



Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas.
They set a new standard for
compassion, artistry and love.

"A BEAUTIFUL MOVIE,
blessed with a gentle spirit,
and spiced by tart humor."

—Deborah Kunk, *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*

"A CIVILIZED DELIGHT."

—Sheila Benson, *Los Angeles Times*



The following is an excerpt from the *Los Angeles Times* by Sheila Benson.

The French call *Waiting For The Moon* "an imaginary biography," and this time they are to be taken seriously. This look at the intertwined lives of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas is film biography of an audacious and tender nature, one that mixes what *was* with what *might* have been with a sure and ingenious hand.

If, going in, you knew nothing about this famous pair, not even Gertrude Stein's sentiments on roses, what you will have absorbed by the end of *Waiting For The Moon* is the essence of a 39-year relationship, distilled with formidable insight and played with consummate artistry. And although none of the dialogue is true Stein, screenwriter Mark Magill has constructed the film in rhythms uncannily like hers.

Magill and director Jill Godmilow (collaborator on the story with Magill) have braided their time frame ingeniously. The outer framework takes place in the garden of the women's country home in the South of France as Gertrude (Linda Bassett) and Alice (Linda Hunt) proofread a Stein manuscript in the company of a very young and unexplained baby named Willie. The scenes progress like shadows on a sundial, early to late, during the course of one day.

WAITING for the MOON

Interspersed between the proofreading scenes are vignettes from the women's lives over a three-month period: picnicking at moonrise with poet Guillaume Apollinaire; gossiping at the tobacconist's; driving in the country in Gertrude's famous Model A Ford, Priscilla; responding to a questionnaire from the *Ladies' Home Journal*—bedrock turned into poetry, with a motion as deft as skimming stones on the surface of a lake.

The poignancy that underlies the peppery encounters between these two, the clear sense of what each one felt she had to lose, make this internal dilemma electric. No small credit goes to the commanding intelligence of both Hunt and Bassett (an English theatre actress in a splendid film debut) whom Godmilow has guided to performances suffused with affection and understanding.

To his great credit, writer Magill has given us a behind-the-scenes sense of this heady period with very little nonsense. The Ernest Hemingway character is, admittedly, a trial, and Bruce McGill's performance in the role is the film's shakiest link. But if you look for pulses, they abound. There is Andrew McCarthy's endearing and restrained creation of the young hitchhiker, on his way to fight in Spain, or Jacques Boudet's marvelous Apollinaire—exactly what a poet should be. And strawhatted, cherry-lipped Bernadette Lafont is enchanting as Picasso's sometimes love, Fernande Olivier.

And even if the film mixes its actual periods and characters quixotically, a strong literary thread runs through it. The magnificent last scene, a muted drama of reconciliation and optimism, can bring you to tears. It does so especially when you notice that Magill has included Gertrude's actual last words, "What is the question?" and played them off against a ringing series of "Yes'es from Alice that are true affirmations of life—and echoes from another great contemporary, James Joyce.

What a *civilized* delight *Waiting For The Moon* is. It has the tang of fine language, the breadth of its subject matter, the beauty of its settings, photography and music and a rare maturity in its outlook. All this, and an evening with Linda Hunt too. What an oasis for the parched adult.

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