

The Iron Lady

reviewed by [Steve A. Vineberg](#) in the [February 8, 2012](#) issue

The Iron Lady, which stars Meryl Streep as Margaret Thatcher, is the worst biopic since *Nixon*. It intercuts Thatcher's old age, when her memory has begun to play tricks on her and she keeps up a running conversation with the ghost of her dead husband, Denis (Jim Broadbent), with episodes from her political career. But it's so cautious that it lacks a coherent point of view, and it's so scattered that it tells you almost exactly nothing.

Most of the political narrative consists of montages of news reports and voice-over collages that carefully juxtapose positive and negative views of Thatcher. Occasionally we see images of IRA bombings juxtaposed with protesters railing against England's presence in Ireland and promoting compassion for Irish prisoners on hunger strikes; the Falklands War makes an appearance.

The filmmakers must think they're going for a psychological portrait of Thatcher. But shots of Streep looking resolute paired with others of her looking doubtful after she's warned that the war will cripple England's economy don't qualify as psychology. And Thatcher's relationship with Denis amounts mostly to glimpses of them dancing to ballads from *The King and I*. As for Streep, don't believe the hype: the most impressive element of her Thatcher is the makeup job.