

'Yesterday' is an entertaining cover that tugs on the heartstrings

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 116 minutes

The new comedy *Yesterday* boasts quite a pedigree. Not only does it contain covers of classic tunes from The Beatles, but it also has a wealth of talent behind the camera, including director Danny Boyle (*Trainspotting*, *28 Days Later*, *Slumdog Millionaire*) and writer Richard Curtis (*Bridget Jones's Diary*

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Love Actually

,
Pirate Radio

,
About Time

). Admittedly, the film may not mark career highpoints for either participant. However, there is a great deal of affection present for its subject and the movie ultimately comes across as sweet, breezy, and enjoyable.

Jack Malik (Himesh Patel) is a struggling musician in a seaside English town whose life is literally turned upside down after being struck by a bus during a sudden and unexplained power outage. After regrouping with friends, he discovers that none of them, including manager Ellie (Lily James), have ever heard of The Beatles. When a search of the internet shows that the

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band (and some other amusing staples of the world he once knew) have completely vanished, the protagonist decides to try to use their music as his chance at fame. In doing so, he draws the attention of artist Ed Sheeran and big-time L.A. record promoter, Debra (Kate McKinnon).

Sections of the film dealing with music as a backdrop are particularly strong, as the lead struggles to understand what is occurring and remember all of the songs and lyrics of The Beatles. And a great many amusing moments are derived from some unusual internet searches, as well as from a strange pair of strangers shadowing the performer, which pays off in an effective and unexpected way. Of course, the patronizing and less-than-enthused responses from family members towards Jack’s latest compositions also earn laughs. These scenes even prompt Jack to wonder if he isn’t charismatic enough to earn the attention that the music deserves. The actor also appears to be performing all the tunes himself and he does an exceptional job of belting out famous tracks from the band’s catalog.

What doesn’t work quite as well is the fairly predictable romantic subplot between Jack and the lovelorn Ellie. As the protagonist becomes more and more successful, he begins to seriously question his motivations and whether fame and professional success truly equate happiness in life. It’s an interesting idea for examination, although the movie keeps their interplay relatively light and the climactic resolution is a little too quick and cleanly wrapped up for this reviewer’s tastes. At least it’s all elevated by charming leads who do make the most of the routine plotting.

The movie’s most effective emotional turn occurs between Jack and another character introduced late in the feature. It comes as something of a surprise, and works remarkably well. As the hero begins to question life in the spotlight and the consequences of his earlier actions (and in some cases lack thereof), the additional character shares personal views on life, success, and what should be valued. In the end, this sequence feels like the true heart and soul of the movie and ends up being the most poignant and memorable sequence.

It’s the little references and small emotional beats like the one previously mentioned, that ultimately make the movie a success. Like the songs themselves, the events in *Yesterday* are awfully familiar, yet they still manage to hook viewers and even tug on their heartstrings.

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