



KATE BECKINSALE IN LOVE & FRIENDSHIP

# LADIES & GENTLEMEN BEHAVING BADLY

Director Whit Stillman proves himself perfectly suited to Jane Austen's biting wit in the excellent *Love & Friendship*

It's always wonderful to be reminded that Kate Beckinsale is an excellent actress. In 2003, Beckinsale became the face of the *Underworld* franchise, and people seemed to stop taking her the least bit seriously. She's too often cast in dopey rom-coms (*Serendipity*) or knock-off action flicks (*Van Helsing*), and so we forget that she was great as Hero in Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing* and as Charlotte in Whit Stillman's *The Last Days of Disco*.

Maybe we can't blame *Underworld* for trapping her in a small cinematic box, but regardless, bless Stillman for once again letting her out of it. Our great purveyor of talky films about wonderfully flawed people, Stillman has in some ways changed very little since 1990's *Metropolitan*. He's only made five features, and took more than a decade between *Disco* and *Damsels in Distress*.

If Stillman has eluded your notice until now, that's understandable. But *Love & Friendship*, his latest, should be his calling card for a new level of renown.

*Love & Friendship* is based on Jane Austen's *Lady Susan*. In Stillman's hands, the novella becomes a precise little petit four of a film with surprising bite. Beckinsale soars through it all as Lady Susan Vernon, a widow with no fixed address and a daughter she needs to provide for. She also, naturally, needs to provide for herself, but her reputation as a terrible flirt and manipulator precedes her.

Lady Susan certainly is those things, and that's the fun of it. Watching Beckinsale deftly maneuver people into position, working sometimes through her good friend Alicia (Chloë Sevigny) and sometimes through unsuspecting new acquaintances, is like watching the political machinations on *Game of Thrones*, just on a much smaller scale (with no bloodshed). She and Sevigny co-starred in *Last Days of Disco* and their level of comfort on screen is apparent; Sevigny is so mild, so natural, that she makes more space for Beckinsale's precisely tempered Susan.

Other highlights of the cast include Stephen Fry as Alicia's older husband; Jenn Murray, having a hell of a time as the perpetually overwrought Lady Manwaring; and Xavier Samuel as a perfectly noble, perfectly kind target for Susan's affections, such as they are.

The great joke of *Love & Friendship* — and it is quite funny, in that wry, British way — is that very little of either is present on screen. Under all the wordplay and posturing and plotting is a simple fact: Susan doesn't have any other options but to finagle herself a new husband. It's her only means of security. You can hate her, but what else is she supposed to do?

Stillman tucks this ugly fact into the corners of Susan's bright smile; it's hidden in the folds of beautiful dresses, underfoot in the endlessly sunny scenes. You don't even have to look at it, if you don't want to. But it's there, like the tensions that run under the conversations in all Stillman's films, the uncomfortable awareness that more is on the table than initially appears. He's perfectly suited to Austen — in fact, he's perfectly suited to witty, sly period pieces, full stop.

Let's hope it's not a decade until he makes another. (*Bijou Art Cinemas*)

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 Jane Austen's epistolary novel *LADY SUSAN* has been transformed into a brisk and cutting comedy of manners  
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	SAT	7:30			
	SUN-TUE	11:50	7:30		
	WED	11:50			
	THU	11:50	7:30		
<b>MAGGIE'S PLAN</b>		12:25	2:45	5:05	7:25 10:10
<b>THE LOBSTER</b>		12:05	2:45	5:25	8:05 9:45
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 Fri. - Sat. (1130 AM 230 PM) 1020 PM

NEON DEMON (R)  
 Fri. - Sat. (1135 250) 625 935

THE SHALLOWS (CC,DV) (PG-13)  
 Fri. - Sat. (1140 215) 500 735 1010

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE (CC,DV) (PG-13) ★  
 Fri. - Sat. (1035 140) 430 705 945

FINDING DORY (CC,DV) (PG) ★  
 Fri. - Sat. (1045 1145 135) 425 645 715 930 1000

FINDING DORY 3D (CC,DV) (PG-13) ★  
 Fri. - Sat. (1115 205 305) 455 745 1030

NOW YOU SEE ME 2 (CC,DV) (PG-13)  
 Fri. - Sat. (1150) 420 725 1035

THE CONJURING 2 (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (1155 300) 650 955

WARCRAFT (CC,DV) (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (1120 AM) 635 PM

WARCRAFT 3D (CC,DV) (PG-13) ★  
 Fri. - Sat. (245 PM) 940 PM

ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING (CC,DV) (PG)  
 Fri. - Sat. (1050 AM 130 PM) 415 PM

X-MEN: APOCALYPSE (CC,DV) (PG-13)  
 Fri. - Sat. 655 PM 1015 PM

CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR (CC,DV) (PG-13)  
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 Fri. - Sat. (1040 AM 125 PM) 405 PM

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<b>ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS (DIG) (PG)</b> 10:40, 1:30, 4:40, 7:25	<b>INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE (DIG) (PG-13)</b> 11:05, 1:20, 5:10, 7:20, 8:05
<b>ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE, THE (DIG) (PG)</b> 10:15, 4:15, 9:50	<b>JUNGLE BOOK, THE (2016) (DIG) (PG)</b> 10:25, 1:10, 4:05, 7:45, 10:30
<b>CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR (DIG) (PG-13)</b> 10:10	<b>ME BEFORE YOU (DIG) (PG-13)</b> 1:00, 6:55
<b>CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE (DIG) (PG-13)</b> 10:30, 1:15, 4:10, 7:40, 10:25	<b>NEON DEMON, THE (DIG) (R)</b> 10:45, 1:35, 4:25, 7:30, 10:30
<b>CONJURING 2, THE (DIG) (R)</b> 12:15, 3:25, 7:10, 10:40	<b>NOW YOU SEE ME 2 (DIG) (PG-13)</b> 11:50, 3:20, 7:30, 10:30
<b>FINDING DORY (3D) (PG)</b> SPECIAL EVENT PRICING: \$3.00 UPCHARGE ALL TICKETS 10:05, 1:40, 3:35, 5:15, 7:15, 10:00, 10:35	<b>SHALLOWS, THE (DIG) (PG-13)</b> 10:00, 12:20, 2:40, 5:00, 7:50, 10:45
<b>FINDING DORY (DIG) (PG)</b> 11:00, 11:55, 12:50, 2:30, 4:30, 6:20, 7:55, 9:05	<b>TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: OUT OF THE SHADOWS (DIG) (PG-13)</b> SPECIAL EVENT PRICING: \$3.00 UPCHARGE ALL TICKETS 10:05, 1:25, 4:35, 7:35, 10:35
<b>FREE STATE OF JONES, THE (DIG) (R)</b> 12:10, 3:30, 7:00, 10:15	<b>WARCRAFT (3D) (PG-13)</b> SPECIAL EVENT PRICING: \$3.00 UPCHARGE ALL TICKETS 10:10, 4:00, 10:05
<b>INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE (3D) (PG-13)</b> SPECIAL EVENT PRICING: \$3.00 UPCHARGE ALL TICKETS 10:20, 2:20, 4:20, 10:15, 10:55	<b>WARCRAFT (DIG) (PG-13)</b> 1:05, 7:00
	<b>X-MEN: APOCALYPSE (DIG) (PG-13)</b> 12:05, 3:40, 7:05, 10:25

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