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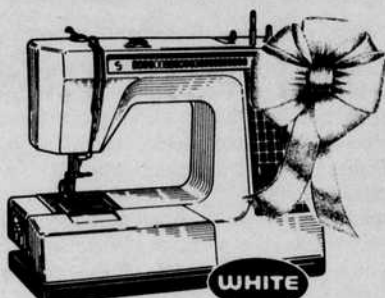
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CINEMA

Charming actress, triumphant story

Review by Ross West

The year is 1951. Fifteen-year-old Linda (Emily Lloyd) bicycles through a small coastal town in the cloudy south of England with her head held high and her skirt flapping above her knee. The ocean air, which spins a pinwheel affixed to her bike's handlebar, has brought up the color in her cheeks.

In the course of *Wish You Were Here* Linda goes through some turbulent times and dramatic changes. Her brashness and foul mouth get her into and out of more than her share of troubles, none of which can quell her indomitable exuberance for very long. *Wish You Were Here*, like Linda, is full of charm.

After a troubled childhood—parts of which we see in flash-back—Linda knows only one means by which she can get attention: her sailor's mouth. Her profane verbal fireworks have embarrassed her father to the point where he takes her to a psychiatrist. The doc's therapy session nearly turns into a Monty Python sketch when he asks her to go through the alphabet letter by letter

naming all the "really filthy, nasty" words she knows.

It isn't long before Linda discovers another way to get attention. Sex. Although hesitant at first, she's soon gathering information at a rate that would make Shere Hite envious. But her exhibitionistic sprees and tumbles with oafish boys just don't, shall we say, cut the mustard.

Enter Eric, Linda's father's friend/bookie, a paragon of ick. Sure he's repellent, but Linda's primed and ready for a dalliance with darkness, and Eric can supply darkness aplenty. Tom Bell, who looks appropriately sinister (like the British equivalent to Harry Dean Stanton), plays Eric to the creepy hilt.

Wish You Were Here is studded with marvelous scenes—some frightening, some comic, some painfully real. Writer-director David Leland deserves much of the credit for the film's texture, a mix of cinematic establishing shots and camera movement with television pacing and editing graced by flashes of theatrical dialogue. Leland's most recent film is *Personal Services*. Among his numerous other writing credits stands the marvelous screenplay for *Mona Lisa*.

Wish You Were Here is in English, or rather, British. Due to the heavy accents and the sometimes whispery dialogue (not to mention a wailing baby a few rows back) the film could almost have benefitted from subtitles.

Actress Emily Lloyd (who turned 16 during the film's produc-



Emily Lloyd stars as Lynda, a rebellious teenager, in David Leland's *Wish You Were Here*.

tion) makes a strong debut in *Wish You Were Here*. Her girlish looks and carriage are perfect for this role which calls on her to bubble, weep, and strut in successive scenes.

Linda's story is a triumph of will and willingness to re-group after disaster. As a young child she hid from her troubles behind her father's gas mask left over from wartime. Just as the country she grew up in healed itself from the terrible wounds of two World Wars, Linda heals herself from the personal wounds of her own rough passages. By film's end she's shed the mask, the breeze has blown away the mustard gas—for now—and small buds begin to poke through the rubble strewn 'round the battlefield.

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