



The Main Feature

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UK 2017 1 hr 46 mins Certificate 15

Director Paul McGuigan
Screenplay Matt Greenhalgh
Cinematography Ula Pontikos
Editor Nick Emerson

Cast

Annette Bening	Gloria Grahame
Jamie Bell	Peter Turner
Vanessa Redgrave	Jeanne McDougall
Julie Walters	Bella Turner
Kenneth Cranham	Joe Turner
Stephen Graham	Joe Turner Jr.
Frances Barber	Joy
Leanne Best	Eileen
Suzanne Bertish	Fifi O'Scar
Tom Brittney	Tim

Peter Turner had written a memoir of his time with Grahame called *Film Stars Don't Die In Liverpool* in 1987, and producer Barbara Broccoli had bought the film rights. She gave the book to Bening. ("It's tasteful and kind of impressionistic," Bening reports. "It doesn't have all the hallmarks of some people who write books about having been in love with someone who was famous.")

"Barbara had known Peter and Gloria when they were together," Bening recalls of those early conversations. "She talked about how when you were around them, [their relationship] really made sense. You thought, 'Yes, they are really in love.'"

The film adaptation is a very poignant affair with an exceptional performance from Annette Bening as Grahame, a screen siren of the 1940s and 1950s.

"I was careful about what I assumed about Gloria but even just the facts of her life were pretty tempestuous," Bening says carefully. "I focused on this chapter of her life, where Peter had written about her. I asked Peter and trusted Peter and from his point of view tried to come up with something. I also didn't want to impose on her family. I wanted to respect their privacy."

But she's matched every step of the way by Jamie Bell. His performance in tonight's film is a flat-out career-best performance achieved so naturally it's a marvel. He's not just sweet, doting, and sprightly, with that boyish charm turned up to 11, but profoundly vulnerable.

"I felt really safe with him. I think that's the best word," Bening says of Bell. "When you feel safe, you can open up a little bit. We didn't really know what it was going to be until we were doing it. For me, Jamie just made everything possible. It began to feel like the nature of Peter and Gloria's attraction, and the way they



were with each other grew very organically between us. I trusted him. He's got an old soul and he's respectful. And I was respectful towards him so we got on very well."

The relationship is portrayed as intense, complex and intimate. Both actors were helped by the rare presence of a female cinematographer, Urszula Pontikos, who also operated the camera.

"She was absolutely terrific and incredibly smart," Bening enthuses. "The cinematographer is such an important thing for an actor. It's an intimate relationship. The great ones feel as much as the actors, the writers and the directors. The great ones are in there, they feel the room. It's such a man's world, the set, but she handled herself brilliantly and everyone supported her."



Bening's performance is subtle and courageous. It gives us a strong sense of Grahame as the femme fatale from classic 1950s film noir. As a movie star in her own right, Bening has the glamour and charisma of the actress she is playing.

What is most impressive about Bening is that she doesn't hide the character's frailty either. Director Paul McGuigan includes some not very flattering close-ups in which we see the wrinkles on her neck and hands.

"She fell in love with Liverpool," says McGuigan. "She fell in love

with the idea of the family unit. It was exotic to someone from Hollywood; it was strange to think but I guess it is – it's the Fab Four, the Beatles, it's Liverpool, the centre of music at the time. To go there and find Peter has this family, this close-knit family, was something that Gloria never had. She always wanted it but she never achieved it because of her personal life. I think that this was what interested more than talking about Hollywood. I think she felt Hollywood turned her back on her."

McGuigan says it's not a film about the glamour and glitz of Tinseltown. "That's what's good about it. It's a story about two ordinary people who are just extraordinarily different from each other. One has an extraordinary life and one has an extraordinary ordinary life."

We aren't accustomed to seeing older women partnered with younger men, which is, at least for its novelty, a more interesting and uncharted dynamic, and one elegantly captured in *Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool*.

It's very much Annette Bening and Jamie Bell's film when all is said and done, and they are stunning in it. Their performances feel bigger than the film itself, but the movie is also a solid take on the waning years of an aging Hollywood film siren.

Their chemistry together is superb. The moving, well-judged, wonderfully acted film has humour, compassion, tenderness, kindness and sadness that is even more moving because it all basically happened.

Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool is not your typical romance, and I loved it for that. I knew nothing of these individuals beforehand and so it serves as an eye-opener and a fitting tribute.

Iain McGlashan



Gloria Grahame

Grahame made her film debut in *Blonde Fever* (1944) and then scored one of her most widely praised roles as the flirtatious Violet Bick, saved from disgrace by George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946). MGM was not able to develop her potential as a star and her contract was sold to RKO Studios in 1947.

Grahame was often featured in film noir pictures as a tarnished beauty with an irresistible sexual allure. During this time, she made films for several Hollywood studios. She received an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actress for *Crossfire* (1947).

Grahame starred with Humphrey Bogart in the film *In a Lonely Place* (1950) for Columbia Pictures, a

performance for which she gained praise. Though today it is considered among her finest performances, it wasn't a box-office hit and Howard Hughes, owner of RKO Studios, admitted that he never saw it. When she asked to be loaned out for roles in *Born Yesterday* (1950) and *A Place in the Sun* (1951), Hughes refused and instead made her do a supporting role in *Macao* (1952). Despite only appearing for a little over nine minutes on screen, she won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in MGM's *The Bad and the Beautiful* (also 1952) she long held the record for the shortest performance on screen to win an acting Oscar until Beatrice Straight won for *Network* with her 5 minutes and 2 seconds of performance.

However Grahame may still hold the record for the shortest acceptance speech with "Thank you."

Other memorable roles included the scheming Irene Neves in *Sudden Fear* (also 1952), the *femme fatale* Vicki Buckley in *Human Desire* (1953), and mob moll Debby Marsh in Fritz Lang's *The Big Heat* (1953) in which, in a horrifying off-screen scene, she is scarred by hot coffee thrown in her face by Lee Marvin's character. Grahame appeared as wealthy seductress Harriet Lang in Stanley Kramer's *Not as a Stranger* (1955) starring Olivia de Havilland, Robert Mitchum, and Frank Sinatra. Grahame also did her own stunts as Angel the Elephant Girl in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth*, which won the Oscar for best film of 1952.

Grahame's career began to wane after her performance in the musical film *Oklahoma!* (1955). Grahame, whom audiences were used to seeing as a film noir siren, was viewed by some critics to be miscast as an ignorant country lass in a wholesome musical, and the paralysis of her upper lip from plastic surgery altered her speech and appearance. Additionally, Grahame was rumored to have been difficult on the set of *Oklahoma!*, upstaging some of the cast and alienating her co-stars. She began a slow return to the theater, and returned to films occasionally to play supporting roles, mostly in minor releases.

Comments and reactions to: **Revanche**

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	~	~	5	3	5	12	14	6	~
No of reaction slips received = 45									Average Score = 7.00		

A brilliant film with a demanding changing psychological situation

What a strange film and oh so slow.

A very unusual film – haunting in its way.

Love, sex, crime, suspense, revenge. This movie had it all.

Lots of tension but an unsatisfactory ending!

Excellent psychological drama. A wonderful ending scene!

My enjoyment of the film spoilt by the very unsatisfactory ending. Well acted – too much!

Excellent cartoon. Good film well made and acted but too depressing.

Very effective. Well paced but gripping. Fascinating psychological study – excellent film.

Superb cinematography. Great use of periods of silence and stillness.

Electrifying, beautiful in its symmetry and emotional journey

Brilliant drama. Loved the contrast between beautiful calm nature setting (e.g., forest) and the darkness of Alex's life / the pain.

Excellent plot, pity about all the vice at the start

Of course Konecny doesn't see Tamara as a whore – that would make him a pimp. I'm sure he sees himself as a businessman and her an asset. Completely different!

Gute Farht?

Extremely well made

Maybe a bit too true to life!

Too gloomy for me

Didn't like the ending – just got into film!

Quite a remarkable film

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	Darkest Hour	8.08
2 nd	The Post	7.67
3 rd	Guildford in the Great War	7.56
4 th	Florence Foster Jenkins	7.47
5 th	Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri	7.4
6 th	The Violin Teacher	7.2
7 th	Revanche	7.0
8 th	Les Quatre Cents Coups (400 Blows)	6.74
=9 th	L'homme du train	6.71
=9 th	Bar Bahar (In Between)	6.26
11 th	Death of Stalin	6.26
12 th	The Levelling	5.6
13 th	Phantom Thread	5.16

Our next film on 25 April:

"Deeply researched, and the production design is astonishing ... even the cinematography seems to come from the period ... while there is gentle humour, and triumph, nothing is overplayed ... Its dignity and reserve are inseparable."

"A conventional but exceptionally warm crowd-pleaser of a movie, mostly thanks to Leuenberger's performance."

"Petra Biondina Volpe skillfully balances the personal and political in a spirited, rousing chronicle of Switzerland's women's suffrage movement, filtered through the experiences of a handful of locals."

