

Hope Springs: one of the most rewarding films of 2012

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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With so many films exploring the sexuality of a younger generation, it is refreshing to find the mature rom-com *Hope Springs*. Oscar is going to love this delightful and utterly charming battle of the sexes, and marriage makeover with Meryl Streep and Tommy Lee Jones as a devoted married couple who need to shed their bedroom hang-ups and try to reignite the spark that caused them to fall for each other in the first place.

When Streep, who is absolutely sensational, hears of a renowned couples' specialist (Steve Carell) in the small town of Great Hope Springs, she attempts to persuade her sceptical husband, a steadfast man of routine, to get on a plane for a week of marriage therapy.

The battle is on and warfare has never been this much fun.

Streep has the uncanny gift of balancing the intricate dynamics between being naughty, vulnerable and at times hysterically funny, without ever forcing her fragile disposition. It is equally refreshing to see Streep playing her natural self, exploring the dilemma of a woman whose marriage has lost its spark and who wants to rekindle its magic, also delving into sensitive issues concerning intimacy and sexuality.





A hot-headed and cold-hearted cynic

Jones is excellent as a bull in a china shop, a hot-headed and cold-hearted cynic who marvellously sets off the sparks and ignites the explosive and volatile relationship. Add to this the dramatic sensibility of comedian Carell as the cool and casual counsellor who pushes all the right and wrong buttons, and you are in for great entertainment. Intelligent, thought provoking and witty, *Hope Springs* is the kind of film that ropes you in and never lets go. From start to finish, each scene gloriously showcases superb performances and storytelling at its best.

A crackling screenplay

The film has a crackling screenplay, marking the feature film debut of television writer Vanessa Taylor, who currently serves as co-executive producer on the HBO series *Game of Thrones*.

Director David Frankel, who directed films like *The Devil Wears Prada* and *Marley And Me*, has a clear understanding of relationships and serves the story well, never allowing contextual gimmicks to distract the focus.

It definitely gets a vote for one of the top films of 2012; it's honest and sincere, and its telling is rewarding and meaningful.

There are certain issues related to intimacy and sexuality that always create a painful affliction; Hope Springs successfully breaks down the barriers (with love, kindness and humour) and poignantly shows how important it is to communicate your desires, fears and frustrations, de-cluttering a nest of uncertainty and feelings of unworthiness and insecurity.

Live life to its fullest

We need films like Hope Springs to show us what it is like to be human, but, more importantly, how vital it is to live life to its fullest and never leave to a second chance your hopes and aspirations. The film instils a belief that it is possible to realise your ultimate dreams and fantasies.

Fantasy might be an illusion and far removed from reality, but when it becomes real and your quest is as determined and unwavering as Streep's housewife, it is an enlightening and emotional payoff that will save you money on therapy.

Hope Springs proves that everything is possible and nothing is ever really lost if it fuelled by hope and motivated by passion.

Behind the scenes

Vanessa Taylor, who wrote the screenplay, which landed on the "Black List" of the industry's best work that has yet to be produced, says that she was inspired by those big questions. "I had been thinking about marriage and how people keep passion and sexuality in a long-term marriage," she said. "I'd been doing some reading on that and on marital counselling. And I started thinking - what would it be like to try to get your spark back if you never quite had it to start with? Especially from a woman's point of view; if you weren't comfortable with yourself and your sexuality, how much courage would it take to step forward and say: 'Our marriage is fine, but it's not good enough. I want more. I deserve better.'"

Read more at www.writingstudio.co.za/page1037.html

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za
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