

Film Review: God Help the Girl (Stuart Murdoch, 2014)



It's an ambiguous Glasgow under a dull light. The music scene is there, as are the high rise buildings and the grey skies. However, notably absent from God Help the Girl is the city's vibrancy, wit and charm. Unfortunately, Belle and Sebastian's founding member has omitted the ingredients that could have made his musical great.

Stuck in a depressed state, a girl named Eve seeks solace in the music she writes. She confides in and works with James and Cassie, two inspired souls whom she collaborates with musically. As their inspiration blossoms, Eve must question whether this upward spiral she is on could possibly uncoil.

Stuart Murdoch's intentions with his own music coming to life on film were a little too flimsy in their execution. What could be brimming with charm and invention is disappointingly cookie cutter in terms of its writing and performances. His scriptural effort echoes those achingly rehashed indie teen 'dramedies' that BBC Three seem to be churning out to a non-existent audience. Murdoch could have used the great city of Glasgow as a platform for his cast to perform on, but its existence is hollow and unapparent. Bar the occasional thick accents and a passing reference to 'neds', this could be any of the UK's steel grey cities.

Characters are thinly developed and halfheartedly performed, surprising from a writer with so much lyrical talent, and a cast with indelible skill. Doe eyed and pale skinned, Emily Browning, playing Eve, does an excellent job of looking the part, but struggles to embody the broken soul she's meant to represent. Hannah Murray playing her rather ditzy accomplice

does so competently, but essentially reenacts the role she most famously played in E4's *Skins*.

It doesn't fall totally flat. When it comes to the music, Murdoch has everything on point. Spattered evenly throughout, they come along to salvage the film from growing monotonous. Their screen execution is often twee, but does have gleeful, endearing moments that will delight any fan of musicals, and should satisfy a fair chunk of Belle & Sebastian's crowd.

Stuart Murdoch's visual interpretation of *God Help the Girl* should have been a powerful homage to his music and the city he hails from. Instead, we are left with a rather diluted and stale view of teenage harmonic angst, with some jubilant tunes along the way. Maybe if Murdoch had handled the musical side of things whilst handing the scriptural and directorial reins to someone more experienced, *God Help the Girl* could have risen from the flat note it ends up groaning on.

God Help the Girl has its UK Premiere at Edinburgh's Corn Exchange on Saturday August 16th, featuring a live performance from Belle and Sebastian. Tickets for this are available [here](#).