

A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

USA (2019) 109 minutes

Director: Marielle Heller

Cast: Tom Hanks (Fred Rogers)
Matthew Rhys (Lloyd Vogel)
Chris Cooper (Jerry Vogel)
Susan Kelechi Watson (Andrea Vogel)



Screening 30 March 2022 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Cynical, jaded investigative journalist Lloyd Vogel gets an assignment he feels is beneath him: interview and write a short article on the much-loved children's TV personality Fred Rogers. Vogel is battling his own demons, not least of which is a long-running animosity towards his father, going back to when his mother died. He overcomes his scepticism, learning about empathy, kindness, and decency from America's most beloved neighbour.

Reviews



Fred Rogers – beloved in the States for his unfailingly sanguine persona, but largely unknown in the UK – was an American television presenter and the man behind the popular, long-running children's series *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

This exquisite adaptation of Tom Junod's 1998 *Esquire* profile paints a carefully shaded picture from a sceptic's vantage point. When investigative reporter Lloyd Vogel is assigned a puff piece about one of the nation's heroes, he takes it upon himself to locate the dark heart of Mr Rogers. There isn't one. Director Marielle Heller (*The Diary of a Teenage Girl*, 2015 and *Can You Ever Forgive Me?* 2018) cleverly mines comedy from Rogers' boundless empathy as Vogel tries to probe for weak spots, finding only his own. Through their interaction he is encouraged, gently, to confront his own demons and daddy issues.

Rogers explains that his show tries to give children a positive way to deal with their feelings. It sounds preachy and schematic, yet the film itself is subtle, melancholy and deeply felt in its sincerity.

Simran Hans, The Observer

Fred Rogers was the real-life host of the popular long-running children's television show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. The show debuted in Pittsburgh in 1968, becoming a staple of television stations around the United States. It was critically acclaimed for focusing on children's emotional and physical concerns, such as death, sibling rivalry, school enrolment and divorce.

Rogers' mild manner, cardigan sweaters and soft speaking voice made him both widely beloved and widely parodied. Rogers ended production of the show in 2001, but re-runs of it continued to be aired on many stations. He died in 2003, aged 74, after a short battle with cancer.

There are many Fred Rogers quotes, for example:

'There are three ways to ultimate success: The first way is to be kind. The second way is to be kind. The third way is to be kind.'

Film Facts

- The movie is loosely based on journalist Tom Junod's life around 1998 when he wrote an article on Fred Rogers for *Esquire* magazine.
- Fred Rogers was known to be extremely difficult to interview because he cared more about the person interviewing him than he did about being interviewed and would often use the time to befriend the person interviewing him.
- This is the seventh film in which Tom Hanks has portrayed a real-life person.

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