

STRONG LANGUAGE

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STRONG LANGUAGE

(U.K.)

A Simon Rumley production. (International sales: Stranger Than Fiction, London.) Produced by Simon Rumley. Co-producer, Alex Tate.

Directed, written by Simon Rumley. Camera (color), Armando Smit; editor, Adrian Begone; music, Martin Phipps; production designer, Joanna Cross; costumes, Francoise LaCroix. Reviewed at Mr. Young's preview theater, London, Jan. 25, 2000. Running time: 77 MIN.

With: David Groves, Al Nedjari, Paul Tonkinson, Julie Rice, Charlie De'ath, Kelly Marcel, Ricci Harnet, Stuart Laing, Chris Pavlo, Robyn Lewis, Elaine Britten, Thomas Dyton, Ruth Purser, Anthony Warren, Kate Allenby, Tania Emery.

An often funny portrait of '90s London through mockumentary interviews with 16 youngsters, "Strong Language" is a clever idea that doesn't overstay its welcome but is surprisingly conventional beneath the surface. No-budgeter, shot in '96 for £30,000 (\$50,000) on 16mm, reveals a writer of promise in young director Simon Rumley, with a good ear for speech patterns. But local refs and humor severely limit outlets for pic, which has a belated limited run at London's National Film Theater prior to ancillary in March.

Film intercuts, in lively style, the answers to the same questions by an unseen interviewer to a group of supposedly real characters, ages 23 to 31. Topics segue smoothly from debt, Britpop, clubbing, sex and cynicism (which half of them can't even spell), through restaurants, food and drink, to defecation, racism, AIDS and guns. Linking material is an interview with an unidentified man whose story provides a clever final twist. Characters are all stereotypes (from working-class oik to Sloane Ranger), and their views, though well acted by a bunch of unknowns, embrace a familiar spectrum. Language is extremely ripe.

— Derek Elley