

Say Anything ★★★

Year of Release: 1989

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: See It

In many ways, the romantic comedy *Say Anything...* is a generic teenage love story—one we've seen countless times before. It tells the all-too-familiar story of young love between two recent high school graduates. Ione Skye plays Diane Court, the intellectual and socially reserved valedictorian of her high school class. She has just been awarded an extremely prestigious scholarship to attend college in England. John Cusack plays Diane's suitor, Lloyd Dobler, an amateur kick-boxer who's unsure of his future. He does know one thing, however: he'd like to spend his summer with Diane.

Lloyd and Diane are the classic mismatch or odd couple. He is your average Joe, unexceptional but for his sensitivity, chivalry, and boyish charm. And she, on the other hand, is one of a kind—someone definitely destined for success. However, despite their differences, Diane and Lloyd click as a couple. He can make her laugh, and she gives him self-confidence. They start dating, and the movie follows their tumultuous on-again-off-again relationship.

If *Say Anything's* premise sounds formulaic and unoriginal, that's because it is. The movie doesn't break any new ground, but it's surprisingly effective nevertheless. After so many brain-dead treatments of this material, *Say Anything...* stands out for its intelligence, sophistication, and sharp wit. The movie also adds a unique twist to its story: namely, one of the most sensitively and touchingly portrayed father-daughter relationships in recent memory. Diane is unusually close to her

father; he's her very best friend and confidante. John Mahoney is outstanding as Diane's loving and understanding father, a man who desperately wants only the best for his daughter. In fact, he's even willing to cheat the Internal Revenue Service in order to better support Diane.

In *Say Anything...*, Cusack demonstrates once again that he makes an extraordinarily appealing romantic lead. His sense of vulnerability, insecurity, and humility make him seem far more authentic than his brat pack colleagues, such as Rob Lowe and Tom Cruise. Cusack is always at his best when he plays the underdog, as he does in *Say Anything...* and as he did in such films as *Better Off Dead* and *Eight Men Out*.

Skye, who received considerable attention in 1986 for her role in *River's Edge*, gives a compelling performance as Diane, the troubled young woman torn between her love for Lloyd and her loyalty to her father who is under criminal investigation by the IRS. Skye poignantly conveys the painful confusion and emotional anguish Diane feels as she falls in love and asserts her independence from her father.

Say Anything... pushes the limits of its tired boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl, boy-gets-girl-back story. But unfortunately, *Say Anything...* fails to say anything terribly new or profound about young love. Most of us already know all too well from our own experience just how exhilarating, terrifying, and painful first love can be. However, as I mentioned before, *Say Anything...* is special not so much for *what* it says, but for *how* it says it.

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