

## Blu-ray Review: John Magaro Shines in Nostalgic 'Not Fade Away'

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CHICAGO – David Chase, the man who seduced audiences with HBO's "The Sopranos" before leaving them hanging in one of the most brilliantly audacious finales in TV history, is certainly not a fan of tidy endings. He understands that suggestion and implication can be infinitely more powerful than closure, and he beautifully applies this principle to his feature directorial debut, "Not Fade Away."

This is not the usual coming-of-age picture where a boy achieves his dreams and finds his place in the world on his journey toward manhood. There are no simple answers in Chase's film, and not even a distinct sense of direction. In its final moments, the young hero is wandering unfamiliar streets attempting to hitch a ride back to a girl who may or may not be waiting for him. And yet, in that one sublime moment, he has found a sense of inner serenity. He knows exactly who he is, even if the world does not.



Blu-ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The boy, an aspiring rocker named Douglas, is played by John Magaro, an actor who previously impressed me with his touching portrayal of a troubled introvert in Josh Radnor's under-appreciated gem, "Liberal Arts." Under Chase's direction, Magaro undergoes a remarkable transformation, transforming himself into the sort of '60s-era crooner who could easily attract a passel of fawning fans with his channeling of Dylan and Jagger. Like Tom Hanks's exuberant charmer, "That Thing You Do!", Chase's film tells the tale of a fictitious garage band that serves as a microcosm of all the imitators that arose soon after the Beatles uplifted American spirits with their Ed Sullivan appearance mere weeks after the JFK assassination. Douglas is clearly the most gifted member of the band, and gradually rises in the ranks from drummer to lead singer, belting out "Time is On My Side" with such bold sexual magnetism that he instantly earns the attention of his longtime crush, Grace (beguiling Aussie Bella Heathcote). Not everyone is pleased with Douglas's newfound success, especially his gruff father (James Gandolfini), who ridicules his son's curly hair and boots with the disgruntled refrain, "It looks like you just got off the boat" (a remark that Chase's father reportedly said many times as well, one of many autobiographical details threaded into the narrative). Also peeved is the band's former lead singer, Eugene, well-played by Jack Huston (nephew of Anjelica) as the sort of unfortunate soul who attracts trouble with his mere existence.



Not Fade Away was released on Blu-ray and DVD on April 30th, 2013.

Photo credit: Paramount Home Media Distribution

This is a very familiar tune, but Chase brings a great deal of specificity and personal insight to each scene. The script is a tad overloaded with subplots—a tangent involving Grace's sister could've easily been axed—and the dutiful narration by Douglas's wide-eyed sister strikes a false note every time it materializes. But those all amount to quibbles in this superb showcase for Magaro, one of Hollywood's most promising talents.

"Not Fade Away" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 1.85:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, Spanish and French audio tracks, and includes a terrific three-part documentary featuring interviews with the cast and crew. Chase recalls how one of his favorite tasks on "The Sopranos" was choosing the right song for a crucial scene (who can forget his use of "Don't Stop Believin'" in the finale?), and it made him want to explore his love of music further. The actors spent four months in musical boot camp prior to production, and the extra effort certainly is apparent in the final cut. One of Magaro's drum teachers was Andy White, the man who served as drummer for The Beatles before Ringo entered the picture. Also included on the disc is an additional featurette and a brief compilation of deleted scenes.

*'Not Fade Away' is released by Paramount Home Media Distribution and stars John Magaro, Bella Heathcote, Jack Huston, Will Brill and James Gandolfini. It was written and directed by David Chase. It was released on April 30th, 2013. It is rated R.*



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