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Review: *Begin Again*

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on July 2, 2014 - 9:00am in [Reviews](#) | [New Releases](#)



In what could be considered writer/director [John Carney's](#) Americanized version of his Academy Award-winning musical *Once*, the movie *Begin Again* (which I continue to mistakenly call "Once Again") hits just the right notes in the bittersweet scale to tug at the heartstrings ... despite [Keira Knightley](#), who makes her singing debut, being flat in more ways than one.

[Knightley](#) plays English singer-songwriter Greta, who finds herself alone with her guitar after her longtime boyfriend [Dave Kohl \(Adam Levine\)](#) dumps her for fame, stardom and a younger-looking woman. Down in the dumps, Greta mentally retires to a life of university studies back in England, that is, until she's persuaded to tag along with a fellow accented friend to an open-mic night at a local dive bar. That's where the movie's audience and Dan ([Mark Ruffalo](#)), a down-on-his-luck record producer, first hear Greta/[Knightley](#) sing a song that has yet to get out of my head.

The duo work through the summer to collaborate on an album that captures the sounds and spirit of NYC.

Eventually, Dan and Greta see each other as their opportunity to, like the title says, "begin again." (I'm really glad the movie's title was changed from *Can a Song Save Your Life?*, which just makes me think of the Make-A-Wish Foundation.)

Begin Again's unpredictability and subtle humor will strike a chord with fans of both indie and mainstream movies, and, regrettably, tweens (hopefully the R rating will prevent them from getting into theaters) because of Maroon 5 frontman [Levine's](#) nauseating performance. Hollywood: Stop trying to make [Adam Levine](#) The Actor happen. Thanks.

Or [Levine's](#) performance -- age spots, fine lines and all -- might have been one of the reasons I enjoyed *Begin Again* because of how simply it incorporates aspects of reality and evokes a more tangible nostalgia than, say, any [Wes Anderson](#) movie.

One of the most heartfelt scenes in *Begin Again*, where Greta and Dan are walking around New York City at night listening to their respective music playlists on their phones with a headphone splitter, reminded me of my own moonlight stroll with a person whose relationship to me is hard to describe for similar reasons to the movie's characters. In hindsight, I find both the fictional and real events to be pretty ridiculous.

Even in moments where the intimacy between Greta and Dan is heightened, I rarely thought about their physical age differences and how Dan is old enough to be Greta's dad and how this should make me angry as a self-described feminist, but it didn't. This may have something to do with Greta's confidence and maturity and Dan's lack thereof, which he makes up for in boyish charm. And I'm a fan of emotionally stunted middle-age men.

Begin Again was worth the three-ish hours to drive in traffic to one of the few Los Angeles theaters screening the movie in its LA/NY release last weekend. The movie opens Friday at [Violet Crown](#) in a limited release, with a July 11 wide release to follow.

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Submitted by [Anonymous](#) on July 8, 2014 - 1:20pm.

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