

STRONG LANGUAGE

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FILMS THE BIGGER PICTURE



Gap just couldn't get the models any more

Strong Language

Londoners talk to camera about everyday issues in low-budget original

Director Simon Rumley
Stars David Groves, Al Nedjari, Paul Tonkinson, Julie Rice
Running Time 1hr 20mins
Certificate Exempt
Opens January 28

The problem with the success of *The Blair Witch Project* is that any Tom, Dick or Harry now reckons he can pick up a camcorder and make a fortune with some shaky, meaningless tat. While this sadly seems to be the case with several Brit flicks (viz this month's appalling *Fast Food*), *Strong Language* is actually a bit of a treat. The big regret is that it only has very limited distribution.

It's a simple idea. Take a bunch of varied twentysomething Londoners and stick them in front of a camera. Soon a theme emerges. One man is telling a story and each time he gets to a certain point, the interviewees spout forth their own opinions on that subject. They talk about money, relationships, racism, AIDS, the tube; all the things most people of their age are

concerned about. But there is a point to all the commentary, as the central story really starts to pique the interest. So what at first seems like a dreaded film school project quickly and cleverly becomes as engrossing as a complex thriller.

In less capable hands, this exercise could have failed dismally, becoming noddy, sub-*This Life* banter. The charisma of the players (actors whose naturalism only rarely slips) is perfectly pitched. Only one character, a dumb sloane whose naivety is meant to provide comic relief, seems like caricature.

Another small regret: the topicality of the content makes the film seem worryingly dated (made in 1996, there's wistful talk of getting rid of the Tory government, for example). That said, it shouldn't spoil your enjoyment for what is a fascinating and (a rare thing to say) original piece of work.

★★★★ **Claire Wills**

Must-see moment *When we realise what all these characters have in common*