

## Sally Hawkins Gives Another Strong Performance in ‘Made in Dagenham’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 24, 2010 - 9:22am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Nigel Cole’s “Made in Dagenham” works because of the strong, believable performances of its ensemble, even if it doesn’t quite resonate with the same strength as other tales of ordinary people who became revolutionary role models. Sally Hawkins, Miranda Richardson, Rosamund Pike, Bob Hoskins, and a talented group of mostly newcomers rarely hit a false note and characters one can believe in go a long way in a film such as this one.

The film that got such wonderful actors together tells a story that you probably don’t know but that certainly impacted your life in that it changed capitalism and commerce around the world. Monumental change often comes from the most unlikely source; from the right person being in the right place at the right time and having the internal fortitude to do what’s right – “Made in Dagenham” deftly tells the story of such a change.



Made in Dagenham

*Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics*

The unlikely heroine of history is Rita O’Grady (Hawkins, so great in Mike Leigh’s “Happy-Go-Lucky” and seen earlier this year in “Never Let Me Go”), one of several female workers at the Ford plant in Dagenham in 1968. Rita works as a seamstress and gets paid nowhere near what her male friends and co-workers take home. When they threaten to strike, the women are rarely taken seriously and it’s not really until Rita is brought to what should be a shallow and useless negotiation that it becomes clear that the only way to get what they want is to stand their



ground with a complete work stoppage.

With the help of union representative Albert (Bob Hoskins), Rita and her co-workers demand that they be classified as skilled workers, a move that would demand that Ford pay them the same rate as their male counterparts. Naturally, Ford recognizes that if they pay Rita and her co-workers the same, not only will they have to spend a lot more in Dagenham, but that it will be a precedent that will change not just their business but all of them around the world. The luminous Rosamund Pike and great Richard Schiff pop up in effective supporting roles.

"Made in Dagenham" smartly underplays the importance of its own story. Like it does for Rita, the history-making aspects of the tale slowly rise to the surface. Rita just wanted what she thought was right. She had no idea that her honesty and desire for equality would impact workers of her gender in the entire civilized world. And director Nigel Cole smartly displays a similarly-delicate touch, rarely allowing his film to dip into any sort of melodrama. There are major, life-changing moments in "Life in Dagenham," but the film remains light on its feet.



Made in Dagenham

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

The main reason for that is the believability brought to it by Hawkins, Hoskins, and the rest of the talented cast (and, of course, credit is due to Cole for pulling such believability from his ensemble). Hawkins once again finds the truth in her character. She's a great actress who is always a joy to watch. She does what only the best performers can do – make a character feel real and make it look easy for her to do so.

"Made in Dagenham" is a likable, enjoyable film but it doesn't quite have the emotional resonance that it might have had with a bit different telling. It's almost too light-on-its-feet at times. It's a hard movie to dislike but an equally hard one to love simply because it doesn't take that many chances. It's a "nice" movie that's not quite a great one. Although with all the junk released recently, "nice" is certainly better than a lot of other options.

*'Made in Dagenham' stars Sally Hawkins, Bob Hoskins, Miranda Richardson, Kenneth Cranham, Rosamund Pike, and Richard Schiff. It was written by William Ivory and directed by Nigel Cole. It opens on November 24th, 2010. It is rated R.*



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