

I TOLD YOU I WAS ILL - REVIEW

The Spike Milligan documentary feature 'I told you I was ill' runs like a homely down to earth family reminiscence about one of its deceased members over jam and scones after a hearty lunch. Spike Milligan's family, mates and admirers gently and adroitly piece together the real goon - tea stains and all!

What emerges is a sympathetic yet credible view of a compassionate and vulnerable family-loving man seen mostly through the eyes of his daughter Jane who, at times, bares her rawest emotions about 'her dad'.

For those wondering if a truly objective construction can be rendered via the perceptions of a family member, consider Jane's assessment of the affairs that Spike was having whilst his second wife lay dying from cancer - 'horrid and not right'.

Alternating between the UK and Australia, and including performance footage, home movie footage, jokes and interviews with a string of celebrities who knew him, this film immerses us in the private world of a man who's domestic persona was anything but that of the smug and capable entertainer with whom the world had become so familiar. Summing it up was a joke of Spike's

'We don't have a plan,
So nothing can go wrong!'

And a compliment he once gave someone that they 'came last in the human race'.

A seasoned traveller who spanned the globe, his heart, it was claimed by one of his daughters, was 'in that little house in Woy Woy'. For Spike, life in Australia was grander, larger and more exciting than anywhere else.

The man who fought for a haunted house and who, from England, protested against the environmental jeopardy signalled by the proposed development of Tasmanian dams, is described as being able to feel the pain of both humans and animals, seeing inside them.

Yet, paradoxically, the same man could not see the need to fill his car with petrol before driving it, leaving it to his manager to extricate it from traffic whilst he caught a cab! She described him as being totally unable to cope with reality.

His family was clearly everything to him. In a heart breaking piece of home movie footage, Spike allowed his daughter, to whom he'd pledged his love everyday, to kiss the dad who, by now, couldn't see out of his right eye.

Yet, his own brother described his treatment of his first wife as 'appalling'.

Perhaps, one of the keys to unravelling this anomaly of a man was the debilitating depression he suffered for all of his life after his wartime service, and which may well have come closer to claiming him as a suicide victim than has ever previously been revealed. His major coping strategy for this seems to have been his endlessly prolific writing which he states he absolutely had no choice but to do in order to lubricate himself out of the terrible blackness which was non-directional and released him strictly at its own pleasure.

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The godfather of alternate comedy to whom the Mirror Newspaper gave its largest after-death coverage since Churchill, ripples into the future human story long after the echoes of his laughter are left behind.

From comedy festivals in his name, to the inspired comic who is writing as we read, it is doubted that his imprint upon the race can be anything but indelible.

And, one suspects, the legacy of this film for those who view it, will be to ensure that the various insidious and nefarious rumours purporting to blacken his name will come to little at best.

With additional material including alternative commentaries, six documentaries, an album of home movies, a Spike game and countless interviews, the DVD package is well worth the buy for those interested.

Sweet so-long to the ultimate Puckoon!