

## Love & Mercy – Review

What's the best way to make a biopic of a **legend**? Todd Haynes made use of six actors in *I'm Not There*, his study of Bob Dylan in 2007, **while** in 2005 James Mangold's *Walk the Line* **aimed** for something more **straightforward** in **depicting** the younger years of Johnny Cash, helped by a **rollicking** performance by Joaquín Phoenix as the troubled **star**.

Bill Pohlad shoots for somewhere **between** the two with *Love & Mercy*, his admirable take on the life of the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson. Two different actors portray the singer at different points in his life: Paul Dano in the mid-1960s as he **gradually recedes** from touring life and begins his attempt to make a **masterpiece** (*Pet Sounds*), and John Cusack in the 1980s, as he succumbs to ever-worsening mental health.



Of course, the **seeds** of Wilson's problems were **sewn** long before the 1980s, and the intensity Dano brings to the role in the beautifully shot 60s scenes **hints** at the demons that will **plague** the **songwriter** from that point on; Cusack's performance, meanwhile, is much more **restrained**, for the most part - yet no less effective. Aided by a fantastic supporting cast that includes Elizabeth Banks and Paul Giamatti, the pair **provide** one of the great depictions of musical royalty, and one that should **undoubtedly** have seen greater success than it did.

Pohlad may be an **unfamiliar** name, but cinephiles will almost certainly respond well to the various films that he's been involved in producing, from *Brokeback Mountain* and *Into the Wild* to *12 Years a Slave*. 25 years after his directorial debut with 1990's *Old Explorers*, he's come up with a very fine second picture in *Love & Mercy*: one that's essential for Wilson fans and highly recommended for everyone else.