

Hello, neighbor

'A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD' CELEBRATES MR. ROGERS



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Fifty-one years ago, the world was introduced to the wonderful world of "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," a show that would go on to capture the hearts of children for decades until its final episode in 2001. Behind it all was one man — a man dedicated to spreading kindness and giving the world a respite from the droning noise of television: Fred Rogers. Today, his biopic "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," continues his legacy and delivers just that.

Easily one of the most uplifting films in years, the film is based on a true story that follows Lloyd Vogel (Matthew Rhys,) a jaded journalist at odds with his father, through his experiences with Mr. Rogers, (Tom Hanks,) who teaches Lloyd how to be kind and forgiving to others as well as himself.

Hanks steals the show in every scene as Mr. Rogers, nailing the gentle tone, sweet nature and welcoming look of the beloved host so accurately that I often found myself forgetting it was Hanks on screen. It's clear that he took great strides to prepare for the role and it pays off with an award-worthy portrayal that made me grin from ear to ear each time he entered the frame. Rhys also provides us with a solid performance; his cynical demeanor acts as an interesting foil as we see his deep unhappiness bounce off of Rogers' unwavering positivity.

Alongside the superb acting, the script adds depth to the characters that helps expand upon them through its clever writing; with this, there's the more technical aspects of this movie, which I'm happy to say are just as brilliant. Scene transitions are shown through dioramas similar to the ones used in "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," with model cars, planes and cities, while the hallmark soft and cheery instrumentals the series is known for played over them. The narration is all portrayed as if it is an episode of Mr. Rogers' show, with Hanks speaking directly to the audience through a grainy television screen on the set of the show. The lavish detail added into these scenes heightened the joy I felt while watching the film even further. However, despite the pleasant moments, there are also a handful of affecting and impactful dramatic scenes that, without spoiling anything, are shot so effectively and portrayed



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so well that they'll be sure to tug at the heartstrings of even the most stone-faced viewer. Speaking of scenes being shot well, this film features plenty of creative and thoughtful cinematography that surprised me with its artistic composition. There is a surreal dream sequence that occurs in the latter half of the movie that caught me off guard with its inventiveness and the final shot of the film was strikingly emotional with its lighting.

Unfortunately, no film is perfect and there were a few small negatives I noted throughout the movie. The songs that are occasionally played over some scenes were a bit jarring and would have been better if it were just instrumentals or maybe even actual songs from Rogers' show. One of Rogers' songs is actually sung by Hanks in a scene near the end of the movie — I feel like this would have been a good approach to take for all the songs rather than having other singers perform the music. Now and then there will be an odd-looking extra here and there who, when focused on, seem out of place and strange. For example, there's a segment on a train where the passengers start singing to Rogers. If you take your focus off of the singers, the other passengers look kind of confused and unsure of how to act. I also think I would have liked to see a little bit more of Mr. Rogers. Some scenes seem to dwell just a little too long on Vogel, and I think that some of that time could have been used for showing us more of the conversations between Vogel and Rogers to really strengthen their relationship.

Honestly though, these complaints are very minor and none of them ruin any part of the movie; what we're presented with is still a wonderful product and the things it gets right completely overpower its flaws. It's so rare to find a film that is so good-natured and that pulls off what it intended the way that "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" does. The performances are top-notch and emotional, with Hanks delivering what could be another defining performance of his career.

"A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" is shot beautifully and filled with so many details and nods to the show that inspired it; it's a monument to the power of kindness, acceptance and positivity that left me crying over the sheer amount of soft-hearted goodness on screen. Most of all, the film is a love letter to one of the nicest and most influential people to ever appear on television — to the man who taught us to be neighborly.