

Saturday 25th November 2017

Letters From Baghdad – France/Great Britain/USA 2016

Director: Zeva Oelbaum, Sabine Krayenbühl
Cinematography: Petr Hlnomaz, Gary Clarke
Editor: Sabine Krayenbühl
Composer: Paul Cantelon

Cast

Gertrude Bell	Tilda Swinton
General Sir Gilbert Clayton	Michael Higgs
T.E. Lawrence	Eric Loscheider
Vita Sackville-West	Rachael Stirling
Sgt. Frank Stafford	Adam Astill
Lady Florence Bell	Helen Ryan

Running time: 95 minutes

Language: English and Arabic, with subtitles

Plot Summary:

Letters from Baghdad tells the extraordinary and dramatic story of Gertrude Bell, the most powerful woman in the British Empire in her day. She shaped the modern Middle East after World War I in ways that still reverberate today. More influential than her friend and colleague Lawrence of Arabia, Bell helped draw the borders of Iraq and established the Iraq Museum.

Using never-seen-before footage of the region, the film chronicles Bell's extraordinary journey into both the uncharted Arabian desert and the inner sanctum of British male colonial power. With unique access to documents from the Iraq National Library and Archive and Gertrude Bell's own 1,600 letters, the story is told entirely in the words of the players of the day, excerpted verbatim from intimate letters, private diaries and secret communiques. It is a unique look at both a remarkable woman and the tangled history of Iraq.

Review

Leslie Felperin from the Guardian says:

“It is one of the injustices of the universe that the fame of TE Lawrence, AKA Lawrence of Arabia, lives on (probably mostly thanks to David Lean and Peter O’Toole), while far fewer people are familiar with the biography of his contemporary and comrade-in-diplomacy, Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), a character no less colourful, charismatic and compelling than Lawrence. Getting a niche arthouse release, this finely wrought documentary won’t rectify that imbalance in their respective reputations. But it does serve as a handy summary for those who want a cinematic introduction to Bell’s sprawling, singular story, and don’t want to start with Queen of the Desert, Werner Herzog’s dramatised flop that starred Nicole Kidman as Bell.”

Jay Weissberg says:

“After the misfire of biopic “Queen of the Desert,” it was clear that intrepid traveler and influential Arabist Gertrude Bell, reductively known as “the female T.E. Lawrence,” needed her reputation rescued from Werner Herzog’s ill-advised effort. In stepped directors Zeva Oelbaum and Sabine Krayenbühl with “Letters From Baghdad,” a carefully researched documentary that uses an extraordinary wealth of appealing archival footage accompanied by Tilda Swinton’s voiceover as Bell.”

Preceded by Pole to Pole (National Film and TV School) 11 minutes

Shortlisted for the 2017 Animation BAFTA’s and one of a string of successes that included four winners in four years. A wonderful little story of two bears (one white and one brown) who meet in the arctic. Starving, they are in two minds if each should become the others next meal or, each being lonely, life-long pals.

Coming Soon *Now booking online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/bfsm*

- Friday, 1st December - Tanna (Dir. Martin Butler/Bentley Dean) Australia 2015
- Saturday 16th December – The Hundred Foot Journey (Dir. Lasse Hallstrom) USA 2014
- Friday, 12th January – The Handmaiden, Rating 18 (Dir. Park Chan-Wook) South Korea 2016

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