

‘Victoria and Abdul’ suffers from deep flaws

Written by By David Pinson For the Sun
Friday, 29 September 2017 02:40



Rating: «« out of «««««

Running Time: 112 Min.

Period costume films. Do you like them?

You probably do if you took anytime to read this. They are an exceptionally bizarre genre to write critique for because it's hard to sway an audience. You either watch these sorts of films or you don't.

You either get a tingle of excitement when you hear the news that Dame Judi Dench is portraying Queen Victoria or you don't.

Fans of these films stay true and those outside of their influence stay away. So, regardless of your position, you are extremely biased and this write up will do very little to influence your decision to see this movie.

But I will not let that get me down. I know that most of these types of films have a certain level of standard that is usually met. But they are not all exceptional. And *Victoria and Abdul* is one of those rare occasions where there are some deep flaws despite the pedigree.

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It's an interesting story. A young Indian man (Ali Fazal) is plucked from his world in India, put on a ship and sent to England to present the queen with a token, a trinket. She is taken with him and the two form a strong bond. Abdul becomes a confidant and friend to the queen, much to the displeasure of the High Court around her. This is a true story that wasn't unearthed until 2010. So, you know, it's an interesting subject.

And Dame Judi is fire. As always. This is a vehicle for her and she does not disappoint. She plays Victoria as a flawed and layered woman disconnected from the world she rules. It's a nuanced and strong performance. What you would expect.

But there is a weird issue with the film. About halfway through, Abdul becomes a stranger in his own film. I mean, it's the story about him and the queen, correct? That's the title of the film even. And then at some point, once the queen starts really settling in to her monologues, Abdul just stops talking. Stops participating. He doesn't go anywhere. He's standing around in most of the scenes. He just stops talking.

It's an interesting development and it takes a toll on the film. Motivations are lost even though the character is right there. Just unwilling to communicate.

While the film is gorgeous and Dench is worth the ticket, the story is mishandled and deserves better handling. You're better off reading the book.

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For the Sun***