

## The Kids Are Alright:

# The Family Dynamic

by Erin J. Smith / CASA

**D**ESPITE THE UNCONVENTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES that brought them together as a family, life is a conventional picture of suburban bliss for lesbian parents Nic and Jules and their two artificially conceived, teenage children in Lisa Cholodenko's latest film *The Kids Are Alright*. But when half-siblings Joni and Laser initiate contact with their donor daddy, the carefully pruned, all

too delicate family dynamic is thrown into a tailspin.

Cholodenko will be in Santa Barbara on Thursday, August 5th for a Q&A screening of *The Kids Are All Right*, Santa Barbara Film Festival's Roger Durling will join her for the Q&A following the 8:15pm showing of the film at the Metropolitan Fiesta 5.

"I fell in love with the characters early on," said

Cholodenko, who directed and co-wrote the film. "The more that we got into all the dynamics of what Nic and Jules were going through in the marriage, I was intrigued with deconstructing what a marriage looks like in a middle age place."

The movie stars Annette Bening, Julianne Moore, and Mark Ruffalo.

Touching and funny, the film references the all too familiar little things – like hair in the sink – that make couples teeter between crazy-in-love and just plain crazy. "We were really keen to pull the humor out as much as possible," said Cholodenko. "We laughed a lot while we were working on it, but there's a humanism at the core of it that invites you to laugh, because you start to realize that we're all on the same page."

Cholodenko holds an MFA in screenwriting and directing from Columbia University's School of the Arts. She was inspired to pursue a film career after working as an assistant editor on *Boyz*



Photos by Suzanne Tenner

Annette Bening, Julianne Moore, Josh Hutcherson, Mia Wasikowska, and Mark Ruffalo in *The Kids Are All Right*.

*N the Hood* and with director Beeban Kidron on *Used People*. Following a series of award-winning short films, including *Souvenir* (1994) and *Dinner Party* (1997), Cholodenko made her feature directorial debut with *High Art* (1998) followed by *Laurel Canyon*, which world-premiered at the 2002 Cannes International Film Festival. Prior to *The Kids Are Alright*, Cholodenko directed *Cavedweller* (2004), starring Kyra Sedgwick and Aidan Quinn, and directed a number of television programs, such as *Homicide: Life on the Street*, *Six Feet Under*, *Hung*, and

*The L Word*.

"I hope the audience feels a sense of connectedness to their own experience and maybe be a little more forgiving of themselves," said Cholodenko. "The film is a celebration of family. People can be flawed and make mistakes, but if the family is durable, then they're there to embrace you."

Phone interview with Erin J. Smith, movie reviewer for CASA Magazine.

Metropolitan Theatre 5 is located at 916 State Street. For information on show times and tickets, see this page. Purchase tickets in advance. It should be a full house!



Annette Bening, director Lisa Cholodenko, and Julianne Moore, on the set of *The Kids Are All Right*.