



What does this photo have to do with Harry Potter, you ask? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

In fact, that's me, crying a fucking river because I'm running out of retardedly funny pictures of Harry Potter characters. You can dry my tears, though; since Halloween is just around the corner, send me a hilarious picture of yourself dressed up as someone from Harry Potter. If your photo is the best, you'll win a stack of rad CDs, as well as a chance to see yourself in print. Exciting!

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The Queen rules the screen

The Queen

Directed by Stephen Frears
Starring Helen Mirren, Michael Sheen and James Cromwell
Empire Theatres
Opens Friday 27 October

PATRICK ROSS
Arts & Entertainment Staff

If there's any one institution that remains unique to Britain, it's the British monarchy. And if there's one movie that tells the tale of monarchy enduring one of its greatest trials, that film would be *The Queen*.

The Queen is situated during the month of May, 1997. Tony Blair (Martin Sheen) has just been elected Prime Minister of Britain. Riding on a wave of populism, he brings a promise of modernization that threatens to overthrow the traditional institutions that Queen Elizabeth II (Helen Mirren) holds so dear.

Upon the first meeting between Blair and the Queen, the tension is absolutely palpable. The Windsors feel Blair represents a threat to the traditional values the monarchy represents, as Blair's "call me Tony" informality mixes poorly with the Queen's obsession with protocol.

The film then abruptly shifts to August of the same year. Blair's government is still in its infancy, and the Windsors have endured months of scandal over the relationship between Diana Spencer (former princess of

Wales) and Dodi Fayed, a coupling made public by the paparazzi and the news media. Then, as anyone not living under a rock that year can attest, tragedy strikes: Diana and Dodi are involved in a paparazzi-precipitated car wreck that ultimately takes the lives of both.

As the British public flock to Buckingham Palace to partake in the public grieving over the death of the "People's Princess," the Windsors retreat to their Scottish estate at Balmoral.

As the lavish world around the Windsors threatens to tumble around their feet, Blair takes up a feverish effort to assuage the British people. Enraged by what they perceive as—and really is—a lack of care for the mother of the future king, the public turns against the monarchy. Prince Phillip (played by the ever-ingenious James Cromwell) even describes Diana as "more annoying dead than alive."

Mirren turns in a magnificently regal performance. Even in the depths of the Queen's most intense emotions, she perfectly mimics the stoic façade expected of royalty. Mirren manufactures a sense of desperate urgency around this atmosphere of indifference, all the while managing to keep up appearances despite the obvious wellspring of grief, guilt and jealousy congregating just below the surface.

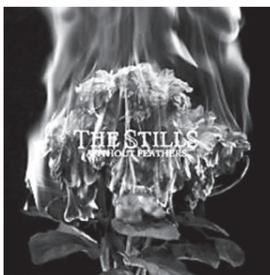
However, while Mirren seems to rule the screen, Sheen portrays Tony

Blair in a manner that few would recognize, especially when placed in comparison with the Blair of today. Youthful, idealistic and energetic, Blair seems at times overwhelmed by the events consuming the earliest days of his tenure as prime minister.

The acting might be fickle at times, but as far as the cinematography goes, *The Queen* presents an image of a royal family shockingly alienated and disconnected from the people that Blair is so in touch with. As their subjects mourn, the Windsors obstinately struggle to resolve the conflict between responding to the emotional needs of their grieving people and maintaining royal protocol.

In addition, *The Queen* is constantly interspersed with news footage related to Diana's death. Director Stephen Frears creates an atmosphere of authenticity, causing viewers to recall their exact emotions when they were first informed of Diana's death, especially those feelings that emerged when they first saw the footage in question.

There are countless clichés that could be used to describe a film like *The Queen*—"gripping" comes to mind, as does "captivating." The movie may be both of these, but moreover, it's demanding and challenging. *The Queen* comes across less as a scathing statement on the value of the monarchy, and more as an invitation to viewers to explore their own feelings on the issue.



The Stills

Without Feathers
Vice Recordings
www.thestills.net

KRISTINA DE GUZMAN
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Anyone who was completely in love with the Stills' first album and was expecting another *Logic Will Break Your Heart* will have to learn to suck it up and remain open to the band's follow-up, *Without Feathers*—especially since drummer David Hamelin replaced lead vocalist Tim Fletcher, leaving Fletcher to shine vocally in only three songs, one of them being the catchy, poetic "Helicopters."

Surprisingly, the musical change overshadows the change in vocal lineup. While one has to be living in a dream world to expect any self-respecting musician to put out the same album twice, it feels like a different band is behind this musical

rollercoaster. "She's Walking Out" is a lament on lost love with a tone of nonchalance. "In the End" is an exceptional piano ballad with a chorus that one can't help but sing along to, while "Ok Shoplifter" takes a lively turn with cowbells hammering in the background and the trend continues with "It Takes Time," a poppy but undoubtedly catchy tune. And despite its being about a potential criminal, "The Destroyer" sounds more fitting for a marching band.

The Stills haven't completely lost their original entity, however, as most of their lyrics remain dark and romantic. All the other changes, though, are more than welcomed.

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