



"Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind"
Starring Jim Carrey, Kate Winslet
Focus Features

Imagine the death of a loved one, a breakup between a couple that is genuinely in love or the hurt of a double-crossing friend. Then, after one all-night procedure, imagine being able to erase those painful events from one's memory and leaving with blissful ignorance. The angst, pain and longing would be gone, and all that would be left would be peaceful nothingness. This is "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

Holding true to Charlie Kaufman's screenwriting, "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" is a strange movie. As opposed to other Kaufman films, the movie stays relatively in bounds and tame. But compared to other mainstream movies, it is a labyrinth full of twists and turns. Viewers should be prepared to see some strange images and have their brains stretched a bit.

Funnyman Jim Carrey thrives as main character Joel, a shifty, lonely, soft-spoken geek. The character is a great new acting direction for Carrey, and it is similar to the character he played in his movie "The Truman Show."

Joel decides to undergo the unbelievable removal of memories of his ex-girlfriend, Clementine (Kate Winslet). Elijah Wood, Kirsten Dunst, Mark Ruffalo and Tom Wilkinson complete a stellar cast that keeps the movie interesting and flowing.

The story takes place against a snowy New York backdrop, where a doctor has opened up a shop with a sketchy procedure of erasing certain parts of people's memories.

This movie is a psychological quandary, leaving many questions unanswered about the effects of having your memory erased, but it is logical enough to pacify audiences and make the story believable.

The movie is hilarious at times as we see Joel in his childhood, wanting to be held by his mother and taking a bath in a sink. It is also heartbreaking at times though, as he is stripped of his memories of Clementine.

One of the most creative movies embraced by mainstream box offices, "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" is extremely thought-provoking and a memory you will not want quickly erased.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIRAMAX

"Jersey Girl"
Miramax Pictures
Starring Ben Affleck, Liv Tyler

"Jersey Girl" marks a new beginning for director Kevin Smith. Leaving behind the "View Askewiverse" that has been home to Smith's previous five films featuring creations "Jay and Silent Bob," Smith has decided it is time to move on to a different movies genre. If "Jersey Girl" is any indication of what the future holds for Smith, audiences can expect bright things from the former clerk.

In "Jersey Girl," Ben Affleck plays Ollie Trinke, a New York music publicist who falls in love with and marries Gertrude (Jennifer Lopez). Together the two of them prepare for the arrival of their first child. Unfortunately, life doesn't give the couple a happy ending. Gertrude dies of an aneurysm during childbirth, leaving Ollie to care for their new daughter alone. Still grieving over his wife's death, Ollie throws himself into his work in an attempt to distance himself from the pain he is dealing with.

On one ill-fated day, Ollie is forced to bring his daughter to a work with him. Stressed out over his child's constant crying and a room of chanting press, Ollie loses his cool and, in front of a packed room of press, lashes out at his client, the fresh prince of Bel-Air himself, Will Smith. His career ruined, Ollie goes from a professional at the top of his career to a blue-collar worker living out of his father's house in Highlands, N.J.

Affleck's performance as a man who is as in love with his past as much as he is in love with his daughter is easily one of his best roles yet. Affleck has always been on the top of his game while working with Kevin Smith. His role in "Jersey Girl" takes his standard up a notch.

While Affleck does tend to ham up this role, his portrayal of a son trying to learn to be a father is always watchable, and many will even consider it good. Not many actors can call a 7-year-old girl a "little *s*!" and still manage to be charming 10 minutes down the line. Audience members will have no problem being able to tap into the character and empathize with his predicament.

The movie is filled with actors on the top of their game. George Carlin's performance as Ollie's father is easily one of the best on-screen roles of Carlin's career. In one scene, Carlin remarks it's not that he wants Ollie to stay with him, it's that he doesn't want to die alone.

He then glances down at the mug of beer in his hand, and in that moment audiences see the pain in his eyes and realize that Carlin is not only a legitimate actor, but a great one.

Lopez's role is short and audiences will only catch a fleeting glance of her in the film. The movie's real love interest is Maya, a video store clerk/graduate student played by Liv Tyler. Tyler's joyful performance reinforces the idea that a man can move forward from his past for a beauty and personality.

The real standout of the movie is Raquel Castro as Gertie Trinke, Ollie's daughter. Castro manages to be precocious without being annoying, a seemingly impossible task for many child actors.

The other star of "Jersey Girl" is the outstanding music selection. The movie features a collection of great songs from such bands as The Cure, Al Green and Fleetwood Mac. The songs are craftily timed to not only offer a nice soundtrack, but also serve as great transitions.

Cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond is a great addition to Kevin Smith's library of friends and with luck, the two of them will continue a productive relationship. Zsigmond works to bring a sense of scope and craft to Smith's visual style.

While "Jersey Girl" may leave some of Smith's core audience feeling left out, it is a great step forward for Smith's career. While the story features an abundance of warmth and heart, don't expect too much of a downgrading of Smith's dialogue. While there is a notable lack of the f-Bomb, his finely-tuned dialogue features a frankness that may cause many parents to feel uncomfortable with their children watching. "Jersey Girl" is a great indicator of Smith's potential and an excellent beginning to the next stage of his career.



- Robert Saucedo

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