



Gwyneth Paltrow and Anthony Hopkins in a scene from *Proof*. Ms Paltrow's performance should earn her an Academy Award nomination, critic Anne Brodie says.

Evidence says Proof is great

Proof

Starring Gwyneth Paltrow, Anthony Hopkins, Jake Gyllenhaal and Hope Davis
Directed by John Madden, based on David Auburn's play.



Anne Brodie

On Movies

Is madness hereditary?

That's the question haunting Catherine (Gwyneth Paltrow), an unstable young woman grieving the death of her father Robert (Anthony Hopkins) a week before the film's action begins.

He died of an aneurysm following several years of mental illness while under Catherine's dotting care. His other daughter (Hope Davis) lives light years away from them and their illnesses, in New York. She's ashamed of them.

The story's told through flashbacks, so the mystery unfolds in the most emotionally real way, as truths spill out in an incessantly rhythmic manner.

Robert is a celebrated mathematician who "twice changed the landscape of mathematics before he was 22". Quiet a legacy to live up to. Catherine studies math a little, while her sister glazes over like ham at the mention of it.

Robert believes math holds the key to everything in the universe, including love. For Catherine, math is common ground between her and her father.

Robert's illness is threatening his position at the university; his lucid periods are few and far between.

Soon he is living at home, waiting for that spark to return and set his passion for math and logic afire again.

Catherine can't accept his death. Without him, she has nothing and no one and she simply stops functioning. She doesn't eat, sleep or think properly, has blind rages and visions of her father.

When Hal (Jake Gyllenhaal) shows up to study her father's hundreds of handwritten notes and mathematical proofs, Catherine goes off the rails. There is one notebook in particular, under lock and key. But who wrote it?

Ms Paltrow does the best work of her career in *Proof*, a role she knows after starring in the London West End production.

Her character believes she has inherited her father's mental illness and is paralyzed by fear.

Imagine Ms Paltrow playing the role every night, tears falling down her cheeks, feeling the pain of it, especially having lost her own father, Bruce, prior to filming.

And it will surely bring her an Academy Award nomination, if not a win.



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