

The boys are back

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by whisperinggums



Southern end of the Fleurieu Peninsula, taken 2007

I would like to say that the real star of [Scott Hicks'](#) latest movie, *[The Boys are Back](#)*, is the [Fleurieu Peninsula](#) because it is absolutely stunning. The rolling hills, the waving golden grasses, the glimpses of blue sea, not to mention wonderful stands of gums are enough to entertain even if the rest of the movie fails to. However, this is not the case. This is an enjoyable movie – not a perfect one, not a particularly innovative one – but an interesting story, well told.

The basic plot, for those who haven't heard, is that sports journalist, Joe Warr (Clive Owen) becomes a

single parent when his wife dies rather suddenly of bowel cancer. Having been a fairly absent father, and now grief-stricken, he is not well-equipped to parent his 6-year old son who is coping with his own grief and inability to fully understand the situation. Throw into the mix the sudden arrival of his 14-year old son from a previous marriage and you have the makings of chaos. And chaos is what ensues. Joe decides that the way to manage the all-male household is to have no rules – or very few anyhow – but as the movie progresses this does not prove to be a winning formula.

The cast is strong, with Clive Owen and [Julia Blake](#) (playing his mother-in-law) being the best-known names. The boys, played by young newcomer [Nicholas McAnulty](#) and [George MacKay](#), are engaging but realistic. The music, by [Hal Lindes](#), once a member of [Dire Straits](#), is understated with just a bit of an edge, and effectively underscores the emotions without over-sentimentalising them. The cinematography is traditional but lovely – with an obvious but nice contrast made between golden sunny Australia and blue damp England.

The story is adapted from a memoir titled *The boys are back in town* by British columnist [Simon Carr](#). It is sad and funny and, at times – perhaps particularly for women (says she being sexist) – infuriating as Joe misses clues from his sons regarding what they need. Housekeeping is not my forte but even I wanted to get stuck into the kitchen to bring it back to some level of organisation and hygiene, and as for silly boy stunts involving cars and the non-use at times of proper restraints – well, let us just say that I'm a mum!

There are some cliched moments, but overall the script is good and Hicks holds it all together to create a warm and tender but not simple movie about grief, parental and sibling love, and, really, just getting on with life when things don't go your way. I'd recommend it. After all, if you find the story not to your liking, there is always the scenery!

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