

## I'll See You in My Dreams

"I'll See You in My Dreams," offers something tempting for "mature" moviegoers: a chance to see the acting paragon Blythe Danner in a leading role. For years, she has played character parts in movies fine and foolish (see "The Great Santini" and "The Prince of Tides" for the fine and "Meet the Parents/Fockers" for the foolish).

Here Danner plays Carol Peterson, a widow of 20 years in a comfortable if aimless retirement in a handsome home in Los Angeles. She had left an early career as a jazz singer to become a teacher and follow her lawyer husband. Her routine is established but hardly scintillating, her one daughter (Malin Akerman) is far away, and she does nothing special with her days. Then her beloved dog dies.

Her social life seems confined to her regular bridge game at a retirement home called Royal Oaks, where she plays with a testy Greek chorus composed of raunchy Sally (Rhea Perlman), naïve Georgina (June Squibb), and pushy Rona (Mary Kay Place). Their basic message to Carol is to get back into the dating game. After some clumsy follies, like embarrassing speed dating, she falls into a friendship with a denizen of the home, Bill (Sam Elliot), a drawling stud of a guy who represents a new life very different from her old one. She also strikes up an intriguing, partially nurturing relationship with her new pool guy Lloyd (Martin Starr) who is attracted to her seriousness and class.

Danner is the reason to see "I'll See you in My Dreams," looking fetching and off-hand sultry in her now-senior years (she is 72) and showing sensitivity and intelligence as Carol, with her distinctive husky voice and her water-blue eyes. She may also be channeling her own life a bit, since she was left a widow just a dozen years ago after the death of her TV producer husband, Bruce Paltrow. Her moments with Elliott are among the best things in the film, as she tentatively begins to open up to a new affection. She also hits a karaoke version of "Cry Me a River" out of the park, a touching performance which gob-smacks the naive Lloyd, an aspiring guitarist.

Overall, however, "I'll See You in My Dreams," directed by Brett Haley, is on the thin side with predictable comic plot points (seniors smoking pot), and some too-easy stereotypes, like Perlman's sex-happy Sally and the inveterate matchmaker played by Place. The writing, by Haley and Marc Basch, should have been better for an actor of Danner's caliber.

One wants a serious picture about people of a certain age to be better since so few of its ilk are being made these days. This effort is not rich or subtle enough to be memorable but does offer a chance to watch the perfectly named Blythe (aside: she has played in "Blithe Spirit" on stage) glow for a while.

*(The film is rated PG-13 and runs 95 mins.)*

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