

Maltin's Movies

Title	Mother and Child
Alt Title	
Year	2010
Director	Rodrigo García
Rating	
Runtime	125
Review	<p>I love the work of writer-director Rodrigo Garcia, and bemoan the fact that more people haven't seen his female-centric anthology films <i>Things You Can Tell Just by Looking at Her</i> and <i>Nine Lives</i>. It's evident that actors are familiar with his efforts, however, because the best and the brightest want to work with him. For <i>Mother and Child</i>, he has narrowed his focus to three parallel (and overlapping) stories, and once again he's attracted great actresses to star: Annette Bening, Naomi Watts, and Kerry Washington.</p> <p>The theme of the movie is adoption. Bening's character gave up a child in infancy, when she was just a teenager, and it's colored her life ever since. She works as a professional caregiver, while taking care of her elderly mother at home. Watts is a career-driven attorney who refuses to put down roots, personally or professionally, which one might trace to the fact that she never knew her mother. Washington is a young married woman who can't bear a child but does want to adopt—although her husband has reservations about the process.</p> <p>Garcia slowly, carefully weaves these stories into one compelling tapestry, and while the viewer has to be willing to accept a certain degree of contrivance, or calculation, in the storytelling, there are no false notes in the emotions he touches upon. For women—and men, too—there are few topics as sensitive as adoption.</p> <p>But this is neither a message picture nor a superficial TV movie. The reason is Garcia's gift for writing interesting characters and choosing the right performers to play them. Bening captures all the nuances of a character who is desperately needy but so prickly that she drives even well-meaning people away. Watts is completely convincing as a woman who has no use for social niceties or pretension; she wants to be in complete control of every facet of her life. Washington, too, is palpably real as a woman who wants to please her husband and her family, but has to ultimately decide what's best for her.</p> <p>It's a treat to watch these gifted women at work, but the men make a worthy contribution as well, especially Jimmy Smits as a nice guy who tries to break through Bening's shell, and Samuel L. Jackson, in an atypical role as the confident, successful head of an L.A. law firm who becomes involved with Watts.</p> <p>The supporting roles are interesting and unpredictable, as well, and they're filled by an impressive array of actors, many of whom have worked with Garcia before, including Cherry Jones, S. Epatha Merkerson, Eileen Ryan, Elpidia Carrillo, Marc Blucas, David Ramsey, Shareeka Epps, Lisa Gay Hamilton, David Morse, Michael Warren, LaTanya Richardson, Amy Brenneman, Carla Gallo, Tatyana Ali, Elizabeth Peña, and Lawrence Pressman.</p> <p>Because it covers so much ground, and takes its time doing so, <i>Mother and Child</i> isn't as cogent as the short stories in Garcia's other films, but its characters and their emotional lives still resonate with me, weeks after seeing it. If you find character as compelling as story, and cherish great acting, <i>Mother and Child</i> is a must-see.</p>
IMDb	tt1121977
MPAA Rating	[R]
Cast	Annette Bening, Naomi Watts, Kerry Washington, Samuel L. Jackson, Shareeka Epps, David Morse, Tatyana Ali, Amy Brenneman, Carla Gallo, Marc Blucas, Jimmy Smits, S. Epatha Merkerson, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Eileen Ryan
Country	USA
Genre	Drama
Review Plain Text	I love the work of writer-director Rodrigo Garcia, and bemoan the fact that more people haven't seen his female-centric anthology films <i>Things You Can Tell Just by Looking at Her</i> and <i>Nine Lives</i> . It's evident that actors are familiar with his efforts, however, because the best and t