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# *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* is a 2004 American surrealist<sup>[1]</sup> science fiction romantic drama film directed by Michel Gondry and written by Charlie Kaufman from a story by Gondry, Kaufman, and Pierre Bismuth. Starring Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet, with supporting roles from Kirsten Dunst, Mark Ruffalo, Elijah Wood and Tom Wilkinson, the film follows two individuals who undergo a memory erasure procedure to forget each other after the dissolution of their romantic relationship. The title of the film is a quotation from the 1717 poem *Eloisa to Abelard* by Alexander Pope. It uses elements of psychological drama and science fiction and a nonlinear narrative to explore the nature of memory and love.<sup>[2]</sup>

*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* opened in theaters in the United States on March 19, 2004, to widespread acclaim from critics and audiences, who hailed the visual style, editing, writing, score, themes, direction and performances, especially of Carrey and Winslet. The film was a box office success, grossing \$74 million on a \$20 million budget, and was named by the American Film Institute one of the Top 10 Films of 2004.<sup>[3]</sup> At the 77th Academy Awards, Bismuth, Gondry and Kaufman won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay, and Winslet received a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Actress.

In the years since its release, the film has become a cult classic, and it has been considered by many publications as one of the best films of the 21st century.<sup>[4][5][6][7]</sup> The film was the inspiration behind several music projects, such as Jay Electronica's 2007 piece "Eternal Sunshine (The Pledge)", Jhené Aiko's 2014 tracks "Spotless Mind" and "Eternal Sunshine", Bastille's 2022 single "Remind Me" and Ariana Grande's 2024 album *Eternal Sunshine*.

## *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*



Theatrical release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	<u>Michel Gondry</u>
<b>Screenplay by</b>	<u>Charlie Kaufman</u>
<b>Story by</b>	<u>Michel Gondry</u> <u>Charlie Kaufman</u> <u>Pierre Bismuth</u>
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>Steve Golin</u> <u>Anthony Bregman</u>
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Jim Carrey</u> <u>Kate Winslet</u> <u>Kirsten Dunst</u> <u>Mark Ruffalo</u> <u>Elijah Wood</u> <u>Tom Wilkinson</u>
<b>Cinematography</b>	<u>Ellen Kuras</u>

## Plot

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Joel Barish discovers that his estranged girlfriend, Clementine Kruczynski, has undergone a procedure to have her memories of him erased by the New York City firm Lacuna. Heartbroken, he decides to undergo the same procedure. In preparation, he records a tape recounting his memories of their volatile relationship.

The Lacuna employees work on Joel's brain as he sleeps in his apartment so that he will wake up with no memory of the procedure. One employee, Patrick, leaves to see Clementine; since her procedure, he has been using Clementine's memories of Joel as a guide to seduce her. While the procedure runs on Joel's brain, the technician, Stan, and the secretary, Mary, take drugs, party, and have sex.

Joel re-experiences his memories of Clementine as they are erased, starting with their last fight. As he reaches earlier, happier memories, he realizes that he does not want to forget her. His mental projection of Clementine suggests that he hide her in memories that do not involve her. This halts the procedure, but Stan calls his boss, Howard, who arrives and restarts it. Joel comes to his last remaining memory of Clementine: the day they first met, on a beach in Montauk. As the memory crumbles around them, Clementine tells Joel to meet her in Montauk.

In Joel's apartment, Mary tries to impress Howard through their mutual interest in poetry by reciting a verse from *Eloisa to Abelard*. While Stan is outside, she tells Howard she is in love with him and they kiss. Howard's wife arrives and sees them through the window. Furious, she tells Howard to tell Mary the truth: Mary and Howard had previously had an affair, and Mary had her memories of it erased. Disgusted, Mary steals the Lacuna records and mails them to the patients, including Joel and Clementine.

Joel wakes up on Valentine's Day with his memories of Clementine erased. He impulsively takes the Long Island Rail Road to Montauk and calls in sick to work. He accidentally meets Clementine on the train ride home; they are drawn to one another, and go on a date to the frozen Charles River in Boston. Joel drives Clementine home and Patrick sees the two of them, realizing they have found each other again. Joel and Clementine receive their Lacuna records from Mary and listen to their tapes together. They are shocked by the bitter memories they had of each other and almost separate again, but agree to try again.

## Cast

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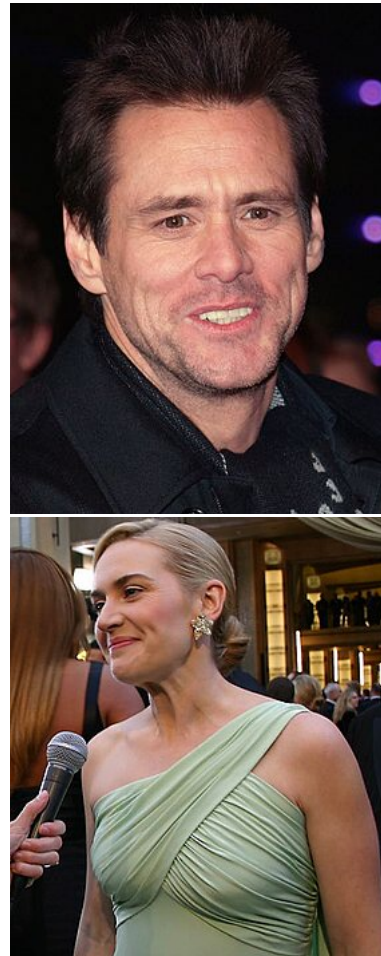
- Jim Carrey as Joel Barish: A bookish introvert who enters a two-year relationship with Clementine Kruczynski. After their relationship ends, Clementine erases Joel from her memory, and he erases her from his mind in response. Charlie Kaufman depicted Joel with some of his own personality traits.<sup>[8]</sup> Producers cast Carrey

<b>Edited by</b>	<u>Valdís Óskarsdóttir</u>
<b>Music by</b>	<u>Jon Brion</u>
<b>Production companies</b>	<u>Anonymous Content</u> <div><u>This is that</u></div>
<b>Distributed by</b>	<u>Focus Features</u>
<b>Release date</b>	March 19, 2004 <div>(United States)</div>
<b>Running time</b>	108 minutes
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$20 million
<b>Box office</b>	\$74 million

against type for his role as Joel,<sup>[8]</sup> selecting him for his everyday appearance, as well as his comedic ability. According to Gondry, this was because "It's hard to be funny. It's far easier to take someone really funny and bring them down than do the opposite."<sup>[9]</sup> To induce Carrey, an actor who typically portrayed high-energy roles, to portray a restrained character, Gondry would not allow him to improvise, a restriction he did not place on the other cast members (Carrey objected).<sup>[10]</sup> Gondry also put Carrey off balance by giving misleading orders or by rolling the camera at the wrong time. Gondry believed this would make Carrey forget what he should do to be Joel, allowing him to go in character.<sup>[8]</sup> In the 2017 Netflix documentary *Jim & Andy*, Carrey mentions a conversation with Gondry one year before shooting began for *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, shortly after Carrey had a breakup with an unspecified woman.<sup>[11]</sup>

Gondry saw that Carrey's emotional state at the time was "so beautiful, so broken" that he asked him to stay that way for one year to fit the character. In the documentary, Carrey commented, "That's how fucked up this business is."<sup>[12][13]</sup> Nicolas Cage was Gondry's original choice to play Joel,<sup>[10]</sup> but Cage was unavailable as he was in high demand from independent directors after his performance in *Leaving Las Vegas*.<sup>[9]</sup>

- **Kate Winslet as Clementine Kruczynski:** A spontaneous extrovert who, after breaking up with him after a two-year relationship, erases Joel Barish from her mind. Producers cast Winslet against type for her part as Clementine,<sup>[8]</sup> as Winslet had previously featured heavily in period pieces.<sup>[14]</sup> She received the role after she was the only actress to offer criticism on the script instead of pandering to the writers.<sup>[9]</sup> After another actress won an Oscar, the studio attempted to make Gondry use her instead of Winslet for the role of Clementine, but Gondry threatened to walk from the project if that occurred.<sup>[9]</sup> During filming, Gondry took Winslet to a separate room to coach her,<sup>[9]</sup> and she wore wigs instead of dying her hair.<sup>[14]</sup> Some commentators note how Clementine's character criticizes the *Manic Pixie Dream Girl* stock character several years before film critic Nathan Rabin coined the phrase.<sup>[15]</sup> Most commentators discuss one particular example to demonstrate this criticism, wherein Clementine warns Joel she is flawed: "Too many guys think I'm a concept, or I complete them, or I'm gonna make them alive. But I'm just a fucked-up girl who's looking for my own peace of mind. Don't assign me



Jim Carrey (top) in 2008, and Kate Winslet in 2007

yours."<sup>[16][17]</sup> With her impulsiveness, emotional intensity (extreme mood changes), alcohol consumption, turbulent relationships, reckless behavior, and hasty idealization or devaluation of Joel, Clementine seems to exhibit traits of borderline personality disorder, although it is not clear whether Kaufman wrote her character with this specific diagnosis in mind.<sup>[18]</sup> Gondry had earlier thought of casting Björk for the role of Clementine. She feared she would be emotionally affected and rejected the invitation after reading the script.<sup>[19]</sup> Winona Ryder also met with Gondry for the role.<sup>[20]</sup>

- Kirsten Dunst as Mary Svevo: The receptionist for Lacuna who, while dating Stan Fink, has a crush on Howard Mierzwiak. While erasing Joel's memory, Howard's wife catches her kissing Howard. Howard's wife reveals Mary previously had a relationship with Howard, which Howard erased from her mind. She reacts to this information by quitting her job and mailing Lacuna's company records to its customers. In the script, Mary and Howard's relationship resulted in an unplanned pregnancy, leading to Howard pressuring Mary into an abortion, which Howard also erased from her memory.<sup>[21]</sup>
- Mark Ruffalo as Stan Fink: A technician for Lacuna who is in a relationship with Mary Svevo until the reveal of her previous relationship with Howard Mierzwiak. Ruffalo received the role of Stan after providing an "unexpected take on the role" to Gondry when he suggested Stan be a fan of the Clash and resemble Joe Strummer.<sup>[9]</sup>
- Elijah Wood as Patrick Wertz: Patrick is a technician for Lacuna who enters a relationship with Clementine by imitating Joel. They break up when Joel and Clementine begin dating for the second time. Seth Rogen auditioned for the role.<sup>[22]</sup>
- Tom Wilkinson as Dr. Howard Mierzwiak: Howard runs Lacuna. Before the film's events, he had an affair with Mary, which ended with the relationship's erasure from her mind. Wilkinson reportedly did not enjoy the shooting of the film and clashed with Gondry.<sup>[9][23]</sup>
- Jane Adams as Carrie Eakin: Joel Barish's friend. She is in a troubled relationship with Rob Eakin.
- David Cross as Rob Eakin: Joel Barish's friend. In a troubled relationship with Carrie Eakin.
- Deirdre O'Connell as Hollis Mierzwiak: Howard Mierzwiak's wife
- Thomas Jay Ryan as Frank: Joel Barish's neighbor
- Debbon Ayer as Joel Barish's mother
- Ellen Pompeo as Naomi, Joel Barish's girlfriend (deleted scene)

## Production

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## Development

The concept of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* came from conversations between director Michel Gondry and co-writer Pierre Bismuth in 1998.<sup>[24]</sup> The pair had met and become friends in the early 1980s during Gondry's drumming career in the French pop group Oui Oui.<sup>[25]</sup> Bismuth had conceived of the idea of

erasing certain people from people's minds in response to a friend complaining about her boyfriend; when he asked her if she would erase that boyfriend from her memory, she said yes.<sup>[25][26]</sup> Bismuth originally planned to conduct an art experiment involving sending cards to people saying someone they knew had erased the card's recipient from their memory.<sup>[27]</sup> When he mentioned this to Gondry, they developed it into a story based on the situations that would arise if it were scientifically possible.<sup>[25][27]</sup> Bismuth never carried out his experiment.<sup>[27]</sup>

Gondry approached writer Charlie Kaufman with this concept,<sup>[26][27]</sup> and they developed it into a short pitch.<sup>[28]</sup> While the writers did not believe the concept was marketable, a small bidding war began over the idea.<sup>[24][28][29]</sup> Steve Golin of Propaganda Films purchased it on June 12, 1998, for a low seven-figure sum.<sup>[8][30]</sup> Kaufman, who was responsible for writing the screenplay, did not begin immediately, instead opting to suspend writing while he was working on *Adaptation*, *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, and *Human Nature*, the last of which Gondry directed as his directorial debut.<sup>[24]</sup>

During this time, filmmaker Christopher Nolan released *Memento* (2000), which similarly deals with memory. Due to the similarities, Kaufman became worried and tried to pull out of the project, but Golin made him complete it.<sup>[8]</sup> During writing, the pitch's ownership changed several times resulting in Kaufman not having to deal with the studios until the end of the scriptwriting process.<sup>[24]</sup> The final script made the studios nervous.<sup>[24]</sup>

Kaufman did not want to make the film a thriller and wanted to downplay the science fiction aspects of memory erasure, focusing on the relationship.<sup>[24][27][29]</sup> He had an "enormous struggle" while writing the script, particularly encountering two problems: showing "the memories, Joel's reactions to the memories, and Joel interacting with Clementine outside of the memories in the memories," and the fact that characters could refer in later scenes to already erased memories.<sup>[24]</sup>

How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!  
The world forgetting, by the world forgot:  
**Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!**  
Each prayer accepted, and each wish  
resigned;

Alexander Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, lines 207–210

Kaufman resolved the first problem by making Joel lucid and able to comment on his memories and solved the second by making the memories degrade instead of immediately erasing, with complete erasure occurring at awakening.<sup>[24]</sup> Kaufman's original name for the screenplay was 18 words long, as he had wanted a title that "you couldn't possibly fit on a marquee."<sup>[31]</sup> He eventually decided on *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, a title originating from the 1717 poem *Eloisa to Abelard* by Alexander Pope.<sup>[32]</sup>

Alain Resnais's *Je t'aime, je t'aime* (1968) has been cited as an influence on the film.<sup>[33][34]</sup>

## Filming and post-production

The shooting of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* began in mid-January 2003 after six weeks of preparation,<sup>[35][36][37]</sup> lasting for three months on a budget of \$20 million mostly in and around New York City.<sup>[10][37]</sup> The film was shot on Fuji Realia 500D.<sup>[37]</sup> The production crew recreated some key scenes, such as Joel's Rockville Centre apartment and the 1950s-style kitchen, in a New Jersey former U.S. Navy base.<sup>[37]</sup> The shoot was difficult, sometimes shooting for 17 hours per day in harsh environments.<sup>[38]</sup>



The shoot was challenging for cinematographer Ellen Kuras, due to the difficulty of filming Gondry's vision, which aimed to "blend location-shoot authenticity with unpredictable flashes of whimsy". Gondry wanted available light used exclusively for the shoot. Kuras disagreed and worked around this idea by lighting the room instead of the actors and by hiding light bulbs around the set to increase light levels.<sup>[37]</sup> Another issue the cinematographers encountered was that due to the frequent improvisation, the lack of marks and the few rehearsals completed, the cinematographers often did not know where the actors would be. Two handheld cameras filmed near 360-degree footage at all times, shooting 36,000 feet of film a day to deal with this.<sup>[23][37]</sup> Gondry called back to the work of French New Wave director Jean-Luc Godard by filming using wheelchairs as well as using sled and chariot dollies instead of traditional dollies. When using wheelchairs, the shot was not consistently smooth; however, as Kuras liked the aesthetic of the low-angle, wobbly movement, the final film contains the footage.<sup>[37]</sup>



Montauk station, where Joel and Clementine meet each other again after the erasing of their memories.



A beach in East Hampton, near where the film's beach scenes were filmed.

The film used minimal CGI, with many effects accomplished in-camera through forced perspectives, hidden space, spotlighting, unsynchronized sound, split focus and continuity editing.<sup>[27]</sup> A notable example is the ocean washing away the house in Montauk; the production team accomplished this by building the corner of a house on the beach and allowing the tide to rise.<sup>[10]</sup> Executing this effect was difficult, as the special team hired to place the set in the water refused due to perceived dangers. In response, Gondry fired the team and had the production team, including the actors and producers, place the set in the water. In retaliation for Gondry's actions, the chief of the union reprimanded Gondry in front of the crew.<sup>[39]</sup>

Kaufman rewrote some of the script during production; thus, several differences exist between the production script and the final film.<sup>[28]</sup> A fundamental difference is that in the production script, with the erasure of each memory, Clementine's behavior is increasingly robotic.<sup>[24]</sup> In the final film, Winslet plays Clementine straight, and degradation of settings and the intrusion of settings upon each other establish memory degradation visually. Another script component that did not make it into the final film was the appearance of Naomi, Joel's girlfriend, played by Ellen Pompeo. Against Kaufman's insistence on Naomi's inclusion, the production team cut her already filmed scenes.<sup>[24]</sup> Tracy Morgan was also cut from the film.<sup>[40]</sup> In one version of the script, Kaufman began the story 50 years in the future. An old woman who turns out to be Mary tries to drop off a bulky manuscript at a publishing house, but the publisher declines her offer. We later learn that the manuscript contains all of the memories that Lacuna had erased from its patients. This version of the film ends with an elderly Clementine once again erasing Joel.<sup>[41]</sup>

Valdís Óskarsdóttir edited the film, and she reportedly clashed with Gondry during editing.<sup>[42]</sup> Kaufman was also very involved in the editing of the film. Editing was a long process as there was no requirement to rush it.<sup>[8][28]</sup> There were a few test screenings of the film, which elicited positive reactions.<sup>[28]</sup>

## Music

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The soundtrack for *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* was composed by Jon Brion, also featuring songs from artists including The Polyphonic Spree, The Willowz and Don Nelson. Hollywood Records released the soundtrack in March 2004.<sup>[43]</sup> A cover version of The Korgis' "Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime" with instrumentation by Brion and vocals by Beck operates as the soundtrack's centerpiece, setting the film's tone in the opening credits, and closing the film.<sup>[43][44]</sup>

*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind's* soundtrack received generally positive reviews. AllMusic described Brion's score as "intimate" and "evocative of love and memories".<sup>[45]</sup> Other positive reviews noted the ambient nature of the music and lauded Beck's cover of "Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime".<sup>[46]</sup> The soundtrack's detractors criticized the album's lack of identity and its depressive atmosphere.<sup>[47]</sup> Even among the detractors, the score's ability to mesh with the plot was lauded, an appraisal common to many reviews.<sup>[45]</sup><sup>[46][47][48]</sup>

## Analysis

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Author Carol Vernallis, writing in *Screen*, argued that Gondry's experience in directing music videos contributed to the film's mise-en-scène and sound design. Vernallis describes some threads of the visual, aural, and musical motifs throughout the film, and how some motifs can work in counterpoint.<sup>[49]</sup>

Philosopher Christopher Grau, in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, discussed how he perceived the film to have its own defined philosophy, beyond addressing ideas of a philosophical nature.<sup>[50]</sup>

*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* has been aligned with a greater inspection, distinctly related to the 21st century, of memory, longing and nostalgia in science fiction films like Code 46 and 2046. The film showcases memory as fragmented and unreliable, evident by its non-linear structure.<sup>[51]</sup>

## Release

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### Box office

Produced on a budget of \$20 million, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* opened on March 19, 2004, in the United States, earning \$8.2 million in its opening weekend from 1,353 theaters. The film placed seventh in the weekend's box office, and remained in theaters for 19 weeks, earning \$34.4 million in the United States and Canada, and \$39.6 million in international markets, for a total of \$74 million worldwide.<sup>[52]</sup>

## Reception

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On Rotten Tomatoes, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* has an approval rating of 92% based on 257

reviews, with an average score of 8.2/10. The site's critical consensus reads, "Propelled by Charlie Kaufman's smart, imaginative script and Michel Gondry's equally daring directorial touch, *Eternal Sunshine* is a twisty yet heartfelt look at relationships and heartache."<sup>[53]</sup> On Metacritic, the film has a score of 89 out of 100, based on 41 reviews.<sup>[54]</sup> Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B−" on an A+ to F scale.<sup>[55]</sup>

Roger Ebert wrote: "Despite jumping through the deliberately disorienting hoops of its story, *Eternal Sunshine* has an emotional center, and that's what makes it work. Although Joel and Clementine ping-pong through various stages of romance and reality, what remains constant is the human need for love and companionship, and the human compulsion to keep seeking it, despite all odds."<sup>[56]</sup> In 2010, he added it to his "Great Movies" canon, writing "The wisdom in *Eternal Sunshine* is how it illuminates the way memory interacts with love. We more readily recall pleasure than pain. From the hospital I remember laughing nurses and not sleepless nights. A drunk remembers the good times better than the hangovers. A failed political candidate remembers the applause. An unsuccessful romantic lover remembers the times when it worked."<sup>[57]</sup> A. O. Scott praised it as "cerebral, formally and conceptually complicated, dense with literary allusions and as unabashedly romantic as any movie you'll ever see".<sup>[58]</sup> *Time Out* concluded: "the formidable Gondry/Kaufman/Carrey/Winslet axis works marvel after marvel in expressing the bewildering beauty and existential horror of being trapped inside one's own addled mind, and in allegorising the self-preserving amnesia of a broken but hopeful heart".<sup>[59]</sup> In 2017, *The New York Times* named it one of the greatest films of the 21st Century so far: "Charlie Kaufman's writing has the perfect equipoise of cynicism and sensitivity, and finds a perfect correlative in the director Michel Gondry's whimsical ingenuity. The only thing better than seeing it again would be wiping it from your memory and rediscovering it for the first time."<sup>[60]</sup> Ross Douthat included it on his list, calling it "The most complete and accessible and moving Charlie Kaufman movie".<sup>[61]</sup>



Kate Winslet's performance garnered widespread critical acclaim, earning her a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Actress.

Winslet and Carrey received widespread praise for their performances. Winslet received multiple award nominations, including an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress,<sup>[62]</sup> a BAFTA nomination for Best Actress in a Leading Role<sup>[63]</sup> and a Golden Globe Award nomination.<sup>[64]</sup> *Premiere* placed her performance 81st in their 2008 list of the 100 Greatest Performances of All Time.<sup>[65]</sup> Claudia Puig wrote: "Winslet is wonderful as a free spirit whose hair color changes along with her moods. She hasn't had such a meaty role in a while, and she plays it just right".<sup>[66]</sup> Ann Hornaday, in *The Washington Post*, said "Even when forced to wear costumes and wigs that make her look like Pippi Longstocking after an acid-fueled trip to the thrift market, Winslet maintains a reassuring equilibrium. It takes an actor of her steadiness to play someone this unhinged."<sup>[67]</sup>

Carrey also received multiple award nominations, including a BAFTA nomination for Best Actor in a Leading Role<sup>[63]</sup> and a Golden Globe nomination.<sup>[64]</sup> Many reviewers noted his casting against type. Jason Killingsworth wrote: "Carrey nails the part, winning audience sympathy from the opening moments of the film".<sup>[68]</sup> Moira MacDonald in *The Seattle Times* stated "[Jim Carrey is] not bad at all — in fact, it's the most honest, vulnerable work he's ever done",<sup>[69]</sup> while David Edelstein of *Slate* said "It's rarely a compliment



when I refer to an actor as "straitjacketed", but the straitjacketing of Jim Carrey is fiercely poignant. You see all that manic comic energy imprisoned in this ordinary man, with the anarchism peeking out and trying to find a way to express itself."<sup>[70]</sup> The supporting cast also received acclaim, with several reviewers, including Hornaday and Rick Groen of *The Globe and Mail* singling out Ruffalo's performance for praise.<sup>[67][71]</sup>

Critics praised Kaufman, and he won numerous awards, including an Academy Award and a BAFTA for Best Original Screenplay.<sup>[62][72]</sup> In *Slate*, David Edelstein claimed Kaufman had "move[d] the boundary posts of romantic comedy,"<sup>[70]</sup> and Moira MacDonald of *The Seattle Times* called Kaufman "one of the few creative screenwriters working today."<sup>[69]</sup> Kaufman's writing received criticism, with John Powers of the *LA Weekly* claiming it lacked passion<sup>[73]</sup> and Andrew Sarris of *The Observer* criticizing the film's "nonexistent character development."<sup>[74]</sup>

Gondry received praise, with Hornaday writing "the results [of Gondry using primarily in-camera effects], in their intricate detail and execution" as "nothing short of brilliant".<sup>[67]</sup> *The Seattle Times* in their review stated "Gondry ... makes it all a melancholy fun house, with camera work and visual tricks that rival the screenplay in invention".<sup>[69]</sup> Cinematographer Ellen Kuras received praise for her work on the film; in an overall negative review, Stephanie Zacharek of *Salon* praised Kuras for giving "the movie a look of dreamy urgency that's perfect for the story".<sup>[75]</sup>

*The A. V. Club* placed it first on its list of the best films of the 2000s, writing: "Though Kaufman is hardly a purely cerebral writer, his philosophical inquiries find an added emotional weight under Gondry's direction. Portraying the fading and flaring of love in gargantuan bookstores and on railway lines, Gondry captures a moment that's quintessentially of the 21st century, and yet timeless. In 2000, the calendar rolled over to a new millennium. With it came a symbolic break with the past, but our old passions and conflicts reasserted themselves seemingly at the stroke of midnight. So it is with *Eternal Sunshine*'s lovers, whose circular path brings them back together for an ending that's ambiguous but guardedly hopeful about the possibility of a future not necessarily doomed to reprise the hurt of the past, though it also may well revisit the same mistakes. It's the rare film that shows us who we are now and who we're likely, for better or worse, forever to be."<sup>[7]</sup>

## Accolades

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Award	Award category	Recipients	Result
<u>Academy Awards</u> <sup>[62]</sup>	<u>Best Actress</u>	<u>Kate Winslet</u>	Nominated
	<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	<u>Pierre Bismuth</u> , <u>Michel Gondry</u> and <u>Charlie Kaufman</u>	Won
<u>British Academy Film Awards</u> <sup>[63][72]</sup>	<u>Best Film</u>	<u>Steve Golin</u> and <u>Anthony Bregman</u>	Nominated
	<u>Best Director</u>	<u>Michel Gondry</u>	Nominated
	<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	<u>Charlie Kaufman</u>	Won
	<u>Best Actor in a Leading Role</u>	<u>Jim Carrey</u>	Nominated
	<u>Best Actress in a Leading Role</u>	<u>Kate Winslet</u>	Nominated
	<u>Best Editing</u>	<u>Valdís Óskarsdóttir</u>	Won
<u>Golden Globe Awards</u> <sup>[64]</sup>	<u>Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy</u>	<u>Steve Golin</u> and <u>Anthony Bregman</u>	Nominated
	<u>Best Screenplay</u>	<u>Charlie Kaufman</u>	Nominated
	<u>Best Actor – Motion Picture Musical or Comedy</u>	<u>Jim Carrey</u>	Nominated
	<u>Best Actress – Motion Picture Comedy or Musical</u>	<u>Kate Winslet</u>	Nominated
<u>Hugo Awards</u> <sup>[76]</sup>	<u>Best Dramatic Presentation</u>	<u>Pierre Bismuth</u> , <u>Michel Gondry</u> and <u>Charlie Kaufman</u>	Nominated
<u>National Board of Review</u> <sup>[77]</sup>	<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	<u>Charlie Kaufman</u>	Won
<u>Writers Guild of America</u> <sup>[78]</sup>	<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	<u>Pierre Bismuth</u> , <u>Michel Gondry</u> and <u>Charlie Kaufman</u>	Won

## Home media

*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* was released on VHS and DVD by Universal Studios Home Video on September 28, 2004,<sup>[82][83]</sup> selling a combined total of over 600,000 units on the first day.<sup>[84]</sup> Among the add-ons included were deleted scenes.<sup>[85][86]</sup> It debuted at number 11 on the VHS rental chart,<sup>[87]</sup> as well as number three on the DVD sales chart.<sup>[88]</sup>

A two-disc Collector's Edition was later released on January 4, 2005.<sup>[89][90]</sup> It was later released on HD DVD on April 24, 2007,<sup>[91]</sup> and on Blu-ray on January 25, 2011.<sup>[92][93]</sup> On July 26, 2022, Kino Lorber Studio Classics released *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* on 4K Ultra HD Blu-Ray.<sup>[94]</sup> This release included a new color grading supervised by cinematographer Ellen Kuras.<sup>[95]</sup>

Universal Home Entertainment release Formats and Dates

Format	Location	Release Date
<u>VHS</u>	U.S.	September 28, 2004 <sup>[79]</sup>
<u>DVD</u>	U.S.	September 28, 2004 <sup>[79]</sup>
<u>HD DVD</u>	U.S.	April 24, 2007 <sup>[80]</sup>
<u>Blu-ray</u>	U.S.	January 25, 2011 <sup>[81]</sup>

## Legacy

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### Music

American singer-songwriter Halsey sampled dialogue from the film for her song "Ashley", the opening track on her 2020 album, *Manic*,<sup>[96]</sup> as well as the following track "Clementine" being titled after and lyrically inspired by Winslet's character.<sup>[97]</sup>

American post-hardcore band Circa Survive released their first record, *Juturna*,<sup>[98]</sup> in 2005. While the album is primarily about lead singer Anthony Green's battle with addiction and substance abuse, the film is referenced both directly and indirectly in its lyrics.<sup>[99]</sup>

American rapper and record producer Jay Electronica sampled five different tracks of Jon Brion's film score for his 2007 debut mixtape *Act 1: Eternal Sunshine (The Pledge)*.<sup>[100]</sup>

American rapper and record producer Mac Miller sampled a track of Jon Brion's film score for his 2013 song "The Quest".<sup>[101]</sup>

American singer-songwriter Jhené Aiko said the film inspired the songs "Eternal Sunshine" and "Spotless Mind" on her 2014 debut album, *Souled Out*.<sup>[102]</sup>

South Korean singer-songwriter Taeyeon took inspiration from the film in the music video for her song "What Do I Call You", the title track on her 2020 EP with the same name.<sup>[103]</sup>

South Korean rapper and singer-songwriter B.I said that the film inspired his song "Tangerine", the fourth track on his 2022 release *Love or Loved Part.1*.<sup>[104]</sup>

American singer-songwriter Ariana Grande titled her 2024 album *Eternal Sunshine* after the film. Her music videos for the songs "Yes, And?" and "We Can't Be Friends (Wait for Your Love)", as well as the rest of the album's songs, contain references to the film.<sup>[105]</sup>

### Video games

Kan Gao, founder of Freebird Games, said his video game *To the Moon*, which is about two doctors traversing through the memory of an old man to fulfill his last wish, was inspired by the film.<sup>[106]</sup>

### Media recognition

Year	Presenter	Title	Rank	Notes
2005	<i>Writers Guild of America</i>	101 Greatest Screenplays	24	<sup>[107]</sup> <sup>[108]</sup>
2008	<i>Empire</i>	The 500 Greatest Movies of All Time	73	<sup>[109]</sup>
2009	<i>Time Out New York</i>	The TONY Top 50 Movies of the Decade	3	<sup>[110]</sup>
	<i>Slant Magazine</i>	The 100 Best Films of the Aughts	86	<sup>[111]</sup>
	<i>Paste</i>	The 50 Best Movies of the Decade (2000-2009)	5	<sup>[112]</sup>
	<i>The A.V. Club</i>	The Best Films of the '00s	1	<sup>[7]</sup>
	<i>Metacritic</i>	Film Critics Pick the Best Movies of the Decade	2	<sup>[113]</sup>
2016	<i>BBC</i>	The 21st Century's 100 Greatest Films	6	<sup>[114]</sup>
2018	<i>Empire</i>	The 100 Greatest Movies	41	<sup>[115]</sup>
	<i>They Shoot Pictures Don't They</i>	The 21st Century's Most Acclaimed Films	13	<sup>[116]</sup>
2022	<i>Sight and Sound</i>	Directors' 100 Greatest Films of All Time	99	<sup>[117]</sup>

## See also

- "Eternal Moonshine of the Simpson Mind"
- Eternal Sunshine*
- Lucid dream
- List of films considered the best

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## External links

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- Official website (<http://www.eternalsunshine.com>) 
  - *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0338013/>) at IMDb
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  - *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/eternal-sunshine-of-the-spotless-mind>) at Metacritic
  - *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (<https://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/moviedetails/54370>) at the AFI Catalog of Feature Films
  - Lacuna Inc. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20051220085434/http://www.lacunainc.com/>), promotional website for the film
  - *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* ([https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/eternal\\_sunshine\\_of\\_the\\_spotless\\_mind](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/eternal_sunshine_of_the_spotless_mind)) at Rotten Tomatoes
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