

ANDREW ROBINSON FILM

MY BLACK DOG

A reflection by Kate Liston-Mills

It was like it was yesterday ... being young, the world's potential bursting through your limbs ... growing up underneath Gulaga and Balawan, swimming in the sapphire waterways. But the darkness, the darkness. It comes. It gnashes. Even now. It curls in corners, snarls.

That darkness writhes and saunters along the edges, down the gutters, seeps into your elbows and eye sockets and lodges. And god, it can proliferate, explode, rupture and rot if you keep it in. I see, I see now, through ribcage singing and bodied emotions how to detonate that bomb, how to hold a hose to the flames of that beast.

Don't go believing that this work is obvious because of the title ... this is a work of brilliant refinement, complexity and fierce accuracy. The black dog we sometimes meet is never the same dog, and it never barks in the exact same way but it sure feels personal when it comes. And it hits with a sourness so many of us know deeply. In this work we meet those poisons but also taste and feel the antidotes at every turn. The ways to be a good friend. The ways to care. The ways to process that which our bodies can feel destined to bury.

The performances were so sophisticated that I believe if you stripped it all back even further those characters could tell you this story through their eyes alone. And if the eyes are windows to the soul, as a viewer from the first scene you have instant rapport, instant trust that these storytellers know this tale all the way through.



The filmmaking is intimate. It creeps initially with disconcerting sounds, limited light, delicate angles, so we feel the struggle. And then as hearts move and lift, it grows spacious, transformative and never hyperbolised.

This is visual and bodily storytelling at its most powerful: stripped back and perfectly restrained to allow for contemplation and access. The score was suitably bold at times but mostly nuanced allowing for the bodies to speak for themselves and find their own connections and impetus. Juxtaposing urban and bucolic backdrops within the Bega Valley, from skate parks, shopping trolleys and graffiti to delicious gums and bush land, My Black Dog is grounded from start to end in place and it shimmers with the stardom of the young people that propel it.

The young people in the front row of the cinema. What superstars. Thank you to these warriors for starting to break the dark cycles of our past and for dreaming up new paths forward for us all.

Release now. And reach out.
You are not alone. I don't know why we so often think we are.

-Kate Liston-Mills

