

# Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts Seek to Repurpose ‘Larry Crowne’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 1, 2011 - 6:13am

- [Byran Cranston](#) [2]
- [Cedric the Entertainer](#) [3]
- [George Takei](#) [4]
- [Gugu Mbatha-Raw](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Julia Roberts](#) [7]
- [Larry Crowne](#) [8]
- [Movie Review](#) [9]
- [Pam Grier](#) [10]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [11]
- [Rita Wilson](#) [12]
- [Rob Riggle](#) [13]
- [Tom Hanks](#) [14]
- [Universal Pictures](#) [15]



Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Movie stars need certain types of films to keep their star power safe and audiences expect certain things from them, with limitations, to create summer movie comfort. Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts fill the bill in “Larry Crowne.”

Tom Hanks wrote (with Nia Vardalos) and directed this film, which on the surface purports to create a ripped-from-the-headlines story about a middle age man who loses his job and faces foreclosure. What it really accomplishes is just another showcase for the charm of the Tom Hanks “character” and the hope that can be enough to counter the questionable situations and weak script.

Hanks is the title character Larry Crowne, an ex-Navy cook who currently works as a floor representative at a Wal-mart type megastore. Although he has won eight employee-of-the-month awards, he is unceremoniously fired for apparently not having a university degree. Faced with a house worth less than what is owed on it and no prospects, Larry decides to register at his local community college.

Trading in his SUV for a gas sipping scooter, Larry fits in almost immediately by meeting Talia (Gugu Mbatha-Raw), who invites him into a scooter “gang” at the school. Larry also signs up for a Public Speaking class, run by the burned-out Mercedes Tainot (Julia Roberts), and a first level economics class run by Dr. Matsutani (George Takei).



To Her With Love: Julia Roberts (Mrs. Tainot) and Tom Hanks as the Title Character ‘Larry Crowne’  
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

It becomes obvious that Larry is taking a shine to the lovely Mrs. Tainot, who is on her last days with husband Dean (Bryan Cranston). He is also helped out by his neighbor Lamar (Cedric the Entertainer) and new group of college friends, even reliving his Navy days by becoming a part-time cook at a popular diner. It's a new life and a new way for Larry Crowne.

Right off the bat the problem is that no retail outlet in there right mind would fire the clearly popular and wonderful Larry. The film opens with the montage of Hanks doing his Hanks thing, laughing with his co-workers, doing wacky things with the retail duties and obviously relishing customer service. Yeah, that's the first guy you want to can in these freaked-out times. The excuse of no college was a screenplay device, and a lame one.

But it gets Hanks to the school itself, and that is where the second most unlikely scenario occurs. The clearly fifty-something Larry is embraced by a "gang" of scooter riders, led by Talia, a comely co-ed who eventually quits college to open a boutique because of the miraculous Larry's advice. This gives Hanks his device, the scooter, to represent Larry and makes him cool in school, but in real-life he'd be ignored and a scooter gang would be a one way ticket to Nerdsville.

The story also suffers because the two people who wrote it, Tom Hanks and Nia "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" Vardalos have no idea what it's really like to be middle class with an underwater mortgage. There is no nuance or even sadness in Larry's sunny character, it would have been much more interesting (but a different movie) had he been a depressive sadsack. He's also divorced, where is the dark side to that? And really, there are no retail jobs in CaliforniaTown for an experienced floor rep? He didn't want to cook after the Navy, but he becomes the best fry cook in town? Three cheers for Larry!

Julia Roberts is a bit disingenuous as the borderline alcoholic professor, because her hair, skin, looks and weight have nothing to do with such a portrayal. But when paired with Hanks the two old pros project the chemistry and appeal that have kept them both going for several decades. The romance is approached cautiously and without a lot of fanfare, which is the only subtle part of the story. It's Tom being Tom and Julia (after a little prodding) being Julia, damn the improbabilities and pass the popcorn.



Warped Drive: Tom Hanks and George Takei (Dr. Matsutani) in 'Larry Crowne'  
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

It's to his credit that Bryan Cranston ("Breaking Bad") took his crass ex-husband role and made it better than written. Cedric the Entertainer was the magical neighbor who never seemed to offer Larry anything but stuff from his ongoing yard sale. And George Takei (the original Mr. Sulu from "Star Trek") makes a case for late career revival with his daffy econ professor. Oh my!

There is nothing wrong with Larry Crowne, especially if you like the two lead stars, but then again it's the type of story that could have been more redemptive or even more real as Americans face the same problems as Larry. If the film is designed to allow us to forget our troubles, how to relate to Larry Tom? He's the guy who gets and has everything, as a real life movie star and a character who is too big to fail.

*"Larry Crowne" opens everywhere on July 1st. Featuring Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts, Cedric the Entertainer, Rita Wilson, Pam Grier, Bryan Cranston, Gugu Mbatha-Raw and George Takei. Screenplay by Tom Hanks and Nia Vardalos, directed by Tom Hanks. Rated "PG-13"*



[16]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [17]  
Senior Staff Writer  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [16]

© 2011 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

**Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 23 2024 - 10:43am*):**  
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/14776/tom-hanks-julia-roberts-seek-to-repurpose-larry-crowne>

**Links:**

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/byran-cranston>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/cedric-the-entertainer>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/george-takei>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/gugu-mbatha-raw>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/julia-roberts>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/larry-crowne>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/pam-grier>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/rita-wilson>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/rob-riggle>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/tom-hanks>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/universal-pictures>
- [16] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>