

Review: Saving Mr Banks ****



Saving Mr Banks is a very enjoyable family film which relates the often adversarial story about Walt Disney and his relationship with PL Travers during the making of Mary Poppins in the 1960s.

In the story Walt Disney (Tom Hanks) has been chasing PL Travers (Emma Thompson) for the film rights to Mary Poppins for 20 years following a promise that he made to his daughter. The only issue is that Travers is not going to give up the rights without going through the script and other rights with a “tooth comb” and lengthy negotiations. This introduces funny vignettes which made the audience chuckle. The story is based on true events, many of which can be verified because the real PL Travers insisted that the script meetings were tape recorded to avoid arguments, and this was incorporated into the film.

The story also weaves in and out of the author’s Australian childhood memories (some happy and others less so) and this gives substance to the body of the script. It also explains some of the background of Mary Poppins and how that story came about. It is not a film for those expecting a lot of visual effects and in fact is stronger for it. Both Emma Thompson and Tom Hanks are very rounded characters. PL Travers is a stubborn, maddening, quintessentially English lady who practically drives Disney “round the bend” trying to get her to allow the film to be made. She drinks tea (served in a cup and saucer with the milk poured before the tea!) in preference to alcohol, even in a cocktail bar. Disney tries all the hospitality, negotiating and politeness tricks in the book to get her to agree which sometimes backfire on him, though he is not one for giving up!

BBC films have had a hand in the making of this film and it shows. This is a proper drama with “heavyweight” actors and is not your average American popcorn fare. It definitely kept the audience and this reviewer entertained. I believe you will be recommending this film to your friends!

Saving Mr Banks (Cert – PG) is out on general release on 29th November.

Image courtesy of BBC Films