

Romantic Coupling of ‘One Day’ Rises Above Average

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 19, 2011 - 11:25am

- [Anne Hathaway](#) [2]
- [Focus Features](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [Interview](#) [5]
- [Jim Sturgess](#) [6]
- [Ken Stott](#) [7]
- [London](#) [8]
- [Lone Scherfig](#) [9]
- [One Day](#) [10]
- [Patricia Clarkson](#) [11]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [12]
- [Rafe Spall](#) [13]
- [Romolo Garai](#) [14]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – In the sure hands of director Lone Scherfig, the underrated film “An Education” brought Carey Mulligan to full light. Anne Hathaway and Jim Sturgess generate similar radiance in Scherfig’s new film, “One Day.”

The narrative does apply some clichés of romantic comedies that could best have been avoided, but it also challenges those conventions with a shocking turn of events that deepens the emotional landscape. It is split into two halves, even though the more serious portion is only about a quarter of the proceedings. The low-key skill of Lone Scherig in mining new depths of purpose from her direction makes One Day a cut above the usual.

Emma (Anne Hathaway) and Dexter (Jim Sturgess) are university classmates who have a close encounter on graduation day. They agree to continue their friendship, the date the story drops in on them is July 15th, depending on the events of the particular year. Emma is a confused writer, who starts out as a waitress, and Dexter is a nascent television personality who morphs his small celebrity into a modicum of success. Their different directions challenge the friendship, but they manage to keep it going.



Anne Hathaway as Emma in ‘One Day’
Photo credit: Giles Keyte for Focus Features

Dexter has to deal with the pain of his dying mother (Patricia Clarkson), and Emma sets up residence with Ian (Rafe Spall). While life happens when they’re busy making other plans, they maintain the connection that can’t seem to be broken, even through domestic partnerships,

marriage and Dexter's daughter. They are destined to be together, but in that destiny lies a poignant truth about the feelings among soul travelers.

David Nicholls script is adapted from his novel, a very popular British fiction. In the device of July 15th, it revels in cutesy observations about tabloid television and easy clichés about the same-time-next-year meanderings of a couple that clearly want to be together. Surprisingly, there is a seen-it-before sameness to the front three quarters of the film, except perhaps the fall of Dexter, after his initial success as a TV star. Emma of course writes the best-seller, which besides being a famous journalist is the go-to occupation of careers depicted in movies.

It is the performances that keep the narrative from sliding into the abyss. Hathaway is strong and British in this film, and has an air of confidence that allows her indecisive character some naturalism. Jim Sturgess, the scene-stealer from "Across the Universe," wisely ages and learns in the twenty years the characters go through, and actually becomes the main story. He is the glue that must deal with the centerpiece revelation in the final quarter of the story, and hits a home run in actualizing the emotion of it all.

The supporting crew is unusual for this time of film, and adds a presence like the proper spice in a stew. Patricia Clarkson, who is becoming a professional Mom character this summer, shows both the negative and positive qualities of her dying character in a very short screen time. Ken Stott as Dexter's father is a dichotomy from Clarkson's aura, but that choice yields great value towards the end. Rafe Spall (son of Timothy) spins the hapless character in new direction, and ends up sympathetic even though he's a bit overreactive.



Toasting the Future: Anne Hathaway and Jim Sturgess as Dexter in 'One Day'
Photo credit: Giles Keyte for Focus Features

It is the twist at the end of the film, as mentioned before, that places it into another realm. This is the best part, beautifully handled by both the narrative form and the performers. It's hard to say whether it was truly enough to counteract the conventionality of the front part, but it does save the movie overall. This isn't as good as *An Education*, but it does explore vital arenas of the heart, as the other film does. *One Day* just does it in a different way, meandering toward the twist, which ends up being substantial.

Anne Hathaway is progressing in an odd way. For every type of challenging performance (like this one), she throws in a rotten "Bride Wars" or "Love and Other Drugs." This may be the lot in life for an actress in the film industry. Make 'em while they're hot, and remind us occasionally that Hathaway can be cool.

"One Day" opens everywhere August 19th. Featuring Anne Hathaway, Jim Sturgess, Patricia Clarkson, Romolo Garai, Rafe Spall and Ken Stott. Screenplay by David Nicholls from his novel. Directed by Lone Scherfig. Rated "PG-13." [Click here](#) [15] to read the HollywoodChicago.com interview with director Lone Scherfig.



[16]

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

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/anne-hathaway>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/focus-features>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/interview>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jim-sturgess>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ken-stott>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/london>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/lone-scherfig>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/one-day>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patricia-clarkson>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/rafe-spall>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/romolo-garai>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/15295/interview-lone-scherfig-directs-anne-hathaway-in-one-day>
- [16] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>