

Somersault

UK : 2001 ? : dir. David Mackenzie : Sigma / Channel 4 : 14 min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
[Nichola Given](#)
 Mandy Matthews; Paul Hickey; Jenny McCrindle; Anne Sillars; Barbara Bland; Emily Wither

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Radio Times listing:

“Short drama about a schoolgirl and her problematic mother.”

Broadcast Channel 4 17/04/01. Problematic mother, eh? “If you try to grow up too soon,” the mother advises her daughter, “It’ll only backfire on you. Believe me.” “**SOMERSAULT**” is a short cameo, briskly edited, of 13-year old Kaly (Nichola Given), who feels isolated by the bitchy sniggering girls at her new Glasgow school. She’s a gymnast, hence the title, and tries to fit in by conforming to the fashion code, etc, but faces resistance from her alcoholic punk mother Trish (Mandy Matthews), who presumably wants to retard her daughter’s adolescence in order to prolong her own illusion of youth. The final humiliation comes when Kaly sneaks out to a nightclub along with her classmates. While they’re queuing up to enter she sees her mother emerge, falling down drunk, from a bar across the street, and has to rescue her from the garbage she collapses onto.

Director Mackenzie compresses a fair amount of incidental observation into just fourteen minutes, the brief conversations do not seem contrived at all, and the mother’s drink problem is conveyed without reducing her to a caricature bad parent. Given was probably closer to 17 than 13, but in such a short title that’s less important. Not bad, as these Channel 4 shorts go, and it concentrates more on substance than style, which is not the case with many.

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