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HIGH FIDELITY

Movie Details

 Post Author: Matt Ho  May 14, 2013  0

OUR RATING



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BEFORE SUNSET

DIRECTOR STEPHEN FREARS

WRITER STEVE PINK, JOHN CUSACK



US BOX OFFICE \$27.3M

RUN TIME 1 HR. 53 MIN. **RATED** R

YOUR RATING

GENRE COMEDY

WATCH THE TRAILER HIGH FIDELITY TRAILER

STARS Catherine Zeta-Jones Iben Hjelje Jack Black Joan Cusack John Cusack Lisa Bonet Tim Robbins
Todd Luiso

SYNOPSIS

After music junkie/record shop owner Rob Gordon (John Cusack) breaks up with girlfriend Laura (Iben Hjelje), he recalls his Desert Island Top Five Most Memorable Breakups and decides to revisit each ex-girlfriend to see where he went wrong.

REVIEW

While book-to-film adaptations are at times, an unnecessary abomination to the author's original work, *High Fidelity* is thankfully not an egregious bastardization of Nicky Hornby's beloved 1995 novel.

In fact, it's surprising how faithful director Stephen Frears and the writers are to the story. The main characters are all there; the compulsively created musical top-five-list remains a ubiquitous presence; the majority of events that take place, as well as the dialogue, are lifted straight from the pages. More importantly, *High Fidelity* breaks the fourth wall in order for Rob to function as a true narrator, revealing his inner thoughts to the audience, which was what made the book great in the first place. There are polarities between the literature and the script though, some of which loyal fans will find acceptable, while others are up for debate.

The most palpable difference is that the film takes place in Chicago as opposed to North London. So



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U.S Box Office

Weekend Box Office for 5/10/2013	
Iron Man 3	\$72,525,615
The Great Gatsby	\$50,085,184
Pain & Gain	\$5,001,029
Peeples	\$4,611,534
42	\$4,588,209

Source: *The Numbers* - Movie Box Office

Advertising

instead of Rob Fleming the Brit, we get Rob Gordon the American in the form of John Cusack. But at the end of the day, the monologues of love, life and music are universal themes; so geographical relocation doesn't affect anything in this case. Besides, the sets are pretty much how you'd imagine *High Fidelity's* Americanized doppelganger, and it complements the characters well.

There were several other directions the film took that I actually found to be better than the book itself. Rob meeting Laura's new age hippy boyfriend Ian (Tim Robbins) was more interesting and comedic than the subtle treatment of an awkward phone call between the two. The imaginary conversation with Bruce Springsteen instead of a simple narration was definitely something I wished Hornby thought of. Barry's address to the crowd about his band's name, and the song he performs were perfectly appropriate cultural alterations. I even liked how the plot sets up Rob's comeback as a DJ.

Is that Peter ****ing Frampton? – Rob Gordon

Whether this is good or bad to some is arguable, but Cusack does play a slightly more uplifting version of Rob. He's less crude and profane compared to the British counterpart, and it would've been nice to see a little more of that side. I do also wish some of the narrations took a break from his perspectives on his relationships. Yes, it's the meat of the story, but some of the best parts of the book are Rob's self-reflections and his general views on life that brought additional depth to the character. The desert-island top five most memorable breakups are out of order, which is fine, but downplaying the role of ex-girlfriend Jackie Alden ("Allen" in the book) is questionable. The way it was handled was understandable, but having Rob reunite with someone trapped in a lifeless marriage would've brought contrast to the other ex-girlfriends he visits, as well as his bleak observations on monogamy.

Cusack portrays Rob fairly well, though there are moments where I wish I saw the Rob fans of the book know; however, he gets the job done. Danish actress Iben Hjelje is very likeable as Laura, and she perfectly captures the personality of a mature, unusually patient ex-girlfriend who's flat out exhausted with her boyfriend. Catherine Zeta-Jones, who has a minor role as the beautiful and intimidating ex-girlfriend Charlie, plays the character's pretentiousness to a tee. But Jack Black is the one who steals the show. Black fully embodies Barry's judgmental music nerd persona, his obnoxiously energetic mannerisms, and his obsession with compiling Top Five lists. Look for his rendition of Marvin Gaye's *Let's Get It On* because it's amazing.

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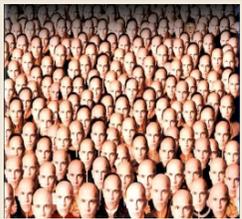
High Fidelity wouldn't be *High Fidelity* without the soundtrack. Anyone familiar with Hornby's work will tell you that music plays a HUGE role in his writing. It doesn't disappoint here with an eclectic mix of psychedelic rock, Motown and pop, featuring artists that include Belle & Sebastian, 13th Floor Elevators, and The Velvet Underground.

VERDICT

High Fidelity is a pretty damn good attempt at bringing Nick Hornby's book to the big screen. In the wrong hands, this could've gone seriously off-track given Hollywood's record for drastically diluting the source material in favor of idiotic clichés (hello *I Am Legend*).

Luckily, Frears and the writers stay true to the story while adding new creative interpretations that are even better than what Hornby originally wrote. The film's not perfect though and there were certainly elements from the novel that I wish made it to the big screen, but perhaps that's just me being nitpicky. It's worth checking out if you're a fan of the book, and for those who watch the movie first, hopefully it'll convince you to pick up a copy.

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