

# FILM: The Boys Are Back

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## **THE BOYS ARE BACK**

**Directed by Scott Hicks**

**Starring: Clive Owen, Emma Booth, Laura Frasier, George Mackay, Nicholas McAnulty and Erik Thompson**

Clive Owen fans rejoice! Even though this film is set in warm and sunny South Australia, he still manages to wear his trademark trench coat that he seems to garnish in practically all of his films. It seems to be written into his contract that he must wear said item of clothing and this is no exception. Perhaps being a co-executive producer on the film he also got a choice of what style of trench coat he would like to wear and this one is very stylish indeed. As is this beautifully shot film. Clive plays Joe, a grieving father who is coming to terms with the death of his wife (Laura Fraser) and how to cope with being a single father to his six-year-old son, Artie. Matters are made even more complicated when his elder teenage son Harry, from a previous marriage in England, comes to stay and the trio get to know each other more. Joe tries to become a father in a household devoid of feminine influence and deal with Artie's mood swings as well as getting to know his other son Harry from whom he has not had much contact with for several years.

Like Clive's wonderful trench coat the actors wear this film proudly and the cast is quite simply superb. Clive Owen is terrific as Joe who comes across as an irresponsible and wise-cracking toff only to charm and delight the audience as he comes to terms with death and love. His flawed character is recognisable and you feel more sympathy for him as the film moves on. George Mackay (a dead ringer for Rupert Grint) gives a nuanced performance as Harry and newcomer Nicholas McAnulty practically steals the film as the likeable Artie. There is a great support cast too from Erik Thomson as Joe's best friend Digby and Emma Booth as fellow single parent and confidant Laura. I was pleasantly surprised when watching the film that the story (based on memoirs by Simon Carr) was not contrived as some recent dramatic fare. You didn't what Joe's occupation was until

around halfway through the film and there are several unanswered questions about character and plot that are never explained and don't have to be.

It's one of those rare films that from the offset you go along for the ride. It packs emotional punch in several places and tissues are advised but this is also an incredibly funny film. The naturalist performances and dialogue are spot on. Less is more quite often is and in particular some of Artie's one liners will have you in stitches. With recent talk of Australian films being depressing and not appealing to a mainstream audience, this is one of the best non-Australian, Australian films made in years that deserves to get a wider release. Co-financed by BBC Films, Screen Australia, South Australian Film Corporation and Hopscotch Films, this film proves that Australian made and located films can still appeal to a homegrown and international audiences. The themes of unspoken love are universal and the lush landscapes and settings of the story are more enticing than any Baz Luhrmann produced tourism advert. Cinematographer Greig Fraser paints a beautiful canvas of a homely Australian landscape that compliments it's characters moods that demands to be seen on the big screen. And for this very reason my holiday for South Australia is now on the cards. The soundtrack is also refreshing with an acoustic score from Hal Lindes and music from Icelandic band Sigor Ros. Director Scott Hicks must be congratulated for crafting a humorous, emotional and ultimately uplifting film that has to be one of *the* best films of the year that knocks battling robots, wizards and starship adventures off their socks.

**You'll love this if:** You want an emotionally rich yet uplifting and beautifully shot drama.

**You'll hate this if:** You still think Australian films have nothing to offer.

*The Boys Are Back is in limited release now.*