

Film Review: Social Evolution with a Twist in ‘A Royal Affair’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 9, 2012 - 4:09pm

- [A Royal Affair](#) [2]
- [Alicia Vikander](#) [3]
- [Danish](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [King Christian VII](#) [6]
- [Mads Mikkelsen](#) [7]
- [Magnolia Pictures](#) [8]
- [Mikkel Boe Gølsgaard](#) [9]
- [Movie Review](#) [10]
- [Nikolaj Arcel](#) [11]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [12]
- [The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo](#) [13]

CHICAGO – European history is – in a sense – our history, especially as it relates to the “Age of Enlightenment,” the intellectual movement in the 1700s that anticipated the Declaration of Independence. One of the quirks in that timeline is passionately explored in the new Danish/French film, “A Royal Affair.”



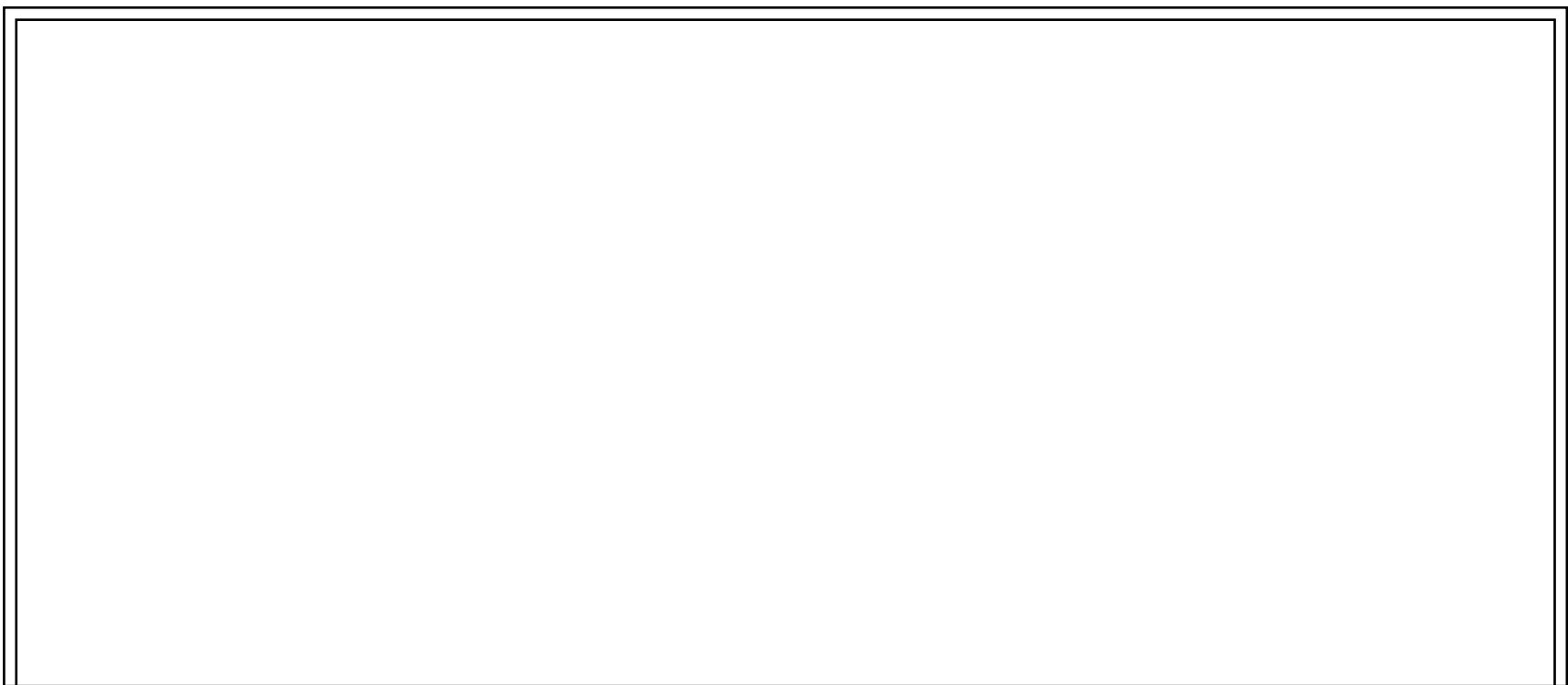
The royal families of that era were just as screwed up as our modern versions, and in highlighting one of those courtly marriages gone wrong, director Nikolaj Arcel brings definition to that enlightenment age, where society seemed to change with each new idea or technology. The intense passion that the secret lovers of the king’s court generate is the light toward the change, given their non-traditional rejection of marriage in its most symbolic form. Although the film moves at a slow pace, the narrative is one of intrigue and historic wealth, directed with a sure hand and period truth.

King Christian the VII of Denmark (Mikkel Boe Følsgaard) must take a wife, and Caroline Mathilde (Alicia Vikander) is a willing victim from the British royal court. Their pairing is difficult, as Christian is a flighty pansexual creature, more interested in playing king than being king. His oddness is so pronounced, that the royal government brings in a series of physicians, and when all are interviewed it is Johann (Mads Mikkelsen) – a intellectually pragmatic surgeon from the city – that favors the king’s attention.

As he becomes closer to the royal life, Johann realizes that he can bring his radical and people-progressive ideals straight to the government, and begins a series of programs that he gets to king to buy into. At the same time, he notices the queen, lonely and bereft as just a child bearer. Their friendship becomes an ardor, and their ardor becomes an affair. All is well when the liaison is conducted in secret, but the implications for finding out this secret means the king’s opposition may have ammunition to quell the progressive legislation. It’s that edge-of-the-knife circumstance that can collapse an entire regime.

“A Royal Affair” has a limited release, including Chicago, on November 9th. See local listings for theaters, show times. Featuring Alicia Vikander, Mads Mikkelsen and Mikkei Boe Gølsgaard. Screenplay by Nikolaj Arcel and Rasmus Heisterberg. Directed by Nikolaj Arcel. Rated “R”

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Mads Mikkelsen as Johann and Alicia Vikander as Caroline in ‘A Royal Affair’
Photo credit: Magnolia Films



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- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/a-royal-affair>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/alicia-vikander>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/danish>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/king-christian-vii>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/mads-mikkelsen>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/magnolia-pictures>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/mikkel-boe-g-lsgaard>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/movie-review>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/nikolaj-arcel>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-girl-with-the-dragon-tattoo>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/20564/social-evolution-with-a-twist-in-a-royal-affair>