



## Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind Review by Megan Spencer

A movie that was written straight from the soul is the only way to describe screenwriter Charlie Kaufman's latest film, *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind*.

As with his three previous films - *Adaptation* (2002), *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and *Human Nature* (2001) - *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind* is an ambitious film when it comes to exploring imagination and the human condition. It also revisits the 'cheesy' science fiction territory of *Being John Malkovich* and *Human Nature*, and like *Confessions Of A Dangerous Mind* (perhaps the weakest film made from a Kaufman script to date), *Eternal Sunshine* is also an internal movie set inside someone's mind. We too become part of this movie's inner dialogue with the outside world.

Above all it is rare these days to find such an intimate film about love and human relationships. Kaufman presents a very honest and deeply personal view of one such relationship gone awry and the anguish involved in trying to exorcise that pain from one's being.

In the dramatic role we have been waiting for Jim Carrey to deliver his entire career (a bit like Bill Murray's in *Lost In Translation*), he plays Joel Barish, an introspective, lonely and shy writer-type, awkward with life but equally yearning for a way to engage with it. (Yes, Carrey plays the Charlie Kaufman cipher character we are now familiar with from his previous films). Carrey is stripped back and subdued for the most part, his usual extrovert evacuated for misanthropic Joel.

Kate Winslet equally matches the strength of Carrey's performance as Clementine, the chick who throws Joel a romantic life-line, with a rampant appetite for life and changing her hair colour (you've got to love a character who colours her hair every five minutes with dyes titled 'Blue Ruin' and the like). They play what is sure to go down as one of the great screen couples, a connection forged in joy, pain and personality opposites.

So Joel and Clementine fall in love, break up and then try to erase each other from their memories by visiting a low-rent clinic that has developed a special "brain damage" procedure guaranteed to wipe out memories that haunt the broken-hearted. (If only it were that easy). It is at these Lacuna laboratories that we are also introduced to the rack of excellent support players that add the vibrancy and depth to *Eternal Sunshine*: Tom Wilkinson (*In The Bedroom*), Kirsten Dunst (*Spiderman*), Elijah Wood (*Lord Of The Rings*), with the very fine Mark Ruffalo (*You Can Count On Me*) as the shambolic team of technicians assigned to mapping and wiping the areas of Joel's brain devoted to Clem.

Jane Adams (*Happiness*) and the acerbic comedian David Cross (*Ghost World*) are also beautifully cast as Joel's well-meaning friends, his 'couple touchstone' who accidentally lead him to memory hell.

Without a doubt *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind* is Charlie Kaufman's best film to date, the most complete and whole and the one with the most heart. Kaufman's previous movies all displayed some measure of genius but somehow faltered, even the brilliant *Adaptation* (only just).

No such problems here. Like Spike Jonze (*Adaptation*, *Being John Malkovich*), Michel Gondry is the perfect director/collaborator for Kaufman, pushing him to deliver the film he (and we) expect. (Gondry also helped develop *Eternal Sunshine's* story with Kaufman over three years). His visual imagination perfectly complements Kaufman's, both sharing an appreciation for non-linear narrative and the artistic possibilities film provides as anyone who has seen Gondry's inventive music videos knows. After a beautifully absorbing, "organic" doco-style start, *Eternal Sunshine* becomes an Escher painting shrouded in the bubble-wrap of realism, making its ideas and observations all the more resonant and powerful.



Publicity still from *Eternal Sunshine of The Spotless Mind*

*Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind* takes its title from an Alexander Pope poem and in the best sense, too it is a beautiful, funny and at times painful screen poem. Anyone who has ever fallen in love or has been through a break up will immediately 'get' this film. While it may prove too be emotionally close to the bone for some (it is an intense experience), the payoff lies in its beautifully simple conclusion. Love it seems is all about taking risks and having the courage to go there knowing it still might all end in tears. Much like watching a Charlie Kaufman film... Stick with the craziness and you will be amply rewarded.

It will go down as one of the films of the 'noughties'.

Visit the film's official [website](#).