

## Circumstances of Life, Truth Exist in ‘Boyhood’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 18, 2014 - 5:01pm

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Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Life is made up of moments, as the philosophy of the new Richard Linklater film wants to convey. What formulates a person’s ideals and soul, born in a certain place and time? Over 12 years, the writer and director created a fictional family using the same actors in “Boyhood.”

The film is more than an experiment, it feels seamless – if you didn’t know that Linklater used the same actors over 12 years, you might think brothers portrayed the main character. Using precise time markers, mostly in technology, the director shows the growth, philosophy and aging process of one star-crossed family in Texas, who manage to survive in the way they know how to, with all their mistakes and sacrifices. The film is nearly three hours, but because of how fascinating their story becomes, it seems like a moment.

Mason (Ellar Coltrane, from age six to 18) is a product of a broken home, and that becomes apparent when his absent father (Ethan Hawke) comes back into his life as the film begins. His mother (Patricia Arquette) wants nothing to do with the Dad, and moves Mason and his sister Samantha (Lorelei Linklater, the director’s daughter) to Houston.





Mason (Ellar Coltrane) and Dad (Ethan Hawke) Explore 'Boyhood'

Photo credit: IFC Films

The years race along, and mother begins a path toward becoming a college professor. In the interim she meets Bill (Marco Perella), one of her teachers, and he becomes her second husband. His two kids merge with hers, and life modifies until Bill's drinking issues wreaks havoc with his relationships. Moving on, the family seeks refuge with a friend, and Mason's father becomes a presence when he moves nearby. There are more marriages, more family decisions and a growth into his own individuality for Mason.

The story moves precisely and carefully, and fleshes out the consequences of this one family with some interesting life cycle changes. Arguably, besides the "boy" in the title, it is Mom who changes the most. In the background, she deals with single parenting and an obvious successful educational path, while at the same time finding difficulties in three relationships. Patricia Arquette is a revelation in understanding her character situations, and her real aging punctuates the passion of her final speech, so powerful in its truth.

How the heck did Linklater find Ellar Coltrane, to essentially grow up on screen while living another person's life? The actor not only goes from moppet to manhood, but has a look that becomes more interesting as he gets older. Who can predict that? It's the purity of the project that gave Linklater that good karma, or perhaps it was the spirit of the story that influenced the growth of the actors. Either way, both Lorelei Linklater and Ellar Coltrane both became their characters, both in moral and physical development.

It is obvious that Linklater was also learning throughout the years. In the length of time with "Boyhood," he made nine other movies, a variety of films anchored by the last two installments of his "Before" trilogy ("Before Sunset" and "Before Midnight" came after "Before Sunset"). The film starts to take a philosophical turn towards the end, as the characters begin a more contemplative life – which emphasizes the value of stability. His long-time collaborator Ethan Hawke (featured in all the "Before" films) went on the whole 12 year journey – it would be amazing to know what was learned in such a creative process.



Mom (Patricia Arquette) and Mason Connect in 'Boyhood'

Photo credit: IFC Films

Some of the "moments" are slightly soap opera-ish. The second husband, portrayed with actor courage by Marco Perella, is a drinker with no roots in the "sorrow of gin." His histrionics are frightening, especially to those who grew up in such households, but it felt more dramatic than necessary to the overall story – plus Mason seems to casually use substances later without any nod to that past. Those are story decisions, and didn't take away from the overall energy of the project, especially in a magical conclusion, drenched in curiosity and hope.

Richard Linklater was born in the same year I was, two months apart and thousands of miles away. But somehow his stories feel like my stories, or your stories. That has nothing to do with the time, place and circumstances of his life, and at the same time everything to do with them. To quote the band Supertramp in the song "Dreamer" – "What a day, a year, a laugh it is."

*"Boyhood" continues its limited release in Chicago on July 18th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Ellar Coltrane, Patricia Arquette, Ethan Hawke, Lorelei Linklater, Marco Perella. Written and directed by Richard Linklater. Rated "R"*



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