

## Film Review: Annette Bening Proves ‘Film Stars Don’t Die in Liverpool’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 12, 2018 - 12:31pm

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CHICAGO – GEORGE BAILEY: “Hey, you look good. That’s some dress you got on there.” VIOLET: “This old thing? I only wear it when I don’t care how I look.” That is how actress Gloria Grahame (as Violet Bick) was introduced in the classic “It’s a Wonderful Life”. Now she is portrayed by Annette Bening in “Film Stars Don’t Die In Liverpool”.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

The movie is based on a memoir by Peter Turner, who is portrayed in “Film Stars...” by Jamie Bell. Turner was a young actor who had an affair with the much older Grahame near the end of her life in the late 1970s/early ‘80s. He lived in Liverpool, England, and took care of the Oscar winner near her demise. The unusual May/December romance is characterized through Grahame’s deep insecurities, which Annette Bening plays to perfection. It’s also a somewhat claustrophobic film, mostly taking place in hotel rooms and the small Liverpool house of Peter’s parents, but that adds to the desperation and tension. So many of those notable actresses from the studio system era (1930s-50s) were forgotten and faded away, and Gloria Grahame was certainly a prime example.

The film opens with Grahame (Bening) preparing to go on stage in the play “The Glass Menagerie.” She is stricken in her dressing room, and Peter Turner (Jamie Bell) is called. It turns out that Grahame has a advanced cancer that she didn’t disclose, so Turner puts her up in his parent’s home in Liverpool to convalesce. This distresses his mother and father (Julie Walters, Kenneth Cranham) who feel that Grahame should die beside her American family.

The film also flashes back to the relationship of Gloria and Peter. It is revealed that Grahame has a predilection toward younger men, which could account for her four marriages, one of which was with her stepson from her second marriage, Tony Ray. Her deep insecurities, regarding aging, acting and her life’s purpose, severed many of the threads in her relationship with Peter.

*“Film Stars Don’t Die in Liverpool” continues its limited release in Chicago on January 12th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Annette Bening, Jamie Bell, Julie Walters, Kenneth Cranham, Frances Barber and Vanessa Redgrave. Screenplay adapted by Matt Greenhalgh. Directed by Paul McGuigan. Rated “R”*



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Annette Bening and Jamie Bell in ‘Film Stars Don’t Die in Liverpool’  
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

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