s London that invites discretion. "The Souvenir" feels like a whispered confidence, an intimate disclosure that shouldn't be betrayed because it isn't really yours.

There's an interesting paradox here: a movie that feels like it was meant for you alone and also like none of your business. Watching the oblique scenes unfold, at first mysteriously and then with ever greater force and clarity, you might believe yourself more of an eavesdropper than a confidant, as if you were sitting at the next table at the ridiculously fancy tearoom where Julie (Honor Swinton Byrne) and Anthony (Tom Burke) have come on a date.

Are we sure they're dating? (Julie's mother, played by Byrne's real-life mother, Tilda Swinton, persists in supposing otherwise.) What exactly is their deal? Julie's is that she's a film student, trying to put together an ambitious, somewhat vague-sounding thesis set in the northern port city of Sunderland. It's about a boy named Tony who loses his mother, though the more we hear about the project the less clear it seems. This is partly because the fictional Tony is often competing for Julie's attention with the actual Anthony.

We surmise that Anthony is at least a few years older than Julie and also different from the relaxed, racially and sexually diverse group of friends and schoolmates who gather at her apartment to drink, smoke and listen to records. Anthony seems, at least at first glance, to be from what the British would call a rather posh background. His ironical, world-weary way of talking and his chalk-striped suits and monogrammed slippers suggest a privileged upbringing. Julie, by contrast, puts out a decidedly middle-class vibe, including the way she self-consciously checks her own privilege in conversations with her professors.

But these first impressions are soon revealed to be completely backward. Anthony's father (James Dodds) is a former shipyard worker and an art school graduate who lives with the rest of the family in cozy, rural Bohemian dishevelment. Julie's parents, meanwhile (the marvelous James Spencer Ashworth plays her father), reek of old, landed money, with aristocratic manners, solidly but not stridently conservative views and enough cash to subsidize their daughter's student lifestyle in a comfortable Knightsbridge duplex.

Anthony claims to work for the Foreign Office. A note of skepticism is in order for the simple reason that, as Julie slowly discovers, he has a habit of lying about nearly everything. It's not his only habit. I hesitate to mention this — less because of spoiler sensitivity than

because of a strange impulse to protect the privacy of fictional beings — but he's also a heroin addict.

And now, like Julie, I'm inclined to make excuses. Not to deny or minimize the increasingly obvious fact of Anthony's drug use — as Julie does for as long as she can — but to dispel certain false impressions that the mention of it might leave behind. There is a way of describing "The Souvenir" at the level of plot that makes it sound interesting and absorbing but also conventional: another chronicle of addiction and codependency, another cautionary fable of a smart woman making a foolish choice, another period drama celebrating a wilder time.

It sort of is all of that, but it is also emphatically not that at all. The title refers to a small, exquisite painting by the 18th-century French artist Jean-Honoré Fragonard that Anthony and Julie behold on one of their maybe-dates. It depicts a young woman, sharply scrutinized by her pet dog, carving letters into the trunk of a tree. "She's very much in love," Anthony says with suave certainty, and perhaps he's right. But there's a lot more going on in the picture — and in the moving picture that shares its name — than that simple declaration would suggest. The woman is making a mark and putting down a marker, declaring her own presence with a mixture of shame and audacity, impulsiveness and deliberation.

Julie isn't quite so bold, or so embarrassed. She does love Anthony, of course, and she sacrifices a great deal for him without quite realizing what she's doing. Over the span of the film — it's hard to know exactly how much time is passing, which is of course exactly how the passage of time can feel — her friends slip away, and the work that had seemed so urgent feels a bit more remote. But the interplay of forces in Julie's life is subtle, as is the balance, in her own temperament, between decisiveness and passivity.

Byrne is a revelation, and Julie is an embodiment of the awkwardness and heedless grace of young adulthood almost without precedent in the movies. Byrne is, of course, the child of one of the greatest actresses alive, but her own talent is of an entirely different order. The point of Julie is that she's a half-formed creature who we're watching take shape, partly through the development of her own nature and partly under the influence of external forces. With her soft features and hesitant diction, Byrne gives Julie's confusion a sensual, almost metaphysical, intensity. For the duration of "The Souvenir," nothing in the world is more important than what will happen to her.



Or, to adjust the grammar a bit, what will turn out to have happened. This movie is a memory piece, after all (with a sequel in the works), set at a time of I.R.A. bombings and ascendant Thatcherism. It's also a coming-of-age story, implying a backward-looking perspective of maturity. The grain of the film (David Raedeker is the director of photography) shrouds the action in a delicate caul of nostalgia, communicating an ache that Julie can't yet feel but that we can see forming inside her. This is one of the saddest movies you can imagine, and it's an absolute joy to watch.

DAVID CROSBY: REMEMBER MY NAME

Monday, October 14, 7:30

Reviewed by Joel Selvin / SF Chronicle Not Rated 95 Mins.

His mortality looms over the documentary like a sickly fog. His pending doom is much on his mind as he recites a litany of health woes. He begs for more time and even predicts his death. "I will have a heart attack within the next couple years," he says.



David Crosby is like Roman ruins; his life may be a wreck, but the magnificence remains. At age 76, he finds himself playing an endless string of one-nighters to pay the mortgage on his Santa Ynez Valley horse ranch; Crosby, as he points out, is the one member of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young to never write a hit. He is a sick, tired and lonely old man.

"All the main guys I made music with won't even talk to me," he says. "All of 'em."

This is Crosby in "David Crosby: Remember My Name," a brilliantly realized, Hollywood-sleek documentary produced by Cameron Crowe, A-list director and onetime boy wonder Rolling Stone reporter who not only conducts the film's current interviews, but is also shown at age 16 in 1974 doing his first interview with Crosby. The septuagenarian rock star is captured in full obsessive confessional mode. He picks over the detritus of shattered relationships, old girlfriends, band politics and personality defects, without ever truly descending to self-pity, but with a connoisseur's eye for pain and suffering.

This movie is like a car crash you can't look away from. A lifetime of obstreperous behavior cascades before your eyes. He sowed conflict and reaped destruction. His longtime best friend and musical soulmate, Graham Nash, one of the most reasonable human beings in rock music, finally cut him off. After talking daily for 40 years, Nash says, he hasn't spoken to Crosby in more than two years.

"He ripped the soul out of Crosby, Stills and Nash and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young," says Nash.

His truth and his music are all Crosby has left. The unflinching candor ranges in mood from cherubic to crabby, but he doesn't

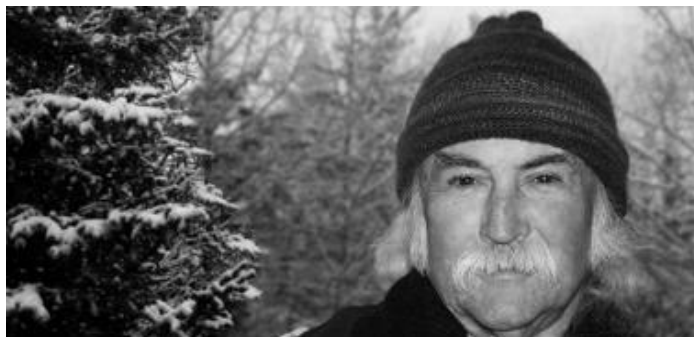
make excuses for himself. "At least I have enough guts to be honest," he says. It is his redemption, if there is any to be had.

First-time director A.J. Eaton follows Crosby on a tour of old haunts along Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood and houses in the hills of Laurel Canyon — one where he was fired from the Byrds and another where Joni Mitchell lived with his friend Graham Nash, where Nash wrote "Our House." It was in that kitchen that Crosby, Nash and Stephen Stills first joined voices. Crosby is alternately sentimental and salty. And the guy can tell a good story.

Other associates weigh in — wife Jan, Jackson Browne, former bandmates Nash, Neil Young and Roger McGuinn of the Byrds. Photographer Henry Diltz makes an amusing appearance, writing off all Crosby's issues to Chinese astrology because Crosby was a Leo born in the Year of the Snake.

Throughout, Crosby is acutely aware he is being filmed; he occasionally tries to direct from in front of the camera ("There's no shot here"). Consequently, the behavior that caused all his problems is discussed, not exhibited, although vintage clips clearly show Crosby baked out of his brain, attesting to his lack of sobriety during his glory years.

Director Eaton claims right at the outset that Crosby is in the midst of a creative revival, although there is scant evidence of that on the screen. Crosby has turned prolific late in life, pumping out a stream of solo albums in the wake of the final collapse of CSN in 2015 (the trio's last appearance singing "Silent Night" at the White House tree-lighting ceremony in front of the Obamas is cringeworthy), but the recent concert performances in the film are not notable. Though Crosby was never a charismatic lead vocalist or consistently powerful songwriter — in fact, a lot of his solo work has been pedestrian — he has a sweet voice that blends beautifully in harmony. He and Nash were like hippie Everly Brothers.



The film's engine runs on a flicker of humanity in Crosby that nothing can extinguish. The glint in his eyes may have dimmed, but he is a resolute fighter, ready for his next bout. He can muster considerable charm and sing like a bird. In the end, that is what always got him by and why this film is as engaging and seductive as Crosby himself.

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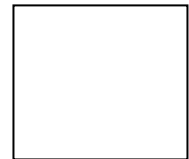
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Monday, September 16 at 7:30 pm

"Its elegance and power cannot be understated. The Souvenir is truly a marvel to behold."

Andrew Parker, The Gate

Monday, September 23 at 7:30 pm



"A terrific movie! A shamanistic parable of pleasure and pain, beauty and loss."

Owen Gleiberman, Variety

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