

## Film Review: 'Cloud Atlas' Reaches For the Sky But Loses Its Way

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 25, 2012 - 3:46pm

- [Andy Wachowski](#) [2]
- [Ben Whishaw](#) [3]
- [Cloud Atlas](#) [4]
- [David Mitchell](#) [5]
- [Doona Bae](#) [6]
- [Halle Berry](#) [7]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [8]
- [Hugo Weaving](#) [9]
- [James D'Arcy](#) [10]
- [Jim Broadbent](#) [11]
- [Jim Sturgess](#) [12]
- [Keith David](#) [13]
- [Lana Wachowski](#) [14]
- [Movie Review](#) [15]
- [Tom Hanks](#) [16]
- [Tom Tykwer](#) [17]

CHICAGO – Not all great works of literature make great works of film. David Mitchell's "Cloud Atlas" is a masterpiece but Tom Tykwer, Andy & Lana Wachowski's "Cloud Atlas" is definitely not. It is an ambitious work with many of Mitchell's fascinating ideas about the ripple effect of emotion through time left intact but it is a work that frustrates as often as it thrills. Too much of what unspools in this epic experience is technically remarkable and thematically engaging to dismiss the film entirely but it's an undeniable disappointment in comparison to the work that inspired it.



Rating: **3.0/5.0**

Mitchell's book is a Russian nesting doll of ideas – six short stories written in different genres and set in different time periods. The first half of each story is presented to the reader and then the second half in snake order – 1-6 and then 6-1. As the book reaches its ending and all of the stories have been intertwined, the true power of Mitchell's work resonates. The film works in the opposite direction in that the Wachowskis and Tykwer put all their cards on the table from montage one. We see all six stories in the opening scenes of "Cloud Atlas" and are instantly told – "All of these people are at the very least thematically intertwined." From the beginning, the film version of "Cloud Atlas" is connecting dots for you in a way that Mitchell allowed you to connect on your own. And that significant flaw of the film will only become more pronounced as it goes along. Every theme is underlined, highlighted, and bolded to the point that the work never sweeps you away organically as great epics do.



[Read Brian Tallerico's full review of "Cloud Atlas" in our reviews section.](#) [18]

Six stories might lead some directors to find dozens of high-profile actors but in keeping with the themes of Mitchell's work, the team behind "Cloud Atlas" chose to use primarily the same players across each of the arcs. So, Tom Hanks plays a character in each time period/story, as do Halle Berry, Jim Sturgess, Jim Broadbent, etc. It's a daring move that works on a very basic level but also somewhat plays into the main problem with the film – "See! They're all related to each other! We're all living the same human experience! Tom Hanks in different makeup makes that clear!" It's letting makeup work (some of which is good but some of which is truly awful) do the thematic highlighting for you.

The basic outlines of the six stories in "Cloud Atlas" are as follows. A young man (Sturgess) exploring the South Pacific in 1849 becomes a target of a cruel doctor (Hanks) and befriends a runaway slave as he struggles to survive long enough to get home to his true love. In 1936, a talented composer (Ben Whishaw) works with a music legend (Broadbent) while maintaining a series of letters with his true love. A journalist (Berry) investigates the criminal dealings of a major corporation and risks her own safety in the process in 1973. In present day, a publisher (Broadbent) is committed by his nefarious brother (Hugh Grant) and forced to deal with a sadistic nurse (Hugo Weaving). Way in the future, a clone (Doona Bae) becomes self-aware and leads a revolution. And, way, WAY in the future, a villager (Hanks) works with a traveler (Berry) to possibly save humanity.



[Continue reading for Brian Tallerico's full "Cloud Atlas" review.](#) [18]

*"Cloud Atlas" stars Tom Hanks, Halle Berry, Jim Broadbent, Hugo Weaving, Jim Sturgess, Doona Bae, Ben Whishaw, Keith David, and James D'Arcy. It was written & directed by Tom Tykwer, Andy & Lana Wachowski. It will be released on October 26, 2012.*



Cloud Atlas

Photo credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 18 2024 - 5:44am):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/20414/film-review-cloud-atlas-reaches-for-the-sky-but-loses-its-way>

#### Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/andy-wachowski>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ben-whishaw>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/cloud-atlas>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/david-mitchell>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/doona-bae>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/halle-berry>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hugo-weaving>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/james-darcy>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jim-broadbent>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jim-sturgess>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/keith-david>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/lana-wachowski>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/movie-review>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/tom-hanks>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/tom-tykwer>
- [18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/20412/cloud-atlas-reaches-for-the-sky-but-loses-its-way>