



## A movie that has everything

MATT LAWREY Last updated 09:28 04/07/2012

Like

0

Tweet

0

Sha

One of the best things about being a movie reviewer is that sometimes you have to see films you don't really want to see.

Take the Danish costume drama *A Royal Affair*, for example. Set in the 18th century, *A Royal Affair* tells the largely true story of an English girl by the name of Caroline Matilda who, as a member of the British royal family, was sent to Copenhagen to marry Norway's new and quite possibly mad King Christian VII.

Life isn't much fun for either of them until Christian goes on a European tour, loses the plot and is put into the care of a Dr Johann Friedrich Struensee.

A German with radical ideas about things like the treatment of peasants, Struensee ingratiates his way into the king's affairs and is soon pulling his boss' strings to bring about radical progressive changes in the country. To complicate matters he and the Queen also fall deeply in love.

By my estimations *A Royal Affair* offers twice as much as your average film of its kind.

Yes, it's got wonderful outfits, majestic castles, palatial interiors, lots of servants, silly wigs, interesting hats, horses, folk dancing and a harpsichord.

And, yes, it's got romance, great performances, sumptuous cinematography, beautiful lighting and excellent direction. But what *A Royal Affair* also offers is a complex plot that is full of genuine suspense, fascinating politics and a glimpse into an amazing chapter of history that you're unlikely to get anywhere else.

Directed by Nikolaj Arcel, the bloke who wrote the screenplay for the Swedish version of *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* *A Royal Affair* stars Mads Mikkelsen (you might remember him crying blood as the bad guy in *Casino Royale*) as Struensee, and the much younger Alicia Vikander and Mikkel Boe Folsgaard as Matilda and Christian.

Mikkelsen, the owner of one of cinema's most interesting faces, makes Struensee an easy guy to like. Smart, warm and ambitious for humanity, he is a poster boy for the Enlightenment.

Vikander shows huge skill and discipline in a role that requires her to experience a few highs and lots of lows. The really impressive bit is that she nails all Matilda's emotional traumas without ever milking them. The same is true of Folsgaard, who manages to create a sympathetic character from a man who should be easy to loathe.

Kudos also to David Dencik, who was in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and both the Swedish and Hollywood versions of *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, for his low-key performance as a brilliantly detestable statesman.

The script by the film's director Arcel and Rasmus Heisterberg keeps you guessing and brings history alive in a way that is exciting without feeling overly exaggerated. Not only that but, if Wikipedia is to be believed, most of it is true.

Bottom line: really, really good.



The Marlborough Express på Facebook

Synes godt om 1,562

- The Marlborough Express

SHARE

Like

Tweet

0 comments

[Post a comment](#)

[Expand All](#)

[Oldest First](#)

## Post comment

Name:

Required

Email:

Required. Will not be published.

**Registration is not required to post a comment** but if you [sign in](#), you will not have to enter your details each time you comment. Registered members also have access to extra features. [Create an account now](#).

Maximum of 1750 characters (about 300 words)

I have read and accepted the [terms and conditions](#)

These comments are moderated. Your comment, if approved, may not appear immediately. Please direct any queries about comment moderation to the Opinion Editor at [blogs@stuff.co.nz](mailto:blogs@stuff.co.nz)