

Clouds of Sils Maria – Review

Sils Maria features two **magnificent** performances from its female leads: Juliette Binoche as Maria Enders, a famous actress entering middle age, and Kristen Stewart as Valentine, her young **assistant**, who helps Maria navigate the world of cinema in which she inhabits. They are luminous in their roles, and this **vivid, deep** exploration of female **friendship** and worth is a stunning addition to the filmography of Olivier Assayas.

The film opens as the **pair** is *en route* to a **ceremony** honouring the work of Wilhelm Melchior, an elderly Swiss **playwright** and **friend** and collaborator of Maria's. A close bond between Maria and Valentine is immediately established via some brilliantly naturalistic dialogue, before Melchior dies, suddenly, and their plans are thrown into **disarray**.



Maria is **unhappy** to learn that in her latest film - an adaptation of a Melchior play in which she starred, years earlier - she will be playing an older woman; the role which made her famous, **meanwhile**, will belong to a rising (and rebellious) young star played by Chloë Grace Moretz. This sets the scene for plenty of discord between Maria and Valentine, lines of **conflict** that lie between **generations** coming to the surface, all set against Yorick Le Saux' stunning **Alpine** cinematography.

There isn't, really, much of a story in *Sils Maria*, but the performances of Binoche, Stewart and Grace Moretz and Assayas' **sharp, intelligent** script mean that the film is hugely engaging nonetheless. Binoche has always been brilliant, but Stewart, who also shone in last year's *Still Alice* **alongside** Julianne Moore, proves that there is far more to her than the *Twilight* films suggested. (Assayas sneaks a great **joke** into the script on the subject.) Stewart also became the first American actress to **win** a César award for her role. Moretz is fantastic, too, but the film really belongs to Stewart and Binoche and their complicated, expertly drawn relationship.