

# Film Review: ‘Qwerty’ Uses Chicago as Backdrop for Word Nerds

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 30, 2012 - 11:04am

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CHICAGO – Taking the game of Scrabble and making it a thread for a romantic comedy and competitive intrigue is a wholly original idea. Director Bill Sebastian and screenwriter Juliet McDaniels guides a Chicago cast through the maze of those words in the new film “Qwerty.”



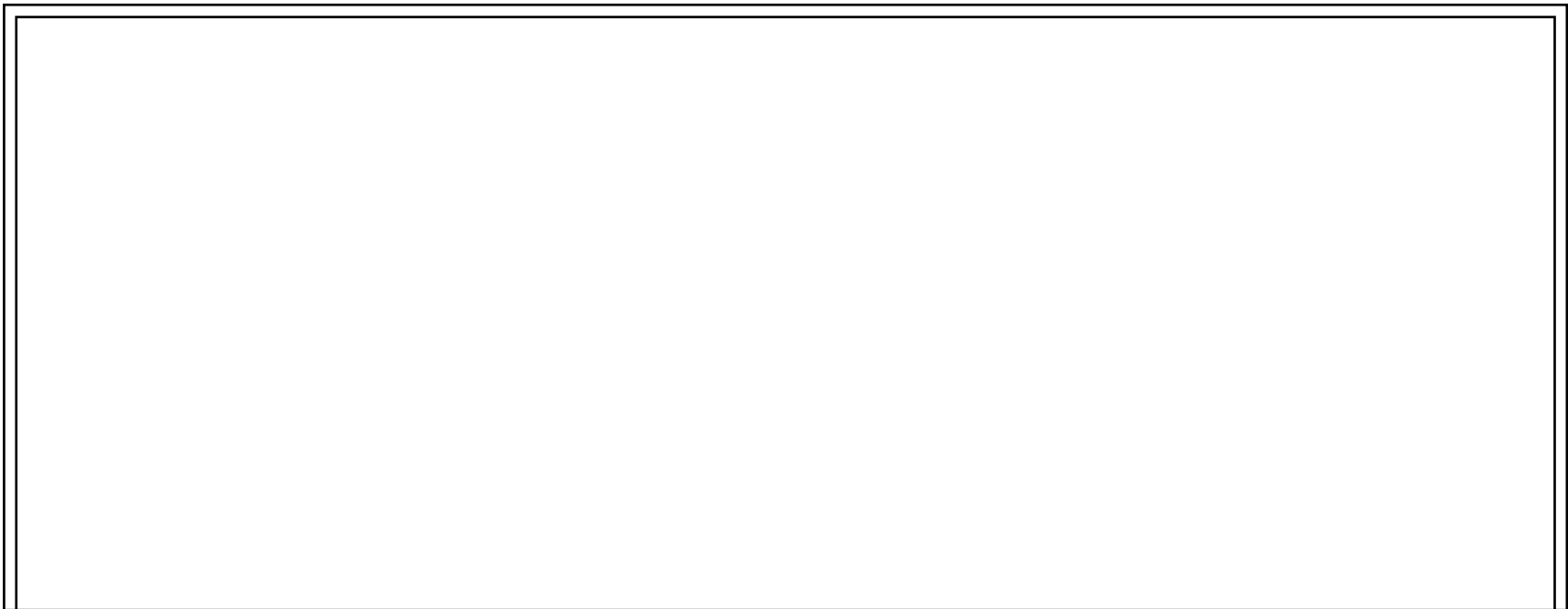
The title refers to what is defined as the American keyboard standard – the first six letters in the top row spell out “qwerty.” But in the context of the film’s narrative, it is a maximum Scrabble word, garnering big points if used at the right time or the right part of the game board (triple word score!). The pursuit of words for Scrabble competition is the background of this Chicago-based story, which in front features a well-done romantic coupling between two outsider souls. Director Bill Sebastian displays a deft touch with the many themes, and uses creative composition to cover up some of the script’s character flaws.

Zoe (Dana Pupkin) is a self-described “word nerd.” Unlucky in love and estranged from her difficult family, she fills her time studying etymology – the history and structure of words – between her job at the Department of Motor Vehicles (exposing dirty word vanity plates) and her interest in a local Scrabble Club. At the same time, she encounters an angry and suicidal security guard named Marty (Eric Hailey) in an upscale Chicago store. Their meeting leads to a date, and although Marty tends to fly off the handle, Zoe is attracted to his sad hopefulness, and they start to live together.

Marty is not confident of the relationship, and even challenges it by taking in a homeless preacher named Lewis (Bill Redding). But Zoe won’t be swayed, and is even stronger in her resolve for the relationship after a disastrous meeting with her family. Meanwhile, the National Scrabble Tournament is coming to Chicago, and Zoe is encouraged to enter, even though it might push Marty away and lead to an encounter with the arrogant current champion named Dirk (Joel Wiserssema).

*“Qwerty” screens at the Midwest Independent Film Festival on Tuesday, March 5th, 2013, starting at 6:30pm. The festival takes place at Landmark Century Centre Cinema, 2828 N. Clark Street, Chicago. [Click here](#) [16]for more information and to purchase tickets. Featuring Dana Pupkin, Eric Hailey, Bill Redding, Joel Wiersema and Mike McNamara. Screenplay by Juliet McDaniels. Directed by Bill Sebastian. Not Rated.*

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Let Us Be L-O-V-E-R-S: Marty (Eric Hailey) and Zoe (Dana Pupkin) in ‘Qwerty’  
*Photo credit: Intentional Films*

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