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## Beatles-inspired 'Yesterday' is nice — just don't overthink it

"Yesterday" is a charming bauble. Not a diamond. Perhaps a rhinestone — sparkling and attractive, yet unable to withstand any scratching of its surface.

Like "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "Rocketman," "Yesterday" offers nostalgic pleasure by reciting from the baby-boomer songbook.

Jack Malik (Himesh Patel) is a struggling musician who has given up his teaching job to devote himself to his music.

He works part time in a hardware store, playing sparsely attended gigs under festival tents, where he strums and warbles before indifferent audiences.

His music career isn't going anywhere, and he's lost confidence.

Jack's manager and would-be love interest, Ellie, (Lily James) is a schoolteacher who also resides in Jack's picturesque overcast British seaside town and chauffeurs him to his gigs.

One especially disappointing night, Jack finally decides to give up on music. After Ellie drops him off at the bike-park, he pedals away in the

dark. A bus slams into him and sends him flying. Jack gets his lights knocked out, and in the moments he is aloft, lights go off all over the world in some sort of magical mystery blackout. In 12 seconds, they're back on again.

Except they're not, exactly.

When Jack comes to after the smash-up, minus his front teeth, it's to a different world. There are products, performers and people, most significantly the Beatles, that have been erased — not just from collective memory, but from ever having existed.

To its credit, "Yesterday" doesn't try to explain this collective amnesia. No happiness could be gained by examining the film's theory of physics.

Jack's old guitar was destroyed in the accident, and his friends come together to present him with the gift of a new one.

Jack is Pakistani-British, his mates are not. The movie prides itself in pretending that this difference makes no difference. All members of this clique of young people are well-integrated into the banalities of small-town life.



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He tests the new instrument by singing "Let it Be." No one else has ever heard it. Their verdict: It's nice, but it's no Coldplay.

Jack realizes he's onto something, but no one seems willing to hear his secret. He almost has no choice except to present the Beatles' songs

as his own creations. It's his ticket to ride.

But the greater his fame, the greater his guilt, and the more distant he grows from Ellie.

Patel, a soap opera star in the United Kingdom, is handsome in a character actor sort of way, like John Cusack. He's malleable and can swing successfully between goofiness and swagger. Patel is everyman, and the audience relates to him, even in Jack's early-stage musical mediocrity.

Once Jack begins his ascent, Kate McKinnon, in the guise of a smarmy Malibu-based music manager, arrives to perform her repertoire of "Saturday Night Live" tics and quirks.

Written by Richard Curtis ("Four Weddings and a Funeral") and directed by Danny Boyle, "Yesterday" is neither edgy like "Trainspotting," nor bristling with suspense and tick-tock urgency like "Slumdog Millionaire," two of Doyle's most memorable films.

It is a balmy summertime pleasure, a reminder of what romantic comedy can be.