

The Main Feature



Season 35 - Issue 2 (screening 25.9.14)

En kongelig affære

Denmark Cert 15 125 minutes

UK release 15 June 2012

Director: Nikolaj Arcel
Writers: Nikolaj Arcel and Rasmus Heisterberg
Costume Designer: Manon Rasmussen
Music: Gabriel Yared and Cyrille Aufort
Cinematography: Rasmus Videbæk

Starring
Mads Mikkelsen as Johann Friedrich Struensee
Alicia Vikander as Caroline Matilda of Great Britain
Mikkel Følsgaard as Christian VII of Denmark
David Dencik as Ove Høegh-Guldberg
Søren Malling as Hartmann
Trine Dyrholm as Juliana Maria of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel
William Jøhnk Nielsen as Frederick VI of Denmark

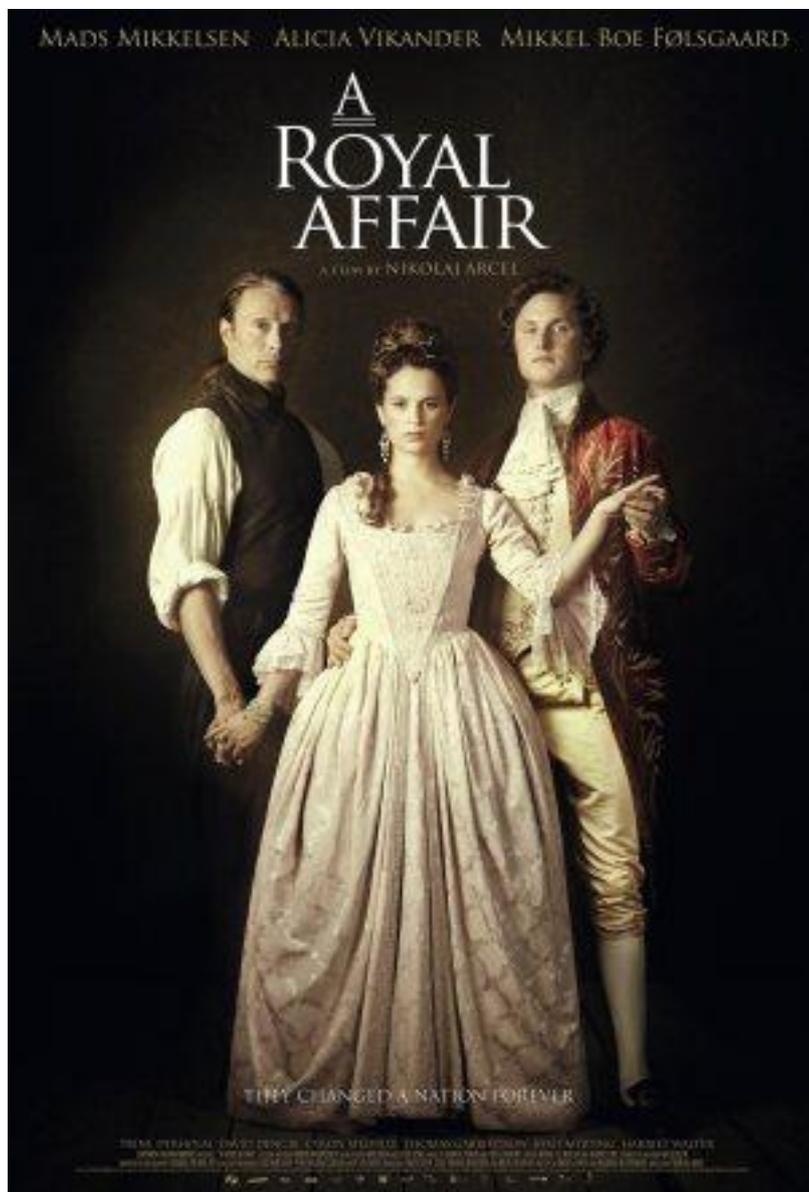
My wife and I saw this film when it was shown by Chertsey Film Society and we both found it gripping, sumptuous and enthralling.

To my mind everything about this film is of the highest caliber. I agree with critic Mark Kermode who stated "It has wonderful period costumes, impressive locations, personal passion, political integrity and is a feast for the eyes and the mind." He placed the film as joint number one in his list of the best films of 2012 (the other film at the top of his list was *Berberian sound Studio*).

I found Mads Mikkelsen to have a magnetic screen presence, a view reaffirmed when we showed "The Hunt" last season. In 2010, Mikkelsen was knighted by Denmark's Queen Marghrethe II which adds a touch of irony to his role tonight.

The film was written by Nikolaj Arcel (who also directed) and Rasmus Heisterberg, the duo that helped write the screenplay for the original *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

En kongelig affære is based on a true story about events that took place in 18th century Denmark. The director called the story a "fairy tale" in which "much more is true than you expect". Asked what had attracted him to make the film he replied "Well mostly the attraction came from, sort of, just being a Dane. Because in Danish culture it is completely part of our DNA, I guess. We all know it, it's a very, very famous story, they teach it to us in school, we've heard about it, there has been several documentaries about it, there was a big ballet, it's very popular, there's even been an opera, several best seller novels have been



written on the subject and so it's almost like why did nobody do it before? So to me as a filmmaker, I did three films before this, it was more like can I get this done before anybody else does because I love the story of it."

He was asked how closely he stuck to the facts. *"Quite closely, I mean I did do a lot of research. Obviously I felt great responsibility because, alright I could lie to you and tell you anything, but in Denmark everybody knows the story so well that if I told even a small lie people would be after me immediately, they all know it so well so I had to be thorough in the research and obviously I did dramatise some stuff and I deleted a couple of characters that seemed extraneous but mostly it's pretty well, it's what happened."*

One journalist enquired "How did you go about getting the right people for the roles?" and Arcel replied: *"The obvious choice for Struensee [the physician] is Mads Mikkelsen and as I was writing I was thinking about him. He hasn't done a Danish film for a few years now, so when I asked and he accepted I was obviously happy. When you have him as a lead things go a lot easier in terms of the financing and so on."*

The most interesting thing with the cast is the guy who we got for the king had never done anything before. Mikkel Boe Folsgaard was in acting school, and so that was a big part and probably the most difficult. The character is manic depressive and slightly insane, so using an acting school guy was a risk, but he was so convincing. So I thought let's just go for it and hope he doesn't get too nervous".



At the age of 15 Princess Caroline Matilda, sister of our mad King George III, travels to Denmark to meet her intended, young King Christian VII. However this is very much a different country, where for example the Danish court considered it appallingly bourgeois to be in love with one's spouse.

The film won two Silver Bears at the Berlin International Film Festival and was nominated for an Oscar in 2013. A lot of the scenes were filmed in the Czech Republic, but you can still to this day visit the many places in Copenhagen, where the dramatic true story

played out. Indeed the website www.visitcopenhagen.com has a page dedicated to the sites associated with the film, including a reference to the "A Royal Affair guided tour".

In an interview, the point was made to Mikkelsen that Struensee is a national icon in Denmark so everyone must have their own idea about who he was. Was that a challenge? He replied:

"This is satisfyingly a long time ago, so people have not met this character. We did another period film, Flame and Citron, about the resistance during the Second World War, and that was closer in people's minds and they had strong opinions about how the characters looked, how they walked, blah, blah, blah. We do not have the same opinion about these characters because everything is based on people writing about them, and what people write has a tendency to be influenced by what political party they're writing for. So if you are against Struensee you will have one cross-reference, and you will find another book that had a different portrayal of him."

A Royal Affair is a wonderfully layered film that dazzles the eye, quickens the heart, and challenges the intellect at every turn and manages to wrap a complex discussion of power, corruption and censorship around an engrossing and increasingly passionate romance.

Iain McGlashan

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15 Poole Road, Woking
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From BBC website 12.9.14: **Mary Poppins songwriter 'thrilled' at Proms singalong**

Alongside regular fixtures such as Land of Hope and Glory, this weekend's Last Night of the BBC Proms will feature a first - a massed audience singalong to the classic Disney score for Mary Poppins which will culminate in the tongue-twisting Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.

First heard in 1964, numbers such as A Spoonful of Sugar and Feed the Birds are known to children, their parents and grandparents. And if the film score has any rival in the affections of the public it would almost certainly be by the same two songwriter brothers: Robert B. and Richard M. Sherman.

From 1960 the Shermans were Disney in-house writers, often known simply as The Boys. As well as Poppins they wrote the scores for The Jungle Book, The Aristocats, Winnie the Pooh, Bedknobs and Broomsticks. Away from Disney, they wrote the songs for Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Robert Sherman died two years ago aged 86. But his younger brother Richard is alive and well and living in Beverly Hills with his wife Elizabeth. He was thrilled when he heard the BBC wanted to use the Poppins songs.

"You know Bob and I were massive anglophiles - eventually my brother went to live in London. There was something about those old British music hall songs we enjoyed, although they were before our time. Take a song like Boiled Beef and Carrots by Harry Champion. There's an honesty and a vigour to it you can't beat. Those songs really influenced what Bob and I wrote for Mary Poppins. Early on the decision was made to set the film in 1910 - earlier than the original stories PL Travers wrote. So we needed that Edwardian music hall feel.

"But I love British songs from the next generation too. Noel Coward wrote fantastic songs and performers like Flanagan and Allen had material which is so evocative even now. It's a tradition Bob and I drew on for Mary Poppins. So to be part of the Proms in London feels very right."

Richard says Walt Disney was a keen judge of a song's merits. "He liked us because he knew we were story men: the numbers couldn't just be pop songs. So Bob and I would perform a new song or a whole sequence for him, with me at the piano. He didn't give huge compliments: the most you would get might be 'that'll work'. But it was enough. He understood song the way he understood the visuals. If he didn't like a number he could take it apart and explain why it didn't fit the moment. So to deal with someone with that kind of brain was special."

Richard admired everything about the film. "Julie Andrews was already known from My Fair Lady on Broadway. But she was genuinely perfect for the main role - a little stern but warm underneath. David Tomlinson could not have been bettered for Mr Banks. And the world fell in love with Dick Van Dyke as Bert."

Richard pauses before tackling the one aspect of the film frequently criticised since. "Sure the Brits didn't really take to Dick's Cockney accent. But he had such a humour and a zest on screen - look at him in a big number like Step in Time, he's magnificent."

He recalls the way that song came about. "It's not the best known piece in the score but it really works. We needed a dance number on the rooftops of London with the chimney-sweeps and Walt asked Peter Ellenshaw, who was British and our matte artist, if he knew songs which might have the right feel. It was Peter who mentioned Knees Up Mother Brown. So one day Bob and I walked into a room and there were Walt and Peter Ellenshaw, plus Don DaGradi and Bill Walsh who were writing the screenplay, all kicking up their legs like madmen and singing Mother Brown. Walt said Boys, write me something like this. So we did."

"People always ask if writing with your brother for half a century was a problem. I would say it was an accomplishment. We learnt to leave personal feelings at the door and we worked very hard at the projects. I sat at the piano and Bob sat at his desk. Then we'd throw ideas back and forth. If Bob heard something he liked he might say, 'why don't you try it like this...'. But we were both word men and Bob had a big influence on the music too. So it's not that I was the composer and he was the lyricist."

Richard recalls that finding the right end for the film took a lot of work. "You have to remember that in the original books Pamela Travers wrote what are really short stories or episodes. There was no through line to the story. But when we were boys Bob and I loved to go kite-flying with our father: it was a wonderful thing to do. So we discussed with Walt whether there was something there we could use to give the movie its end. It gives an emotional close to the film which Bob and I were proud of."

The Mary Poppins medley at the Albert Hall will be happening early afternoon in California. "If we can't find it live on TV or online we'll catch it in recorded form. So I hope I and my wife Elizabeth will be singing along in Los Angeles. And maybe our children and grandchildren too."

Reactions on 11.9.14 to: **Saving Mr Banks**

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	1	1	~	~	3	8	14	10	3

Total received – 40

Average Score – 7.78

Your Comments

Thoroughly good start to the season

Good start to the season

A great way to start the season

A must see for longtime Disney fans

Magical but the sound wasn't quite right

Just a made for tv movie with some better actors

Awful film! Some stories should remain untold!

Excellent choice for the first night of new season

Acting masterclass by Hanks and Thompson

An interesting and in the end moving film with brilliant acting

Wonderful acting, particularly Emma Thompson's – thoroughly enjoyed it

My eyes started watering about 30 seconds before PL Travers' did...Brilliant

Good to start the new season with such an enjoyable, very cleverly made, feel good film

Brilliant! A good choice to start the new season. Especially enjoyed the original tape recording at the end.

A very good start to the season

Excellent start to another season

A fine start to the season!

Entertaining, enlightening, moving

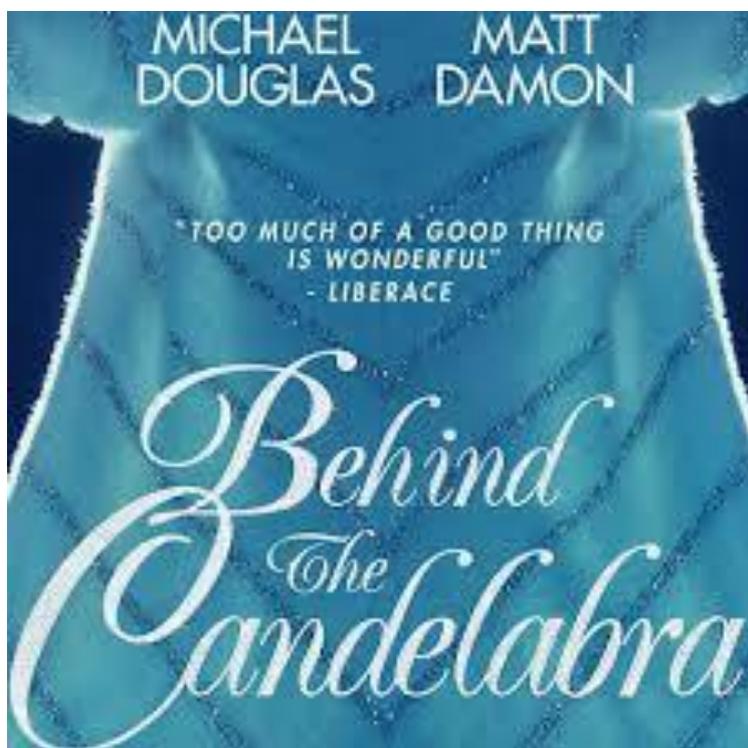
Good acting but very "Disneyfied"

A delightful film

Good fun

Very enjoyable

Our next film: Thursday 9 October



If showbusiness is the business of showing off, nobody did it better than Liberace. As fabulous as it should be and not a jot more or less!

Stephen Soderbergh's film features excellent performances by Michael Douglas and Matt Damon in this tale of love and need.