

'The Greatest Hits' doesn't strike a powerful chord

Written by gallupsun
Sunday, 14 April 2024 13:08

Rating: 2 out of 4

Running Time: 94 minutes

This feature is currently available to stream for Hulu subscribers.

In the span of only a short period, music can have immense power. It can energize, excite, inspire, as well as deal with relatable themes and even create a sense of sadness, longing and a myriad of other emotions. The Greatest Hits attempts to use songs as a plot device, allowing the film's main character to relive a handful of important moments in her life. It's a nifty concept, but unfortunately the feature only uses it as a narrative device. This tune doesn't end up striking a powerful chord.

Harriet (Lucy Boynton) is a young woman in Los Angeles who loves music and yearns to work in the industry. But after the death of her boyfriend Max (David Corenswet) in a traffic accident, the protagonist's life grinds to a halt.

Every time she hears a song that she first listened to with Max, she is transported back in time to the moment they both discovered it. As a result, Harriet wears large headphones in public to avoid hearing random music and having these episodes. She also works on a detailed list of all the songs that cause this effect, hoping that she can use them to find a way to prevent his death.

One day, while attending a group grief counseling session, she meets David (Justin H. Min). The two immediately click and Harriet begins wondering if she can move on, but fears her condition will ruin any new relationship.

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As mentioned, the concept has potential and makes one immediately wonder about all the permutations and changes one might have to employ to avoid strange time-traveling journeys. If one felt it too painful to reconnect with their deceased loved one, should they devote themselves to a different genre of music (perhaps taking up an interest in polka)? Questions might also arise whether or not fresh radio jingles could cause temporary jumps. As you might have already guessed, the script doesn't do much to explain why any of this is happening (I suppose the universe is simply determined that the protagonist to come to one specific conclusion about her past relationship).

Additionally, mileage could have been gained from the protagonist doing everything possible to make their loved one avoid a fateful end. Perhaps insisting the individual take care of a hugely important but imaginary errand? Alas, all that occurs is the lead complaining that nothing she says seems to change the fatal outcome for Max.

So instead, most of the sudden time-traveling interludes are merely flashbacks detailing their tragic relationship. They frolic at the beach, visit shops together and sit around talking about songs. In the present, the plot mostly revolves around the depressed, dour character avoiding others and obsessively trying to find songs that were important in her relationship, all the while being told to snap out of her strange funk by best friend/disc jockey Morris (Austin Crute).

The cast are fine, there are some good tunes and even a few low-key sparks between Harriet and remarkably understanding potential romantic interest David, but even this subplot is handled awkwardly. The two cross paths at a counseling session, and so it comes off as a bit odd for them to flirt so quickly before overtly bonding over a mutual admiration for Roxy Music. Harriet also spends time wondering if her relationship with Max would have lasted, diminishing the drama of her predicament.

It all climaxes with a realization from Harriet that feels like a last-minute plot device. But in the end, the film's greatest crime is wasting its musical potential. As previously mentioned, important songs from the past can be joyful, bittersweet and even cathartic, but in this picture the character's attitude results in the music often coming across as an ordeal to be suffered through. In the end, the overly somber and serious tone used through much of The Greatest Hits results in anything but a chart-topper.

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