

Colin Firth, Geoffrey Rush Star in Confident 'The King's Speech'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 17, 2010 - 10:08am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Tom Hooper's "The King's Speech" has been barreling through the awards season with a number of significant nominations, including six from the Chicago Film Critics Association just today. I understand why. The film does nothing wrong. It features confident production values and good performances but never reaches the peak of excellence for this critic. "The King's Speech" is a good film that's been inflated by some viewers to great even if it doesn't quite deserve the throne.

The words I think of in conjunction with "The King's Speech" are all relatively positive. It's a nice film. It's well-made. And its ensemble is flawless. At the same time, it's nothing that you have not seen before. It's not very ambitious. And it's surprisingly cold — not the kind of film that sticks in the memory, especially in a season with so many strong contenders for your favorite films of 2010. The film is comparable to a nicely-grilled piece of chicken. It's good and there's nothing notably wrong with it but you've tasted it before and won't truly cherish the meal as time goes by.



The King's Speech

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

The best thing about "The King's Speech" is the likely Oscar-winning performance by Colin Firth, who stars as Prince Albert, Duke of York,

the eventual King George VI, a man we meet when he's still Prince (to Michael Gambon's King) and who assumes that the royal throne will be occupied by his brother (Guy Pearce). Despite being a few seats from his reign, 'Bertie' still maintains an important enough role in royal society that his stuttering has made him something of a joke. He's seen a number of doctors to try to cure his speech impediment but the lifelong malady continues to rule his existence.

Prince Albert's wife Elizabeth (a wonderfully understated Helena Bonham-Carter) finds an aspiring actor who also happens to be an eccentric speech therapist named Lionel Logue (Geoffrey Rush) and the doctor and the future King begin an unusual relationship. Lionel is undeterred by Albert's royal title and refuses to coddle his sometimes-immature behavior. He confronts Bertie and teaches him to stand up for himself and speak.

It's obviously a nice story. And Firth, Rush, and Carter (along with Pearce, Gambon, Derek Jacobi, and Timothy Spall in smaller roles) all deliver nice performances in it. In particular, Firth sells the complexities of what it must have been like to be a man forced by lineage into a position of power who never really felt comfortable being there. As the war approaches and it becomes clearer that the country is going to need a confident speaker to guide them through some dark times, the burden of the responsibility both weighs on Albert and pulls him up to do what needs to be done. Firth sells these complex scenes perfectly. Rush and Carter are nice balances but the film belongs to Firth.



The King's Speech

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

Perhaps it's because we've come through a year with such remarkably ambitious films as David Fincher's "The Social Network," Darren Aronofsky's "Black Swan," and Christopher Nolan's "Inception" that I'm somewhat non-plussed by elements of "The King's Speech" but Hooper's film simply isn't creative or original enough to stand as one of my best of the year. Most of us have read books that we enjoyed but we put down and never thought about again. "The King's Speech" is the equivalent.

"The King's Speech," still a likely multiple Oscar nominee despite a bit of air being leaked out of its campaign by the Fincher juggernaut, is absolutely worth seeing, particularly for the performances. And it's somewhat rare to see a movie that does nothing notably wrong, but merely doing nothing wrong is not the same thing as doing something great. We should demand more from the movies that have been knighted as the most artistically important of the year.

'The King's Speech' stars Colin Firth, Geoffrey Rush, Helena Bonham Carter, Timothy Spall, Michael Gambon, Guy Pearce, and Derek Jacobi. It was written by David Seidler and directed by Tom Hooper. It opens in Chicago on December 17th, 2010. It is rated R and runs 118 minutes.



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [13]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [12]

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