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**Posted: Sun., Dec. 6, 2009, 1:24pm PT**

## Farewell

(Docu - Netherlands) A Pieter van Huystree Film production, in association with NPS, with the participation of Arte France. (International sales: Pieter van Huystree Film, Amsterdam.) Produced by van Huystree. Directed, written by Ditteke Mensink.

Voices: Michael Krass, Steven Cieply.

Narrator: Poppy Elliot.

By [LESLIE FELPERIN](#)

**Entirely assembled from archival footage, absorbing docu "Farewell" recounts the story of the first zeppelin flight around the world as seen through the eyes of journalist-passenger Lady Grace Drummond-Hay, whose writings about the flight are fed into the pic's voiceover narration. Dutch docu helmer Ditteke Mensink's first foray into English-language filmmaking reps an appealing exercise in historical storytelling from a femme perspective. "Farewell" could chart a stately course through fests before landing on tony television channels, taking onboard auds attracted to vintage material.**

Narration (spoken by Poppy Elliot) drawn from Drummond-Hay's letters and journalism explains how the English journalist was hired by Hearst newspapers to cover the maiden voyage of the Graf Zeppelin, then the crown jewel of German aviation, which took off from Gotham in 1929. Constructed like a diary, the narration waxes lyrical about the stunning aerial views and landscapes seen, nicely illustrated by choice footage.

But Drummond-Hay also notes the discontent of the German people, struggling with the war reparation debt and embittered that lack of funds forced the flight to commence from the U.S. instead of Deutschland. Shots of early Nazis provide ominous warnings of what was to come, eventually

resulting in the Graf Zeppelin's dismantlement to recycle its aluminium for armaments.

On a more personal note, the pic draws out Drummond-Hay's complex feelings for ex-b.f., fellow air traveler and Hearst employee Karl Henry von Wiegand. The two had recently split up before the flight, but she still has feelings for him.

Integration of words and imagery is subtly executed, always illustrating the story but never feeling too on-the-nose. Footage itself still has the ability to awe, especially shots showing the vast size of the Zeppelin. Material used is generally in good condition, with even some of the delicately hand-colored shots that break up the pic's generally monochrome palette.

(Color/B&W); editor, Jessica de Koning; music, Paul M. van Brugge; film research, Gerard Nijssen; sound, Mark Glynn. Reviewed online, London, Dec. 1, 2009. (In Intl. Documentary Festival Amsterdam -- competing.) Running time: 92 MIN.

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