

Firth and Tucci Deliver Stellar Performances in 'Supernova'

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on January 31, 2021 - 5:46am

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Stars are a concept that I don't think I will ever understand. Giant celestial bodies of gas and fire that burn and shine with an unimaginable intensity. Their spherical appearance masks a double-edge that can both bring and sustain life, or out-right end it. Love is much the same way, simultaneously nurturing us up until the moment it isn't. Although *Supernova* doesn't take us on the incredible interstellar adventure its title suggests, the grounded, emotional journey is still otherworldly.

When I say that there is a journey to be had, I don't mean that in the purely figurative sense. There are 2 men, 1 dog, an old RV, and the open road driving us through emotional exposition. The road that we find ourselves on feels familiar but comfortable. There is nothing remarkable about the themes explored, on even the narrative vehicle (not to be confused with the RV) taken to get there, but there is a muted brilliance that shines so bright, it envelopes you in warmth as if you were laying in the sun.

This humble story revolves around a farewell tour of sorts as two men take a road trip that will forever change their lives. Sam (Colin Firth) and Tusker (Stanley Tucci), decades-long partners, travel the English countryside re-visiting some of their greatest hits as they reminisce about their youth and the high points of their relationship. The destination? A concert where acclaimed pianist Sam will perform after a long hiatus. There are several picturesque stops along the way, including a surprise birthday party, but we soon find out that what should be a joyous occasion is filled with somber realizations and philosophical introspective about mortality.



Photo credit: *Bleeker Street*

Tusker, a renowned novelist, suffers through the late stages of dementia while attempting to finish what could very well be his final story.

Although this well-known wordsmith struggles to pen his penultimate work of art, he has one final plot twist left in him. Much like a good book, *Supernova* doesn't outright spoon-feed the audience. Every bit of information that we need to understand the characters is naturally presented in soft-spoken exchanges, both verbal and non.

Director-Writer Harry Macqueen's sophomore film softly tells us a tale about love and the complexity of love and loss. Throughout the film, we explore some gorgeous landscapes that feel like perfect snapshots or painted portraits that effortlessly frame the beauty of everything natural, including the love shared between these two men. Macqueen's visual style and narrative voice are subdued, but never quiet. He relies on the more humdrum elements of this film to create an emotional anchor that helps draw the audience into the effortless poignancy between our two main characters. Silly things such as sexual orientation aren't ever at the forefront of any encounter or conversation, which is refreshing and worth applauding in this film because it is treated how it should be: normal. This queer love story doesn't harbor any reproachful thoughts or harsh judgments, only genuine human interactions, and as a gay man, it is always a refreshing sight to see my sexuality displayed as something unremarkable and not worth gawking at.



Photo credit: Bleeker Street

The chemistry between Firth and Tucci, while tempered, is palpable. Much like our gravitational pull around the sun, both actor's sincere and candid performances are what we pull us towards them. The little ways they display the love that they share, through longing stares or physical affection, feel truly earnest. The biggest challenge a low-key film like this faces is keeping the audience's attention through the somber, sauntering pacing, but Firth and Tucci's magnetic nuances keep us unable to look away, even when the tears make it hard to see.

We've seen many treatments of dementia in films, and I continue to be in awe when a story carefully and respectfully explores such a difficult subject without exaggerated ostentation. We all know life comes to an end, but with dementia and other cognitive disorders, the mourning process begins while the person is still alive. The torturous feeling of slowly losing the person you love feels equivalent to death by a thousand cuts. In *Supernova*, every cut Sam experiences open up a too-familiar emotional wound of loss within us, leaving us to not only commiserate, but also wholly empathize with him. In many ways, Tusker is a star that has gone supernova light-years away; what he used to be may be gone, but we can still see the force of his presence still lingering on as it takes time for his light to truly fade. Although the star has lost its original form, it serves as a reminder that love never truly died, it just changes.

"Supernova" opens in theaters and VOD on January 29th. Featuring Colin Firth, Stanley Tucci, Pippa Haywood, Ian Drysdale, Sarah Woodward, and James Dreyfus. Directed by Harry Macqueen. Written by Harry Macqueen. Rated "R"



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