



ABCD Online no. 7

May 2021

Whitney: Can I Be Me?

2017

Britain

105mins

Cert 15

One advantage of our current film selections being confined to titles available on BBC iPlayer is that we're able to choose some that might otherwise have been missed in the selection process. This month's film is a case in point.

Documentary maker Nick Broomfield's films cover many subjects and are always incisive. He doesn't shy away from ruffling the feathers of his subjects and their estates, so this film might not have been at the top of our list given a wider choice. However, it has given us the opportunity to suggest *Whitney: Can I be Me?* - a fascinating insight into the troubled and turbulent world of the talented artist Whitney Houston, who faced criticism on multiple fronts. In customary fashion, Broomfield depicts Houston and her entourage with warts and all realism, as a consequence of which he was refused rights to her song catalogue. He therefore relied on footage shot by co-director Rudi Dolezal from Houston's 1990's European tour, much of which has been hitherto unseen.

Whitney Houston was born into R&B royalty, her mother being choir minister and singer Cissy Houston and the wonderful Dionne Warwick her cousin: her Godmother was Aretha Franklin. However, having a salubrious family background does not necessarily lead to a happy and contented life and the pressures of a manipulative management did not allow Houston to develop her career as she might have chosen. Furthermore, her troubled marriage to Bobby Brown and the ensuing substance abuse added more unstable pressures which further derailed her career.

Whitney Houston's untimely death in 2012, at the age of just 48, provides a cautionary tale for aspiring young artists.

"The title of Nick Broomfield's [...] documentary about Whitney Houston echoes a question she often asked herself, 'Can I be me?' Apparently, she often could not. According to Broomfield's damning film, Houston had to repress her true self throughout much of her life due to a perfect storm of factors, which included her controlling mother Cissy Houston, her pushy record company Arista, her co-dependent husband Bobby Brown, her conflicted sexuality, and the mountain of drugs she used to blot all of that out"

Jim Farber, *The Guardian*

Leading Players

Whitney Houston	Herself
Robyn Crawford (friend&confidant)	Herself
Gary Houston (brother)	Himself
Cissy Houston (mother)	Herself
Michael Houston (brother)	Himself

Production Credits

Directors	Nick Broomfield, Rudi Dolezal
Producers	Nick Broomfield, Marc Hoferlin+13 others
Writers	Nick Broomfield, Marc Hoferlin
Cinematography	Sam Mitchell
Music	Nick Laird-Clowes

Zoom discussion meeting to take place
Thursday May 27th from 7.30pm to 8.15pm

Link:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72409011429?pwd=OEFScjRNRW4rTFZ5aVBveEJieWVZUT09>

Meeting ID: 724 0901 1429

Passcode: fN80XF



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