

In Search of a Midnight Kiss

Cert 15 USA 100 minutes

Crew

Director	Alex Holdridge
Screenplay	Alex Holdridge
Cinematography	Robert Murphy

Cast

Wilson	Scot McNairy
Vivian	Sara Simmonds
Jacob	Brian Matthew MaGuire
Min	Katie Luong
Wilson's Mum	Twink Caplon
Bouy	Bret Roberts

Synopsis

Los Angeles, the present. Inconsolable after breaking up with his girlfriend, Wilson has come to the city to live with his friend Jacob. Jacob and his partner Min are amused to catch him masturbating to a photograph of Min. They encourage him to post a personal ad in order to get a date for New Year's Eve.

A New Year's rendezvous is arranged with Vivian, who is intrigued by Wilson's professed misanthropy. Wilson discovers that he is among a number of men being subjected to a remorseless interview process as Vivian seeks the right man for a kiss at midnight. The two roam the streets; she tells him that she has recently parted from her 'redneck' boyfriend.

Abridged from Sight & Sound, June 2008



Review

In Search of a Midnight Kiss is a realistic comedy of modern manners set in Los Angeles over a period of some 24 hours, starting on the morning of New Year's Eve. The depressed protagonist, 29-year-old Wilson (Scot McNairy), is a would-be writer from Texas whose car was written off in Arizona on his way to California. His computer, containing various scripts, was stolen shortly after his arrival. His long-time relationship with a girl back home has broken up and he's been working as a clerk in a video shop (the movie slacker's occupation of choice these past 20 years).

After he's conjured up an engaging montage of midnight kisses at that sentimental moment - 00:00 am on the clock - when the old year goes out and new hopes begin to the strains of *Auld Lang Syne*, Wilson reconciles himself to entering the New Year alone. But Jacob, his lifelong friend and flatmate, a small-time DJ (Brian McGuire), thinks he needs company, especially after he's caught Wilson masturbating over a photo of the beautiful Asian-American Min (Katie Luong), Jacob's soon-to-be fiancée. As it happens, Min, a musician, regards this as a compliment.

Nobody meets by chance any longer in LA. It's done on the web and within an hour of the appearance on the website Craig's list site of the personable Wilson's photo, accompanied by a note beginning: 'Misanthrope would like to meet a misanthrope', there's a call from Vivian (Sara Simmonds). The confident, good-looking Vivian, it transpires, is also from Texas. She's come to LA to pursue an acting career and has just dumped Jack, her boyfriend who'd accompanied her.

Determined to be in the right company at midnight, she's in the process of auditioning prospective partners. When she meets Wilson, they embark on a walking tour of downtown LA, an almost surreal world of squalor and magnificence, of elegant old buildings waiting to be pulled down and wonderful new ones like Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall. Before their rendezvous, Jacob and Min dress up Wilson in the right clothes for the occasion and Jacob advises him on the new etiquette of how many condoms to carry on the first date.

There's a particularly haunting moment when she indulges in her hobby of photographing single shoes abandoned on waste lots and in gutters, and we're given a montage of the images she preserves on her website. The muted, climactic scenes of this beguiling film offer surprises, both touching and wistful, and Robert Murphy's monochrome photography is excellent. Murphy's band Sybil perform a couple of songs on the soundtrack and he appears briefly as Vivian's volatile ex-lover.

Philip French The Observer (abridged) 15 June 2008