



LOYALTY WITHOUT QUESTION. FRIENDSHIP WITHOUT EQUAL.

JUDI DENCH BILLY CONNOLLY
MRS. BROWN PG

CREDITS

Directed by.....John Madden
 Produced bySarah Curtis
 Screenplay by.....Jeremy Brock
 Photography by.....Richard Greatrex
 Music by.....Stephen Warbeck

CAST LIST

Queen Victoria.....Judi Dench
 John Brown.....Billy Connolly
 Benjamin Disraeli.....Anthony Sher
 Henry Ponsonby.....Geoffrey Palmer
 Dr. Jenner.....Richard Pascoe
 Bertie, Prince of Wales..David Westhead
 Archie Brown.....Gerard Butler

The producers of 'Mrs Brown' could hardly have envisaged the topical boost that their film would receive from the untimely death of Diana, Princess of Wales, just one week before its release in September 1997. However, I'm sure that they must have already realised that their story of an outsider who becomes intimately involved with the Royal Family, alienates the stiff and stuffy royal household, causes a scandal that calls the very future of the monarchy into question, and is heartlessly driven from the monarch's inner circle, had close parallels with the plight of the House of Windsor in the 1990's.

The film opens in 1864, with the 45-year old Queen, [*Judi Dench*], deep into the third year of her solitary lament for the loss of her beloved Prince Albert. She plods gloomily amid the Italianate architecture of Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, (a house designed to Albert's personal instructions), presiding over a regime that her Private Secretary, Henry Ponsonby, [*Geoffrey Palmer*], calls "ferocious introspection", in which no raised voices may be heard.

However, outside the walls of Osborne House, the nation is growing impatient with their absent Queen; in desperation, Ponsonby sends to Balmoral for Prince Albert's trusted ghillie, John Brown, [*Billy Connolly*], hoping that a familiar face from the past will break the monarch's depression. Brown duly arrives, together with Victoria's highland pony, but his plain speaking and abrupt manner quickly antagonises the Royal family and household alike. Nevertheless, under his scolding and cajoling, the grieving Queen gradually rediscovers her former life of riding, walking and painting, leading to an exploratory break from her exile to visit Balmoral .

'Mrs. Brown' is a passionate and sensitive dramatisation of this unexpected alliance, adopting as its title the name that scandalised chattering classes gave to the widowed Queen in its leading articles and cartoons, as polite society began to whisper about the apparent closeness of the mistress-servant relationship. The film's subtlety is in its oblique suggestions that there may have been some substance to the rumours - "I'm Her Majesty's Highland Servant, indoors and out", Brown roars at his brother, Archie, (a below stairs servant at Osborne House), during a drunken tirade.

"You too will fall for Mrs. Brown..."

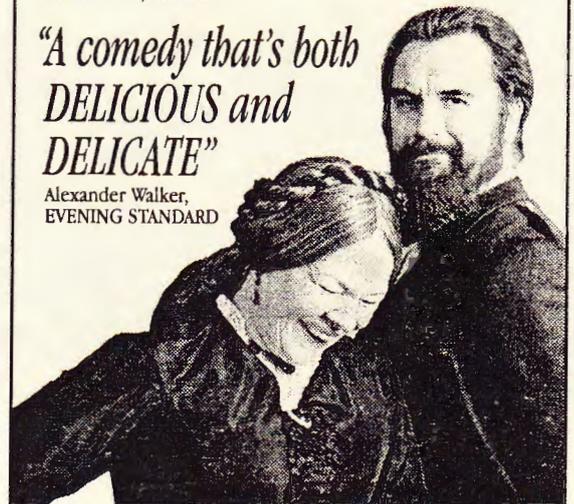
INTELLIGENT, ENTERTAINING AND FUNNY. Well made and moving"
 THE SUNDAY TIMES

"Judi Dench is already backed to win an Oscar. SEE IT"

Steve Grant, TIME OUT

"A comedy that's both DELICIOUS and DELICATE"

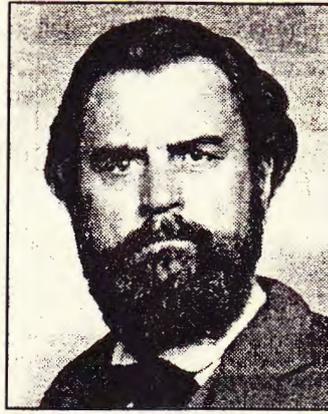
Alexander Walker, EVENING STANDARD



GB, 1997. 103 minutes.



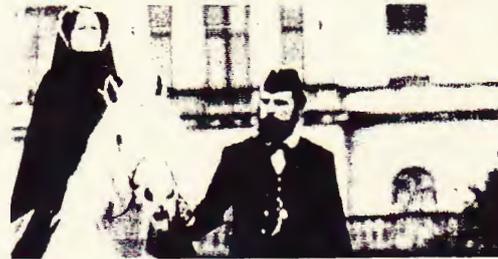
Judi Dench



Billy Connolly



Anthony Sher



Commissioned jointly by BBC Scotland and America's Masterpiece Theatre, as a follow up to the internationally successful 'The Madness of King George' - apparently, the original title of the play, 'The Madness of George III' couldn't be used because American audiences would wonder what happened to parts I & II! - 'Mrs Brown', exhibits all of the qualities that we have come to expect of BBC historical adaptations. Although it doesn't have the depth of a 60's epic, such as 'A Man For all Seasons', it is nevertheless superior TV fare.

This quality is largely due to the acting of the principals and the supporting cast; (indeed, some of the external scenes belie its relatively small budget, with carefully controlled tight angles and viewpoints ensuring that 1990's paraphernalia doesn't intrude into shot). Dame Judi Dench, one of the most powerful stage actresses of our time, gives perhaps her finest screen performance, particularly her gradual thawing from a grieving widow into a woman rediscovering her zest for life, fully deserving her Best Actress 'Oscar' nomination.

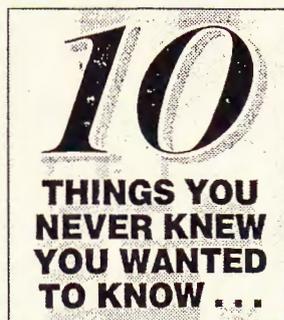
Billy Connolly - as many other comedians before him - proves that he is a fine serious actor, coping magnificently with the scenes in which he portrays the hard-drinking, plain speaking, raconteur who can amuse even the staid Queen Victoria; he even gets to include an obligatory naked bathing scene, something he always seems driven to do in his BBC travel documentaries! However, the acting laurels are snatched from under Dench and Connolly's noses by Anthony Sher - another gifted stage actor with little film pedigree - whose portrayal of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli as a political heavyweight, who, although a fish out of water at the Royal Court, is still able to make the Queen see that she must begin to resume her public appearances, if the monarchy is to survive into the 20th century.

In the present day climate in Great Britain, is it too fanciful to see Tony Blair as a latter day pragmatist, like Disraeli, or to wish that our own Queen Elizabeth II had advisers as down to earth and in touch with the general public as John Brown?

IAN SOWERBY

PS. If anyone fancies trying their hand at writing the notes for any of the remaining films in this Season's Programme, please see me during a Club evening, or telephone me on 01344 772463. I'll provide all the background information - reviews, press quotes, articles, etc. - all you have to do is to let me have a (preferably) typewritten article at least 1 week before the film is to be screened. - Ian Sowerby.

South Hill Park, Bracknell's, recently announced programme of films for October to December 1998, includes 2 new features. "Matinee Idyll" is a fortnightly season of Hollywood "classics" screened on Wednesdays at 2.30 pm & 7.45 pm, including: 'Band Wagon' [Oct 7th]; 'Now Voyager' [Oct 21st] and 'Show Boat' [Nov 18th]. It also includes 'It's A Wonderful Life' on December 16th, but you, of course, will see it at WNCC first on December 10th! The other special feature is additional screenings of the main weekend films on Thursday evenings at 7.45 pm, aimed at the single filmgoer, entitled "Independents' Day".



THE British Film Institute's ten greatest films of all time:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 Casablanca (1942) | 6 Some Like It Hot, with Marilyn Monroe, above (1959) |
| 2 Les Enfants Du Paradis (1944) | 7 Seven Samurai (1954) |
| 3 Citizen Kane (1941) | 8 Gone With The Wind (1939) |
| 4 Singin' In The Rain (1952) | 9 The Third Man (1949) |
| 5 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) | 10 One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest (1975) |



From The Daily Mail

COMING SOON.....

22nd October - WNCC supports 'One World Week' with a rare screening of a feature film from Africa:

LETTER FROM MY VILLAGE [tbc], Senegal, 1976. Directed by Safi Faye.

Safi Faye's debut feature is an everyday story of the travails of a farming community attempting to introduce a new crop despite the rigours of the African climate. Set in her own village, using largely non-professional actors, Faye creates an effective and moving social drama with romantic overtones.

12th November - John Cusack, Minnie Driver and Dan Ackroyd in the slick black comedy:

GROSSE POINTE BLANK [15], USA, 1996. Directed by George Armitage.

Elements of film noir, satire and romantic comedy, are somehow mixed in this brilliant tale of successful hit-man, Martin Q. Blank, (Cusack), attending his High School reunion in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, with the dual objectives of regaining his lost love, (Driver), and completing one last kill !

26th November - France's wittiest comedy for years, featuring Charles Berling and Fanny Ardant:

RIDICULE [15], France, 1996. Directed by Patrice Leconte.

Like 'Dangerous Liaisons', this heavily powdered and rouged period piece is set in the most excessive days of Louis XVI's reign, when an ability to engage in witty and insulting exchanges with members of the Court proves to be the only way that poor rural aristocrat (Berling) can gain an audience with the King.

10th December - Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed star in the ultimate Christmas feel-good film:

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE [U], USA, 1946. Directed by Frank Capra.

George Bailey, (Stewart), is a small-town banker, beset with financial problems and contemplating suicide on a snowy Christmas Eve. He is saved by Angel Clarence, who reprises George's blameless life and provides a glimpse of the less than rosy future for his family and friends should he carry out his threat.

The Reactions summary for 'Road to Morocco' and 'Mrs Brown' will appear in the next programme notes - Ed.

Obituaries

FROM 'FILM REVIEW' MAGAZINE



Alice Faye in *Fallen Angel*

● A singer and actress who delivered a clutch of memorable performances during an all too brief acting career, **Alice Faye** – who died on May 9 aged 83 – found fame working in musicals at Darryl Zanuck's 20th Century Fox studios. A chorus girl in George White's *Scandals on Broadway* in 1931, she actually played the lead role in the film version three years later. Her screen career took off, and she scored hits with such films as *Sing Baby Sing* (1936), *Stowaway* (1936), *Alexander's Ragtime Band* (1938), *Rose of Washington Square* (1939), *Tin Pan Alley* (1940), *That Night in Rio* (1941) and *Hello Frisco Hello* (1943). The latter film featured, perhaps, her most memorable song, the Oscar-winning *You'll Never Know*.

● **Gene Raymond** – who died on May 3 aged 89 – was almost as well known for being the husband of Jeanette MacDonald as for any of his screen performances. But he proved a dependable if uncharismatic presence in movies such as *Flying Down To Rio* (1933), *Zoo In Budapest* (1933) and *Behold My Wife* (1934).

● An actor, composer and writer **Peter Lind Hayes** – who died on April 22 aged 82 – appeared before the camera in *Million Dollar Legs* (1939), *Winged Victory* (1943), *The Senator Was Indiscreet* (1947) and *The Five Thousand Fingers of Dr T* (1953).

● One of the regular cast of *The Bill*, **Kevin Lloyd** – who died on May 2 aged 49 – had small roles in a handful of films during the late '70s and early '80s, including Lindsay Anderson's *Britannia Hospital* (1982).

● Cinematographer **Charles Lang** – who died on April 3 aged 96 – photographed such classic films as *A Farewell To Arms* (1932), *Death Takes a Holiday* (1934), *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935), *Ace In The Hole* (1951), *The Big Heat* (1953), *Gunfight At The OK Corral* (1957), *Some Like It Hot* (1958) and *One Eyed Jacks* (1961). He won an Oscar for *A Farewell to Arms*, and was nominated a further 16 times.

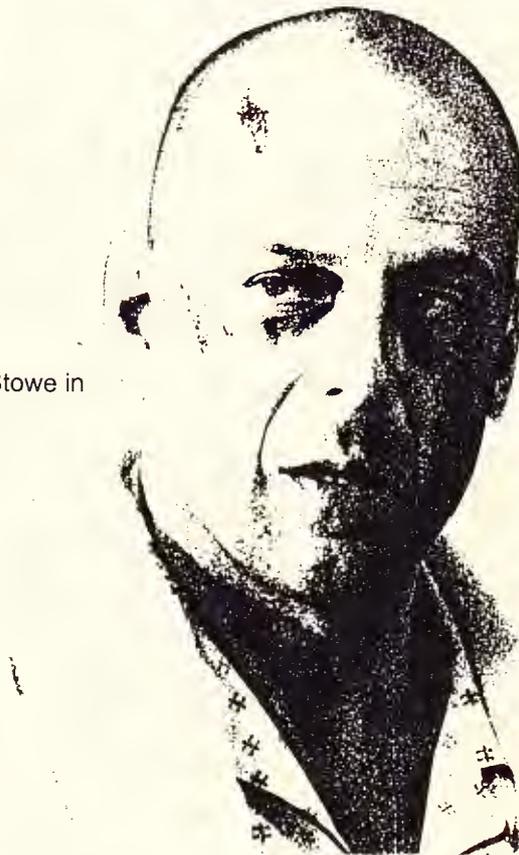
COMING NEXT MONTH

8th October - Bruce Willis, Brad Pitt and Madeline Stowe in **TWELVE MONKEYS [15]**, USA, 1996.

Directed by Terry Gilliam

In the bleak world of the near-future, a prisoner is sent back in time to the 1990s to discover the source of a plague that killed billions and forced society to move underground. Plays with present/past/future tense in ways both clever and confusing; at the very least, it's the kind of movie that leaves you with plenty to talk about afterward. Inspired by Chris Marker's 1962 short film, *LA JETÉE*.

Programme ends at 10.45 pm (approx)



Forthcoming Attractions

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