

MELANIA – A REVIEW

By Barbara Kamm

No doubt you've read the reviews by now and heard that the critics panned it. In fact, two dozen critics, some of whom admittedly hadn't seen the film, gave the documentary a 7% rating on Rotten Tomatoes' Tomatometer. Well... the verified audience (actual ticket buyers) rating on Rotten Tomatoes was about 99%, and the film had the strongest opening for a non-music, non-concert documentary in over a decade, grossing \$7.16 million at only 1,778 theaters and finishing #3 behind all other films last weekend. In fact, many local theaters are NOT showing it, and we had to go to Surprise (or Glendale) to see it Saturday. The theater was full at 12:45 pm, and the audience cheered at the end. So much for the critics...

Melania is an intimate, polished portrait that feels deliberately scaled—not a sweeping chronicle, but a carefully framed window into a defining moment. The film follows a focused 20-day period, and that restraint works in its favor, allowing small, human details to carry the emotional weight. From the opening notes of its score which begins with "Gimme Shelter" as the camera pans in over Mar-A-Lago, the music supports the storytelling without ever overpowering it: songs include "Billie Jean," Melania's favorite; "Amazing Grace," playing as Melania lights a candle in St Patrick's Cathedral on the one-year anniversary of her beloved mother's death; and, of course, "YMCA," where we catch a rare glimpse of Melania really enjoying herself.

Visually, the filmmaking is refined and observant. The camera lingers in behind-the-scenes spaces rarely seen so candidly—inside the Blair House, through quieter corridors of the White House, within the private calm of the Trump Tower apartment, and in the back halls of the Capitol. These settings are not treated as symbols of power so much as lived-in environments, places where preparation, family life and responsibility intersect.

Melania Trump's influence, in her role as a producer, is evident in the access granted, the disciplined pacing, and the respectful focus on intention rather than spectacle. This is not a film that tells the audience what to think; instead, it invites viewers to observe how she works, reflects, and chooses. We see moments of deliberation, warmth with her family, and a clear commitment to representing the country with dignity.

Ultimately, *Melania* presents a First Lady who is thoughtful, disciplined, and deeply aware of the honor she carries. It's a graceful film that leaves a lasting impression through calm strength rather than grand declarations. I'm proud that she is our First Lady.