



We Live in Time

108 min

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We Live in Time Johanna Schneller Globe and Mail. *We Live in Time* is a love story with zero cynicism and is all the better for it. Over the last two decades, filmmakers have ceded serious love stories to period dramas. Maybe obstacles felt too false or love itself felt too corny in our cynical age, so screenwriters sought refuge in corsets and crinolines. But what if the obstacle in a romantic drama was time itself? That's the premise of *We Live in Time*, directed by John Crowley (*Brooklyn*), and there's zero cynicism in it. Almut (Florence Pugh) is an ambitious London chef, forward-facing, dedicated to her career as an expression of who she is. Tobias (Andrew Garfield) is a romantic who does something or other for the company that makes Weetabix. When they meet, neither is looking for love, or even properly looking both ways: She drives into him as he's bending down in the road to retrieve a pen. But even before we learn their beginnings, we learn she might be dying, because the film skips back and forth in time. The presence or absence of Almut's bangs indicate whether the pair are in courtship, relationship, her first cancer diagnosis, young parenthood, her second diagnosis, or her last good day. The filmmakers' hope is that knowing Almut's fate – and remembering that all of us live in a ticking clock – allows us to realize how precious any of our moments are, in the same way that light bouncing off a large black cloud makes a sunset more gloriously golden. Crowley and screenwriter Nick Payne give us some lovely small moments: the way Tobias's knees stick out of the tub in a crappy Travelodge, as he eats two lonely biscuits in the bath; the way, early in their dating, their eyes meet and hold across a crowded party; the believable way they fight, and the swoony way he apologizes. But the film sure doesn't shy away from huge, often absurd moments. In the tour de force scene, Almut gives birth in a roadside restroom, proving once again that people behaving well – being their best, most generous selves – is every bit as suspenseful and thrilling as people behaving badly. The film's detractors argue that its chopped-up chronology is a cheap trick to cover the thinness of the story. But loving someone means accepting their flaws and emphasizing their strengths, and this film has plenty: Pugh's fierceness and Garfield's ready access to emotion make them a good match; the dialogue is witty and it's a pleasure just to listen to them talk. Most importantly, everyone involved is serious about and committed to and yes, in love with the story. In the end, what else is there? Love is life, grief is love. Grab it while you can.

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