

'Ray & Liz', Quotes from the Critics

"Richard Billingham's virtuoso debut feature is set in council houses and high rise flats on the outskirts of Birmingham but it boasts as many animals and insects as you will find in the average natural history documentary..."

The director isn't judging his characters. Nor is he patronising them. Instead, he is observing them as they try and fail to make sense of their lives. Shot in grainy 16mm, the film doesn't have much of a storyline but is unexpectedly moving and graceful in its depiction of this ill-fated family."

Geoffrey Macnab, The Independent

★★★★★

"Photographer turned film-maker Richard Billingham, who's been documenting his parents for years, does an incredible job in this autobiographical tale of making us feel at home in a series of decrepit rooms that aren't in the least bit cosy."

Billingham doesn't romanticise a single molecule of the past. Maybe it's a West Midlands thing. All hail an instant classic."

Charlotte O'Sullivan, The Evening Standard

★★★★★

"Even though it's tough to like any of the characters, it's also tough to dislike them, as the film neither panders for sympathy nor chides their listless ways. It bemoans neither the politics of the era nor blames the system which pins these people to the bottom of the barrel. It's about the vividness of memory and how these lives have shaped Billingham's own. It's a very special film, perhaps the best to come out of the UK in many years."

David Jenkins, Little White Lies

★★★★★

"A darkly funny portrait of a Britain that shouldn't exist....Billingham is working with the outstanding cinematographer Daniel Landin, much celebrated for his work on Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*, who sends a mythological shiver coursing through the chaos and clutter."

Ray and Liz are wonderfully played by Justin Salinger and Ella Smith in young adulthood and Patrick Romer and Deirdre Kelly in late middle age."

Robbie Collin, The Daily Telegraph

★★★★★

"Funny, and brimming with colour, character and eventually compassion, Ray & Liz represents film at its most painstakingly personal."

Emma Simmonds, The List

★★★★

"Stingingly intimate first feature...Ella Smith is superb...the film is extraordinary and unflinching. And remarkably it's made with as much love as anger."

Wendy Ide, The Observer

"Extraordinary...it is his bruised and complex view of the past, seen through nicotine-yellowed net curtains rather than rose-tinted glasses, that makes the film such a rich experience.

As much as any film since Terence Davies's Distant Voices, Still Lives, Billingham's Ray & Liz is not merely about revisiting the past but re-examining it from a new angle."

Ryan Gilbey, The New Statesman

"Ray & Liz is no gratuitous wallow; it is authentic, sympathetic, lyrical, keenly observant and richly detailed."

Steve Rose, The Guardian Guide

★★★★

"Richard Billingham soaks his terrific debut in bleak authenticity and some gorgeous cinematography...

a quietly enraged, ultimately compassionate portrait of people who have nothing."

Chris Waywell, Time Out

★★★★

"A gifted photographer writing/directing his first feature creates a sardonically confident, pictorially faultless fly-on-the-wall drama about, inter alia, flies on walls."

Nigel Andrews, The Financial Times

★★★★

"Splendidly played by Justin Salinger and Ella Smith."

Ed Potton, The Times

★★★★

"A sympathetic meditation on the effects of poverty and lack of opportunity told from the perspective of the one who managed to escape through education. Billingham looks back with understanding, rather than anger, at the people he left behind."

Sarah Kent, The ArtsDesk

"The British kitchen sink drama receives a welcome injection of texture, fragmentation and rhythm in Richard Billingham's *Ray & Liz*, a highlight of the 2018 Locarno Film Festival competition. Largely retelling his own troubled childhood spent in Birmingham during the Thatcher era, the celebrated photographer and artist's debut feature is by turns brutal, tender and bleakly funny."

James Lattimer, Sight & Sound

"It's the way art imitates, reflects and recomposes other art — specifically, Billingham's much-discussed photography — that lends complex layers of memoir and mimesis to this singular spin on the British kitchen-sink drama, preserving both the director's childhood and his creative evolution in gorgeous, grainy amber..."

"*Ray & Liz*" stands as a uniquely moving work of self-identification and self-illustration, bristling with pride, anger and even some regret — for the general ugly state of things, certainly, but perhaps for a family he's come to see, and shoot, a little differently over the decades."

Guy Lodge, Variety

"A striking, sustained artistic achievement... A beautifully understated, heart melting performance from Joshua Millard Lloyd is a stand out and gives the film a real grip on the emotions."

Allan Hunter, Screen International

"It's a beautifully crafted and meticulously made snapshot of life on the margins of society."

Rob Aldham, Backseat Mafia

"The first feature from photographer Richard Billingham is a moving yet unsentimental portrait of a life in fragments, as empathetic as it is brutal."

Elena Lazic, Seventh Row

"A remarkable debut...an immersive poetic-realist dive into the artist's fractured memories of his parents during the time he spent growing up in Birmingham in the '70s and '80s."

Rory O'Connor, The Film Stage

★★★★

"Billingham uses his talent for still photography as much as his own memories to craft a portrait of poverty without pity, through love laced with dysfunction...It's a love letter as much as a demand for an apology, a reckoning with a life lived in decay which unfolds with a humble but powerful stillness."

Ella Kemp, Culture Whisper