

## Julianne Moore Pushes Freudian Implications to Limit in True Story of ‘Savage Grace’

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CHICAGO – The national acting treasure Julianne Moore never shies away from a performance challenge.

From her memorable exposure in Robert Altman’s “Short Cuts” to her willingness to go all the way in Paul Thomas Anderson’s “Boogie Nights,” Moore has proven that true vulnerability in a role requires the ability to bare – and bear with – all.



In “Savage Grace,” which is based on the true story of the eccentric Barbara Daly Baekeland, Moore once again puts the acting pedal to the metal.

Moore plays Barbara Baekeland: the socialite wife of Brooks Baekeland (Stephen Dillane). Brooks is the heir to the Bakelite plastics fortune. With the birth of their son, Anthony (Eddie Redmayne), her wealthy lifestyle seems complete.

But signs of her early eccentricities morph into a darker psychological unraveling especially in the relationship with her son.

Barbara begins to notice Anthony’s gay awakening and tries to introduce him to women. Anthony soon takes up with a local girl near their home in Majorca, Spain. His inability to connect in the relationship leads to his father moving in on the girl and soon his parents are divorced.





Eddie Redmayne (left) in "Savage Grace".  
Photo credit: IFC Films

The split puts Barbara into a tailspin that eventually leads to a suicide attempt. She now leans on her son, and when they move to London, a couple extreme confrontations end in tragedy.

Moore's absorption into the role actually seems better than the thankless craziness written for the character. With each inappropriate outburst, Moore subtly holds onto Baekeland's obsessive-compulsive nature even when it would be easier to just play one psychotic note.

The story, which spans the 1940s to the 1970s, unfolds with stops and starts in the locations where the Baekeland family lived (New York, Paris, Majorca and London) with barely a breath in between to take it all in.

As characters age quickly from stop to stop, the time line is somewhat confusing.

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The supporting players are underwritten next to Moore's grandiose character. Her husband, Brooks, is never shown once as happy or satisfied with his marital choice. His leaving seems more elementary than suicide inducing.

Son Anthony – who's eventually diagnosed as a schizophrenic in real life – is never shown to push the envelope of this madness. He seems more like a willing participant in his mother's sphere.

Julianne Moore is prepared to take on anything the "mother of the year" is up against including humiliating sexuality and raw depression. Moore's acting range – up to and including an act of unspeakable wrongness – allows her to dive into the deep end without making Barbara a cartoon. It is the highlight of this otherwise expendable film.

*The Chicago engagement of "Savage Grace" began on June 13, 2008 at Landmark's Century Centre Cinema.*



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

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