



MEMBER PICKS

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

Director: Michel Gondry
©/Presented by: Focus Features
Production Company: Anonymous Content
In association with: This Is That
Executive Producers: David Bushell, Charlie Kaufman, Glenn Williamson, Georges Bermann
Produced by: Steve Golin, Anthony Bregman
Associate Producers: Linda Fields Hill, Michael A. Jackman
Production Accountant: Andy Wheeler
Production Co-ordinator: Erica Kay
Unit Production Manager: David Bushell
Location Manager: Gayle Vangrofsky
1st Assistant Director: Michael Hausman
2nd Assistant Director: Scott Ferguson
Script Supervisor: Mary Cybulski
Casting: Jeanne McCarthy
LA Casting: Blythe Cappello
Associate Casting: Natasha Cuba
Screenplay: Charlie Kaufman
Story: Charlie Kaufman, Michel Gondry, Pierre Bismuth
Director of Photography: Ellen Kuras
Camera Operator: Chris Norr
B Camera Operator: Peter Agliata
Additional Camera Operator: Mark Schmidt
Still Photographer: David C. Lee
Visual Effects: Buzz Image Group, Custom Film Effects
Special Effects Co-ordinator: Drew Jiritano
Lead Animator: Brent Ekstrand
Editor: Valdis Óskarsdóttir
Additional Editors: James Haygood, Paul Zucker, Jeffrey M. Werner
Production Designer: Dan Leigh
Art Director: David Stein
Set Decorator: Ron Von Blomberg
Joel's Sketchbook Created by: Paul Proch
Charge Scenic: Anne Beiser Haywood
Scenic Foreman: Patricia Sprott
Shop Scenic: Sam Z. Rogers
Camera Scenic: Hollis James Hoff
Property Master: Kevin Ladson
Costume Designer: Melissa Toth
Custom Skeleton Costume Designed by: Frankie Steinz
Key Make-up Artist: Kyra Panchenko
Wigs: Peter Owen
Key Hairstylist: D. Michelle Johnson
Titles: Custom Film Effects
End Titles: Title House Digital
Digital Opticals: Custom Film Effects
Digital Intermediate: EFilm (Mike Eaves, Mike Kennedy, Loan Phan)
DeLuxe Colour Timer: Kenny Becker
Music/Composer: Jon Brion
Music Conducted by: Jon Brion
Music Orchestrated by: Steve Bartek, Peter Gordon, Edgardo Simone
Music Programming: Nick Vidar
Music Guru: Kathy Nelson
Music Produced by: Jon Brion
Music Editor: Anastassios Filipos
Music Recorded by: Tom Biller
Music Consultant: Jennifer Pray
Sound Designer: Eugene Gearty
Sound Mixer: Thomas Nelson

'Kaufman's script showcases a perfect balance between intelligent and resourceful storytelling.' – Carolina, BFI Member

We celebrate the 20th anniversary of director Michel Gondry and writer Charlie Kaufman's genre-bending classic. Uturning rom-com conventions with its sci-fi twist, the film finds heartbroken Joel deciding on a procedure that removes all memories of Clementine, his ex, only to change his mind at the last minute. But is he too late? It's not strictly a 'Christmas classic', but with its wintry warmth and ultimately moving denouement, it's a surprisingly perfect fit for the season of goodwill.

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The second collaboration between director Michel Gondry and screenwriter Charlie Kaufman – following the uneven *Human Nature* – *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* mixes their respective thematic concerns with dazzling alchemy: it's a film that is as bold and inventive as Kaufman's past work, but is also, perhaps less predictably, remarkably sweet. Say what you will about previous Kaufman efforts *Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation*, and *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, none of them exhibits the sensitivity and romantic longing that envelops *Eternal Sunshine* like a soft blanket on a chilly night (when much of the film – given a wonderfully wintry feel by Ellen Kura – is set).

With the exception of a haunting pre-credit sequence, in which two bereft-looking New Yorkers, Joel and Clementine, meet on a deserted beach and spark up an instant attraction, the film is structured on two levels. Having established that Joel and Clem already dated, then split up, Kaufman's script sees Joel consent to have his memories of her wiped; as the procedure begins – as determinedly low-tech as the portal in *John Malkovich* – Joel retreats into his memories of the relationship, told, *Betrayal*-style, in reverse chronology. It's at this point, with these parallel narratives set in train, that Kaufman and Gondry settle into a fine harmony.

The inside-out brain-teaser quality of Kaufman's work reaches a kind of apotheosis, as Joel, having decided to halt the erasing of Clementine from his memory, hides within the recesses of his mind. The premise is thematically ambitious (a rain-soaked interior suggests Tarkovsky, another filmmaker concerned with the poignant workings of memory) while at the same time giving rise to some inspired bits of comedy (Joel's childhood memories are embarrassingly revisited). Gondry reuses many of the visual tricks from his music videos, but they are grounded here in emotions and storytelling (Joel's memory of certain people disintegrates as the procedure takes hold, faces blurring into indistinguishable smudges). In the scenes inside Joel's brain, Gondry deepens the interest in extended childhood that has been a strong feature of his work (such as the autobiographical *I've Been 12 Forever*) with the added element of Kaufman's fixation on sexual formation.

When Joel and the Clementine of his memories are finally chased back to the beach house where they first met, they comment on their feelings about these intimate moments as they (re)occur. The scene is among the finest Kaufman has done, simultaneously both inside and outside of itself; there is an emotional rigour here which brings to mind the probing intellectualism of Bergman's *Persona* (1966), but also a rapturous warmth and sense of discovery and adventure. Not quite done, Kaufman and Gondry replay a number of scenes from the opening, the viewer now seeing not strangers but fated lovers. The cleansed Joel and Clementine find out about the faults and foibles that first

Boom Operator: Tommy Louie
Re-recording Mixers: Eugene Gearty, Reilly Steele
Supervising Sound Editor: Philip Stockton
Dialogue Editor: Fred Rosenberg
Effects Editor: Paul Urmsion
ADR Editor: Marissa Littlefield
Foley Artists: Marko Costanzo, Jay Peck
Foley Mixer: George Lara
Supervising Foley Editor: Frank Kern
Foley Editors: Kam Chan, Steve Visscher
Stunt Co-ordinator: Brian Smyj
Animals Provided by:
Dawn Animal Agency (New York)
Unit Publicist: Frances Fiore
Cast:
Jim Carrey (*Joel Barish*)
Kate Winslet (*Clementine Kruczynski*)
Kirsten Dunst (*Mary*)
Mark Ruffalo (*Stan*)
Elijah Wood (*Patrick*)
Tom Wilkinson (*Doctor Howard Mierzwia*)
Jane Adams (*Carrie*)
David Cross (*Rob*)
Deirdre O'Connell (*Hollis*)
Debbon Ayer (*Joel's mother*)
Gerry Robert Byrne (*train conductor*)
Thomas Jay Ryan (*Frank*)
Ryan Whitney (*young Joel*)
Amir Ali Said, Brian Price, Paul Litowsky,
Josh Flitter (*young bullies*)
Lola Daehler (*young Clementine*)
USA 2004©
108 mins
Digital

MEMBER EXCLUSIVES

Member Picks: Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

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Thu 19 Dec 20:30 BFI Reuben Library

Members' Festive Evening

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drove them apart – and yet they still decide to give the relationship a shot. As an affirmation of the power and meaning of love sharing experiences, memories and risks – in its concluding moments *Eternal Sunshine* achieves a touching and unexpected epiphany.

Mark Olsen, *Sight and Sound*, May 2004

Michel Gondry on 'Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind'

You have quite a high-powered cast here. How did you work with the actors?

Sometimes they weren't complaining exactly, but mentioning that things could be more organised. Jim Carrey told me he'd never seen such a disorganised shoot. But I think I was in charge of the chaos. It's good for actors to have a lot of things happening around them. For instance, we would decide at the last second, 'It's snowing, let's do this scene now instead of the one we're supposed to do,' even though the actors didn't know their lines. It helped keep them on their toes and surprise them, and let them surprise us.

Your editor Valdis Óskarsdóttir has worked on several Dogme productions, and Eternal Sunshine has something of a rough-edged Dogme look. Was that deliberate?

I always try to ignore style when I start working, even when I'm making music videos. The work just has to be functional. If you think too much about the aesthetics then the result becomes like the type of architecture you find in Hollywood – all about decoration, patisserie.

In the case of *Eternal Sunshine* the look wasn't a choice; it was more a necessity. The story is set in New York, but initially the producers wanted me to shoot in Toronto so there'd be more money for special effects. I didn't want that. On *Human Nature* I had to pretend Los Angeles was Washington and it was very constricting. I wanted to go into this movie with more freedom, to let the actors explore and just capture them with the camera. So I convinced the producers to stay in New York, promising I could make it for less money. All the actors, including Jim, took 10 cent of their usual salary.

It was a good thing for the film, first because we had New York and second because the fact that we had less money made us use a smaller crew and simpler lighting. A lot of the effects were done in the camera, with very low-key techniques.

The film is extremely dark in places. Do you think it will be perceived as a comedy?

I don't know. It's good when you decide it's maybe not a comedy because then you don't have the pressure to get the laughs. You just go along with what you want to shoot and don't have to time the next line to make sure it can be heard over the audience's laughter.

How is your work influenced by your background in music videos?

A question I get all the time is, 'What is the difference between doing a music video and a film?' I don't know what to say, except to ask, 'Can't you see for yourself?' I'm still making music videos. There are a couple of songs in *Eternal Sunshine* by a band called The Willowz and I just did a video for them and one for Steriogram, a new band from New Zealand.

Would you be interested in working on a Hollywood blockbuster?

I'd like to do a big-budget film. I'd try to do something personal, though for sure it would be more difficult. I loved *Back to the Future* – when I was in Hollywood five or six years ago I went on the Universal Studios tour and did the *Back to the Future* ride. Jim talked to me recently about a project; I don't know what it is yet. He said to me, 'You, with a big budget: danger!' He saw the madness of the possibilities.

Interview by Sheila Johnston, *Sight and Sound*, May 2004