

‘Yesterday’ is a Can’t-Miss Premise That Still Misses

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 28, 2019 - 10:07am

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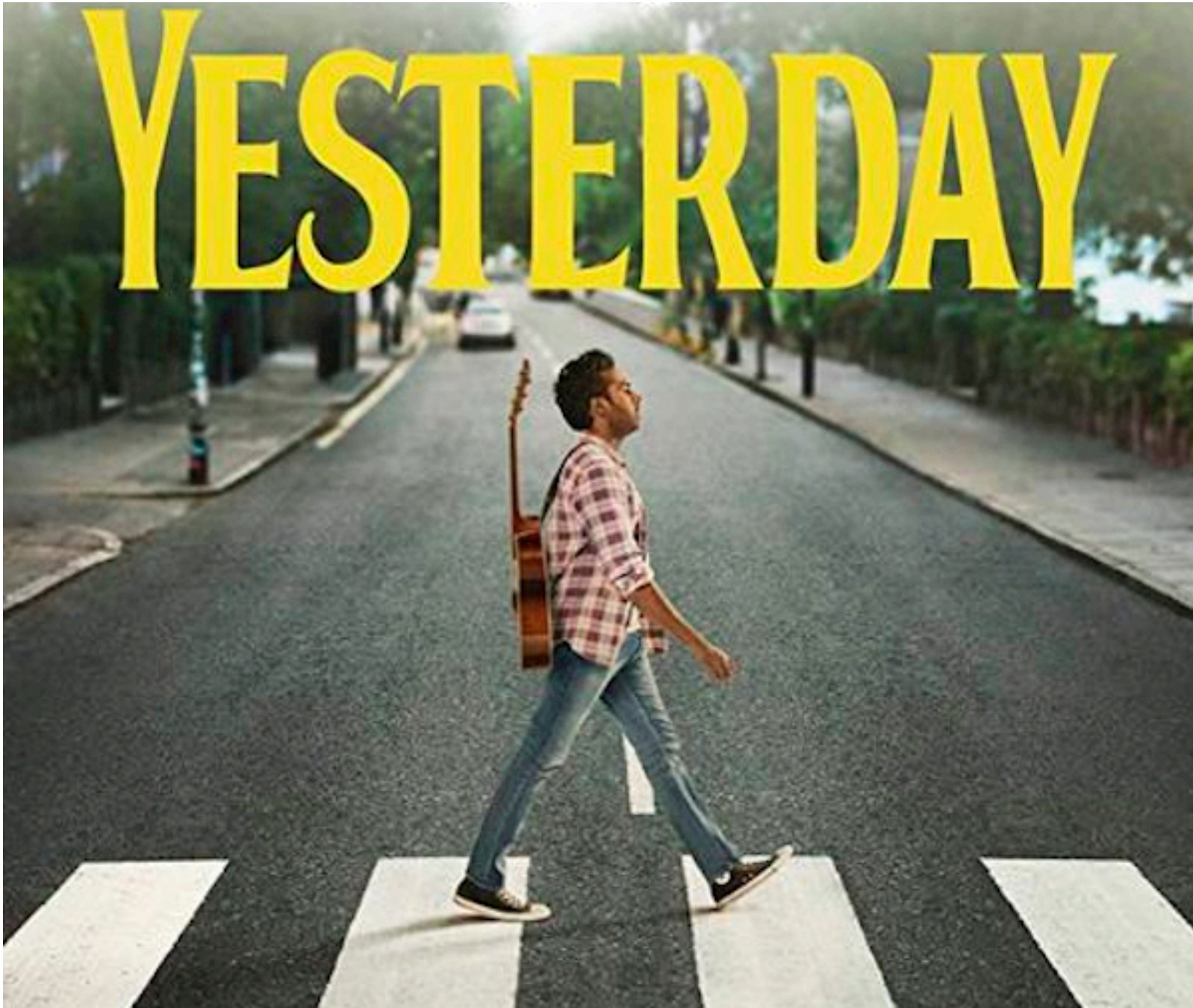


Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – As a Beatles fanatic who has a band because of their existence, the premise of “Yesterday” was can’t miss. A man wakes up after an accident to discover he’s the only person to know that The Beatles existed? Sign me up and buy me popcorn. It’s unfortunate that the story went in a direction that did miss.

There is joy in the discovery ... the early days of Jack, the musician who is awoken to his only-man-on-earth status, is goofy fun. His early renderings of the songs, and their bare bones recordings, have a special quality that harken back to their origins. However, story creator/screenwriter Richard Curtis (“Love Actually”) couldn’t help but wrap a rather lame love story around it, and having Ed Sheeran bring the proceedings to a halt every time he appeared on screen was painful. And while Himesh Patel gave it the old college try, he just wasn’t right for the serendipity that the role required. I walked in thinking A plus, but reluctantly have to write B minus on this report card.

Jack (Himesh Patel) is a struggling musician getting nowhere, man. His manager and potential crush, Ellie (Lily James), believes in him and wants him to continue. While riding his bike home one night, Jack gets swallowed up by a worldwide electrical black out and wrecks himself into a coma. When he comes out of it, he is the only man on earth who knows The Beatles existed.



Jack (Himesh Patel) Believes in ‘Yesterday’

Photo credit: Universal Studios

After embarking on some soul searching, he decides to move forward to record the songs. The early raw recordings cause a sensation, which gets him a new manager (Kate McKinnon), a meeting with Ed Sheeran (himself) and a new pressure with fame, knowing he is a fraud. Can he make some hard decisions, and realize that the love of his life may be his old manager? It’s a long and winding road.

Himesh Patel is earnest, but for some reason his range as an actor can’t handle the varied emotions (extreme surprise, love, depression, fear) that the screenplay calls for. His dog tired expression was not the correct face for the film, which I believe required a stranger type of enthusiasm, an almost madness. Given Mr. Patel’s lack of recognition outside of England (he is known for the popular BBC series “EastEnders”), director Danny Boyle (“Slumdog Millionaire”) should have opted for a complete unknown.

The story quality suffers through some wrong decisions. The focus on a will-they-won’t-they love story between Jack and Ellie is a distraction to the main premise, and never really goes anywhere. Kate McKinnon’s ruthless music industry manager could have use more of a comic touch ... the story portrays her as an extension of a soulless corporate music industry, which is like shooting fish in a barrel. Ed Sheeran adds nothing, and he delivers even less.



James Corden Gives Jack a Chance in ‘Yesterday’

Photo credit: Universal Studios

But but but there is the original premise, which is so fun and intriguing. The original joy of expressing those songs is what Patel does best, including a blistering rendition of “Help.” The gobsmacked expressions of people as he rolls out “Yesterday” and other classics is hugely satisfying. He also forgets a bunch of songs and lyrics, even as a musician/fan, and his trying to remember them is done very cleverly.

The existential question in relationship to this film is (if you were the only one to know The Beatles) is “what Beatles song would you introduce as the first one, to connect to an audience and create a desire for more?” given the music industry, the internet access, the “sound” and the styles of today. Are The B’s a relic of the past, or does their freshness still have the ability to speak to us? Tomorrow never knows.

“Yesterday” opens everywhere on June 28th. Featuring the voices of Danny Boyle, Himesh Patel, Lily James, Kate McKinnon, James Corden and Ed Sheeran. Screenplay by Richard Curtis, from a story by Curtis and Jack Barth. Directed by Danny Boyle. Rated “PG-13” ... My answer to the question in the last paragraph is “Hey Bulldog,” which has a amazing hook and is adaptable in today’s styles.



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