

Film Review: Uneven ‘Anomalisa’ is an Animated Reflection Back to Us

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 8, 2016 - 4:54pm

- [Adaptation](#) [2]
- [Anomalisa](#) [3]
- [Being John Malkovich](#) [4]
- [Charlie Kaufman](#) [5]
- [David Thewlis](#) [6]
- [Donald Kaufman](#) [7]
- [Duke Johnson](#) [8]
- [Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind](#) [9]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [10]
- [Jennifer Jason Leigh](#) [11]
- [Movie Review](#) [12]
- [Paramount Pictures](#) [13]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [14]
- [Stop Motion](#) [15]
- [Synecdoche New York](#) [16]
- [Tom Noonan](#) [17]

CHICAGO – There is directness in the reflective philosophy of “Anomalisa,” but there is also a sense of disconnection. From writer/co-director Charlie Kaufman (“Being John Malkovich”) comes another meditation on the life of life, and the twists of fate that inhabit the journey.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

If this were a live action film instead of a stop-motion animated effort, there would little to distinguish it from any other independent film-style character study. The main character is stuck in a loop, so much so that the other people in his world sound exactly the same to him. The “Anomalisa” character of the title does little to fulfill her promise as his break from the normalcy. There are many weird features of the film – characteristic of Charlie Kaufman – and with its method of animation and philosophy it’s enough to recommend it, but be wary of its slow pace and use of awkward surreal moments to pad the story. Taken in as a complete work, it does score as “we have met the enemy and they are us.”

Michael Stone (voice of David Thewlis) is a customer service guru, and has written several books on the subject. But his personal life is in a rut, and he the sound of the world and everything else in his life is the same bland voice (Tom Noonan), whether man or woman. His attendance at a convention comes at a crossroad in his “normal” existence.

At this conference, he meets Lisa (Jennifer Jason Leigh) and suddenly he’s not hearing that same voice. He seduces her, and she reluctantly goes along (he’s literally the Elvis of customer service ideology). Their brief affair revives Michael’s outlook, but the price he has to pay might not be enough to turn his life around. The anomaly of Lisa may be a blessing and a curse.

“Anomalisa” continues its limited release in Chicago on January 8th. See local listings for theaters and showtimes. Featuring the voices of David Thewlis, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Tom Noonan. Written by Charlie Kaufman. Directed by Charlie Kaufman and Duke Johnson. Rated “R”



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Stop Motion Characters Michael (voice of David Thewlis) and Lisa (Jennifer Jason Leigh) in 'Anomalisa'

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

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- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/adaptation-0>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/anomalisa>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/being-john-malkovich>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/charlie-kaufman>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/david-thewlis>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/donald-kaufman>
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- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/movie-review>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/paramount-pictures>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/stop-motion>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/synecdoche-new-york-0>
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- [18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/26154/uneven-anomalisa-is-an-animated-reflection-back-to-us>