

More is Preferred in 'Love is All You Need'

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Creating the lofty name for this film, “Love is All You Need” – from a translation of its original title, “Den skaldede friser” – is intently ambitious considering its source is a lyric from one of The Beatles most famous songs. The film has its moments, but cannot sustain itself in a stew of high drama and mixed emotions.

Pierce Brosnan lends his star power to a Danish, Swedish, Italian, French and German produced film, and actually is one of the main characters to get caught in the web of the conflicting emotions in the plot. He is supposed to be a man in mourning for a long passed first wife, but his sophistication as a wealthy business man and still-good-looking James Bond air makes this character trait extremely unlikely. However, he meets a woman who is struggling with her own problems, and it turns out they are both going to the wedding of his son and her daughter. Through a bunch of hard to fathom circumstances, the wedding becomes secondary to Brosnan’s pursuit in his definition of love. What this film really needs is a more coherent narrative flow.

Brosnan is Philip, who has lost his wife years ago in an automobile accident, and owns a food distributorship in Copenhagen. He has let his son Patrick (Sebastian Jensen) borrow the villa he owns in Italy for the son’s marriage to Astrid (Molly Blixt Egelind). Astrid’s mother Ida (Trine Dyrholm) is going to the wedding, but without her husband. He has flown the coop and now shacks up with an accountant from his job. This occurs right at the point while Ida is waiting for diagnostic news regarding her breast cancer, and right before the wedding.



Philip (Pierce Brosnan) has Eyes for Ida (Trine Dyrholm) in 'Love is All You Need'

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

Everyone gathers for the wedding, including Astrid’s father, who not only brings his new conquest but announces they’re engaged. Also

arriving to stir trouble is Benedikte (Parprika Steen), the bawdy and obnoxious ex sister-in-law of Philip. Patrick and Astrid are ready to take the vows, but between their unrevealed secrets and Philip's sudden attraction to Ida, they'll need to first take care of the wedding guests.

This scenario almost plays out like the film "Mamma Mia!" without the music, since Brosnan was in that cast and the brides look alike. But this has a more European sensibility, with a more open look at the emotional dread that comes with illness, and the harsh emotions associated with adultery and unrequited desire. There is a very interesting nude scene, for example, that would never be an American version of this story. Ida decides to skinny dip – cancer scars and all – and leaves her chemotherapy wig behind. There was a real exposure in Philip's discovery of the swimmer.

The highlight of the film is the performance of Trine Dyrholm. The Danish actress has an expressive face that was made for the movies, and she portrays her cancer victim character as a survivor, who won't let her errant husband, lost luggage or the fear of bad diagnostic news defeat her at the wedding. Her aura does shine, and it can be believed that Brosnan could fall for her, given the presence that she generates.

It's too bad that screenwriter Anders Thomas Jensen and director Susanne Bier (who also wrote the story) couldn't reconcile Brosnan's character. The role is one note and shrill, so much so that it remains unlikely that such a personality would fall for Ida – which is probably the point – but what needs to be evident is a transformation for Philip that isn't there. And Parprika Steen, her obvious great name aside, is overbearing as Philip's sister-in-law, and idiotically ignores all signals from others, even as those signals are as bright as a spotlight.



Ida Contemplates Her Life in 'Love is All You Need'
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

The kids getting married are pretty much besides the point in "Love Is All You Need," and although they have a subplot, the conclusion can be seen from outer space. It was also annoying for the father to bring his new girlfriend to the ceremony, given that Ida had discovered the adultery a week before. It was done merely to add high drama to the plot, and wouldn't happen (hopefully, but you never know with those Europeans) in real life.

It's fascinating in a cultural sense, to absorb a modern take on European lives and loves in the post millennium. It just that this film "needs" a little more than what it's able to give in that connective experience.

"Love is All You Need" continues its limited release in Chicago on May 10th. See local listings for show times and theaters. Featuring Pierce Brosnan, Trine Dyrholm, Molly Blixt Egelind and Sebastian Jessen. Screenplay by Anders Thomas Jensen, directed by Susanne Bier. Rated "R"



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