

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

FILM SYNOPSIS

A unique and poignant film that blends together several genres including love, romance and surrealism, realism and elements of science fiction.

Joel Barish and Clementine Kruczynski have been in a turbulent relationship for two years. So when Joel finds out that Clementine has had their relationship erased from her memory, meaning she can no longer remember anything about him or their time together, he's distraught.

Out of desperation and bitterness, Joel contacts the inventor of the process, Dr Howard Mierzwiak to have the same treatment. As his memories of their relationship begin to fade, Joel realises he still loves Clementine, and fights to keep them alive.

KEY CREW

Director – Michel Gondry has a long list of films under his director's belt including Human Nature. He also has a strong reputation for his aesthetic music videos by artists such as Bjork.

Scriptwriter – Charlie Kaufman is a highly talented and praised writer and has penned many box-office hits, including Adaptation, Being John Malkovich, Confessions of a Dangerous Mind and Human Nature.

Producers - Steve Golin / Antony Bergman

COMMENTS ON THE CREW

Kaufman and Gondry received great praise for their work together on Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind. Two of their biggest advocates are the film's producers. During an interview with the movie website rottentomatoes.com, Steve Golin said 'The two complement each other. Michel is truly gifted at visualising. But he also has a lot of soul, which I think is sometimes lacking from people who come from a more visual background. Charlie is probably the most imaginative writer that I've had the opportunity to work with. He creates characters and situations that are relatable but very unusual – and he also has very visual ideas.'

In the same interview, the film's other producer Antony Bergman also celebrated the duo's talents. '*Charlie's screenplays are always surprising and intellectually rigorous, and also very emotional. Michel's work is characterised by stories within stories, unfolding within each other – Chinese boxes of complication. This was a project that had very strong elements of both the writer and the director from the beginning, on every page. The thrill of working with both of them is their incredible imaginations.*'

KEY CAST

Joel Barish (Jim Carrey) Joel Barish is a quiet, nervous and intelligent individual who is troubled and depressed. A self-employed cartoonist and graphic designer, he is an unshaven, conventional dresser, who hides behind his dark brown floppy hair and worries about the meaning of life.

Clementine Kruczynski (Kate Winslet) Clementine is a fascinating, outspoken character who is forever changing the colour of her hair, from blue to orange and back again. Confident, brash and at the same time troubled, she works in a book shop and lives in a bright, cluttered, homely apartment.

At first glance the two characters seem at opposite ends of the spectrum; Joel is quiet and intellectual, while Clementine is loud and unpredictable. Look closer and it is easy to see that both are anxious, unsure and searching for their significant other.

This unlikely pairing of Carrey and Winslet in the film works extremely well. Film reviewers agreed that Winslet is playing the role usually saved for Carrey and vice versa.

Dr Howard Mierzwiak (Tom Wilkinson) is the scientist behind Lacuna Inc., and the inventor of the experimental hi-tech mind erasing procedure. Despite the sensational service it offers, the business operates out of scruffy premises, making it seem more like a normal office than a place of groundbreaking medical inventions. Mierzwiak is calm and authoritative, though towards the end of the film he seems to become weaker, and more vulnerable.

Patrick (Mark Ruffalo) Patrick is the main geeky technician at Lacuna Inc., who carries out the mind erasing procedures. On the surface he takes his work very seriously. However deep down he really views it as just another normal job and will gladly slack off, even when in the middle of a procedure.

Mary (Kirsten Dunst) is the flirtatious receptionist at Lacuna Inc., who is also the girlfriend of Patrick. She has an unnatural attraction to her boss Dr Mierzwiak and has aspirations to get more involved in the technical side of the business.

Stan (Elijah Wood) Stan is Patrick's assistant. Not as cool or confident as his colleague, he steals Joel's memories and belongings and tries to win the heart of Clementine.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind attracted a strong star cast, with many well-known actors happy to play a small part.

STYLE AND TECHNIQUE

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind was made using few special effects and was filmed in a near-documentary style. Director Gondry used raw, low-key effects that included in-camera tricks of the eye and sets with large props, to make the actors look small, to represent Joel's earlier memories.

The director chose to make the film in a non-chronological order, with many of the more imaginative sequences being set deep in Joel's mind, as he invades his own memories to keep them from slipping away.

Gondry is also the veteran music-video director behind the White Stripes' video 'Fell in Love with a Girl,' and several projects with Bjork.

ACTIVITIES

- Was the use of a non-linear narrative the best way of telling Joel and Clementine's story?
- Did you find the film easy to follow or confusing?
- Do you think Gondry's decision to use few special effects and instead focus on camera angles and trickery worked well? Identify scenes where he has played with camera angles and in-camera tricks.
- Do you think that Gondry has used his experiences in the music industry in this film? Watch the White Stripes and Bjork videos he worked on and see if you can identify any similarities.

GENRE

As identified in the synopsis, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind mixes together several film genres including romance, drama, sci-fi and black comedy.

Identify the key elements of the following genres:

- Love story/romance
- Drama
- Science Fiction
- Black Comedy
- Surrealism
- Realism

The film received a great deal of critical acclaim when it was released back in 2004. Many fans of the film admitted to watching the movie over and over and each time taking something new away from it. Watch the film again in your own time, and see if you notice anything that you missed in the first viewing.

Below is an extract from an interview with Anthony Bergman taken from the website rottentomatoes.com. He's explaining why he thinks the movie makes such a great love story.

'With warmth and emotion, it starts off at the point where two people are tired of each other. Then it moves backwards, telling how they got that way, to the beginning – that first blush of attraction. Then it wraps around itself and goes back to the end again, so that when these two characters get back into their relationship, they do it with the knowledge of what their relationship will become. You see why people are attracted to each other, why people fall in love, why people fall out of love, why you get sucked into the mundaneness of a relationship after a long time. Some of this is hilarious, and some of it is painful; you see how frail and unstable relationships actually are. It's a love story in reverse.'

Write a synopsis of the film pitching it as one of the following genres:

- Love story
- Sci-fi
- Black Comedy
- Drama

Remember that synopses are meant to give a brief overview of what the film is about, who is in it and why people should go to see it. It is not meant to give away the whole plot or reveal the ending.

Now choose three clips from the film that could be used to make a trailer. The clips must emphasise the genre of your synopsis. For example, love story, shots of Joel and Clementine happy together, or sci-fi, shots of Lacuna Inc., and the erasing procedure.

Now present the synopsis and the three clips to the rest of the group. Try and convince the other class members that your chosen film genre and synopsis is the one that should be used for the multi-million pound marketing campaign.

MARKETING

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind had a production budget of \$20 million (£11 million) and an estimated marketing budget of \$10 million (£5 million). The film was viewed as Charlie Kaufman's most successful film to date after it took almost \$68 million (£38 million) at the box office worldwide and was awarded the Oscar for best original screenplay.

It is well documented, researched and discussed that Hollywood likes to spend big budgets on marketing its products. The belief that some films are marketing tools first and entertaining films second is also widely acknowledged. Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind actually surprised many hardened Hollywood cynics, who deemed it originally creative and something that had the hallmarks of an independent production, instead of Hollywood.

The marketing campaign for the film was extensive, covering all media and most major cities across the world. In addition to the usual actor promotion, marketing literature, plus the inevitable film website, the Hollywood marketing machine also added in a website for Lacuna Inc. Lacunainc.com advertises the services of this fictitious organisation offering potential clients free evaluations, promotions and the testimonials of happy customers.

ACTIVITIES

Spend some time studying www.lacunainc.com

- Do you think the site is an example of Hollywood's innovative marketing ideas or just a step too far?
- After watching the film would you actually take time out to visit this spin off website?
- As part of the marketing team for the Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind what other content would you add to the website to help promote the film?
- On the site there is a section for customer comments/reviews. Write testimonials for Joel and Clementine. Testimonials are used by businesses to promote the benefits of their services. How might the characters endorse Lacuna Inc.'s procedures?
- Write a 500-word article for a tabloid newspaper from the point-of-view of Mary, Kirsten Dunst's character, exploiting the work of Lacuna Inc., and telling her side of the story. Include quotes from other Lacuna Inc., patients; what do you think they would say?
- Now rewrite the article for a broadsheet newspaper or women's magazine. How would the tone, language and style of the article change?

Record a 40 second news report for Newsbeat (Radio 1) on the Lacuna Inc., story and include short quotes from Joel, Clementine, Mary or Dr Mierzwiak. The target audience for Newsbeat is 15-24 year olds so the tone of the report should be fast and upbeat. What music could you add to complement the story? Spend some time listening to Newsbeat to get a feel for their in-house style.

Imagine you are working as the press officer for Lacuna Inc.; you want to rectify all the negative press that the company has been getting since Mary’s story broke. Draw up a list of positive story ideas that you could pitch to the media. Use the table below to record your ideas. Think about what media outlets you might send the ideas to. Some ideas have already been added.

	Positive News Story Ideas	Identify Media Outlets to Pitch Stories
Lacuna Inc.	<p>Introduce Dr Mierzwiak to the media as the world’s first specialist in mind erasing procedures</p> <p>Collate positive testimonials from clients who were happy with Lacuna Inc.’s services</p>	<p>science/medical journals, daily broadsheets, (identify what sections?)...</p> <p>women’s/men’s magazines, including Bella, Woman’s Own, Red Magazine, FHM...</p>

FILM TITLES – ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND

The title Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind was taken from the poem ‘Eloisa to Abelard’ by Alexander Pope.

*How happy is the blameless Vestal’s lot!
The world forgetting, by the world forgot;
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!
Each pray’r accepted, and each wish resign’d.*

Kaufman also included several quotes from other famous writers/theorists which the character Mary liked to cite.

ACTIVITIES

- Why do you think Kaufman/Gondry chose *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* as the title?
- What did it make you think of when you first heard/read it? What did you think the film was about?
- Who was Alexander Pope?
- Create several alternative titles for the film. Look back over the work you did on genres: will this affect the new titles? Can you create a new title for each of the different genres the film fits into?

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