



PREVIEW

# The Souvenir Part II

+ Q&A with writer-director Joanna Hogg

How do you follow a film like *The Souvenir* (2019)? Joanna Hogg's unsparing portrait of the relationship between a student filmmaker, Julie (Honor Swinton-Byrne) and an older man, Anthony (Tom Burke), who ends up dying from a heroin overdose, was loaded with metatextual emotion by virtue of being naked autobiography. Hogg recycled personal mementos, using photographs of the view from her own apartment window in 1980s Knightsbridge to show Julie's view of the same and bringing her own gold-framed bed onto the set for Julie to sleep in. These tactile details blurred the line between truth and art, a line further blurred with playful sophistication in this transfixing sequel.

The first shot in *The Souvenir Part II* is of white flowers in the idyllic garden of Julie's parents' country pile. Next we see mum Rosalind (Tilda Swinton) carefully carrying a breakfast tray, decorated with a flower, to the room where a grieving Julie has come to convalesce. This mother and daughter relationship, played by a real mother and daughter, is the font of the film's central tenderness. Ever the queen of understated emotion, Hogg mostly keeps scenes driven by stilted chit-chat but every so often feeds in the most devastating line of dialogue. When Julie presses her mum to reveal how she felt when she took the call informing of Anthony's death, Rosalind replies 'I felt through you,' using a soft, matter-of-fact voice that renders the ineffable power of her maternal love.

If *Part I* was about Julie losing herself in romance, *Part II* is about Julie finding herself in grief, as she attempts to process what happened with Anthony through the making of her thesis film, itself as transparently autobiographical as *The Souvenir* is for Hogg. The making of the film-within-the-film gives rise to excruciating moments that show its creator's lacerating self-awareness and lack of vanity. Harris Dickinson shows up to play 'Anthony' (opposite Ariane Labed's 'Julie'), wincing with the pained confusion of a well-meaning actor confronted with a director who has not given him a solid character. As he questions the material, the sense is that he is also questioning whether Julie really knew Anthony. The film expresses the awkward and vulnerable truth that creating something out of raw emotion means total exposure to collaborators, not all of whom will be on side.

Hogg relishes drawing up a range of unsentimental peers, each complete with their own desires and impulses, no one reduced to being a supporting act in Julie's emotional drama. Swinton-Byrne brings a new poise to her role, marking her progression from a doe-eyed naif to a determined young artist capable of taking routine blows to her self-esteem while moving forwards.

One man was once her world, but now there is a mini carousel of men in the form of casual relationships. These do not touch her core of solitude, an interiority expressed as she talks to a therapist and implied as she sits in the still of a home previously shared with Anthony. The men in her life now exist along sexual, creative or friendship lines, and each is given a generous dollop of humanity, whether it's Charlie Heaton showing up to fuck the pain away, Jaygann Ayeh sticking up for Julie in front of a mutinous crew or Joe Alwyn, whose kindness belies his own world of suffering. The biggest scene stealer is Richard Ayoade as an arthouse filmmaker, who delights via a combination of flamboyant outfits and withering lines and who conducts his sets and himself with the petulant grandiosity of a baby king. His outfits include a pink jacket, a fur coat, a cream suit and a gold-flecked tie. Costume designer Grace Snell does stellar work throughout, giving Julie a more sophisticated wardrobe than in *Part I* to reflect her growth.

The genius of this film, which could have easily displayed the solipsism of grief, is that it goes the opposite way. Julie, freshly burst out of the love bubble, navigates the world and meets people on their own terms, at the distance of a creative person figuring out how to channel grief. Hogg illustrates the concept of 'sonder' (the realisation that everyone else has as rich and complex a life as you) with a perspective that Julie will eventually grow into. Evidence of her intention to own this portrait of the artist as a young, bereaved woman arrives in a perfectly judged finale, where Hogg's own voice has the final word.

**Sophie Monks Kaufman, *Sight and Sound*, [bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound](https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound) 8 July 2021**

Joanna Hogg has mastered the alchemy of transforming personal anguish into art, and her new film seems to show us how that magic happens. *The Souvenir* depicted a young woman in an escalating crisis, a story inspired by an episode from Hogg's own life when she was studying film and in a relationship with a charismatic man who had a terrible secret. Now its sequel, *The Souvenir Part II*, reveals that woman responding to the trauma by making an astonishing, unexpected film. As answers go, this is a creative response, not a cure-all. Julie, based on Hogg and played exquisitely by Honor Swinton Byrne, investigates the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of her lover, Anthony (Tom Burke), but she also interrogates her own feelings of grief and her impulse to remake the world on screen – not as it is, but as she imagines it. The film she makes emerges not only from her experiences and influences, but also out of her determination to pursue her own style.

A deadpan favourite from the first film, Richard Ayoade returns here to play the puffed-up, modish British director Patrick, and he's yet more grimly hilarious, smoking two cigarettes at once and throwing vicious edit-suite tantrums. Yet it's his words that are likely to ring in your ears as you leave the

cinema. Poised to question Julie about the film she has just made, he has only one line of inquiry: ‘Did you resist the temptation to be obvious?’

Julie resists that temptation, just as Hogg has been doing for years.

*The Souvenir Part II* is her fifth feature film – she made her debut, *Unrelated*, in 2007 – and when I talk to her, she is in the middle of postproduction on her sixth, *The Eternal Daughter*, which was shot during lockdown. But just because she didn’t make a feature when she was Julie’s age doesn’t mean she lacked her heroine’s single-minded ambition. ‘I was never prepared to compromise, even at that young age – or maybe particularly at that young age – in the way I wanted to make the films,’ she tells me over coffee. ‘It had to be 35mm, I wouldn’t dream of shooting something on video, which meant that those projects were shot down before they even had a chance, because of the scale of ambition and ideas of what I wanted to make.’

Those missed opportunities – ‘ghost films’, Hogg calls them – are something to mourn. *Part II* is her best work yet, partly because of its soaring ambition, and its insight into the art of filmmaking, and just possibly because it recalls that blaze of youthful excitement about cinema too. It is a maze of memory and fiction, film and production, whisking us from the soundstage to the screen and back again. It nests one film inside another, and spies on almost every step of Julie’s production process, from the screenplay, to the shoot with its fallings out and failures of communication, on to the relative serenity of the edit. And still her methods are veiled in a certain mystery: Julie constantly surprises us, inventing new scenes and set-ups on the fly, much to the chagrin of her crew, who want to know everything in advance, who push back as hard as her seething filmschool tutors do when they receive her screenplay tied up in red ribbon, without traditional formatting or structure.

Swinton Byrne’s performance as Julie is one of the great pleasures of the film too. Hogg cast her partly because her interests were not in acting but in working behind the camera, and she consciously preserved her lead actress’s innocence in the first film, not allowing her to know where the story was going to end up. In the second film, she is more in control, both as her director character and as an actress. ‘I thought it would be very exciting in *Part II* for Julie to break out, and become this more creative, energised being.’ She does so to the point where she can answer Patrick’s question about resisting the obvious with a quietly satisfied affirmative.

**Pamela Hutchinson, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 2021-22**

THE SOUVENIR PART II

A film by [Director]: Joanna Hogg  
©: Souvenir 2 Productions Limited, The British Film Institute, British Broadcasting Corporation  
Made with the support of the: BFI Film Fund  
Production Companies: Element Pictures, JWH Films  
Presented by: BBC Film, British Film Institute  
In association with: Sikelia Productions, Protagonist Pictures  
International Sales by: Protagonist Pictures  
Executive Producers: Rose Garnett, Michael Wood, Lizzie Franke, Martin Scorsese, Emma Tillinger Koskoff, Dave Bishop  
Produced by: Ed Guiney, Emma Norton, Andrew Lowe, Joanna Hogg, Luke Schiller  
Line Producer: Eimhear McMahon  
Associate Producer: Crispin Buxton  
Production Co-ordinator: Elena Santamaria  
Production Accountant: Habib Rahman  
Location Manager: Crispin Buxton  
Post-production Supervisor: Deborah Harding  
1st Assistant Director: Paolo Guglielmotti  
2nd Assistant Director: Toby Hosking  
3rd Assistant Director: La'Toyah McDonald  
Script Supervisor: Sara J. Doughty  
Casting Director: Olivia Scott-Webb  
Dancers Casting Director: Nana Tinley  
Casting (Norfolk): Donna Triggs  
Casting Associate: Nicola Chisholm  
Screenplay: Joanna Hogg  
Director of Photography: David Raedeker  
Camera Operator for Musical Sequence: Erik Wilson  
B Camera Operator: Nick Gordon Smith  
Digital Imaging Technician: Jeremy Balderstone  
Gaffer: Ben Manwaring  
Best Boy: Tim Jordan  
Visual Effects: Technicolor VFX  
Editor: Helle le Fevre  
Assistant Editor: Michael Macleod  
Production Designer: Stéphane Collonge  
Supervising Art Director: Byron Broadbent  
Art Director: Pedro Moura  
Standby Art Director: Tony Boffey  
Set Decorator: Polly Davenport  
Additional Set Decorator: Mimi Winsor  
Assistant Set Decorator: Emily Dyson  
Graphic Designer: Chris Barber  
Prop Master: Lee Martin  
Construction Manager: Antoine Robin  
Costume Designer: Grace Snell  
Costume Supervisor: Kirsty Hanlon  
Hair & Make-up Designer: Siobhán Harper-Ryan  
Key Make-up Artist: Alice Jones  
Title Design by: The Morrison Studio  
Film Stock: Kodak  
Music Supervisors: Maggie Rodford, Ciara Elwis  
Patrick's Choreographer: Les Child  
Jessie's Choreographer: Solomon Jessie  
Production Sound Mixer: Howard Peryer  
Re-recording Mixer: Jovan Ajder  
Supervising Sound Editor: Jovan Ajder  
Dialogue Editor: Ruben Aguirre Barba  
Creative Adviser: Tom Shkolnik  
Unit Publicist: Charles McDonald

Cast

Honor Swinton Byrne (Julie)  
Joe Alwyn (Max)  
Jaygann Ayeh (Marland)  
Richard Ayoade (Patrick)  
Harris Dickinson (Pete)  
Charlie Heaton (Jim)  
Ariane Labed (Garance)  
Jack McMullen (Jack)  
James Spencer Ashworth (William)  
Frankie Wilson (Frankie)  
Tilda Swinton (Rosalind)  
Alice McMillan (Elisa)  
Oliver Bauer (Simon)  
Barbara Peirson (Barbara)  
James Dodds (James)  
Gail Ferguson (parapsychologist)  
Yasmin Paige (Patrick's assistant)  
Erik Wilson (Patrick's director of photography)  
Alex Robertson (Patrick's art director)  
Emyr Glyn Rees (Patrick's assistant director)  
Les Child (Patrick's choreographer)  
Lydia Fox (Lydia)  
Inés Rau (Garance's actress)  
Nick Woolgar (assistant director)  
Pedro Moura (art director)  
Gala Botero (Susi)  
Stephen Higgins (Stephen)  
Jack Gregory (Ray)  
Lee Martin (school handyman)  
Jonathan Hourigan (head of script)  
Steve Gough (head of directing)  
Richard Bevan (head of production)  
El Pilkington (Susan)  
Keifer Taylor (sound recordist)  
Ben Hecking (Ben)  
Roscoe Gibson-Denney (boom operator)  
James Barrett (camera assistant)  
James Fox (narrator, Patrick's musical)  
Lewis Leeson (Horatio)  
Chris Dickens (Patrick's editor)  
Tosin Cole (Phil)  
Anna Calvi (Anna Sette)  
Grace Snell (pop video costume)  
Alice Jones (pop video hair & make-up artist)  
Solomon Jessie (pop video choreographer)  
Agatha A. Nitecka (pop video stills photographer)  
Amrou Al-Khadi (Julie's interviewer)  
Amber Anderson (Jim's girlfriend)

UK 2021  
107 mins

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