

Still Mine is complicated and heartbreaking

by [Ken Eisner](#) on May 2, 2013 at 3:00 am



Starring James Cromwell and Geneviève Bujold. Rated PG. Opens Friday, May 3, at the Fifth Avenue Cinemas and International Village

The previous efforts of Toronto writer-director Michael McGowan have been wildly uneven. Moreover, *Saint Ralph*, *One Week*, and *Score: A Hockey Musical*, although each had a few strong elements, were so different from each other as to make you forget who made them. In *Still Mine*, however, McGowan attempts something small-scaled and elusive and gets just about everything right.

This starts with the cast, dominated by veteran character actor James Cromwell and '60s darling [Geneviève Bujold](#) as a long-married New Brunswick couple, Craig and Irene, who see everything falling away. Since their children have grown and gone—they still show up, warily, to kibitz with the old man—Craig has his gnarly hands full with their rural property. No one wants his meagre crops, the house is falling apart, and everything's starting to be dangerous for Irene, who is gradually slipping into dementia. (This is a notable role reversal, since many viewers know Cromwell best for his turn as the mentally deteriorating George on *Six Feet Under*.)

He decides to build a tidier, one-storey house for his wife on another piece of their land. But Craig hasn't kept up with newfangled notions like building permits and engineer's inspections. By the time he's decided to play ball, aided by a sympathetic lawyer (Campbell Scott), he has already alienated bureaucrats too young to know or care that Craig's father was a master shipbuilder and that he himself could erect an entire structure without a single nail.

The film's clunky title refers to the uphill struggle to hold on to what it takes a lifetime to construct—whether that be property, reputation, or genuine love. That's if you're lucky. This portrait of a marriage is more incisive, complicated, and heartbreaking than most movies about romance. (The recent *Amour* being an obvious exception.) Most things don't get better with age, but some filmmakers certainly do.

Watch the trailer for Still Mine.

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