

## Movie Review: Still Mine



By Monday Magazine

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### A Battle on Both Fronts

Despite the overwhelming preponderance of youth-centric movies these days, some notable cinema with geriatric themes has emerged in the last few years, including such fine films as *Amour*, *Away From Her* and *Cloudburst*. Now add to that list *Still Mine*, a heartfelt and marvelously acted award-winning drama set in New Brunswick. It is based on the true-life story of Craig Morrison, an 89-year-old farmer who suddenly finds himself fighting two battles. Not only is his wife's dementia presenting a variety of challenges, but Craig is confronted by a fussy building inspector who is determined to stop him from building a new house on his own property, one that will better provide for his wife's needs and comfort.

Craig (James Cromwell, best known as the farmer in *Babe*) presides over several thousand acres and has been self-sufficient all his life, whether it's raising his own cattle and chickens or felling and milling old-growth spruce for his various building projects. Morrison's father was a superb shipbuilder, and his son has inherited all those joinery skills as well as a powerful work ethic. And so, when it becomes clear that Irene (Genevieve Bujold), his beloved wife of 61 years, is now unsafe in the rambling, two-storey farmhouse where they raised their seven children, the land-rich but cash-poor Craig decides to build them a new, more appropriate one-level home nearby, one with beautiful views of the Bay of Fundy.

Advised by his son that he needs a permit from the planning office in town, Craig ambles in – only to come across an overzealous inspector who initially demands \$400 in fees and then proceeds to harass him through every step of construction, citing him for ridiculous violations and ultimately declaring that if Craig doesn't respect the "stop work" order and address the alleged shortcomings he will have the half-built house bulldozed. As all this is going on, Irene's health worsens and the need for the new house becomes more urgent. And so this decent, hard-working — and undeniably stubborn — man finds himself headed to court, a hostage to bureaucratic tyranny, where a judge will decide if Craig is going home or going to jail.

Although in many ways a small story, *Mine* is a solid triumph for serious cinema. It's the best film yet from veteran Canadian director Michael McGowan (*One Week*, *Saint Ralph*), who deftly counterpoints the threat posed by the exasperating building inspector with the much more dire challenges presented by a marriage that has run smoothly for decades but has now hit an obstacle that has changed everything. He also captures the complexities of a family crisis where a husband, out of loyalty to a wife who refuses to "move into town," finds himself at odds with his well-intentioned and justifiably concerned kids.

Most of all, *Mine* is a marvelous love story: unsentimental, well observed, and rooted in these two unique people whose lives have been shaped by the particularities of being New Brunswick farmers. This film is a distinct pleasure to recommend. M

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Rating: \*\*\*\*

(Still *Mine* opens Friday at the Odeon)

#### PERFECTLY POTABLE:

Let's celebrate a great film with a distinguished Scottish libation, the Peat Monster. This is from the impressive boutique company known as Compass Box, who aren't distillers themselves but buyers of selected small lots of malt whiskey, which they blend to great effect (a so-called vatted malt). Their brooding Monster is sourced mostly from Islay, and has all the smoke and peat you'd ever want, with hints of sea salt and sweet malt. With good balance and sufficient complexity to keep you intrigued to the end of your dram (you may want two), this is a grand tippie and well priced at \$89. Available at the Strath, on Douglas Street.

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