

# MAMMA MIA! (2008)

Rated PG-13 Our ratings: V- 1; L- 1; S/N-5. Running time: 1 hour 49 minutes

*"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.*

*Exodus 20:12*

Honor her father is exactly what Donna and friends in a moment the about-to-be-married Sophie of exuberance.

(Amanda Seyfield) wants to do.

Her problem is that she has <sup>2008 Universal Pictures</sup>

never known her father, having been raised by her Donna (Meryl Streep) for the past twenty years on a picturesque Greek island. The two run the kind of rundown tourist inn that only creators of stage and Hollywood musicals can dream up—that is, no bed-bugs and a barely working toilet that never smells bad. Sophie thinks she has solved her problem when she discovers her mother's diary and learns that during the period in which she was conceived her hippy mother had a serious affair with an architect and briefer stints with two other men. So, without informing her mother, Sophie sends invitations to all three men. This being a musical, all three accept and show up, on a boat owned by one of them.

The plot does not get any more believable as the film progresses, but if you like ABBA and the 70s period music (and awful costumes of the time that Meryl and her two friends don when they sing together), you will enjoy this cleaned-up version of the popular stage play. Although Pierce Brosnan, who can barely carry a tune, is woefully miscast, we forget this whenever Meryl Streep opens up. She is delightful as soloist, as well as when she sings with her two long-time pals. "Dancing Queen" has never sounded better. Sophie, like her mother, has two close friends, and their songs together are also great fun.

An early song "Money, Money, Money," in which Donna laments her lack of funds to fix up her dilapidated inn, will remind you of the impoverished Tevye's far better song in Fiddler on the Roof, though Mamma Mia! never comes close to the beauty and dramatic intensity of the former.

The singing and dancing mesmerized me up until the last act, and then the scene in the hilltop church departed so far from reality, even for a frothy movie fantasy, that I was brought back to earth with a thud, realizing what an artificial affair Mamma Mia! is (although I did like the way in which Sophie decides who will give away at the wedding). However, unlike other summer froth (see the review of Journey to the Center of the Earth), this is well worth your time, one film that I look forward to seeing again. I hope that Ms. Streep will obtain the opportunity to sing again in a film, perhaps a film as good as her Postcards From the Edge or A Prairie Home Companion.