



CULTURE MOVIE REVIEWS

Memory Box



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UMAR ALI

Memory Box tells the story of Maia (Rim Turki), a Lebanese woman living in Montreal with her teenage daughter, Alex (Paloma Vauthier). On Christmas Eve, Maia receives a box filled with photos, tapes and letters that she sent to her old friend Liza; she is hesitant to read the contents and confront her past, but Alex is captivated by Maia's accounts of her adolescent life, and, in opening the box, discovers sides to her mother she has never seen before.

This film from Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige makes great use of its titular plot device, which features correspondences freely adapted from the letters director Hadjithomas wrote in her youth, mixing cinematic styles and conventions in captivating ways to tell a complicated and emotive story. Maia's tale is a compelling one, filled with love and loss against the backdrop of the Lebanese civil war, and it is communicated beautifully and with nuance.

The production also does a great job at conveying the tactile sensation of physical media in its cinematography, invoking a real sense of nostalgia that feeds perfectly into the themes of memory and makes for a fresh and engaging cinematic experience. This includes the sound design, which emphasises audio hiss and the physical clicks and whirrs of cameras, as well as the visuals, which play with stop-motion animation and time-lapse photography to communicate the inherent narrative dead spaces of old photos. Nostalgia is equal parts memory and pain, and the stylistic choices made here represent the joy and suffering of remembering perfectly.

With such a tight focus on Maia, and her relationships in the past and present, this film really needed strong performances to land its beats, and both Turki and Vauthier deliver fantastic, emotive portrayals that bolster the already strong script and cinematography. Manal Issa also stars as a young Maia, and she and Turki paint a complete and complex picture of the character, seamlessly charting her development from a rebellious and idealistic teenager to a mother haunted by her past.

Memory Box is a profound and moving piece, telling a beautiful and intricate story creatively and with emotion. It's a film exploring trauma and tragedy, and it does so with care, but it is also optimistic, with visions of a bright and happy future. The sun may set, *Memory Box* says, but it also rises.

★★★★★

Umar Ali

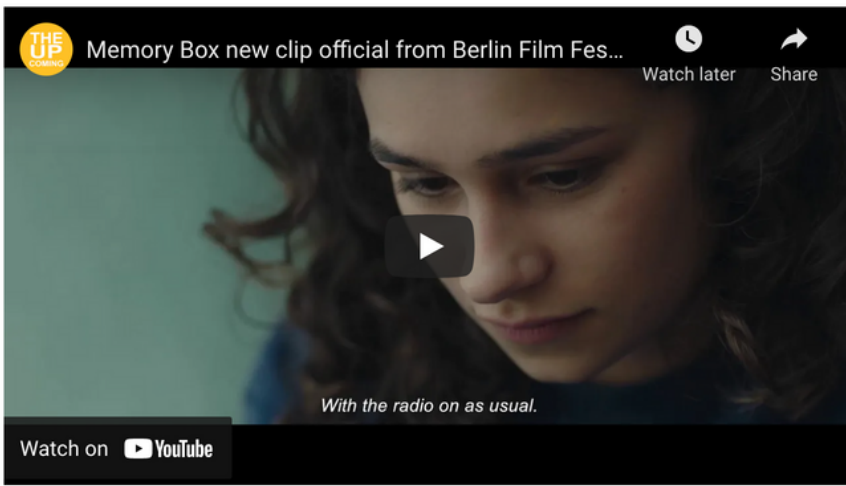
Memory Box is released in select cinemas on 21st January 2022.

**Memory Box**

★★★★★

Release date21st January 2022**Certificate**

[Watch the a clip from Memory Box here:](#)



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