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Saving Mr. Banks

By Derek Zemrak



Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures

daughters he agreed to the terms. Disney did not have any idea what was in store for him and the production crew as they began making "Mary Poppins." Travers was not happy about anything from the script, the music, the animation, to the casting of Dick Van Dyke.

As the story is told with the use of childhood flashbacks, we learn why the fictitious characters were so important. The film explores how events in Travers' childhood stayed with her and how she became more embittered holding on to the memories. Some of the events are heart wrenching, which I was not expecting. Thompson as Travers is Oscar-worthy and the emotional end scene will receive a lot of attention. I think it will be a tight race at the 86th Annual Academy Awards between Emma Thompson and Cate Blanchett, for her role in "Blue Jasmine."

John Lee Hancock ("The Blind Slide") directed "Saving Mr. Banks," which is a high-quality film, but not "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious." Be prepared for a drama - not a lighthearted comedy. "Saving Mr. Banks" is rated PG-13, due to the intense emotional and troubling scenes from Travers' childhood with a TRT (total running time) of 2 hours and 5 minutes. Heads up: stay for the end credits for a special treat.

In the next issue I will be writing my picks for the 2014 Oscars. Speaking of the Oscars, mark your calendars for the annual Oscar party at the Rheem Theatre on March 2, 2014. Watch the academy awards on the biggest screen (except for IMAX) in the East Bay; enjoy live music, great food from Shelbys of Orinda, auctions, raffles and door prizes. Plus enjoy the opening of the Classic Film Hall of Fame and Museum. Costumes and props from blockbuster films will be on display as well as wardrobes worn by Oscar nominees Meryl Streep, Bradley Cooper and Marisa Tomei, just to name a few! The place to be seen on Oscar night is the Rheem Theatre!

Derek Zemrak is a film critic, film producer and founder of the California Independent Film Festival. You can follow Derek on Twitter @zemrak for the latest Hollywood news. Derek can be heard every Friday on KAHN 950AM on the Poppoff Show.

I went into the press screening of "Saving Mr. Banks" thinking I was going to see a "feel good" Disney holiday movie. But in reality, I got more than a "spoonful of sugar." I saw a solid film with a superior script and superb acting based on the true story about P. L. Travers, the author of "Mary Poppins."

The film stars two-time Oscar winner Emma Thompson ("Sense and Sensibility," "Howards End") as the bitter Travers and two-time Oscar winner and Bay Area native Tom Hanks ("Forrest Gump," "Philadelphia") as Walt Disney. Disney's daughters loved the book, "Mary Poppins," and he promised them that one day he would make a "Mary Poppins" movie. Well, sometimes things are not that easy, even if you are Walt Disney. Travers was very protective of the creation of her characters in "Mary Poppins" and she had no desire to have them come to life on the big screen.

After 20 years chasing his promise to his daughters, Disney continued to pursue the rights from Travers. When the royalties were drying up, Travers finally agreed under one condition: that she maintain total control of production. As Disney says, "A promise is a promise," and for his

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