

Film Review: Great Cast Receives Winning Showcase in Dustin Hoffman's 'Quartet'

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on January 25, 2013 - 6:46am

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CHICAGO – There are few things more fragile than an actor's ego. It must be treated with the utmost care in order to prevent a split-second meltdown. The enormous pressure of audience expectations coupled with the piercing eye of an ever-present media is enough to send sensitive folk to a sanitarium. Thick skin is a necessity in show business, but what happens when that skin begins to age?



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

No one knows about this sort of anxiety better than Dustin Hoffman, who memorably witnessed it up close and personal on the set of David O. Russell's gloriously messy satire, "I Heart Huckabees." His screen partner Lily Tomlin delivered her reliable brand of deadpan genius on camera, but behind the scenes, she was an explosive time bomb of insecurity that ended up being immortalized online, courtesy of leaked footage. Her expletive-laden rant at Russell was a potent illustration of an aging icon whose paranoia had caused her to doubt her obvious abilities (though, to be fair, Russell proved to be every bit as unhinged).



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[Fagerholm's full review of "Quartet" in our reviews section.](#) [12]

The F-bomb is dropped only once in Dustin Hoffman's otherwise warm and cuddly adaptation of Ronald Harwood's play, but it is used for maximum effect. It is placed in the mouth of former opera superstar Jean Horton, a veteran diva not a million miles removed from Tomlin. She's been asked by some old colleagues to reunite in a quartet that will perform at the annual gala concert of their new picturesque abode, Beecham House, a home for aging musicians. Instead of reacting in delight, Horton is deeply offended—convinced that her supposedly backstabbing friends are setting her up for humiliation. This culminates in a classic bit of naughty language, delivered with saucy glee by Maggie Smith, an actress who is surely the grandest of all Dames. Her portrayal of Horton's anguished vulnerability is all the more remarkable considering how far removed it is from her own. For Smith, acting has always seemed as effortless as breathing. From her peerless work in the '50s and '60s, culminating in her brilliant Oscar-winning performance in "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie" (a startling inverse of the "Dead Poets Society" formula), to her crowd-pleasing, razor-sharp comic timing in seven consecutive "Harry Potter" films and every episode of "Downtown Abbey," Smith has only gotten better with age and shows absolutely no sign of slowing down. If anyone seemed destined for immortality, it's her.

'Quartet' stars Maggie Smith, Tom Courtenay, Billy Connolly, Pauline Collins, Sheridan Smith and Michael Gambon. It was written by Ronald Harwood and directed by Dustin Hoffman. It opened January 25th at Landmark Century Centre Cinema and Landmark Renaissance Place. It

is rated PG-13.



[Continue reading for Matt Fagerholm's full "Quartet" review.](#) [12]



Maggie Smith stars in Dustin Hoffman's Quartet.

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

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