

Review of The King's Speech

✘ Without stutter or hesitation, Tom Hooper, director of *The Damned United*, explores the private life and difficulties of the reluctant King George VI (Colin Firth) from around the time of his brother's abdication to the lead-up to his first wartime address, in *The King's Speech*. Famed as a stammerer, and required to speak publicly, George (Bertie to his friends) is forced into seeking the help of various speech therapists without much success. Enter Geoffery Rush as the unorthodox, but highly effective, Lionel Logue.

Whilst on the surface the film may appear to be yet another costume drama based around the relationship between a monarch and a wily over-familiar 'commoner', in the same vein as *Mrs Brown* or, more recently, *The Queen*, here, Hooper uses the opportunity to examine the role of language and the responsibility that comes with having a voice. Centring around the fledgling friendship between Bertie and Logue, the film portrays the anxious sentiment of the interwar period and the confusion over the abdication of Edward VIII (Guy Pearce). Presenting the role of the King as a monarchic leader of men, and showing the country feverishly hanging on his every word in each speech given by the kings featured (Michael Gambon, Pearce, and Firth) thanks to the game-changing radio technology, the wireless. The radio, symbolising the new and changing times, shown to infiltrate every aspect of culture thanks to a superb montage, in the film's closing minutes and obviously a point of severe consternation to a stammering king.

Don't be fooled though. Whilst the film is beautifully shot and incisively acted, with many critics tipping Firth for Oscar and BAFTA wins, it is also very funny. The comedic elements of the script are wonderfully realised by Rush and Firth, and in particular the vulgarities, which feature as a form of therapy, are hilariously played by Firth as the

repressed monarch given free reign to swear in public.

Helena Bonham Carter is sophisticated and relatively understated in the supporting role of Queen Elizabeth, and Derek Jacobi is almost scene-stealing in his few minutes of screen time as the Archbishop Lang.

All in all, *The King's Speech* is an insightful and cinematic portrayal of anxiety in what are essentially interior spaces; either the mind of George VI, or the various small rooms from Harley Street to Buckingham Palace in which the central characters spend a great deal of the film talking to one another.

Truly showing how cinematic and entertaining two people talking in a room can be, *The King's Speech* is showing at the Filmhouse until 3rd February.