



ARTS

Edited by Stephen Bevis



A rip-roaring seafaring yarn

FESTIVAL FILM

Deep Water (PG) ★★★★★
Directed by Louise Osmond and Jerry Rothwell
Review: Mark Naglazas

It's not often that I urge people to stop reading one of my reviews (actually, it might not take that much urging). But *Deep Water* is one of those rare documentaries in which the spoiler alert begins at the first paragraph.

Quite simply, the less you know of the story of Donald Crowhurst, the mild-mannered Englishman who attempted to pull off the superhuman feat of sailing around the world single-handedly and ended up tumbling over the edge, the more you'll be swept up by this tragedy that will leave you more shaken than a trip round the Cape of Good Hope.

The story of Crowhurst is apparently well known. His journey, as part of an around-the-world yacht race in 1968 sponsored by a British newspaper, made world headlines.

But for those like me who during that era were staring up at the skies at other era-defining fantastic voyages this astonishing tale hit me like a gale force wind, pushing me

into oceans of human experience only touched upon by the most ambitious of movies.

In the wake of Sir Francis Chichester's one-stop around-the-world voyage in 1967 Britain's *Sunday Times* decided to sponsor the first non-stop single-handed race.

Among the small band of entrants is the 36-year-old Crowhurst, a manufacturer of sailing equipment with four children. While other men in the race are experienced sea salts and dashing men-of-the-world in the Errol Flynn mould, most strikingly the charismatic Frenchman Bernard Moitessier, Crowhurst is a Sunday sailor with dreams well above his station. Within weeks of leaving Britain, Crowhurst's boat starts taking on water. Before he hits Cape Horn he's on the horn of a dilemma: going back would mean financial ruin, going forward he faced certain death in the rough Southern Ocean.

Crowhurst's solution, which is both brilliant and ultimately pushes him into a moral quagmire then madness, is to break radio contact and bide his time on the coast of Argentina until the rest of the group rounded the Cape of Good Hope and join them on the home stretch.

What happens next is

jaw-dropping. It's as if these bold, foolhardy men become the playthings of the gods, with the meek Crowhurst like some modern-day Odysseus fighting against his own mediocrity and being punished in ways you cannot possibly imagine.

What makes the film so compelling is that Crowhurst's incredibly detailed documentation of the voyage somehow survived the ill-fated journey (how the material made its way back to Britain is an amazing story in itself) and has been beautifully incorporated by directors Louise Osmond and Jerry Rothwell.

Not only do they tell a rip-roaring seafaring yarn that will have you on the edge of your seats but they take us deep into the soul of a good man whose seemingly innocent decisions to protect himself and his family mutates into something so existentially wrenching it could have been penned by the writing team of Nietzsche and Sartre.

Deep Water is screening at the Somerville Auditorium each night at 8.30 until Sunday. It then moves to the Joondalup Pines for one week.



Tragic: Donald Crowhurst