

Edinburgh International Film Festival 2018 Review : Whitney ****

In the six years since Whitney Houston's death so much has been written about her life you'd be forgiven for thinking you already know the story. You'd be wrong.

In this stunning documentary Academy Award winning Scottish director Kevin Macdonald (Touching The Void (which was a Surprise movie at an earlier Film Festival!) and Marley) reveals the woman behind the public persona and the circumstances which lead to her death at the age of only 48.



The involvement of Houston's friends and family, who affectionately referred to Whitney as "Nippy" sets this documentary apart from the salacious tabloid headlines. Using never-before-seen archive footage, exclusive demo recordings, rare performances, audio archives and original interviews with the people who knew her best it's an intimate portrait of a deeply troubled individual.

Thrust into the spotlight by her mother Cissy at the age of

11, at 19 Houston had signed her first recording contract. At 22 her first hit "Saving All My Love For You" was released and began a run of number one singles, awards and public acclaim. Houston's glittering career gradually gave way to a troubled personal life. Over the next few years she survived a volatile marriage to R&B singer Bobby Brown, drug abuse, divorce, estrangement from her father, rehab, reality TV and a disastrous comeback tour.

The film is unflinching, profound and reminiscent of Asif Kapadia's *Amy* in charting the meteoric rise and fall from grace of a much-loved performer.

Although Houston was surrounded by friends, family and employees, no one could stop her once she was hellbent on self-destruction. The film delicately navigates difficult topics including race, sexuality, abuse and trauma without sensationalism. It's impossible not to be moved by Houston's life story and you will likely leave the cinema saddened at the tragic end to an often difficult life.

The UK Premiere of *Whitney* took place at the Edinburgh International Film Festival and the film goes on general release on Friday 6 July 2018.