

## The Doors ★★ ★<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

---

**Year of Release:** 1991

Review by Randy Parker

**Country:** USA

**Verdict:** See It

---

After Oliver Stone's hit-you-over-the-head antics in *Born on the Fourth of July*, I was skeptical about *The Doors*, fearing he would ruin another fertile subject with sledgehammer direction. To my great delight, however, I found *The Doors* to be an extraordinary technical and artistic achievement, from Stone's direction to the cinematography, set design, and sound editing—not to mention Val Kilmer's mind blowing performance as Jim Morrison.

Granted, there are some things the movie does *not* do particularly well. For example, it gives Meg Ryan (who plays Morrison's common-law wife, Pamela Courson) far too little screen time. Further, Stone is so obsessed with Morrison that he fails to shine any light on the other Doors members. But these deficiencies are inconsequential blemishes on an otherwise striking canvas. Stone's recreation of the Doors' concerts is breathtaking, and he chronicles Morrison's self-destructive descent with a chilling sense of claustrophobia. *The Doors* also provides an extremely vivid sense of the era, perfectly capturing the essence of the late '60s and early '70s. The psychedelic, drugged-out point of view makes this a film for the time capsule.

In short, all of the qualities that I hated about *Born on the Fourth of July* I admired in *The Doors*. In this case, Stone's over-the-top direction is appro-

priate to the subject matter—even integrated with it. A counter example is *Great Balls of Fire*, in which the light comic tone is completely at odds with the controversial nature of Jerry Lee Lewis' life. Stone's flamboyant and portentous visual style, on the other hand, perfectly suits Morrison's excessive personality and his group's foreboding music.

If *The Doors* is a stylistic victory for Stone, then it's a monumental triumph for Kilmer. After playing bubble gum heroes in forgettable movies, such as *Top Secret*, *Willow* and *Kill Me Again*, Kilmer has stepped into the major leagues with his seamless performance as the Doors' tormented, death-obsessed lead singer. You forget that it's Kilmer you're watching; all you see on the screen is Jim Morrison. Kilmer has completely transformed his image as an actor; there's nothing lightweight about him.

You also may get a kick out of seeing Kyle MacLachlan shed his clean-cut Dale Cooper persona from "Twin Peaks" to play Ray Manzarek, the laid back hippie who became the Doors' keyboardist. And in a priceless cameo as Andy Warhol, Crispin Glover is not to be missed.

The icing on the cake is the wall-to-wall soundtrack of classic Doors songs. The group's evocative music and Stone's potent visuals combine to form a wild ride—for your eyes *and* ears.

© 1991 – Randy Parker - All Rights Reserved

<http://www.emusements.com/randy/RRI/>