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Review: *Keep The Lights On*

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on November 3, 2012 - 11:00am in [Reviews](#) | [New Releases](#)



"Hello. What's up?" the protagonist of [Ira Sachs](#)' new feature film *Keep The Lights On* whispers into the phone to an unknown man on a sex chatline. After repeating the same lines to the same faceless souls desperate for human connection, Erik Rothman ([Thure Lindhardt](#)) finds what he thinks he has been looking for in Paul Lucy ([Zachary Booth](#)).

Keep The Lights On follows Erik and Paul's journey of mutual and self-discovery beginning in 1997 in New York City. Their relationship is tested by drug, alcohol and sex addiction, playing like a broken record (or the film's similar-sounding, albeit enjoyable soundtrack) over the course of a decade.

On the outside, Paul, a lawyer for Random House, appears to be the perfect boyfriend: successful, intelligent and stable. Erik, on the other hand, with his boyish, gap-tooth smile and messy blonde hair, is unemployed and has been working on an assumed parent-financed documentary for years. The Danish native wanders up-and-down the streets of New York and in-and-out of love with Paul desperately trying to find something to connect with and express himself through. The same could be said for Paul, who finds himself regularly staring down the tail end of a crack pipe.

It's hard for Erik to keep the lights on, if you will, when he refuses to see the truth in his and Paul's relationship. Erik is tempted to continue to live in the dark, thinking Paul has recovered from his addictions, so he doesn't have to be alone again. As these characters grow older their own sense and the viewers' sense of who they are is completely upended, for better or for worse. The characters see themselves one way and the world views them in another.

Erik attempts to understand Paul by trying crack with one of his former boy toys. This is only after witnessing Paul's complete out-of-body emotional and physical breakdown (more like deterioration) in one of the most uniquely moving and intimate scenes I have ever seen.

Keep the Lights On, Sachs' Teddy Award-winning, semi-autobiographical fifth feature is an intimately realistic take on the nature of love and how we are constructed to react and handle it.

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