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Pettigrew surpasses the preview

With its bang-on acting, *Miss Pettigrew* deserves more than just a trailer

filmreview

Miss Pettigrew Lives For a Day

Directed by Bharat Nalluri
Starring Frances McDormand, Amy Adams, Mark Strong, Tom Payne, and Lee Pace

KELSEY TANASIUK
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Going into *Miss Pettigrew Lives For a Day*, there wasn't information around to hint at what to expect. With a rarely seen and rather uninformative commercial, the best synopsis an attentive viewer could offer would be "some kind of period chick-flick." However, once you're seated in the theatre and the lights dim, you'll find that *Miss Pettigrew* deserves a much more telling synopsis.

Miss Guinevere Pettigrew (Frances McDormand) is a new and frequently unemployed governess (a nanny or babysitter, for those not up with old-fashioned diction). After being verbally given the boot by her employment agency, Pettigrew snatches a business card of a potential employer. Later that morning, she finds herself on the doorstep of a dizzy aspiring actress and trouble-magnet by the name of Delysia Lafosse (current film darling Amy Adams.)

Arguably the best chick flick to hit theatres in a very long time, *Miss Pettigrew* is a movie that can easily entertain both genders: it's genuinely funny, with all the necessary drama to

keep it moving. And not to worry gentlemen, there's only one short make-over scene in the entire film; it's even a believable one.

Arguably the best chick flick to hit the theatres in a very long time, *Miss Pettigrew* is a movie that can easily entertain both genders: it's genuinely funny, with all the necessary drama to keep it moving.

Of course, it would be a pretty boring chick flick without onscreen men, and Delysia has plenty of bachelors hanging around. First there's the "snake," Nick (Mark Strong), Delysia's rich and frequently out-of-town man whose apartment she lives in. Then there's Phil (Tom Payne), the daddy's-boy-come-producer that Delysia's seducing to get a starring role, and finally, there's fresh-out-of-prison Michael (Lee Pace), whose heart of gold landed him in the slammer for drunkenly trying to steal a better engagement ring for Delysia.

Miss Pettigrew spends the day trying to help Delysia navigate her love life as her "social secretary," all while trying to masquerade as someone accustomed to high society. It would be hard to believe if not for the strong

will and lively spark that McDormand works so hard to portray.

The costumes are completely envy-inducing, and the sets transport you right back to 1939. But if you had to pick out the one thing that truly makes *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* shine, it would be the casting. You'd be hard-pressed to find a better actor for any of the roles: McDormand is charming, funny, and occasionally heartbreaking in her role as a frequently misunderstood but determined pauper. It's McDormand's quiet fierceness that complements the character of Delysia in an unexpected, but no less entertaining, way. Adams is right on target in her portrayal of a '40s starlet, blending that strange mix of innocence and sexuality that gave screen stars like Marilyn Monroe their charm.

Though similar to her performance as Giselle in Disney's *Enchanted*, Adams still manages to keep the two characters from being mirror images. She's also aided greatly by McDormand's performance, as it's *Miss Pettigrew* that grounds Delysia, and makes what could have been an annoying character quite bearable.

When the potentially lighthearted comedy is placed against the tense background of brewing war, it bares a lot more weight. And having the right actors to portray the contrast between the glittering lives of 1939's socialites and the gloom of war only strengthens the film. *Miss Pettigrew* is a movie that has a lot more going for it that what you can see from the previews.