

Review: Suffragette

The much anticipated film about the Suffragette movement well documents the struggles women faced in acquiring the vote in Britain, whilst also serving as a reminder for how the fight must continue on a global scale in 2015, says [Kate Barlow](#)

Friday 23 October 2015

★★★★☆



Image: Steffan Hill/Focus Features

Suffragette is a story that has been worth telling for a long time. The fight for half of our country's population to receive equal voting rights has rarely been depicted on screen. However, the problem with any story so keenly anticipated by feminist film fans is that it inevitably can't cover everything, and one is left with the realisation that there is still so much of this sensational, revolutionary tale that is left to tell.

The film's main focus is on underpaid laundry worker Maude Watts (Carey Mulligan) who, after witnessing a group of suffragettes smashing windows on a West End high street, finds herself dragged into the movement. Before she knows it, she is imprisoned, kicked out of her home by her husband, and unable to see her beloved young son. With little else to lose, Watts decides to fully immerse herself in the fight for women's suffrage.

The film boasts an immensely strong cast, especially in the depiction of Watts' key allies: the brash and politically active Violet Miller (Anne-Marie Duff) and the educated pharmacist Edith Ellyn, in a suburb and subtle turn by Helena Bonham Carter. Meryl Streep also gives an extremely brief and fairly unremarkable appearance as the elusive Emmeline Pankhurst.

One of *Suffragette's* main strengths is that it doesn't shy away from the brutality, violence, and fear that women faced. From the sexual abuse experienced by a young woman in Bethnal Green laundry from her leering older boss, to the brutality protesters faced by police armed with truncheons. Perhaps the most difficult scene to watch is the depiction of the force-feeding endured by imprisoned suffragettes on prison strike. Seeing Watts' head clamped in position, a tube inserted up her nose, and milk being poured down it, is perhaps one of the most horribly enduring scenes of the film. Emotionally and physically, the difficulty women faced in trying to protest for their equal right to vote is pertinently demonstrated.

However, the actual politics of the women's suffrage movement can sometimes drag. At times the film

seems too slow-paced. As discussions, arrangements and plans are made in hushed tones in secret locations, the destruction caused by these women's actions isn't really revealed. The revolutionary, militant nature of the suffragette movement is lost in the conservative narration.

Nonetheless, what redeems *Suffragette* is its ending. Just as you are becoming embroiled in the plot and the tense chase scene through the Epsom Derby, the film ends before the audience is ready: with Emily Wilding Davison jumping to her death in front of the king's horse. This sense of the film being unfinished, combined with a harsh reminder just before the ending credits that there are some women in the world in 2015 still fighting for their right to vote, leaves a lasting reminder of the continued struggle for women's suffrage.



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Wimpy

27 Mar '18 at 7:34 am

Aplpnertay this is what the esteemed Willis was talkin' 'bout.

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