

DVD Review: 'Elegy' Features Spectacular Performances From Ben Kingsley, Penelope Cruz

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 17, 2009 - 11:06pm

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DVD Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – They have yet to perfectly adapt the great author [Philip Roth](#) [13]’s tone from page to screen, but Isabel Coixet’s “[Elegy](#) [6]” comes the closest. With other modern masters like Ian McEwan (“[Atonement](#) [15]”) and Cormac McCarthy (“[No Country For Old Men](#) [16]”) finding a new audience through the successful adaptations of their work, maybe “Elegy” will bring fans to Roth.

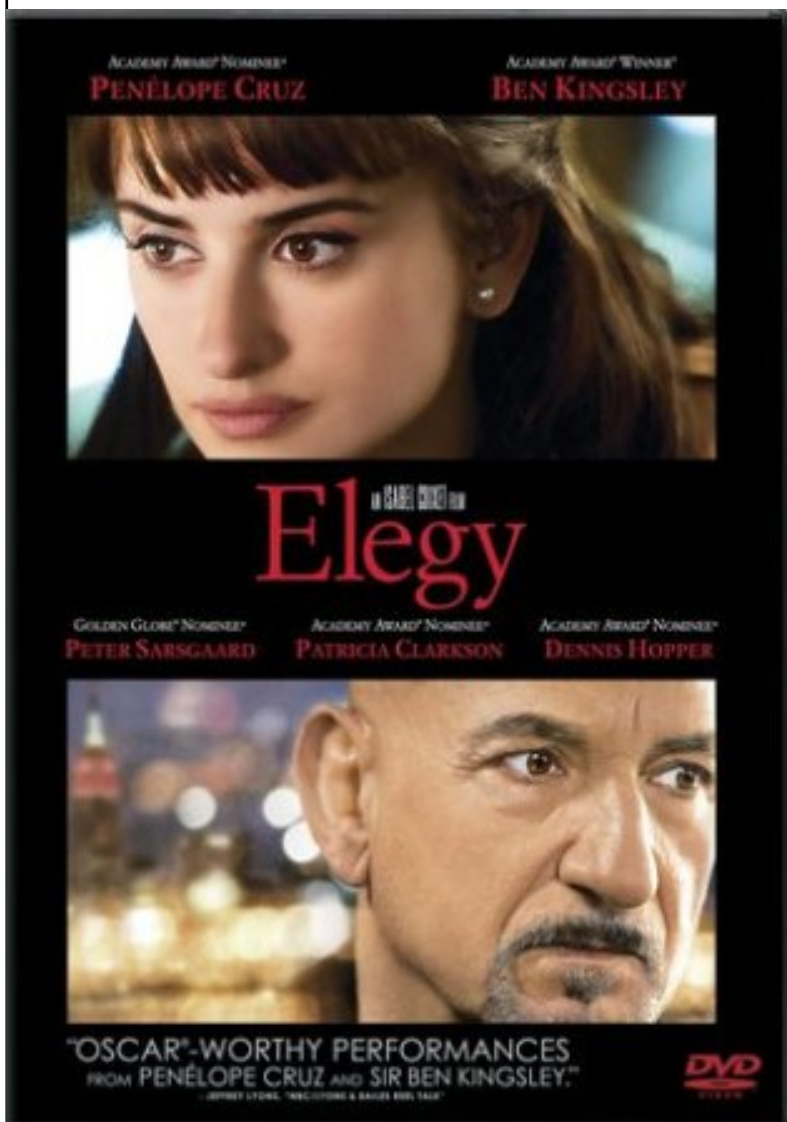
With the best performance from [Ben Kingsley](#) [2] in a long time and a turn from [Penelope Cruz](#) [11] that deserved more consideration in the year-end awards season conversation, “Elegy” certainly deserves a look on DVD. It’s the kind of adult, mature drama that seems to be made with less frequency every year.



Elegy was released on DVD on March 17th, 2009.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Video

Kingsley plays David Kepesh, a perfectionist through and through who believes that not only is life planned out but that he wrote the plan. He has perfected every element of his life to the point that he intellectually controls nearly everyone around him. He beds his younger students with ease, doesn’t seem to mind that he can’t get along with his son ([Peter Sarsgaard](#) [12]), exercises physically and intellectually with his buddy ([Dennis Hopper](#) [4]), and has a girlfriend ([Patricia Clarkson](#) [10]) that he only sees on his terms.



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Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Video

Of course, David's is a life that needs to be turned upside down and watching it go topsy-turvy after the entrance of a gorgeous young woman named Consuela (Penelope Cruz) is something predictable in the world of drama but it's handled eloquently and unpredictably.

Consuela doesn't just get into David's bed, she does something he thought impossible - she gets under his skin. The two develop a May-December romance that shatters the strict rules that David has set up and that he thought he'd follow until his final days. But just when David thinks he's adjusted to one curveball, life throws a distinctly different one his way. "Elegy" is about a man who thinks he has everything under control and learning that he very clearly does not.

A few of the twists and turns of "Elegy" feel a bit forced on the big screen and probably were easier to sell on the page than they were for a screenwriter. And Coixet starts to let the piece feel a bit too melodramatic in the final act.

But these are minor complaints for what is truly an actor's piece. Hopper, Clarkson, and Sarsgaard are perfect in the supporting cast and Kingsley and Cruz simply rock. She gives a particularly daring performance that I think nearly stands up with her Oscar-winning work in "Vicky Cristina Barcelona" and her incredible turn in "Volver". It may be more of an acting showcase than a complete film, but judged as such it's one of the best of 2008.

Sadly, Sony didn't see fit to release "Elegy" on Blu-Ray, so "old-ray" will have to do. The film is presented in 1.85:1 anamorphic widescreen with an English 5.1 Dolby Digital track that fits the film well without being particularly remarkable.

The same "just about par or maybe a bit under" judgment could be rendered regarding the special features for "Elegy". All fans will find is a lonely featurette called "The Poetry of Elegy" and a commentary track by screenwriter Nicholas Meyer. Neither are that notable but considering the film made under \$4 million in theaters, the paucity of bonuses on the DVD can be understood, if not forgiven.

'Elegy' is released by Sony Pictures Home Video and stars Ben Kingsley, Penelope Cruz, Dennis Hopper, Patricia Clarkson, and Peter Sarsgaard. It was written by Nicholas Meyer based on the book by Philip Roth and directed by Isabel Coixet. It was released on March 17th, 2009. It is rated R.



[17]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [18]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [17]

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