

MANGANINNIE.

Review by John Turner – FVFS

Australia 1980. Tasmanian Film Corporation. 86 Mins.

Director: John Honey, Producer: Gilda Baracchi, Script: Ken Kelso, Based on the novel by Beth Roberts, Photography: Gary Hansen, Music: Peter Sculthorpe.

Mawuyal Yanthalawuy (Manganinnie), Anna Ralph (Joanna), Philip Hinton (Edward Waterman), Elaine Mangan (Margaret Waterman).

Following the success of *My Brilliant Career* and several other Australian films of the time, *Manganinnie* was very much undervalued on its release. Set in 1830 it presents a child's eye view of one of the blackest events in Australian history, the virtual extinction of the Tasmanian native population. Manganinnie is the only survivor of a local massacre and the film charts her wanderings during the next year or more as she seeks for the vanished tribe in their annual places of settlement.

She is accompanied on her wanderings by Joanna, the young daughter of English settlers, through whose eyes and occasional voice-over recollections from a later life, we see the basic values and survival skills of the Aboriginal population. For instance, Manganinnie was the keeper of the flame for her people and the importance of fire, a fact which eventually she imbues Joanna, is constantly placed before us becoming the thread which binds the film together.

The direction from John Honey is straightforward, the dialogue by Ken Kelso, sparse and the acting by mostly amateur actors is more than adequate. Gary Hansen captures the magnificent range of terrain and the music by Peter Sculthorpe never intrudes or over emphasis the plot.

The implications of the hopeless search by the woman and child are expanded by the use of voice-over and although there are some obvious lapses in the narrative exposition these are more than outweighed by the many moving scenes and in particular the emotional final sequences.

If *Manganinnie* were produced today, because of the popularity gained by the films of Rolf De Heer, it would receive a much more widespread release than it achieved in 1980. It should be screened by Film Societies, even those who did show the 16mm print available at the time.