# ‘Lincoln’ clever,  compelling fare

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For anyone who cringed just a little while watching the trailer and worried that this might be a near-parody of a Steven Spielberg film, with its heartfelt proclamations, sentimental tones and inspiring John Williams score, fret not.

The movie itself is actually a lot more reserved than that — more a wonky, nuts-and-bolts lesson about the way political machinery operates than a sweeping historical epic that tries to encapsulate the entirety of the revered 16th president’s life.

That was a smart move on the part of Spielberg and Pulitzer prize-winning screenwriter Tony Kushner. Talky and intimate but also surprisingly funny, Lincoln focuses on the final four months of Abraham Lincoln’s life as he fought for the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery, and sought to unite a nation torn apart by the Civil War.

This tumultuous period provides a crucible to display everything Lincoln was made of, both his folksiness and fortitude.

Totally unsurprisingly, Daniel Day-Lewis inhabits the role fully. He disappears into it with small details and grand gestures, from his carriage to the cadence of his speech, and the Academy should probably just give him the best-actor Oscar now and get it over with.

Although Lincoln itself often feels too conservative, stagey and safe, Day-Lewis’ performance is full of so many clever choices that he keeps it compelling.

Of course, the film has all the top-notch technical hallmarks we’ve come to expect from Spielberg: It’s handsomely staged and impeccable in its production design.

But this is a movie that’s easier to admire than love; it’s impressive but not exactly moving. Tommy Lee Jones, James Spader, John Hawkes and David Strathairn are among the supporting cast that might be too crammed with gifted character actors.