

= Begin Again ( film ) =

Begin Again is a 2013 American musical comedy @-@ drama film written and directed by John Carney and starring Keira Knightley and Mark Ruffalo . Knightley plays a singer @-@ songwriter who is discovered by a struggling record label executive ( Ruffalo ) and collaborates with him to produce an album recorded in public locations all over New York City .

After the success of his 2007 musical film Once , Carney wrote the script for Begin Again in 2010 and employed Gregg Alexander to compose most of the film 's music . With an US \$ 8 million budget , production began in July 2012 with filming taking place in various locations around New York City . The film premiered in September 2013 at the Toronto International Film Festival and was released theatrically on June 27 , 2014 , in conjunction with the release of the film 's soundtrack . It has grossed over \$ 63 million worldwide and received mostly positive reviews from critics . It was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Song for " Lost Stars " .

= = Plot = =

Dan Mulligan ( Mark Ruffalo ) is a formerly successful record label executive living in New York City who is estranged from his wife Miriam and struggling to keep up with the changing music industry . After being fired from his job , he goes on a drinking binge which leads him to a bar in the Lower East Side where he encounters Gretta James ( Keira Knightley ) . Gretta is a young and fiercely independent songwriter who has just broken up with her long @-@ time boyfriend and songwriting partner Dave Kohl ( Adam Levine ) , a newly successful musician who had an affair with one of his producers ' assistants . Captivated by Gretta 's music , Dan offers her to sign her to his former record label , and although she initially refuses she reconsiders the offer and agrees .

Dan and Gretta meet with Saul , Dan 's business partner and co @-@ founder of their record label , but he does not see the same potential in Gretta and turns her away . Undeterred , Dan proposes that he and Gretta produce their own album together , to be recorded live during the summer at various public locations around New York City . Recruiting a team of talented musicians , including Gretta 's best friend Steve , Dan sets out to make an album worthy of being published by his label . During this time , Dan and Gretta bond both personally and professionally , and Gretta takes Dan 's teenage daughter Violet , a fledgling guitarist , under her wing and encourages her to play on the album . When the album is finished , Dan and Gretta meet again with Saul , who is very impressed with their collaboration . Gretta demands that Saul give Dan his job back and give her a bigger share in the deal . They leave without reaching an agreement , but Dan feels confident that Saul will eventually sign Gretta to the label .

When Gretta sees Dave accepting an award on television , she criticizes him for selling out to the music industry and she expresses her grievances with him in a song which she records on his voice mail . A remorseful Dave , who is back in New York to promote his new album , returns her call and asks to see her . After some consideration , she decides to meet with him and they critique each other 's albums . Gretta feels betrayed by Dave 's heavily commercialized rendition of " Lost Stars , " a love ballad she had once written and composed for him as a Christmas present , believing that the true meaning of the song has been lost . Dave tells her that the audiences love when he plays it in the new way , and that their energy fills the room . He believes that music is about sharing it with people , but Gretta tells him that 's not what she intended for that song . Nevertheless , Dave invites her to come and hear him play the song at the Gramercy Theatre that weekend so that she can see the impact it has had on his fans . She arrives at the venue just in time to watch him play her original arrangement of the song , but as she watches him play and sees the reaction of the crowd to the song and how Dave responds to the fans ' adoration by slipping into singing the commercialized arrangement of the song , she realizes that he is a lost cause . Gretta then leaves the concert and cycles through the city with newfound closure and a dawning smile on her face .

Afterwards , Gretta visits Dan at his apartment as he prepares to move back home , having made amends with his wife . She tells him that she does not want him to release her album , instead preferring to distribute it online for \$ 1 . Although Dan returns to work with Saul , he agrees to let

Gretta release the album online and helps her to promote the release . The next day , Saul jokingly fires Dan for promoting Gretta 's album and informs him that it sold 10 @, @ 000 copies in its first day of release .

= = Cast = =

Keira Knightley as Gretta James , a songwriter

Mark Ruffalo as Dan Mulligan , a music producer

Adam Levine as Dave Kohl , Gretta 's ex @-@ boyfriend and a successful musician

Catherine Keener as Miriam Hart , Dan 's estranged wife

Hailee Steinfeld as Violet Mulligan , Dan and Miriam 's daughter

James Corden as Steve , Gretta 's best friend

CeeLo Green as TroubleGum , a successful rapper who was discovered by Dan

Mos Def as Saul , Dan 's long @-@ time business partner

Rob Morrow as CEO

= = Production = =

Director John Carney conceived the premise for Begin Again several years before he began to write the screenplay in 2010 . The story was partly inspired by his own experiences as a musician in a band , and from his impression of the artists and repertoire ( A & R ) executives of record labels during the 1990s , which formed the basis of Dan 's character . Carney wrote the script , which was initially titled Can a Song Save Your Life ? , before he , Glen Hansard , and Gregg Alexander began writing the songs ; he wanted " to work the music around the story , instead of the other way around . " The script 's style of featuring songs as a natural element of the story was inspired by the 1954 Judy Garland musical film A Star Is Born , and is also employed in Carney 's earlier film Once ( 2007 ) . Carney first pitched the film in 2010 to filmmaker Judd Apatow , who produced the film alongside Tobin Armbrust and Anthony Bregman whose production company Exclusive Media financed the film 's US \$ 8 million budget .

Before casting Keira Knightley as Gretta , Carney considered casting a pop singer such as Adele in the main role , as well as a number of other actresses including Scarlett Johansson , who was at one point attached to the project . Knightley , who had never sung professionally before , prepared for the role by training with a vocal coach and learning how to play a guitar . Mark Ruffalo was Carney 's first choice for the role of Dan , and agreed to star in the film after Carney sent him the first draft of the screenplay . Singer Adam Levine was also the only person Carney considered casting as Dave , and won the role after talking with Carney over Skype and recording some dialogue as an audition ; he declined to be paid for appearing in the film . Although he had had minor acting parts on television before , Begin Again marked his first role in a film . Carney approached James Corden to appear in the film after admiring Corden 's performance in the lead role in a Broadway production of One Man , Two Guvnors .

Principal photography of the film began in New York City on July 2 , 2012 , and lasted for 23 days . Carney chose to film in Manhattan 's lesser known neighborhoods that would be more recognizable to locals than tourists . Specific locations included Greenwich Village , the East Village , Times Square , and Washington Square Park . Rather than performing live during filming , the actors sang to pre @-@ recorded tracks . In order to save money on hiring a full crew and extras , some scenes ? including one in Times Square ? were shot late at night with a handheld camera . The rooftop location near the Empire State Building is located at 28 W 36th St.

= = = Carney ? Knightley feud = = =

During a series of interviews to promote his film Sing Street in 2016 , Carney repeatedly criticized Knightley for her acting in Begin Again . When asked about the critical reaction to Sing Street by The Independent , Carney responded unprompted that " it 's a small personal movie with no Keira

Knightleys in it . It 's really rewarding . " In the same interview Carney also referred to her repeatedly as a model , despite the fact that Knightley had been working professionally as an actress since childhood , saying " I 'll never make a film with supermodels again . " He also criticized her in an interview with Heyuguys.com , saying , " I just think with Keira it was like asking her to do something that she could not do . " Though he did not specifically name Knightley , he did , in an interview with Den of Geek , say that his desire to make Sing Street came from his " experience of working , let 's face it , with a model on my last film " . Filmmakers Massy Tadjedin , Mark Romanek , Lorene Scafaria and Lynn Shelton , who had worked with Knightley on other films , tweeted their support for her after Carney 's comments .

Carney later tweeted a public apology saying he felt like " a complete idiot " and saying that Knightley was " nothing but professional and dedicated " during the filming of the movie .

= = Soundtrack = =

The soundtrack was released on June 30 , 2014 in the U.S. by Gregg Alexander 's record label ALXNDR , Levine 's label 222 Records , Polydor Records , and Interscope Records . Most of the film 's music was composed by Alexander with Danielle Brisebois , Nick Lashley , Rick Nowels , and Nick Southwood . Some songs were written and composed by Glen Hansard and Carney , and most were performed by Knightley and Levine . The track " Drowning Pool " by The Walls , which played over the opening credit sequence , is not included on the soundtrack album . The song " Lost Stars " was nominated for numerous awards , including the Academy Award for Best Original Song and the Broadcast Film Critics Association Award for Best Song .

= = = Charts = = =

= = Release = =

Begin Again premiered on September 7 , 2013 at the Toronto International Film Festival , where The Weinstein Company acquired the U.S. distribution rights to the film for \$ 7 million . It was later screened on April 26 , 2014 on the closing night of the Tribeca Film Festival . The film 's title was changed from Can a Song Save Your Life ? to Begin Again between its festival premiere and its theatrical release because viewers found it difficult to remember and it was often misquoted .

= = = Box office = = =

The film was given a limited release in the United States on June 27 , 2014 , grossing \$ 134 @ , @ 064 on its opening weekend , and opened in wide release on July 11 . It was re @ - @ released by The Weinstein Company on August 29 , closer to the awards season . Overall , the film earned \$ 16 @ , @ 170 @ , @ 632 at the U.S. box office and \$ 47 @ , @ 294 @ , @ 229 internationally for a total gross of \$ 63 @ , @ 464 @ , @ 861 .

= = = Critical response = = =

Begin Again received generally positive reviews from critics . On Rotten Tomatoes , the film holds a rating of 83 % , based on 144 reviews , with an average rating of 6 @ . @ 8 / 10 . The site 's consensus reads , " Writer @ - @ director John Carney 's return to musical drama isn 't quite as potent as it was with Once , but thanks to charming work from its well @ - @ matched leads , Begin Again is difficult to resist . " On Metacritic , the film has a score of 62 out of 100 , based on reviews from 39 critics , indicating " generally favorable reviews " .

Rolling Stone critic Peter Travers gave Begin Again three out of four stars , praising the " subtle magic " of the lead actors ' performances and Carney 's creation of " surreal , enchanting loveliness " without being overly sentimental . Ian Freer of Empire awarded the film four out of five stars ,

describing it as " lovely stuff , winningly played , open @-@ hearted and guaranteed to slap on a smile on a balmy summer night . " In a review for Variety , Peter Debruge wrote that " Gregg Alexander 's music is undeniably the best thing " about the film , which " lays emotions on the line and then drives them home with music . " The Hollywood Reporter 's David Rooney praised the " disarming emotional candor and intimacy " of Carney 's script and the chemistry between Knightley and Ruffalo , while David Edelstein of New York enjoyed Ruffalo 's " very funny " performance and Knightley 's " surprisingly sweet singing voice " .

The Los Angeles Times 's Kenneth Turan , on the other hand , opined that the story and performances felt contrived , and that the film as a whole failed to impress as much as Carney 's previous musical film Once . Similar , A. O. Scott of The New York Times wrote that Begin Again was a " disappointing , overly produced follow @-@ up " to Once and found it " not very good , but ... kind of enjoyable . " In a review for The Guardian , Paul MacInnes awarded the film 2 out of 5 stars and described it as " a movie obsessed with authenticity but as phoney as a Miley Cyrus dance routine . " The Chicago Sun @-@ Times critic Bruce Ingram also found the film hypocritical , noting " the slightly bogus vibe " of the song performances that had been recorded in a studio but were meant to be played live .

= = Accolades = =