



BFI FLIPSIDE UHD/BLU-RAY LAUNCH

Full Circle

The Haunting of Julia

+ Q&A with Richard Loncraine and Simon Fitzjohn

Full Circle The Haunting of Julia

Directed by: Richard Loncraine

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Presented by: Fetter Productions Ltd,
Classic Film Industries Ltd

The producers acknowledge the participation
of: Canadian Film Development Corporation,
Famous Players Ltd

Executive Producer: Julian Melzack

Produced by: Peter Fetterman, Alfred Pariser

Associate Producer: Hugh Harlow

Production Accountant: Gerry Wheatley

Location Manager: Peter Bennett

Production Secretary: Marilyn Clarke

Production Assistant:

Terry Madden [uncredited]

1st Assistant Director: Tony Thatcher

2nd Assistant Director: Gerry Gavigan

Continuity: Penny Eyles

British Casting: Irene Lamb

Canadian Casting: Karen Hazzard

Screenplay by: Dave Humphries

Based on an adaptation by:

Harry Bromley Davenport

From the novel Julia by: Peter Straub

Director of Photography: Peter Hannan

[Camera] Operator: Terry Parmane

Camera Assistant: Laurie Frost

Gaffer: Roy Rodhouse

Stills: Tony Bliss

Special Effects: Thomas Clark

Film Editor: Ron Wisman

Assistant Editor: Catharine Lane

Art Director: Brian Morris

Production Buyer: Brenda Roberson

Property Master: George Ball

Construction: Roy Hamilton

Wardrobe Designer: Shuna Harwood

Miss [Jill] Bennett's Wardrobe by: Jaeger

Wardrobe Mistress: Susan David

Make-up: Dickie Mills

Hairdresser: Martin Samuel

Title Design: John Leach & Associates

Laboratory: Technicolor, Quinn Labs

Music Composed and Performed by:

Colin Towns

Sound Mixer: Tony Jackson

Dubbing Mixer: David Appleby, Gary Bourgeois

Sound Editor: Jim Hopkins

Unit Publicist: Mike Russell

Special Publicity: Dennis Davidson Assoc.

[Camera] Equipment: Technovision

Lighting [Equipment]: Lee Electric

Made at: Lee International Film Studios

Cast:

Mia Farrow (*Julia Lofting*)

Keir Dullea (*Magnus Lofting*)

Tom Conti (*Mark*)

Robin Gammell (*David Swift*)

Jill Bennett (*Lily*)

Cathleen Nesbitt (*Mrs Rudge*)

Anna Wing (*Rose Flood*)

Edward Hardwicke (*Captain Paul Winter*)

Mary Morris (*Greta Braden*)

Pauline Jameson (*Claudia Branscombe*)

Peter Sallis (*Geoffrey Branscombe*)

Arthur Howard (*Mr Piggott*)

Damaris Hayman (*Miss Pinner*)

Susan Porrett (*Mrs Ward*)

Sophie Ward (*Katie Lofting*)

When the cameras finally started rolling on the production of *Full Circle* in London on 8 November 1976, it is unlikely that producer Peter Fetterman, director Richard Loncraine or a talented cast that included Hollywood A-lister Mia Farrow were thinking that, barely two years later, the film would seemingly be lost to the mists of time.

But such were the pitfalls of independent film production, with Fetterman operating outside the studio system, cobbling together a budget of \$1.1m – thanks to convincing a series of investors in both Canada and the UK – to bankroll the film. With a hectic schedule (filming had to be complete by the end of 1976 for Canadian tax purposes) and a fresh-faced crew devoid of industry cynicism, that target was met. But what happened next?

With no release plan or marketing budget to play with, Fetterman, Canadian producer Alfred Pariser and executive producer (and major investor) Julian Melzack headed to Cannes in May 1977, looking to sell the film worldwide. The original cut had its first industry screening on 18 May at the Vox cinema in Cannes, with follow-up screenings at the Star over the following days. There was interest – *Full Circle* sold quite quickly to distributors in Australia and the Netherlands, with UK and French deals to follow – but the industry screenings attracted lukewarm responses, with the film dismissed as ‘too slow’ and certainly missing the ‘bang for your buck’ splatter of recent demonic smash *The Omen* (1976).

Veteran British producer Michael Klinger – of *Get Carter* (1971) fame – did see potential though, insisting to Fetterman that ‘You almost have a commercial film there’, but suggested trimming a few scenes to bring some more focus to the story.

Fetterman and Loncraine pushed on, with an uncredited Sean Barton drafted in for a re-edit to quicken the pace. Six minutes were shaved from the film’s runtime, with a tame ‘love scene’ featuring Farrow and Conti shelved, as well as a handful of later scenes featuring Dullea after the decision was made to kill off Julia’s husband midway through the film.

The new-and-improved *Full Circle* was offered as the UK entry at the San Sebastian Film Festival in September, swiftly followed by heading to France for the Avoriaz Fantastic Film Festival that winter – where it actually took the Best Picture prize from a panel that included William Freidkin and Sergio Leone, seeing off the likes of David Lynch’s *Eraserhead* (1977) in the process.

But if Fetterman and Loncraine thought festival success would translate to cinema takings, they were mistaken. The film’s debut in Australia and the Netherlands in February 1978 was met by a critical shrug of the shoulders and indifferent box office. Film journalists Down Under were particularly brutal, with Helen Frizzell of *The Sydney Morning Herald* describing the film, mystifyingly, as ‘drivel presented for teenagers’.

Alarms were also sounding in the UK, with the BBFC’s pre-release report noting: ‘A combination of title, a probably unwanted AA certificate, its distributors apparent lack of enthusiasm to release the film and its general undramatic treatment will probably ensure that it achieves little commercially.’

Indeed, *Full Circle* (with the Avoriaz win proudly plastered across the UK quad poster) only opened in one London cinema to begin with in May 1978 – the Plaza in Piccadilly Circus – and took a mere £5,208 in its first week. Although the film did roll out to more cinemas across the capital (and the country) over the following weeks, it struggled to find an audience, not helped by a raft of reviews such as Arthur Thirrell’s in the *Daily Mirror*, which accused the film of having ‘more loose ends than a tippy knitting contest’.

Yet Loncraine’s efforts were welcomed by some critics, who appreciated the film’s artistic qualities – and the fact it did not descend into the type of cinematic bloodbath

Hilda Fenemore (*Katherine*)
Yvonne Edgell (*Mrs Flood's niece*)
Nigel Havers (*estate agent*)
Denis Lill (*doctor*)
Ann Mitchell (*woman in park*)
Michael Bilton (*salesman*)
John Tinn (*customer*)
Robert Farrant (*receptionist*)
Elizabeth Weaver (*mother in showroom*)
Susan Hibbert (*daughter*)
Julian Fellows (*library attendant*)
Oliver Maguire (*nurse*)
Samantha Gates (*Olivia Rudge*)
Canada/UK 1978
97 mins

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then becoming the norm. Chief of these was Margaret Hinxman of the *Daily Mail*, who not only praised the sterling work of the director and DoP Peter Hannan, but noted the 'shatteringly fine' performance by Farrow.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering its focus on mood and style, the film was welcomed warmly in France. Titled *Le Cercle infernal*, it received a considerably bigger release there than in any other country and made a decent return at the box office. Not only that, but it also attracted coverage in monthly film magazines and a series of glowing newspaper reviews.

Both English-language and French dubbed versions also screened in Canada – but even so, come the close of 1978, there seemed to be little cinematic life left in *Full Circle*. Most notably, it did not pick up a release in the US, despite the best efforts of producer Fetterman. He recalled: 'I kept being told it was too subtle for American audiences, that it wasn't gory enough or that it didn't hold the attention. On one occasion, I carried the cans of film down Fifth Avenue to meet with Paramount and they walked out after 10 minutes, saying it was "too slow".'

A few television screenings on Canadian networks followed, before the film was given a new lease of life courtesy of John Alan Simon and his Discovery Films company. Simon specialised in hoovering up titles unreleased in the US, giving them a polish and then unleashing them on the American market. He had done well for himself giving *The Wicker Man* (1973) that very treatment earlier in the 1970s.

Making a quick deal with Fetterman, Simon obtained the rights to distribute *Full Circle* in 1981 but insisted on a change of title to *The Haunting of Julia*, feeling the film's original name did not make it abundantly clear to audiences that it was a horror movie. Not only that, but Discovery ditched the Mia Farrow artwork and came up with a new poster design, a somewhat lurid offering purporting to show the demonic Olivia, complete with the tagline 'She had no one to play with for thirty years...'

Commercially, *The Haunting of Julia* caused barely a ripple as it made its way across the US, finding itself out of step with a young horror audience lapping up the slew of slasher flicks storming the circuit at that time. However, the film did pick up a gaggle of ardent admirers Stateside, led by Sheila Benson of the *Los Angeles Times*, who wrote in July 1981 that the film had 'such elegance, authority and perfection of style'. She continued: 'This is the "other world" as it should be, and so rarely is. It doesn't rely on bleeding walls, sudden winds that lift the toast from the plates or severed heads for its horror. Now the eeriness builds steadily.' Judy Stone of the *San Francisco Chronicle* went even further, claiming somewhat hyperbolically, '*The Haunting of Julia* provides all the chilling suspense that *The Shining* promised but didn't deliver.'

With the absence of any sort of marketing budget, *Full Circle* – *The Haunting of Julia* was practically doomed, with well-known stars such as Farrow, Tom Conti and even Keir Dullea never called upon to talk about – or talk up – the film. Indeed, I have found no record of Farrow ever speaking about it, including neglecting to mention it in numerous biographies and memoirs she has penned over subsequent years.

A brief VHS release followed in the early 1980s, with rental versions popping up in video shops in countries including Sweden, Hungary and the Soviet Union, hampered by an awful, clumsy pan-and-scan picture that destroyed the landscapes and hazy, hallucinatory vibe so carefully crafted by Loncraine and Hannan. The film would crop up on television in the US from time to time – never in the UK, it should be added – with one showing on Sony Movies inspiring a slew of bootlegs.

But there was never to be an official release for home viewing, whether it be commercial VHS or DVD. Loncraine moved on to bigger things, and the cast and crew carried on with their careers, while producer Peter Fetterman ditched the movie business altogether a year or so later, chastened by the experience.

And that appeared to be that for *Full Circle* or *The Haunting of Julia*: one of those movies whispered about in forums and fan groups, ignored by the majority but treasured by a few who hoped that one day – one day – a film arguably ahead of its time would get the love and attention it so richly deserved.

Simon Fitzjohn, *Chasing Ghosts: The Search for Full Circle*, booklet accompanying BFI Flipside UHD/Blu-ray