



Media Studies

Film Review - *Being Julia*

Being Julia is just coming to the end of its run in the cinemas so, unless you scurry along quickly, you might have to wait until it reaches the DVD phase.

But if you're interested in seeing a well-made motion picture of the kind that restores your faith in the ability of people to make movies that provide you with a thoroughly satisfying movie experience ...then don't miss *Being Julia*.

Annette Bening plays the title character – a fictitious leading lady of the London stage during the late 1930's. The role is a tour-de-force for Bening who plays in almost every scene and, indeed, dominates the screen in all of those scenes. It's a breathtaking performance – worthy of the best actress Oscar for which she was nominated but did not get.

Although it is Bening's picture from start to finish, she is splendidly supported by a talented cast and, in particular, by Jeremy Irons who looks absolutely comfortable in his role as Julia's impresario husband.

Being Julia is directed by Hungary's Istvan Szabo whose movie *Mephisto* – another subject with a theatrical setting - was awarded the Oscar for Best Foreign Film twenty-four years ago. Szabo is clearly very much at home with stories about the theatre and he re-creates the London stage of the 1930's so meticulously that you can almost smell the greasepaint.

Being Julia is billed as a comedy and, while it is certainly a "feel good" movie experience, there is an element of pathos – deriving from Julia's awareness of her encroaching middle-age – which sharpens the edges of the comedy.

If you love theatre you'll be wonderfully satisfied by this movie...and you'll never see a better performance by an actress in a leading role.

John J. McGowan
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