

Sammy Going South

UK 1963

Director

Alexander Mackendrick

Screenplay

Denis Cannan

Based on the novel by

W H Canaway

Director of Photography

Erwin Hillier

Cast

Cocky Wainwright

Edward G Robinson

Sammy Hartland

Fergus McClelland

Gloria van Imhoff

Constance Cummings

Lem

Harry H Corbett

Spyros Dracondopolous

Paul Stassino

114 minutes

Our next screening...

Departures (Japan)

Tue 22 March 2011

Dir: Yojiro Takita

Winner of the Best Foreign Language film at the 2009 Oscars.

Welcome to tonight's rare chance to see a film from the great director Alexander Mackendrick (*Whiskey Galore!* & *Sweet Smell of Success*).

I'm not entirely sure what it was about the 1960s that meant all the best family films had to have a large British component, but from *Mary Poppins* and *Oliver* to *Born Free*, it certainly seems it was a golden age for the UK. *Sammy Going South* deserves to be on that list, although it's rather been eclipsed and slightly forgotten over the decades. It may be pretty dark, but has real spirit and a sense of hope burning under the tragedy. It also has Edward G. Robinson, which is a boon for any movie. The reason *Sammy Going South* might not be as well known as it should be is partially down to the dark themes, but it also probably has something to do with its slightly imperialistic attitudes. Although not openly racist, it does have a tendency to treat Africa as the white man's domain, which the 'natives' mere live in. However at its core is a wonderfully made story of survival and spirit, and a reminder of a British Empire world that's long since passed (and thankfully so). Even now, young and old will probably respond to it despite its age.

Tim Issac, *Moviemuser*

A unique portrait of a time now gone, *Sammy Going South* takes the epic journey of a 10-year-old orphan across Africa and turns it into an in-depth look at the strange mix of people who frequented the far corners of Africa. Needless to say that there are many adventures along the way, all of which reflect in some way the colonial world of the time. The beauty of the film comes in the way it's shot. There are the predictable vistas of African countryside, of course, and plenty of heart-wrenching close ups. But rather than injecting these moments dramaturgically, they all reflect the point of view of Sammy himself. This way director Alexander Mackendrick removes much of the politicisation that can hamper stories in such volatile settings, and replaces simple sentimentality with the mesh of reactions and emotions you might expect from a brave young boy hurled into such a complicated situation. As you might expect, the film has dated a bit. The music is occasionally corny to the point of distraction, and the acting sometimes leans toward the domain of pork products, but on the whole this remains an outstanding portrait of a unique period in history, presented in a way that is as intelligent and exciting as you could hope for.

Mike Edwards, *Movie Vortex*

