

## A Royal Affair, review

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★★★★★



Sensational: Alicia Vikander in *A Royal Affair*

By Robbie Collin

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**15 cert, 137 min, dir Nikolaj Arcel Starring Mads Mikkelsen, Alicia Vikander**

From Denmark comes this sensational period drama recounting the illicit romance between that country's former queen, Caroline Mathilde, and the royal physician. It is a clear-eyed, morally nuanced and beautifully mounted picture: terrifically Danish on all counts.

It is the early 1770s and Enlightenment thinking is percolating throughout Europe thanks to people like Johan Friedrich Struensee (Mads Mikkelsen), a shrewd German doctor with a sideline in seditious tracts. Struensee is summoned to care for Denmark's charming, if noticeably unhinged, King Christian (Mikkel Boe Følsgaard) on his European tour, and is so well-liked, he is kept on as his personal physician.

In Copenhagen, Struensee finds a kindred progressive spirit in the young Queen Caroline (Alicia Vikander) and together they persuade Christian to embark on a bold reform agenda, but their

mutual admiration turns to something racier, and the turgid courtiers start sharpening their knives.

Arcel gives this true story the shape and bite of a well-crafted fiction, and its political themes are every bit as stirring as the romance. Mikkelsen, a deserving award winner at Cannes this year for another film, can speak paragraphs with a single curl of his lip, and Vikander fluoresces as the young royal consort.

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