

Tekst 3

Kidman with clichés

Charles Spencer

Nicole Kidman

by Tim Ewbank and Stafford Hildred

Headline, £17.99, 244 pp

- 1 TENNYSON¹⁾ MEMORABLY described a critic as a “louse in the locks of literature”. Messrs Ewbank and Hildred are a pair of lice in the expensively groomed locks of celebrity.
- 2 In recent years they have churned out biographies of Roy Keane, David Jason, Russell Crowe, Julie Christie, John Thaw, Rod Stewart and Joanna Lumley. Perhaps these books were full of insight, wit and fresh facts, but after reading their latest opus, on Nicole Kidman, I somehow doubt it.
- 3 This is a dreadful take-the-money-and-run project that spends more than 200 pages presenting rather less information than you would gain from an intelligent profile in a quality newspaper. Naively, I’d always assumed that the purpose of unauthorised biographies was to dish the dirt and the gossip. That may be an objectionable function, but at least it gives the reader some bang for their bucks. Ewbank and Hildred, however, have contented themselves with stuffing their book with clichés about the Australian actress, formerly Mrs Tom Cruise.
- 4 Her film career has taken off spectacularly with two terrific performances in major movies – as the troubled mother in Alejandro Amenabar’s brilliant ghost story, *The Others*, and as Satine, the courtesan and star, in Baz Luhrmann’s exuberant musical *Moulin Rouge*. They are both fine achievements, but to describe Kidman as “arguably the most famous actress in the world” strikes me as absurd. More famous than Liz Taylor? More famous than Judi Dench? Surely not.
- 5 The reason why most people will buy this book is to find out what really went wrong in her marriage to Cruise, but here Ewbank and Hildred draw a notable blank, delivering no juicy morsels at all. One moment the couple are



blissfully happy, the next they are issuing a statement announcing their separation. Did it have anything to do with Cruise’s adherence to Scientology? Or did the many months they spent filming Stanley Kubrick’s notably steamy *Eyes Wide Shut* together reveal faultlines in their marriage? Ewbank and Hildred don’t appear to have a clue.

- They don’t even raise the questions.
- 6 What you get is a detailed trudge through every movie Kidman has ever made, which recounts the plots in dreary detail without giving you much insight into Kidman’s performances, together with frequent assertions of what a thoroughly nice woman Kidman is, and what a smashing, loving, liberal family she comes from.
- 7 We are left with judgments that sound like headmasterly school reports, which is odd when you consider that the authors are a pair of tabloid newshounds who can’t spot a cliché without rushing to embrace it like a long-lost friend.
- 8 What makes Kidman interesting is a screen and a stage presence that simultaneously suggests the innocent and the sensual, as a critic from New York’s *Village Voice* perceptively noted. It’s a highly provocative combination but this colourless and pointless book makes her seem marginally less interesting than a dull, dutifully conscientious Girl Guide.

The Sunday Telegraph

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Tennyson: English poet (1809-1892)

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- “I somehow doubt it” (end of paragraph 2)
- 1p 6 ■ What does Charles Spencer have doubts about?
- A Whether Ewbank and Hildred chose the right people to write biographies about.
 - B Whether Ewbank and Hildred had Nicole Kidman’s permission to write her biography.
 - C Whether Ewbank and Hildred have written any good biographies at all.
 - D Whether Ewbank and Hildred’s biography of Nicole Kidman is worth reading.
- 1p 7 □ Wat is het voornaamste bezwaar van Charles Spencer tegen de inhoud van de biografie *Nicole Kidman* volgens alinea 3?
- 1p 8 ■ What is the main aim of paragraph 4?
- A To criticise Ewbank and Hildred for praising Nicole Kidman too highly.
 - B To explain why Ewbank and Hildred have written about Nicole Kidman.
 - C To express agreement with one point made by Ewbank and Hildred.
 - D To point out some of Nicole Kidman’s shortcomings as an actress.
 - E To provide background information on Nicole Kidman’s career.
- 1p 9 ■ What is Charles Spencer’s point in paragraph 5?
- A Ewbank and Hildred do not seem to have any interest in Nicole Kidman’s private life.
 - B Ewbank and Hildred fail to explain why Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise broke up.
 - C It is obvious that Nicole Kidman’s marriage to Tom Cruise gained her lots of free publicity.
 - D It will always be a mystery why Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise decided to get married.
- 1p 10 ■ How does Charles Spencer qualify Ewbank and Hildred’s *Nicole Kidman* in paragraphs 6 and 7?
- A As amazingly accurate, in view of its writers’ usual carelessness.
 - B As remarkably boring, in view of its writers’ press background.
 - C As unusually complimentary, in view of its writers’ critical attitude to stardom.
- 1p 11 ■ What is Charles Spencer’s main criticism of Ewbank and Hildred’s *Nicole Kidman* in paragraph 8?
- A It does not do justice to the qualities that Nicole Kidman has as an actress.
 - B It pays too much attention to Nicole Kidman’s unremarkable youth.
 - C It shows lack of understanding of the roles Nicole Kidman has played.