

## ‘Love in the Time of Cholera’ Searches Soul, Comes Up Half Full

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CHICAGO – In 2000’s “High Fidelity,” John Cusack mused: “I’ve read books like ... ‘Love in the Time of Cholera’ and I think I’ve understood them. They’re about girls, right?”



Giovanna Mezzogiorno stars as Fermina Daza in “Love in the Time of Cholera”.

*Photo credit: Daniel Daza, New Line Cinema*

The following year, Cusack’s character in “Serendipity” chases a missed love connection fueled in part by Gabriel Garcia Márquez’s novel.

After years in the making, director Mike Newell brings “Love in the Time of Cholera” to the big screen. The end result would make even Lloyd Dobler (John Cusack’s character in 1989’s “Say Anything...”) put down the boom box and rethink his kickboxing career.

In “Love in the Time of Cholera,” Juvenal Urbino (Benjamin Bratt) is a prominent doctor who has become one of the most respected members of society as he enters his twilight years.

When he falls from a ladder and dies, his widow – Fermina Daza (Giovanna Mezzogiorno) – is met with a surprise guest at the wake: her sweetheart (Florentino Ariza) from her teenage years (played by Javier Bardem).



Benjamin Bratt stars as Juvenal Urbino and Giovanna Mezzogiorno stars as Fermina Daza in “Love in the Time of Cholera”.

*Photo credit: Daniel Daza, New Line Cinema*

There, he repeats the vow of eternal love and fidelity he made more than 50 years earlier. The film then starts from the beginning of the courtship and follows each member of the lover’s triangle from childhood to old age.

Structurally, the film follows the story of the novel to a fine point without changing the through line of any of the three central characters as it clumsily hops from scene to scene.

Unfortunately, the thoroughness screenwriter Ronald Harwood executed for the main lovers spanning more than half a century left little time to flesh out the supporting characters.

The family, friends and lovers who fill out the peripheral of Márquez’s novel are what really accent the self-indulgent obsessions of Ariza, Daza and Urbino.



Unax Ugalde stars as the young Florentino in “Love in the Time of Cholera”.

*Photo credit: Daniel Daza, New Line Cinema*

Without the full attention to the supporting characters’ function in the story, Daza seems less like the tormented hopeless romantic and more of a glib womanizer with stalker tendencies.

His cute, wry remarks are humorous and refreshing.

Meanwhile, they make the eternal turmoil of his soul less believable. The supporting cast of Liev Schrieber, Hector Elizondo and especially John Lequizaro give every scene new life in what would otherwise be a slow, sad love affair.

Shot primarily in Cartagena, Columbia, the beautiful scenery adds much to the film’s recipe for romance. The soundtrack composed by Antonio Pinto enriches every frame of the picture and highlights the nuances of emotion of the characters.





Giovanna Mezzogiorno stars as Fermina Daza in "Love in the Time of Cholera".

Photo credit: Daniel Daza, New Line Cinema

Márquez himself convinced pop star Shakira to contribute two songs to the picture. Her contemporary and polished voice, though, sounds out of place in this period piece.

There is no greater case for true love than the idea of a man who would wait patiently 51 one years, nine months and four days for his soul mate. The story is sweeter than eating a caramel sundae while listening to "Moon River".

Reading the book would cause even the hardest skeptic to entertain the idea.

Hearing the tale at a bar from a friend would make you rethink your current relationship. While seeing this movie might inspire you to plan a vacation to Latin America, it won't move you to rethink proposing to your high school sweetheart.

*"Love in the Time of Cholera" opened on Nov. 16, 2007.*

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