



39<sup>th</sup> SEASON

## ENGLISH FILM CLUB 2018/19

Locarno Cinema KURSAAL

18:15

Friday, 29 March 2019

**THE MERCY**      **2018**

112 minutes

Directed by **James Marsh**

Starring: Rachel Weisz, Colin Firth, David Trewlis

Donald Crowhurst, (Colin Firth) an amateur sailor and entrepreneur based in Teignmouth, Devon, is inspired by listening to single-handed round-the-world yachtsman Sir Francis Chichester and does a crazy thing. He enters the 1968 Sunday Times Golden Globe Race in the hope of becoming the first person in history to single-handedly circumnavigate the globe without stopping. Lending him the money, under onerous terms, are local businessman Mr Best and the local newspaper editor Rodney Hallworth. With the race deadline upon him, Crowhurst is pressed into sailing away with an unfinished boat and his business and house on the line. He leaves his beloved wife Clare (Rachel Weisz) and young family, hesitantly embarking on an adventure on his boat the Teignmouth Electron. This was a time where morality and honour were often rigidly adhered to - British "stiff upper lip" and all that - and seemed to carry a lot more weight than they do today. The story of Crowhurst's dangerous solo voyage and the struggles he confronted on the epic journey while his family awaited his return is one of the most enduring mysteries of recent times.

### Critics' comments:

Colin Firth excels in this heartbreaking true story of yachtsman Donald Crowhurst and his ill-fated attempt to win the 1968 Golden Globe race.

...*The Mercy* follows him as he strays from the race and ends up alone at sea, completely lonely, with the added pressure of trying to come home a winner, the plucky underdog who succeeds. Back at home supportive wife Clare (Rachel Weisz) waits with their children for news, whilst being exposed to the brunt of the press, with Crowhurst's folly becoming world-wide news masterminded by David Thewlis' slimy publicist.

Alongside this, one of the funders of Crowhurst's dream has made put up his house as collateral for the race - Crowhurst becomes trapped, having to go through with a race that he may not survive in order to keep his family afloat and appease the nation's press.

Firth brilliantly conveys Crowhurst's gradual breakdown as the weight of his badly-thought-through ambition overwhelms him. He has always been an actor superb at keeping a stiff upper lip, the quintessential Englishman, but here he provides a heartbreaking melancholy to Crowhurst, a man unable to allow anyone to think the worst of him. Rachel Weisz makes something far more of what would otherwise be a standard loyal-wife role, creating a tender, believable relationship, aware of the risks but understanding of her husband's taste for adventure. She is exploited by the press in his absence as the media frenzy grows. A Brit setting sail into a world he does not understand in an unsteady, unready ship can be seen as a very timely metaphor for Brexit, with Crowhurst gradually losing grip on reality as he struggles on blindly.

Under James Marsh's direction - who has previously helmed the nail-biting documentary *Man on Wire* and the Stephen Hawking biopic *The Theory of Everything* - and Scott Z. Burns' script, *The Mercy* becomes far more than just a failed sailor's biopic; it has a deep resonance with the state of the nation. Moving and gripping, it's some of Firth's finest work and haunts long after it's finished.  
*(from Kieron Self, Buzz)*