

IN his first days at Oxford, handsome but middle class Charles Ryder (Matthew Goode) is befriended by sensitive Sebastian Flyte (Ben Whishaw).

Charles is captivated by Sebastian's flamboyant lifestyle – only intensified by an invite to spend the summer at Brideshead, Sebastian's family home.

There he meets Sebastian's sister, Julia (Hayley Atwell), and it is this relationship that acts as the core of director Julian Jarrold's retelling of Evelyn Waugh's classic novel **BRIDESHEAD REVISITED (12A)**.

Emma Thompson's skilled portrayal of Lady Marchmain keeps the story's religious elements in the foreground, and we get a real sense of the complexity of individual faith, guilt and desire.

Focusing on the romance is, of course, at the expense of other parts of the novel and this abridged version may not be to the taste of those loyal to the book or the 1981 television series. But it's successful on its own terms.

The narrative is dreamy enough to convey that all-important sense of aristocratic decadence, yet the dialogue is sharp. It also allows plenty of time for beautiful cinematography: locations including Oxford, Venice and Marrakech provide many wonderful moments. – **JO CAIRD**