

ALI & AVA

UK (2021) 95 minutes

Director: Clio Barnard

Cast: Adeel Akhtar (Ali)
Claire Rushbrook (Ava)
Ellora Torchia (Runa)



Screening 29th March 2023 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Ali and Ava, both lonely for different reasons, meet and sparks fly. Over a lunar month, a deep connection begins to grow, despite the legacy of Ava's past relationship, and Ali's emotional turmoil at the breakdown of his marriage.

Reviews



There's a tremendous human warmth to this love story from writer-director Clio Barnard, a social-realist tale that you might compare to Ken Loach's *Ae Fond Kiss*. It's a drama of autumnal love conquering the divisions of race, the disillusionments of middle age, the discomfort of parenthood and grand-parenthood, and the tensions of class.

Ali, is a likeable, happy-go-lucky British Asian in Bradford whose family is well-off. They own properties and insofar as Ali has a job, it is going around collecting rent, and he is a genial friend to the tenants and their families. . .

Then, while taking the daughter of one of his tenant families to school, Ali comes across Ava, a woman of Irish heritage who is a classroom assistant. She is a widowed mother whose late husband was an abusive bully, and his ugly attitudes may have infected their son Callum, who has himself become a new father. Ava is a sweet-natured and generous soul, young at heart, fond of music and looking for love.

She instantly clicks with Ali, and their growing relationship inevitably causes problems with their respective clans. However, Barnard's film is an essay in acceptance and love.

The tender and gentle *Ali & Ava* is for those who like their social dramas with an overlay of romance.

A leisurely-paced and keenly observed character piece, *Ali & Ava* foregrounds an unlikely later-in-life relationship which plays up the axiom that you really can find love in the most unusual places, or with the most unusual people.

There are reams of glossy romantic dramas starring impossibly beautiful, often young, people who must overcome exaggerated conflicts and eventually fall into each other's arms. Swoon! The film doesn't go in for those tropes. It confronts the reality of a normal meet-cute and the more mundane drudgery that gets in the way of two lovers.

Despite the cultural and socio-economic barriers, Ali and Ava are increasingly drawn to each other and while it's slow-burn kindling, it's the kind of connection that feels real. The stops and starts and the low-level conflicts are more relatable than any grand Hollywood romance.

There's an authenticity to Ali and Ava's unshowy love story that hits deeper because it's a drama that really could belong to anyone.

Wenlei Ma, News.com.au

Film Facts

- In some contemporary British cinema the world is incredibly London-centric. Clio Barnard's films, mostly set in her native Bradford (and all in the wider Yorkshire area), represent something else – working-class life in northern post-industrial cities, places left behind by globalisation and 12 years of austerity.
- She is known for *The Arbor* (2010), *The Selfish Giant* (2013), and *Dark River* (2017).

Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian

