

Film Review: Ryan Reynolds, Julia Roberts Trapped in Dull ‘Fireflies in the Garden’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 14, 2011 - 12:09pm

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – It’s always risky for a screenwriter to craft a film about a family of writers in that when the result is a script so generically awful as that for “Fireflies in the Garden” it’s going to stick out even more prominently. After sitting on the shelf for years (it played festivals in 2008 and was supposed to be released that year) and reportedly undergoing some reshoots, this stale drama is finally getting a limited release and will prove just how limited it is to the poor saps who pay to see it.

The most interesting thing about “Fireflies in the Garden” may be how it proves, yet again, that talented actors and actresses can still get sucked into awful projects despite their well-known abilities. What on Earth did Willem Dafoe and Emily Watson see in this mess? They’re such talented performers that one would assume they should know better by now. Julia Roberts should as well. Even Ryan Reynolds, who has had a year of bad career decisions (“Green Lantern,” “The Change-Up”) is a likable actor in the right material and proved with last year’s “Buried” that he can deliver an engaging performance. Not one member of the talented ensemble in “Fireflies in the Garden” ever reveals what they could have seen in this clichéd mess. Maybe they thought it would be the next “Great Santini” or “Prince of Tides.” Maybe they didn’t actually read the script.



[Read Brian Tallerico’s full review of “Fireflies in the Garden” in our reviews section.](#)
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Michael (Ryan Reynolds) had a crappy childhood. His father Charles (Willem Dafoe) was a total prick, the kind of guy who makes his kid hold paint cans at arm’s length to learn a lesson; the kind of guy who punishes his son by making him walk home in the rain; the kind of guy who cheated on his lovely wife Lisa (Julia Roberts). As the film opens, writer Michael is coming home to a family reunion with some emotional baggage. A horrendous accident involving Michael’s cousin leads to Lisa’s death and the aforementioned baggage gets a whole lot heavier. Much of the film takes place in flashback, as we learn about Michael’s upbringing and his friendship with his mother’s younger sister (Hayden Panettiere in flashback, Emily Watson in present day...wrap your brain around that), who helped him deal with his abusive patriarch.

“Fireflies in the Garden” is one of the longest 88-minute movies that I’ve ever seen. To say it drags would be a massive understatement. It has zero rising action and builds to nothing but a fabricated climax involving the manipulation of a missing child. We never get emotionally involved with any of these characters in the slightest. Rarely has a drama felt more distant and less genuine. I actually longed for some melodrama or some pulpy guilty pleasure just to alleviate the boredom.



[Continue reading for Brian Tallerico’s full “Fireflies in the Garden” review.](#) [14]

“Fireflies in the Garden” stars Ryan Reynolds, Willem Dafoe, Julia Roberts, Emily Watson, Carrie-Anne Moss, Hayden Panettiere, and Ioan Gruffudd. It was written and directed by Dennis Lee. It was released on October 14th, 2011.



Fireflies in the Garden
Photo credit: Universal

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