

## Sordid love triangle at center of searing Brit melodrama

Written by Kam Williams

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This searing, coming-of-age saga, written and directed by Brit Andrea Arnold (*Red Road*), gets my vote as the best cinematic release of the first two weeks of 2010, if that means much. Last year, the movie made a big splash on the other side of the pond where it reeled in awards at film festivals in Cannes, England, Norway, Scotland and Croatia.

Despite the film's title (and my employing every aquatic allusion I could think of in the previous sentence), the movie doesn't revolve around a fish tank. Still, that might be the best way to describe the modest flat which serves as the setting for the picture's lead characters sharing the cramped confines of an increasingly-claustrophobic, pressure cooker.

Joanne Williams (Kierston Wareing) doesn't look old enough to have a 15 year-old daughter, and the immature single-mom certainly doesn't behave in a responsible enough fashion to be raising Mia (Katie Jarvis) and her kid sister Tyler (Rebecca Griffiths). First of all, she's an irascible, foul-mouthed lush, traits she's already passed on to her troubled teenager.

Consequently, Mia has ended up an angry, friendless alcoholic who's always at odds with the world. This is not a healthy frame of mind when you're stuck in the forbidding environs of the Essex projects, a maze of cold, towering edifices, each overlooking the vast, soulless wasteland of a totally-defoliated concrete jungle.

At the point of departure, it is established that Mia is a wanksta (white gangsta) who loves to dress, walk and talk hip hop-style, plus she's doing her best to teach herself to breakdance in order to enter a competition. But she also like boys, and lands in hot water after head-butting a classmate whom she considers competition. Between that infraction and the booze, it isn't long before Mia isn't going to school anymore, but instead hanging out at home and contemplating working as a stripper.

A little hope comes into the rudderless juvenile's life the morning Connor (Michael Fassbender) staggers out of her mother's bedroom after a one-night stand. He compliments gyrating Mia by telling her that, "You dance like a black," and it isn't long before he further ingratiates himself with the needy girls as her new father figure.

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Too bad sexually-impulsive Joanne hadn't bothered to determine whether the guy was married, had any kids or was a pervert before introducing him to her daughters. For, there is only danger in store as she endeavors to cobble a relationship with a pedophile who's just waiting for the right moment to pounce on emotionally-vulnerable Mia.

Trouble in Cockneyland.

### **Excellent (4 stars)**

Unrated

Running time: 122 Minutes

Distributor: IFC Films

To see a trailer for Fish Tank, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg1yMOdjyp0>