

## Elle Fanning Delivers Her Best Performance in ‘Ginger and Rosa’

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on March 22, 2013 - 9:26am

- [A24 Films](#) [2]
- [Alice Englert](#) [3]
- [Annette Bening](#) [4]
- [Elle Fanning](#) [5]
- [Future Weather](#) [6]
- [Ginger and Rosa](#) [7]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [8]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [9]
- [Movie Review](#) [10]
- [Sally Potter](#) [11]



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – There are plenty of good reasons to see Sally Potter’s beguiling, tenderly bittersweet coming-of-age drama, “Ginger & Rosa,” but one reason trumps them all. Her name is Elle Fanning. The enormous potential she exuded in everything from art house gems (“Somewhere”) to mainstream blockbusters (“Super 8”) pays off in this sterling showcase, solidifying her status—at age 14—as one of the top talents in modern film acting.

Whereas many young actors force out emotion with conspicuous effort or dial it back so far that it eventually evaporates, Fanning never misses beat. Every auburn blush and cool teardrop that caresses her face is utterly authentic. She holds the audience within her character’s moment-to-moment pain and euphoria while maintaining such an effortless command of each increasingly complex nuance that she could leave Meryl Streep shaking in her Oscar-winning boots. If any actor in America currently seems poised for a Streepian career, it is indeed Ms. Fanning.

In Potter’s London-set period drama, the actress delivers the sort of performance that becomes more awe-inspiring the more one reflects on it. Only afterward do we realize the flawlessness of her British accent or how the vast majority of the film’s scenes are anchored by close-ups of her marvelously expressive face. Yet while the film is playing, we’re never distracted by the fact that we’re watching a great performance. We are simply engrossed in the world of Fanning’s heroine, Ginger, a headstrong teen so frightened by the threat of a potential nuclear holocaust that it has brought her an avid interest in activism. Since the entire story is clearly experienced from Ginger’s perspective, Potter’s decision to name the film “Ginger & Rosa” is initially perplexing. Yet whereas Ginger represents the Cold War-era youth grappling with the fragility of their mortality, her best friend, Rosa (well-played by Alice Englert, daughter of Jane Campion, in her film debut shot prior to “Beautiful Creatures”) embodies the sexual revolution. With the Cuban missile crisis mere months away, Ginger’s inner world crumbles at the precise moment that mankind itself appears doomed to collapse. Since Ginger’s tight-knit bond with Rosa resembles that of a first crush, her friend’s lustful dalliances are all the more difficult to bear. The ever-growing distance between these two women is beautifully portrayed in an unforgettable shot, as Ginger huddles in the corner of a bus stop while the blurred silhouette of Rosa makes out with a boy behind a glass wall.



Elle Fanning stars in Sally Potter's *Ginger and Rosa*.

*Photo credit: A24 Films*

Tackling the film's most repellent yet oddly transfixing adult character is Alessandro Nivola, an actor who somehow manages to make oily magnetism appear noble. As Ginger's academic father whose left-leaning politics landed him in prison, Nivola captures the angst of an embittered idealist who confuses moral righteousness with primal urges. He cruelly ridicules the domestic rituals of his wife (Christina Hendricks), while fawning over temptresses a third his age. When his eyes lock on those of Rosa, the film could've easily devolved into a standard melodrama, but Potter's script is too intelligent to utilize any glib emotional payoffs. There is the inevitable climactic scene where secrets are spewed and grand gestures are made, but Fanning grounds every frame with her raw intensity, as her catatonic façade erupts into a volcanic surge of repressed anguish. Though the plot has its share of twists, the most intriguing drama takes place within Ginger's mind, and is often externalized by the gorgeous cinematography from Robbie Ryan (who also lensed Andrea Arnold's underrated remake of "Wuthering Heights"). When Ginger senses the first rumblings of encroaching catastrophe, Ryan places the camera so close to Fanning's tear-streaked face that the audience shares in her every shudder and whimper. Not only is Ginger in danger of losing her closest companion, she's also losing her innocence at an alarming rate.

Though Ginger shares her father's impassioned belief in "autonomous thought," she soon realizes that some truths transcend the boundaries of freedom. A nearly unrecognizable Annette Bening turns up in a small yet plum role as an American activist who sees right through Nivola's romanticized sense of self. Some characters make very bad choices throughout the picture, but there are no villains, only fallible humans attempting to break free of societal constraints in pursuit of a higher truth. The world may not have ended in 1962, but it sure felt like it would. Now that the rumors of a theoretical apocalypse have become a regular news item, Potter's film is potentially relevant. Watching it, I couldn't help being reminded of Jenny Deller's recent directorial debut, "Future Weather," about a 13-year-old budding environmentalist (played by the sublime Perla Haney-Jardine) preoccupied with global warming while coming to terms with her own personal crises. Both films center on young female protagonists betrayed by the sins of their elders. These girls look imminent doom in the face and somehow manage to find hope, empowerment and forgiveness. I can't imagine a more fitting double bill.





Alice Englert and Elle Fanning star in Sally Potter's *Ginger and Rosa*.

Photo credit: A24 Films

After helming the mind-boggling fantasy, "Orlando," and the iambic pentameter romance, "Yes," Potter has become the sort of filmmaker whose work I eagerly anticipate. She's elicited some of the finest and gutsiest performances in the careers of acting icons such as Tilda Swinton and Joan Allen, and has now enabled Elle Fanning to illuminate the screen like never before. Just look at her during the protracted take in which Ginger carefully composes a letter, and gradually undergoes her final transformation. Fanning reads the words as she writes them, but only through narration. Ginger herself remains silent, subtly conveying each thought and hesitation purely through her body language. The last line in her note may have seemed like a stretch in the hands of another actress, but not with Fanning, who finds just the right grace note—in the form of an extended pause—with which to cap off her most remarkable tour de force to date.

*'Ginger and Rosa' stars Elle Fanning, Alice Englert, Alessandro Nivola, Christina Hendricks, Timothy Spall, Oliver Platt and Annette Bening. It was written and directed by Sally Potter. It opened at Landmark Century Centre Cinema on March 22nd, 2013. It is rated PG-13.*



[12]

By [MATT FAGERHOLM](#) [13]

Staff Writer

[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)

[matt@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:matt@hollywoodchicago.com) [12]

**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 24 2024 - 6:30am):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/21639/elle-fanning-delivers-her-best-performance-in-ginger-and-rosa>

#### Links:

[1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/mattmovieman>

[2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/a24-films>

[3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/alice-englert>

[4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/annette-bening>

[5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/elle-fanning>

[6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/future-weather>

[7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ginger-and-rosa>

[8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>

[9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/matt-fagerholm>

[10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>

[11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sally-potter>

[12] <mailto:matt@hollywoodchicago.com>

[13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#MATT>