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'The Kids Are All Right' review: Julianne Moore and Annette Bening get perfect direction



BY ELIZABETH
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Annette Bening and Julianne Moore star in Lisa Cholodenko's pitch-perfect family drama.

TITLE:

■ The Kids Are All Right

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Sundance audiences are notorious for their optimism, embracing mediocre indies that quickly flop in the real world. But occasionally, festival fans get it exactly right, shining the spotlight on small, special films that need the extra boost. Last year's recipient of those well-earned accolades was "Precious." This year, it's [Lisa Cholodenko's "The Kids Are All Right."](#)

The story of a family that is both as unique and as ordinary as any other, "Kids" may sound like typically quirky arthouse fare. But this is a movie for everyone - and, in one way or another, about everyone, too.

It really doesn't matter if you have two mothers, like [California](#) teens Joni ([Mia Wasikowska](#)) and Laser ([Josh Hutcherson](#)). Or if you're an affluent, mildly new-age lesbian like their moms, Jules ([Julianne Moore](#)) and Nic ([Annette Bening](#)). What you'll recognize most about this clan is how they relate to each other, in each beautiful, comical, and painfully familiar way.

Granted, their immediate issues are somewhat unconventional. When Joni and



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Laser decide to find their moms' sperm donor, they meet Paul ([Mark Ruffalo](#)), an easygoing, happily single restaurateur. Much to his surprise, he likes the idea of being a dad. But adding a new member to a tightly knit family turns out to be, well, just as complicated as you might expect.

It's such a pleasure to watch actors and filmmakers working at the very top of their game, you may be shocked to realize how rare an experience that actually is. Even gifted performers like Bening and Moore can overplay when poorly directed, but Cholodenko ("High Art," "[Laurel Canyon](#)") guides her perfectly meshed cast with the gentlest hand, allowing each to delve fully into the wise, open-hearted script she wrote with [Stuart Blumberg](#).

Every scene has its highlights, from amusing observations about sex to poignant truths about parenting and partnerships. But what you'll remember most is the exquisitely lovely final scene, in which Cholodenko reminds us that all we need is a single moment of perfection -in a family, or even in a film - to believe that somehow, things will always be all right.



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