

Annette Bening, Julianne Moore Out in the Light With 'The Kids Are All Right'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 9, 2010 - 7:06am

- [Annette Bening](#) [2]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [3]
- [Josh Hutcherson](#) [4]
- [Julianne Moore](#) [5]
- [Lisa Cholodenko](#) [6]
- [Mark Ruffalo](#) [7]
- [Mia Wasikowska](#) [8]
- [Movie Review](#) [9]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [10]
- [Sasha Spielberg](#) [11]
- [The Kids Are All Right](#) [12]



Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – It is Hollywood that is often ahead of the social curve, expressing in art what most people can't fathom in real life. "The Kids Are All Right" is that type of consciousness, depicting a committed lesbian couple – played by Annette Bening and Julianne Moore – coming to grips with transitions occurring with their kids.

Bening portrays Nic and Moore is Jules, a seemingly perfect domestic couple raising two children, Joni (Mia Wasikowska) and Laser (Josh Hutcherson). Joni has just graduated from high school and will begin college in the fall. Her brother Laser has a request for her to fulfill a promise, that after her 18th birthday (a requirement) she would look up the person that provided the sperm donation that spawned both of them.

That man turns out to be Paul (Mark Ruffalo), a local restaurateur. Initially shocked when the kids contact him, Paul soon decides that he will ingratiate himself into their lives, and even meets Nic and Jules. Nic is very cool towards Paul, and starts lashing out against him. The rest of the family accept the new arrangement, but the jealousy and suspicion from Nic nearly ruins the reunion.

Paul also needs his backyard landscaped. Jules is starting a business that does just that, and their liaison in that project takes a turn that could threaten the main family even further. Things begin to explode when certain indiscretions are revealed and at the same time Joni and Laser deepen their connection to Paul. In the midst of all these transitions, something has definitely got to give.



Annette Bening, Julianne Moore, Josh Hutcherson, Mia Wasikowska and Mark Ruffalo in 'The Kids Are All Right'

© Focus Features

There are stellar performances in this film, elevating some fairly common screenplay actions. Annette Bening and Julianne Moore give perfect balance to their delicate characters, adding a few touches to the boilerplate that creates the unique family dynamic of "two mommies." The kids, Mia Wasikowska (Alice in the recent "in Wonderland" film) and Josh Hutcherson add their own spice to the stew, and proceeds with both caution and curiosity in the dealings with Paul and his issues.

Mark Ruffalo has a few problems with his portrayal, but only because it is weakly defined through the screenplay. Maybe because he is the representative wrench in the happy family, but the writers (Stuart Blumberg and director Lisa Cholodenko) openly despise the character, who didn't ask to be brought into the mix of the family. The way he infiltrates the clan is a tad leery, but there is nothing in his initial actions that justify what occurs later in the film, and he is reduced to pleading a case that makes him sound pathetic, even though he is only half to blame.

There is a love for the "California Story" angle in the film, as the winding, hilly streets and hip bistros of La-La Land become as important to the sense of the story as the trippy meanderings that are espoused by the earth mother Jules. It feels like California, which is all a credit to director Lisa Cholodenko's subtle nods throughout the scenario. From Paul's motorcycle rides to his hip bistro, he is the state-of-mind personified, and the self consciousness of living in Cali is even skewered by a frustrated Nic when she has had too much of it.

The script has some other problems, though, besides making Paul a patriarchal scapegoat. All of the conflict has to be assumed through the characters' moods, especially Nic, and that creates some quick emotional turnarounds that produces awkward and unlikely moments. Also the discovery of the indiscretion is the film is something that could only happen on paper, because it rang false in comparison to what seems like many more probable options in real life.



They're All, All Right: Mia Wasikowska and Josh Hutcherson in 'The Kids Are All Right'

© Focus Features

Although it is important to see alternative families depicted on screen, the cruelty that occurs when the "father" is subjected to a punishment that doesn't fit the crime puts a damper on the whole premise. It might even had been more interesting to see the sperm donor accepted in the family through a different or more tolerable route, and actually work towards a more acceptable conflict.

Then maybe the happy ending wouldn't necessarily be the ending, just an opening to a possibility that allows for a redemption in the strained relationships that would make everybody involved more naturally whole.

"The Kids Are All Right" opens in select theaters July 9th. Check local listings for show times. Featuring Annette Bening, Julianne Moore, Mark Ruffalo, Mia Wasikowska and Josh Hutcherson, written (with Stuart Blumberg) and directed by Lisa Cholodenko. Rated "R"



[13]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [14]
Senior Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [13]

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/11238/annette-bening-julianne-moore-out-in-the-light-in-the-kids-are-all-right>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/annette-bening>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/josh-hucherson>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/julianne-moore>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/lisa-cholodenko>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/mark-ruffalo>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/mia-wasikowska>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sasha-speilberg>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/the-kids-are-all-right>
- [13] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>