

Motherboard [15]

2024 UK 87 mins

UK released **15 August 2025**

Director **Victoria Mapplebeck**

Screenplay **Victoria Mapplebeck**

Cinematography **Victoria Mapplebeck**

Music **Jamie Perera**

Cast **Victoria Mapplebeck; Jim Mapplebeck**

Richard Linklater's *Boyhood* has nothing on *Motherboard*. This documentary from Victoria Mapplebeck was shot over twenty years, giving audiences an intimate insight into the life of a single mother and her son. Marketing hook aside, this is an honest, funny, and endearing feature.

A TV director in her 30s, Victoria had to give up the life of a freelancer when she became pregnant at the age of 38. She only had four dates with the father, and we quickly learn that he wasn't there basically at all for his newborn son. Through DVCAM and iPhone footage, we watch her son, Jim, grow from an energetic child to a smart young man. The heart of *Motherboard* is the relationship between mother and son; and all the highs and lows that come with parenting as a single mum.

Editors Mapplebeck and Oli Bauer have fun with the editing, leaning into 2000s nostalgia. Windows Movie Maker effects are overlaid on top of DVCAM footage, but it's the rapid cutting that is most effective. The first third has a frantic energy—repeating shots, quick cuts, and numerous voiceovers—that perfectly encapsulates what it is like raising a young child. Viewers who grew up in the 1990s and 2000s will no doubt be familiar with the old dial tones and Nokia sound bites the film deploys. *Motherboard* eventually slows things down for a more melancholic outlook. As Jim matures and becomes more involved in the narrative, the choppy editing is replaced with extended close-ups of Victoria and Jim. They show extreme vulnerability, not just in what they say but how they

present themselves. These close-ups are often unflattering and unfiltered, convincing us that this documentary is as raw and real as it gets. Victoria isn't afraid to cut out brutal conversations either; with Jim declaring his sadness at not getting to know his father being especially heart-wrenching for us and her.

Although only 90 minutes, you'll leave thinking you've known Victoria and Jim for years. Jim is still young, but a very emotionally intelligent lad for someone his age. And Victoria is a committed mother who only wants the best for her son, especially after a cancer diagnosis adds additional challenges for the small family unit. Thankfully, Motherboard never steers into over-sentimentality, and instead lets the audience form their own opinions of the pair as we see their good and bad moments.

The latter half isn't as flashy as the first, but there's still a playful approach to the filmmaking. All sorts of tools are utilised, from mobile screen recordings to slow-motion, and it keeps proceedings interesting. Not that it was needed, as you'll already be invested in Victoria and Jim by that point. Motherboard is ultimately a life-affirming film, proving that any family unit of any size is all you need.

Gavin Spoors, *Filmhounds*, 8 August 2025

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