

THE PARTY

UK (2017) 71 minutes

Director: Sally Potter

Written By: Sally Potter and Walter Donohue

Cast: Kristin Scott Thomas (Janet), Timothy Spall (Bill), Emily Mortimer (Jinny), Bruno Ganz (Gottfried)



Screening 30 January 2019 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

To celebrate her long-awaited and prestigious post as a Shadow Minister for Health, a possible stepping-stone on the way to party leader and prime minister, Janet is throwing a party for friends at her London flat. Her guests comprise a motley crew of elite hand-picked experts. Unfortunately, before dinner is served, the upbeat ambience is shattered, as festering secrets start surfacing in this perfect domestic war-zone. Undoubtedly, after this night, things will never be the same again. . .

Reviews



This is a short, sharp, funny shock of a movie; a theatrical drawing-room comedy which plays out in real time with elegance and dispatch, cantering up to a cheeky punchline twist which leaves you laughing over the final credits.

Perhaps it is possible to write a movie or play set at a party in which festering secrets do not rise to the surface, do not explode, do not leave the guests stunned with the knowledge that after this catharsis things can never be the same.

Not here! This party is simmering with repression. As she puts together canapés in the kitchen, Janet is giggling over racy texts from a secret lover. Bill looks stunned, almost catatonic, playing loud records as if in a world of his own. Martha and Jinny have issues they haven't quite come to terms with and Tom has brought a certain something to the party that we are to see in Janet's vengeful hand in the flash-forward instant that starts the film.

Yet with admirable discipline, Potter keeps the running time within strict bounds. Like the best sort of party guest, it doesn't outstay its welcome.

Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian

Any party thrown by Kristin Scott Thomas is bound to be worth attending – and with guests including Timothy Spall, Patricia Clarkson and Cillian Murphy, this is one star-studded screen soirée.

Each knock on the door brings fresh characters, comical complications and layers of intrigue. Most intriguing is Tom, a coke-snorting City boy with several tricks up his sleeve, while the most amusing is undoubtedly April. A dry, acerbic wit barely concealing hostility towards several of her friends, she reserves her most withering put-downs for her older partner Gottfried, a contrastingly mellow New Ager who takes whatever is thrown at him. Milder domestic disputes are stirring with pregnant Jinny and her friend Martha.

The film uses its single setting to claustrophobic, dramatic advantage. The dialogue is bitterly funny, even while dealing with the darkest of subject matters, touching on politics, family, fidelity and sexuality while maintaining a breezy comic tone. And amid the middle-class intellectual squabbling there's a palpable sense of tension and danger. It's openly theatrical, but if it feels like a film of a play, it's a play you really should see.

Anna Smith, Time Out

Film Facts

- The actresses and actors in the film were paid equally and used this fact to promote equal pay for women in the film industry.
- Bruno Ganz (Gottfried) states during the film 'I am not a Nazi'. He famously played Hitler in the German film *Downfall* (2004) shown by SFS.
- The film was selected to compete for the Golden Bear in the Berlin International Film Festival and was awarded the Guild Film Prize.