

## Blu-ray Review: Anne Hathaway, Jim Sturgess Lend Humanity to 'One Day'

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CHICAGO – Director Lone Scherfig has a keen eye for observation when charting the coming-of-age and disillusionment of characters awakening to life's injustices. Her superb 2009 film, "An Education," followed the painful yet vital journey of a young woman who discovers what she truly wants out of life. "One Day" is a more pessimistic film, since it focuses on the various obstacles preventing one from living the life they desire until it's too late.

It's also an unabashed melodrama in the tradition of "An Affair to Remember," aiming directly for the tear ducts of sentimental viewers. Just as "An Education" greatly benefited from Carey Mulligan's star-making turn as the intelligent yet naïve protagonist, "One Day" is enhanced by the enormous appeal of leads Anne Hathaway and Jim Sturgess. It's a good thing they're so likable, since their characters are not only incompatible but also less than sympathetic.



Blu-ray Rating: **3.0/5.0**

Based on screenwriter David Nicholls's bestseller, the film centers on Dexter (Sturgess) and Emma (Hathaway), two friends who spend a meaningful yet chaste night together after their college graduation in 1988. Emma had always harbored a crush on Dex, though her attraction seems to be no more substantial than the lustful yearnings of the countless other women intent on throwing themselves at his vain mug. It's clear from the get-go that Dex is a womanizing cad who treats his female counterparts like consumer products more disposable than his treasured Armani suit. Yet the scattered nuggets of warmhearted encouragement that Dex offers Emma are meant to be representative of a deeper connection between the two characters.

Like Nicholls's book, the film peeks in on the would-be couple during every July 15th for the next two decades, thus examining their relationship through a fragmented series of vignettes. Obvious comparisons could be made to Drake Doremus's superior indie romance, "Like Crazy," which had a similarly unconventional but less rigid structure, and was far more emotionally resonant in its subtlety. Nicholls's narrative gimmick results in a series of trite scenes and dramatic gestures that often aren't backed up by the necessary character development.



Anne Hathaway and Jim Sturgess star in Lone Scherfig's *One Day*.

*Photo credit: Universal Studios Home Entertainment*

With different actors, the film may have derailed entirely, but Hathaway and Sturgess anchor their scenes in enough richly conflicted nuances to make the film effortlessly watchable throughout, leading to a final act that does manage to pay off in spite of itself. Sturgess's genial screen persona allows Dex to be more sympathetic than he has any right to be, while Hathaway effortlessly eases into the skin of yet another self-deprecating, earthily radiant everywoman. Her problematic British accent notwithstanding, Hathaway does a fine job of allowing her character to grow and mature purely through behavioral changes, since her face proves nearly impossible to age. Sturgess is more convincing as his slick playboy finds himself facing an eternity of loneliness after years of thoughtless missteps. He shares some genuinely painful moments with his ailing mother (played by the consistently sublime Patricia Clarkson), who becomes increasingly disappointed by her son's susceptibility to sleaze.



*One Day* was released on Blu-ray and DVD on Nov. 29, 2011.

*Photo credit: Universal Studios Home Entertainment*

Yet perhaps the most tragic element in the film is not Dex and Emma's consistently unrequited love, but the casualties that their indecisiveness causes along the way. Witty character actor Rafe Spall is assigned the thankless task of playing the kind but nerdy man whom

Emma conducts a long, drawn-out relationship with despite the fact she has no real feelings for him. Spall's character may be a sad sack, but he has a late scene of beautiful selflessness that may be the most moving moment in the picture. "One Day" is no instant classic, but it's infinitely preferable to contrived weepies like "Twilight."

"One Day" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, Spanish, French and Descriptive Video Service audio tracks, and includes a pocketBLU app. The superficial, super-brief featurettes skim through the clothes, hair and makeup changes used to age the actors for each successive year. Sturgess says he gauged where he was in the story by how big the shoulder pads were in his suit, while Spall insisted on wearing a rust-colored jacket in the majority of his scenes, much to the chagrin of Scherfig (though she begrudgingly admits that it added to his character's lovability). In her diverting audio commentary, Scherfig reveals that she wanted good actors for even the smallest roles, and went so far as to cast the French star Joséphine de La Baume ("The Princess of Montpensier") as the nude woman standing atop Sturgess's bed in a fleeting shot. Her choice of large typeface for the opening titles was meant to signify the film's status as a classical melodrama aiming for a direct emotional (rather than intellectual) connection with viewers. On that level, the film works.

*'One Day' is released by Universal Studios Home Entertainment and stars Anne Hathaway, Jim Sturgess, Rafe Spall, Patricia Clarkson and Jodie Whittaker. It was written by David Nicholls and directed by Lone Scherfig. It was released on Nov. 29, 2011. It is rated PG-13.*



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