

Interview: Richard Ayoade Finds Emotional Depth in ‘Submarine’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 9, 2011 - 1:06pm

- [Alex Turner](#) [2]
- [Badlands](#) [3]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [4]
- [Community](#) [5]
- [Craig Roberts](#) [6]
- [Danny Pudi](#) [7]
- [Garth Marengi's Darkplace](#) [8]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [9]
- [Interview](#) [10]
- [Joel McHale](#) [11]
- [Richard Ayoade](#) [12]
- [Submarine](#) [13]
- [Taxi Driver](#) [14]
- [Television](#) [15]
- [The IT Crowd](#) [16]
- [Yasmin Paige](#) [17]

CHICAGO – Writer/director Richard Ayoade is one of the most unassuming, soft-spoken subjects with which I have ever spoken. He is modest beyond measure and seems completely unaware that he has made a film, the coming-of-age comedy “Submarine,” that has already started the kind of buzz that turns an indie film into a cult hit. People will love this movie. And Ayoade may not be quiet for much longer.

Based on the coming-of-age novel by Joe Dunthorne, “Submarine” tells the story of Oliver Tate (Craig Roberts), a quirky young man who seems concerned about everything but is at that age where concern isn’t cool. He’s noticed that his parents (Sally Hawkins & Noah Taylor) haven’t had sex in some time (through detective work involving the dimmer switch in their bedroom) and isn’t quite sure about the New Age douche (Paddy Considine) who just moved in down the street. More importantly, he’s begun a relationship with the wicked-smart and possibly-just-wicked Jordana (a great Yasmin Paige) and he’s having trouble keeping it all together.

Ayoade is also well-known for starring in “The IT Crowd” and “Garth Marengi’s Darkplace” and directed one of the best episodes ever of “Community” (the one that leaned heavily on “Pulp Fiction” and “My Dinner With Andre”).



Submarine

Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

HollywoodChicago.com: A lot of times movies are reduced down to phrases — thriller, whatever — this is a “coming-of-age story.” Especially now with all these blockbusters opening...

Richard Ayoade: I’m sure they’re trembling.

HollywoodChicago.com: ...how do you tell someone who goes “oh, ANOTHER coming-of-age story” that this one is worth seeing?

Ayoade: I’m the worst person at recommending anything I’ve done. For me, had it been up to me in deciding subject area then I might not have gone for it. It does feel over-populated. Various parts of the geography have been claimed. I just really liked the book. I thought the book was really funny and well-written and I didn’t worry about that when I read it. The character of Oliver felt like a very unique character. I hadn’t read a character like that before. I hadn’t seen a character like him. In a way, genre expectations exist with everything. People used to enjoy seeing films within a genre. I guess television has taken over that. In many ways, people like that. People like to say “it’s like nothing you’ve ever seen before.” I can’t remember the last time something was actually unlike anything I have seen before. There’s a new tendency that has grown up to immediately say what something is like — how rapidly you can identify something. It rarely is the case. Anything that you like isn’t copy-able. So often the things that you really like are about the flavor of that particular constellation of people.

HollywoodChicago.com: What did attract you to the source? The strong central character?

Ayoade: That was mainly it. The idea that this was a character who felt that by accurately describing things that he could circumvent them. You can’t get out of the way of being a cliché by identifying it. I think, in a way, it’s a very interesting thing. I think people stand outside themselves and try and head things off at the past but they never work. Every band knows the ridiculous “Spinal Tap” narrative of in-fighting and drugs and breaking up but bands still do it.

HollywoodChicago.com: How is it different from the source?

Ayoade: The book is very literary and book-ish. It used literary tropes and is aware of itself in that way.

HollywoodChicago.com: So is the film.

Ayoade: The idea was to translate the literary self-awareness to film self-awareness. Oliver is aware of certain things and that the camera sees him how he wants to be seen.

HollywoodChicago.com: There are no major plot changes?

Ayoade: The book takes place over more than a year. There’s a subplot with Zoe that isn’t in the film. It’s contracted and shifted about. It’s not unrecognizable. It does feel quite different, just necessarily.



Submarine

Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

HollywoodChicago.com: When you read that and focus on the character — the casting of Oliver has to be a major concern.

Ayoade: Yeah.

HollywoodChicago.com: And Yasmin. That’s a very difficult role — balancing the hard shell with the stuff that comes later. How did you cast those two?

Ayoade: For her, it’s much easier for someone who’s warm and lovely to be mean. You can’t really get a mean person to appear to be pleasant. It was important that she was very sensitive. I wish there was a better anecdote than long auditions. You have a good casting director.

HollywoodChicago.com: What did you see in Craig?

Ayoade: He was still. He had a deadpan face and a Buster Keaton quality. He looked quite tired and like he was overthinking things. And his voice. It's slightly transatlantic. It may not sound like that here but he doesn't sound quite Welsh.

HollywoodChicago.com: I loved Alex Turner's music. How did that happen?

Ayoade: I'd done some music videos for the Arctic Monkeys. While I was writing, I just asked. That was it.

HollywoodChicago.com: That simple.

Ayoade: Yeah.

HollywoodChicago.com: Why him?

Ayoade: I think he's great. I'm not very good at selling things but I can't imagine there being better original songs in the film. They're great. We talked about "The Graduate" and how they're used in that. They're very verbal. And it was in the script — two songs played in their entirety. Normally you have to fade after a minute. People have an internal egg timer.

HollywoodChicago.com: The movie has a unique pace overall. It gives you something of a jarring feeling which feels appropriate for a coming-of-age story.

Ayoade: Yeah, yeah, you sort of know exactly how something will be edited nowadays. It's sort of how the Academy Award always goes to the MOST editing.

HollywoodChicago.com: Very true. And the MOST costumes.

Ayoade: Yeah. I've always felt why hasn't Scorsese or Wes Anderson won a costume award? I feel period stuff...it seems like you can kind of call the costume house and say, "What have you got from the '30s?" With contemporary costumes, it's very hard. It's very rarely recognized.

HollywoodChicago.com: The editing in this is more interesting by the lack of it sometimes.

Ayoade: Although Chris Dickens did win an Oscar for "Slumdog Millionaire."

HollywoodChicago.com: Quite a bit of editing.

Ayoade: Yes. And he did Edgar Wright's stuff. A lot of editing. But, good editing.



Submarine

Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

HollywoodChicago.com: We’re talking about fitting the material. This one fits. You mentioned “The Graduate.” Were there any other specific inspirations?

Ayoade: “Taxi Driver” and “Badlands.” They’re both...the juxtaposition between voiceover...and because “Taxi” is so internal and is filmed in a manner which reflects his view of himself — someone who is self-mythologizing.

HollywoodChicago.com: There’s also a point where I wondered if Oliver was crazy...so there’s that aspect of it too.

Ayoade: Yeah. I imagined him a bit like Travis Bickle. Also, “American Psycho.” Someone’s continual listing of things. All of those moments.

HollywoodChicago.com: Why “Badlands”?

Ayoade: Partly using natural light. Partly flat voiceover, which I think is very funny. Also, it has a banality to the voiceover that juxtaposes itself with what’s happening. Also, thematically, the idea of constructing your own legacy. He very much sees himself as a figure, a folk hero.

HollywoodChicago.com: How does being an actor make you a better director?

Ayoade: It’s difficult to know. It might make a worse director. I don’t know. I suppose you are sympathetic to how difficult it is to act. It can be difficult to be on-set. There are so many things that prevent you from doing your job — the noise, self-consciousness, time pressure, waiting. I try to protect them from those concerns. And just being a fan of them and trying to encourage. That’s the most important thing.

HollywoodChicago.com: How did you get involved with “Community”?

Ayoade: Through Joel [McHale]. I met him doing a pilot for “The IT Crowd.” We kept in touch. I really liked the show. And, oddly enough, John Oliver, who I knew from University, is in it. It’s odd we both worked on that show.

HollywoodChicago.com: It’s such a unique show, especially your episode. The number of “My Dinner With Andre” references on network TV can be counted on one hand.

Ayoade: I felt really pleased to get a Louis Malle episode. I didn’t know that it would be my episode. I just said “Yes.” I didn’t say, “What’s the script?”

HollywoodChicago.com: Danny [Pudi]’s so great in that episode.

Ayoade: And really kind of moving. He’s great.

HollywoodChicago.com: Yes. I like this season how they’ve kind of made Abed more melancholy. They’ve added a level of sadness, which is interesting. What’s next?

Ayoade: I’m working on a script with Harvey Korine which is an adaptation of “The Double.”

HollywoodChicago.com: Modern?

Ayoade: Sort of.

HollywoodChicago.com: “Submarine” is kind of indeterminate.

Ayoade: Right. Except for the “Crocodile Dundee” reference.

HollywoodChicago.com: But that could have been a midnight show.

Ayoade: Or a Paul Hogan retrospective.

HollywoodChicago.com: Any advice for upcoming filmmakers?

Ayoade: Watch John Ford films. I don’t think you can go wrong there.

HollywoodChicago.com: I’m going home to watch “Stagecoach.”

Watch “Submarine” when it opens in Chicago theaters tomorrow, June 10th, 2011.



[18]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [19]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [18]

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 11:01am):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/14603/interview-richard-ayoade-finds-emotional-depth-in-submarine>

Links:

[1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
[2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/alex-turner>
[3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/badlands>
[4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>
[5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/community>
[6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/craig-roberts>
[7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/danny-pudi>
[8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/garth-marenghis-darkplace>
[9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
[10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html>
[11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/joel-mchale>
[12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/richard-ayoade>
[13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/submarine>
[14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/taxi-driver>
[15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/television>
[16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-it-crowd>
[17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/yasmin-paige>
[18] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
[19] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>