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The Life Cinematic



Written by Clarisse Loughrey

Prologue | Sweet, Summer Child



How much trust should we put in our own childhood memories? There are two films out this week – Kenneth Branagh’s *Belfast* on the one hand, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige’s *Memory Box* on the other – that made me sit for a moment and ponder that question. Both are lovely pieces of filmmaking, drawn directly from personal experience. Branagh’s film explores how his love of the arts was able to blossom, even as the Troubles rumbled angrily away – a constant backdrop to his existence.

Hadjithomas and Joreige's slightly looser approach combines Hadjithomas's own journal and tapes from between 1982 and 1988 and Joreige's photographs of the Lebanese civil war to tell the story of young love and friendships snuffed out by unrest. They've been given a kind of scrapbook, A-Ha music video feel – very Eighties. And while *Memory Box* has its moments of total emotional clarity, showing us how this teenager from the civil war is now a mother who doesn't know how to communicate that pain to her daughter, there is a persistent sense of artifice and sentimentality in the film. It's even more present in *Belfast*. [As I mentioned in my review](#) for the latter. I wonder what drives that? Our memories of youth are so warped by innocence and misplaced nostalgia. How much truth is left there? Or are we looking at a reflection of a reflection of a reflection?