

Mother and Child

Director: Rodrigo Garcia

Cast: Annette Bening, Shareeka Epps, Samuel Jackson, Jimmy Smits, Kerry Washington, Naomi Watts.

Mother and Child follows the stories of four American women whose lives are affected by adoption, each in different ways. Karen (Annette Bening) lives with and cares for her mother and works as physiotherapist in a nursing home. She is uptight and prickly and as her story unfolds we understand why - she was forced to relinquish her daughter for adoption 35 years earlier.

The tough and successful lawyer Elizabeth (Naomi Watts) is her long-lost daughter. She lives a solitary life and carefully controls the few relationships she does have. Lucy (Kerry Washington) is unable to have children and is desperate to adopt, together with her husband Tom. Her honesty about how she would bring up a child goes down well with teenager Ray (Shareeka Epps) who is pregnant and selecting a couple to adopt her baby.

The complexities of each of these women's lives and relationships are deftly woven with poignancy and occasional humour. The highs uplift us and the lows are devastating. Best of all are the impeccable performances, particularly by Annette Bening who is nothing short of brilliant, but also Naomi Watts, Samuel Jackson and Jimmy Smits. Some critics felt Mother and Child was melodramatic and that is for you to decide but to me, adoption is dramatic and every one of our stories could be made into a movie.

If Mother and Child helps the general public better understand the impact adoption can have and has had, then I give it five stars.

Reviewed by Charlotte Smith