



What Dreams May Come

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The quasi-religious nature of the material has inspired the filmmakers to heavenly heights, from the landscape painted paradise to the profoundly moving performances. Director Vincent Ward (remember his *Voyager* and *Navigator* films, as well as *Map of the Human Heart*, with their quest-driven themes?) has pulled out all the stops with his digital effects teams to create for us a visual wonderland where the dead inhabit their favourite paintings. The simple story is embellished with these imagination-rich works, and the emotional intensity of the film is unquestionably its centrifugal force, gripping with the glue of deep and profound love. But for all that, the film suffers from an overload of sentimentality – which, of course, it can not really avoid, given the core subject matter. There are also holes and weaknesses in the script, as well as some lively and inventive touches (but we won't spoil the many surprises for you). But the film's primary purpose is confidently and resoundingly achieved: *What Dreams May Come* is a spectacular ode to romantic love. It is also an intellectual question mark about the big question of life after death, but in strictly traditional terms. It's worth the money, despite its soft spots."

Andrew L. Urban

"The notion of being immersed in art has never been taken so literally as in *What Dreams May Come*, an imaginative, inventive and conceptually brilliant film, in which we are limited only by our imagination. Exquisite to look at with a production design about which to fantasize; glorious, intense colours and surreal images are contrasted by dark, ominous ones. The ethereal, magical garden paradise is a seductive valhalla, representative of all things beautiful – flowers, trees, birds, water – straight from Monet's impressionistic canvas. Vincent Ward's vision canvasses not only the euphoric shangri-la of our dreams, but also the horrors of our worst nightmare. Who could not be forced to ponder with lines like 'Real hell is your life gone wrong...?' And Michael Kamen's romantic score is superbly played by the London Metropolitan Orchestra. Robin Williams is compelling, his complex facial features expressing a multitude of emotions and his extraordinary sensitivity hungrily seeking every channel of communication. Annabella Sciorra chisels a magnetic depth to her performance, while Max Von Sydow is a solid presence. Cuba Gooding Jr is adequate, but this role doesn't offer him much chance to shine. A few script flaws are apparent with some rather contrived lines. Beyond the schmaltz which is rather heavy handed, there's an emotional richness that is passionate and moving. Exhilarating, funny, tragic, poignant and overwhelmingly beautiful, *What Dreams May Come* is romantic in the true poetic sense, offering a palette of illusions for the soul."

Louise Keller

"Cynics, who have problems dealing with their own spirituality and the concept of an afterlife may have problems accepting this film. But for the rest of us, *What Dreams May Come* is an audacious, original and overpowering masterwork, a film not only of shimmering beauty, but one which deals with such purity of emotions that rarely have the courage to be expressed on film. Audiences may not be too willing to embrace it, which would be a tragedy. Like the original Richard Matheson novel, beautifully adapted by Ronald Bass, *Dreams* is a film about the power and emotional depth of the human spirit, yet not in a cliched or hackneyed way. New Zealand director Vincent Ward has crafted an emotionally complex work within a visually stylised milieu that befits the thematic tone of the piece. Love, loss, death, birth, heaven and hell, are all intrinsically detailed in this powerful story of a man determined to find his soul mate after death. Visually, *What Dreams May Come* is an astonishing sight to behold. Based on classic paintings, Ward's visualisation of the stark worlds inhabited by Robin Williams' Chris Nielsen, is a hypnotic and dazzling sight to behold, making this film one of breathtaking beauty, yet it's a beauty that doesn't mar the film's characters and central performances. In the central role of Chris Nielsen, Williams gives an emotionally meticulous and remarkable performance; this is his most beautiful work to date, while the often underused Annabella Sciorra is extraordinary in a tough, complex role in which she shines. Cuba Gooding also excels as a kind of celestial guide. But the real star of this movie is director Vincent Ward, a cinematic artist who has created a world that one believes in, as long as you let it. *What Dreams May Come* is close to a masterpiece, a film that deserves to be accepted by a jaded audience."

Paul Fischer