

## The Young Victoria

British movie producers, year after year, come up with handsome versions of their own rich and complex history—what in Great Britain they call “heritage films.” The latest is “The Young Victoria,” a new drama which encompasses the period just before and just after the very young Queen Victoria took over the throne in 1837 (when she was merely 18), and when she had to both overcome attempts within the palaces to thwart her reign and to come to terms with a mate, the sterling German lad Albert from Saxe-Coburg.

Emily Blunt impersonates the young princess-queen fully and believably, giving evidence both of a high-spirited person ready to break out of her Kensington Palace “prison” and a woman with a mind who could take on the reigns of empire. She does it with wide-open, ever curious blue eyes, a manner mingling the prim with the insouciant, and a smooth, “royal” delivery. The fact that she looks not at all like the real Victoria matters not one whit.

It’s nice to see Blunt in a different setting from her recent roles, where she has assayed mainly comic parts as contemporary Americans (“Charlie Wilson’s War,” “Sunshine Cleaning,” “The Jane Austen Book Club”) and as the delightfully bitchy Emily in “The Devil Wears Prada,” her most high profile role to date.

Fetching Rupert Friend (last seen in “Chéri”) is Prince Alfred, a young man smitten, but a young man also eager to take on his new role as a husband and man of consequence. You see him mature nicely on the screen. The two leads have ample chemistry, evident in fervent, if very discrete, love scenes in the imperial boudoir. As in so many British heritage productions, a parade of reputable featured players round out a solid cast and make vivid the period, actors like Paul Bettany, Jim Broadbent, Miranda Richardson, Mark Strong, Harriett Walters, etc.

Though directed by a Canadian, Jean-Marc Vallée, “The Young Victoria” could hardly be more British, and it is enhanced by a knowing script by Julian Fellowes (who did so well by “Separate Lies” and “Gosford Park” in recent years) and a most effective, sweeping musical score by Ilan Eshkeri. Then there are, as usual, the castles, the gardens, the gowns, and the hairdos...all that good heritage stuff. Hail to this Queen. *(The film is rated PG and runs 100 minutes)*

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