

Review #15 : *The Reckless Moment* (1944)

Joan Bennett and James Mason

TRAILER

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFO6uzgZzU4>

REVIEW

The sultry temptress of Fritz Lang's *Scarlet Street* and *The Woman in the Window*, Joan Bennett, plays a respectable mother in a California coastal town. Family life is proving nettlesome, what with a husband travelling the globe on business, a teenage son drawn to inappropriate states of attire, and two live-ins, a father-in-law and a housekeeper. The nettle-in-chief, however, is her handful of a daughter (Geraldine Brooks). Like her predecessor Veda Pierce, she fancies herself a worldly woman and has taken up with a penniless but pretentious lecher, who winds up dead. **Bennett's battle to cover up the death** becomes the story's meat. **Into the mix ambles James Mason**, wanting \$5-grand for incriminating love letters....



James Mason is the film's most intriguing and intricately shaded character and he gets top billing but Bennett also delivers a controlled and expert performance, possibly her finest. The star of *The Reckless Moment*, however, is the great Max Ophüls. Displaying **evocative chiaroscuro and voluptuous slow takes**, Ophüls creates a rich texture ranging from shabby seaside respectability to the grungy sidewalks of nearby Los Angeles. This splendidly nuanced work has emerged as one of the standouts of the noir cycle, its ironies so understated that their oppressive weight isn't felt until long after the film has unspooled. The ending is heart-breaking as well and Bennett makes you feel all of her torments and fears as a loving mother and wife struggling to protect those whom she loves...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQxOFrX0vNA>