

= Dustbin Baby (film) =

Dustbin Baby is a BBC television film directed by Juliet May , based on Jacqueline Wilson 's 2001 novel of the same name . It was first broadcast on BBC One on 21 December 2008 . The film stars Dakota Blue Richards as April , a troubled teenager who was abandoned in a dustbin as an infant , and Juliet Stevenson as Marion Bean , April 's adoptive mother . David Haig stars as Elliot , Marion 's friend and colleague . The screenplay was written by Helen Blakeman , and the film was produced by Kindle Entertainment . Dustbin Baby deals with themes including maternal bonding , bullying , and youth crime . The story revolves around April running away on her fourteenth birthday , while Marion searches for her . April 's life is recounted in flashbacks as she meets people and visits places that are significant to her .

Both Wilson and critics responded positively to the film , with Wilson saying she thought it was the best film adaptation of any of her works . It was released on DVD on 12 January 2009 . Dustbin Baby was awarded the International Emmy in the Children and Young People category at the 2009 ceremony . Helen Blakeman won a Children 's BAFTA for the screenplay , while the film itself was shortlisted for a Children 's BAFTA in the Drama category and shortlisted for the Kids ' Vote award . The film was also awarded the 2010 KidScreen Award for Best One @-@ off , Special , or TV movie aimed at a Family Audience and the KidScreen Award for Best Acting .

= = Plot = =

On April 's fourteenth birthday , Marion , her adoptive mother , gives her earrings , not the mobile phone she wanted . They argue , and April leaves for school . After lying to her friends , claiming she has a phone and is going to the dentist 's , April chooses to play truant . While at work at a stately home , Marion hears that April has not arrived at school . She talks to her friend and colleague Elliot , who unsuccessfully tries to dissuade her from leaving . April visits the home of Pat Williams , who cared for her as a baby . Pat remembers April and gives her a newspaper cutting telling the story of her discovery as a baby in a dustbin behind a pizza parlour . In a flashback , a young April is seen living with Janet and Daniel Johnson . The Johnsons ' relationship is an abusive one , leading to Janet 's suicide . Meanwhile , Marion goes to April 's school , where she talks to April 's friends , and realises that they were lied to . April then leaves Pat 's home , and travels alone to Janet 's grave . Marion continues to search , and , in a shopping centre , meets Elliot , who has joined her . April then visits the now abandoned Sunnyholme Children 's Home , where she lived when she was younger . In a flashback , an eight @-@ year @-@ old April lives at the Sunnyholme . Cared for by a woman named Mo , April befriends an older girl called Gina and is introduced to Pearl , a girl of her age . Pearl behaves in front of Mo , but actually bullies April . Gina wakes April one night to involve her in a burglary , and , later , Pearl attacks April , holding her head under water , and then tears up April 's beloved paper dolls . April confronts Pearl , who she pushes down a flight of stairs , and is reprimanded by Mo . A voice @-@ over from 14 @-@ year @-@ old April says Gina was then " moved on " , and , eventually , April is also moved on .

The flashback jumps forward to April 's time at Fairdale Residential School . She befriends Poppy , who has Asperger syndrome . In the present , Marion buys a mobile phone for April . Back at Fairdale , April is being taught by Miss Bean (Marion) . A piece of work on family trees leads to the pair fighting . At night , April tries to escape the school to find Gina , but is caught by Marion , who sends her back . Marion reads April 's records , and , having learnt of her history , apologises for the family tree incident . Banned from going out on a Saturday with her peers , April is instead taken to the stately home by Marion . A present @-@ day Marion goes alone to her house , to find that there are no messages on the phone . The younger Marion introduces April to Elliot as they continue to visit the home . The present @-@ day Marion goes to April 's room , and looks in April 's box , which contains mementos from different times in her life . The younger April and Marion walk through the home 's garden , and Marion tells April she is leaving Fairdale . April becomes angry , thinking that Marion , like others before her , is now going to leave her life . Marion invites April to move in with her , and she accepts . When shown around her new bedroom , April 's first concern is to have

somewhere to put her box . The present April considers returning to Marion , but realises there is another place she wants to visit . It occurs to Marion where April will be going , and she drives away from her house . April goes to the street where she was found as a baby , and stands among the bins . Marion opens April 's mobile and rings Reno 's , the pizza parlour . April then notices a phone number on the side of a dustbin . Marion asks for directions to the pizza parlour , while April dials the number she found . It is not her mother who answers , as she hoped , but Frankie , the pizza boy who found her . She meets Frankie in the pizza parlour , and Marion arrives . April explains who Frankie is , and Marion gives April her new phone . The three sit down together . A voice @-@ over from April says that , though she will probably never know her real mother , she has a mother in Marion , and this is just the beginning .

= = Cast = =

= = Production = =

The film 's screenplay was based on Jaqueline Wilson 's 2001 novel *Dustbin Baby* , and was written by Helen Blakeman , who had previously worked on *Pleasureland* . *Dustbin Baby* was co @-@ commissioned by CBBC and BBC One , and was produced by Kindle Entertainment , a production company specialising in children 's television . According to *The Guardian* , the film was billed as " a key part of BBC1 's Christmas family line @-@ up " . Blakeman said that when she had read the novel , she " knew it was something [she] had to write " . The film 's executive producers were Anne Brogan and Melanie Stokes for Kindle , with Sue Nott as executive producer for CBBC . The producer was Julia Ouston . Director Juliet May , at the time of filming , had 14 @-@ year @-@ old twins , and so found " the fact that the lead , April , is 14 years old ... very interesting " as she felt she could " kind of understand 14 @-@ year @-@ old children " .

Though the " gritty realism " of Wilson 's novels was different from Dakota Blue Richards 's first role as Lyra Belacqua in *The Golden Compass* , she was happy to take on the character of April . She said she " can really relate to the characters " in Wilson 's novels , but found that April was " a really different person " to her . Wilson , who had previously seen Richards in *The Golden Compass* , was " over the moon to hear she was going to be in *Dustbin Baby* . Richards was to play the 14 @-@ year @-@ old April , but other actresses were required to play younger versions of the character . Lucy Hutchinson , who was five at the time of filming , played the youngest April . Director Juliet May described her as " one of the most remarkable five year olds I have ever met " , saying that " it 's like she 's not acting at all " . Alex Hewitt was selected to play the " middle April " . May described her as having " utter truth in her acting " . Though ten years old , Hewitt plays April at eight .

Juliet Stevenson said she was attracted to the part of Marion as " it 's very boring playing versions of yourself " , and because she did at the time have a 14 @-@ year @-@ old daughter . David Haig filmed *Dustbin Baby* , along with three other television appearances that summer , to earn money to help support his family while he appeared in the play *Loot* . He described his role as a " snug cameo with a purpose " . *Dustbin Baby* was filmed over summer 2008 in London and the surrounding areas , with scenes at Hatfield House and in Barnet . Before the completion of the filming , Wilson was quoted as saying she was " thrilled at the prospect of *Dustbin Baby* being brought to life by such a talented cast and production team . I am looking forward to seeing the end result immensely . "

The BBC purposefully searched for an actress with Asperger syndrome to play the part of Poppy . Lizzy Clark auditioned for the part after her mother saw an advert on an autism website . Clark was selected to play Poppy , and the role in *Dustbin Baby* was her first experience of professional acting . Clark was the first actress with Asperger syndrome to portray a fictional character with the condition . Clark , who has since campaigned with her mother against characters with conditions such as Asperger syndrome being played by actors without the condition , said " My Asperger 's made some things on the film set difficult at first , like dealing with the sudden noise of the storyboard , but I was soon so focused on acting that I didn 't notice anything else . "

= = Themes = =

Blakeman said that she read the book in a single sitting , before " crying her eyes out " . The film includes the themes of bullying , youth crime , domestic violence , unwanted pregnancy , and teenage angst . For Blakeman , April 's " heartbreaking journey in searching for her real mum is also about being brave enough to let love in . " Tom Sutcliffe , writing for The Independent , spoke of the limits of taboo themes in family dramas , and said the film 's " account of a life lived in care couldn 't have had swearing , or casual drug use , and when a shadow fell over a child 's bed at night , it wasn 't the care @-@ home manager coming to exercise some horrible droit de seigneur [sic] , as it might have been in an adult drama " . The film also addressed the theme of Asperger syndrome through the character of Poppy . The BBC claimed that Clark , who has the condition herself , was able to offer " a unique take " on the role . Steveson summarised the themes of the film , saying that " At the centre of the story , Marion finds out that she loves this girl . And that is an amazing liberation when you discover someone more important to you than you are . That is what is incredible about becoming a parent ? you care about your child more than you care about yourself . "

On Behind the Bin , a making @-@ of documentary about Dustbin Baby , Wilson said that " lots and lots of people will identify with " the central theme of adoption , as at fourteen " you start to look at your mum and dad and think ' I 'm nothing like them ' , and everyone seems to have fantasies about that they were adopted or something , and so I think that it 's a typical teenage thing that you question who you are " . Richards says that she likes the idea that April " went on a journey to try and find herself " as " a lot of people [her age] try and do that because a lot of people get to the point where they 're not really sure who they are any more " . Richards also discusses the motif of April 's paper dolls , saying that April can relate to them as in different places , she is " still the same person " , but that she is " coloured in differently by different people and different surroundings " . Alexandra Hewett , who played the Young April , described the dolls as April 's " only real friends " .

Stevenson described the character of Marion as " cranky , stubborn and lonely " , saying that living alone has made her " become quite idiotic and eccentric " . When the character of April arrives , Stevenson explains that " Marion has to go from nought to 80 in terms of parenting . There are lots of reasons she wouldn 't get it right " which leads on to the guilt and anxiety that Marion suffers when April runs away . Stevenson compared her own difficulties of parenting to Marion 's , saying " it is easier for me than someone like Marion because I have had 14 years experience " . Richards spoke of the character of April , saying that " the residential schools and children 's homes were completely different from my life . [April] doesn 't feel connected to anybody and she struggles to know who she is " .

= = Reception = =

Wilson , after seeing an early screening of Dustbin Baby , said that it was the best film adaptation of any of her works . Haig said that the film was his favourite of his summer projects , saying " it was a terrific story and very touchingly done . I think Juliet Stevenson was very funny and moving in it " . Critics also responded positively . In an article in The Times David Chater awarded the programme the TV choice of the day , describing it as " tremendous " , and " the wonderful surprise of Christmas " . The film was described in The Telegraph as a " rare treat " , as it is " something that teenagers and parents can watch together " . This view was shared by producer Anne Brogan , who said that the film was something " that parents and children will enjoy watching while giving them much to talk about " . Tom Sutcliffe , writing for The Independent , said Stevenson was " good as a woman who was far more comfortable in the past than the present " , and that " her performance was more than matched by that of Dakota Blue Richards as April , mostly banked @-@ down and wary but prone to sudden wild flashes of anger " . He criticised some of the " implausibilities " , saying that the plot was , at times , " a lot kinder than the world might have been " , but said that " it still made you well up with its final reconciliation " with emotion that had been " honestly earned " . Euan Ferguson , in an article in The Guardian , said that the film " hooked and haunted " , and added that Stevenson

played Marion like " a kind of updated " Jean Brodie . During its initial run on BBC One , Dustbin Baby was watched by 2 @. @ 3 million viewers , giving it a 15 @. @ 4 % share of the audience .

= = Accolades = =

In 2009 , Dustbin Baby was one of four works of children 's television shortlisted for the International Emmy Award in the children and young people category at the 37th International Emmy Awards . The other nominations were Lharn Poo Koo E @-@ Joo (produced by Workpoint Entertainment) , The Little Emperor 's Christmas (produced by Rede Globo) , and Mille (produced by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation) . The film was one of nine nominations for the UK , which had more than any other nation . The film won the award , making it one of six International Emmys for the UK , and one of three for the BBC , in 2009 . Dustbin Baby was also shortlisted for the British Academy Children 's Awards in the drama category , along with The Sarah Jane Adventures (also by the BBC) , S4C 's Rhestr Nadolig Wil , and the online show following boyband US5 . The ceremony was held on 29 November at The London Hilton on Park Lane and hosted by Dick and Dom . Dustbin Baby lost out to Rhestr Nadolig Wil . Blakeman was shortlisted for the British Academy Children 's Award for best writer , thanks to her screenplay for Dustbin Baby , and won . The film was also entered into the BAFTA Kids ' Vote in the television category . Children aged between seven and fourteen were able to vote for their favourite television show from a choice also featuring Blue Peter , Dani 's House , Newsround , Prank Patrol , The Sarah Jane Adventures , Hannah Montana , Phineas & Ferb , iCarly , and SpongeBob SquarePants . The Kids ' Vote was won by Hannah Montana .

In February 2010 , Dustbin Baby was awarded the 2010 KidScreen Award for best one @-@ off , special , or TV movie aimed at a family audience . The film also won the Creative Talent award for best acting . These were two of five prizes won by CBBC at the inaugural KidScreen Awards , and Joe Godwin , the BBC Children 's director , said " I 'm truly delighted that CBBC programmes are being recognised globally for being original and inspiring to children everywhere ... It 's especially satisfying to win awards for really distinctive and hard @-@ hitting factual and drama , which has always been , and always will be , a unique and central part of what BBC Children 's does . "

= = Home media release = =

Dustbin Baby was released on DVD in January 2009 by ITV DVD . It was rated PG by the British Board of Film Classification , due to " mild threat , violence and one sex reference " , and was marketed with the tagline " April is about to lift the lid on her past " . The DVD included a 24 @-@ minute making @-@ of feature , " Behind the Bin : The Making of Dustbin Baby " , containing interviews with Jacqueline Wilson and production staff and cast .