

Member feedback: Dreams of a Life

Twenty five people voted. The breakdown and comments are listed below.

'Excellent': 10 votes

- Poignant, brilliantly conceived study of someone dying alone.
- A mystery best described by *La Donne è Mobile* and *Die Gedanken sind frei*.
- Excellent treatment of material.
- Powerful, original.
- Second time around it seemed more shocking.
- Intriguing and oddly uplifting, not to mention thought-provoking. Very enjoyable.
- What a sad commentary on modern living. In a world of constant communication, it is still possible for someone to cut themselves off entirely from family and friends.
- Enigmatic, ambiguous, sublime. A black Dusty[?]
- Astoundingly well cast and acted, and beautifully put together. Well worth another view.

'Very Good': 7 votes

- Superb acting and music. Very, very original story.
- Interesting.
- Curious. Lacks the focus which usually goes with an excellent film and lacks the suspense/excitement that usually goes with a thought-through narrative. Lacks the exact knowledge that is gleaned from a documentary. OK as a 'one-off'.
- Very moving, Martin was the real-life, unsung hero, very sadly.

'Good': 5 votes

- Strange but interesting.
- Nice to see something different.
- Moving story. Sad, disturbing.
- Very sad. The gaps in her life seemed more striking than the information about her. Lots of questions unanswered.

'Satisfactory': 3 votes

- A very 'different' film' I hope I wouldn't let it happen to anyone I know!
- Strange subject
- Interesting – overlong. Though-provoking

'Poor': 0 votes

Responses via the CFC Discussion page:

Very moving, Martin was the real-life, unsung hero, very sadly.

If Martin was the unsung hero then, unwittingly, he was a flawed one – perhaps a victim of his class, age, and upbringing. For, whilst he clearly loved Joyce intensely, he'd told her he would not be prepared to father "tinted" children. Honest of him on the surface, but – even if unintended – a spectacularly cruel rejection of everything Joyce had vainly sought to put behind her in choosing him.

I wonder whether, in his grief at the end, he was aware of this. He is clearly a very kind, gentle guy in many ways. But a truly sensitive, intuitive and life-affirming partner might have encouraged her to confront issues with her mixed race, re-contact her family, embrace her past – rather than quietly enabling her flight.

Perhaps this is easy to say with the hindsight of a quarter of a century. I moved around London as much as Joyce – from house to house and job to job. In many ways, I was an exact contemporary (though decidedly less well behaved). She was precisely the same age as my sister, a year older than me. Leslie and I had many close friends who were Caribbean, African, musicians, and so on. My neighbours and I, from Charteris Road, N4, drunk at The Park Tavern – apparently haunted by her dad fifteen years earlier. Yet to actually be welcomed into a black household, as I recall even then – to dine with their kids, in the kitchen, as part of the family – still conveyed an unspoken message of special trust; you had crossed some invisible line. It was as though black families and white families were expected to live parallel lives. They worked together and played together but, even as late as the early nineties, it was unusual to intermingle domestically – such was the insidious legacy of subtle racism which, arguably, has continued to destroy lives right into the C21st.

Very well done film – Dreams of a life.

Left me stunned thinking how someone could lie undiscovered and not missed for over three years with the TV playing over her decomposing corpse.

Made me question whether I was taking enough care looking out for signs of life in my elderly neighbours.

Thought the juxtaposition of interviews and fictionalised representation of Joyce's life worked well and gave hints as to what had happened without trying to really the many questions. Abandoned by her mother through death and her philandering father who walked out on her, something must have happened with the sisters to make her distance herself so much, and seek a new life completely. It's a tragedy that Martin whom she loved was afraid to have mixed race progeny, but it seems that Joyce lived vicariously through others with a secret inner grief and insecurity, adopting their friends, their hobbies, their lives and moulding herself to others. Puzzling, thought provoking and sad. I liked the way you got hints as to what may have happened in the interspersed post-it's and writing on the white boards, e.g. that the family wished to remain incognito and not participate in the film. Sad comment on the alienation of modern society that her disappearance could go so unnoticed by any one.

I like Eric's comments as they provide another insight into a nomadic wandering life style of Joyce's decade and cultural milieu and remind us how little real intermingling there was between peoples of different ethnic backgrounds. Martin and other important people in her life must carry great sadness and a sense that somehow they failed Joyce.