

ONE DAY

**A Focus Features / Random House / Film 4 Presentation
A Color Force Production / A Lone Scherfig Film**

Film reviewed by Franco P. Visser

With Valentine's Day still fresh in our memories, I decided to review a film that offers a different take on romance and the visual portrayal thereof. The film *One Day* is based on the number 1 best seller with the same title written by David Nicholls who also wrote the screenplay for the movie. Dexter (played by Jim Sturgess) and Emma (played by Anne Hathaway) meet after their college graduation celebrations and end up spending the night together, though not in a manner as is so often the case with drunk graduates who pair up and further their celebrations privately and in a physical way. The date of this is the 15th of July 1988 and the movie opens with this day. The film proceeds to show Dexter and Emma on that exact date every year from their graduation onwards, and how they lead their own lives separately but with a desperate longing for each other that never fades.

On 15 July 1989 Dexter helps Emma to move into a rather dilapidated apartment in London where she will aspire to become a famous writer, whereafter Dexter leaves for India. 15 July 1990 shows Emma working in a Mexican restaurant obviously unsuccessful in her writing career. A new guy by the name of Ian (played by Rafe Spall) starts working in the restaurant and Emma is tasked with showing him the ropes as a newly hired waiter. 15 July 1991 and Emma is offered the position of manager in the restaurant. Emma and Dexter have irregular telephonic contact, and he tries his best to get Emma to work on her true passion: writing. 15 July 1992 sees Emma and Dexter on their way to France for a shared holiday. While driving in France Emma lays down the rules for their holiday: no shared beds, no flirting (as Dexter has a girlfriend) and no seeing each other in the nude. Dexter insists that he too can make a rule - no playing Scrabble knowing very well that Emma loves playing Scrabble. In France they land up on a nudist beach, go skinny dipping one evening and again land up sharing a bed. Without pointing to the obvious, some of their holiday rules are broken - rather badly. The tension between them is unbearable and it is rather clear that they are very attracted to each other.

15 July 1993 sees Dexter hosting a cheesy television show and he ends up calling Emma one night in a drunken state and tells her that he likes her beautiful body. 1994's 15 July shows Dexter getting a lot of flak from his parents for his drinking and socialising habits. Ian meanwhile falls in love with Emma, but he is very aware of Dexter being in Emma's mind constantly. On 15 July 1995 Dexter is hosting an even worse television show, and it is clear that his career is going to shreds. After the show one night, Dexter's father pays him a visit on set and informs him that his mother passed away. As his father leaves the set he tells Dexter that he should not pay too much attention to a newspaper article that calls Dexter the 'most annoying man on telly'.

15 July 1996 shows Emma and Ian sharing a flat, and it is obvious that Emma is not impressed with his lack of success, ambition and drive. Dexter in the meantime has moved on to doing drugs, and one night he takes Emma out to a fancy club. In the club's bathroom he uses drugs and returns to insult Emma and the teaching job that she now has. They argue and Emma tells Dexter that although she loves him, she doesn't like what



he has become. From 15 July 1997 up to 15 July 2005 a lot happens in Emma and Dexter's lives. Dexter gets married to Sylvie (played by Romola Garai) and the couple has a baby daughter. Dexter is very involved in raising the baby, as Sylvie is frequently absent from their home-life. One of the reasons for this is that she is having an affair with one of Dexter's best friends, the same friend that employs Dexter in his restaurant. Dexter and Sylvie divorce. Emma moves from one relationship to the next without committing to marriage despite a number of proposals. She becomes a successful writer and her longing for Dexter grows stronger as the years go by. Dexter, down and out, starts up his own food shop. After many years Emma and Dexter finally get together and they marry each other.

Their love and attraction to each other have never disappeared, and being very much in love, after all that has happened throughout the years, they are able to have a solid and loving marriage.

15 July 2006 shows Emma taking a pregnancy test one morning which is negative. This causes her to snap at Dexter, and they have an argument. The day goes on and Emma goes swimming after spending time on her writing. She leaves a message for Dexter apologising for the argument that they had that morning, and that she will be late for a special dinner date that they had planned. This is where I will leave the rest of the film for you to discover, because what happens next is a pure and heartbreaking 'oh no!' moment.

One Day is a very different film. The way that it is presented to the viewer requires a lot of attention and mental flexibility while following Emma and Dexter's story. This is especially so because the film shows extracts in Emma and Dexter's lives in consecutive years over a span of 23 years. The overriding impression or message that the film left with me was that if one's path crosses with 'the one', the person or love object that you feel overwhelmingly attracted to and when the attraction is mutual, you should pursue a lasting and meaningful relationship with that person before it is 'too late'. Life is strange and one can never be certain as to tomorrow or any day further in the future. All we really do have is today, the present, and I often ask myself the question whether I am doing enough with what the present moment brings. Even more important than this is what do we do with the significant others that we are blessed with in our lives? In the current life and life-circumstances that we live in, real and true love is indeed often hard to find, and if you find it, cherish it! Make every moment that you share with a significant other, spouse, partner, lover or whatever, count because you may never know what drastic and unexpected turn of events life brings to you. We all know that Valentine's Day should actually be a constant celebration of love in our own love lives, but due to all kinds of pressures, demands and stressors we hardly take time out on every other day to 'celebrate' love and the presence thereof in our lives. Who the actual Saint Valentine was remains debateable, but chances are that martyr mythology gave rise to sentimental fact and the resultant custom that we observe on 14 February each year. *One Day* presents the realities of real-life love and loss, and the film is a fine movie with an excellent screenplay - really worth viewing.