

REVIEWS

Unrequited love

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The new independent film *Adam* portrays, in many ways, a typical New York love story. Two young, good-looking people meet in the laundry room of their brownstone apartment building. They frolic under the moon in Central Park, dine at abrasively loud restaurants, and endure awkward parent introductions.

The setup is utterly conventional — except that the handsome, quiet and quirky male lead, Adam, has Asperger syndrome.

I had the pleasure of catching a sneak preview of *Adam* on Monday night; it will be rolled out to **theatres across the country** over the next few weeks. The movie will no doubt receive critical nods for the refined direction by **Max Mayer** and engrossing performances by **Hugh Dancy**, who plays Adam, and **Rose Byrne**, who plays his lover, Beth.

But *Adam* is bound to stir up controversy among the autism advocacy community for its provocative central question: Can people with autism truly fall in love?

In the real world, some people with Asperger's do get married, but it's **rare and often fraught**. Some surveys estimate that about 75 percent of couples with Asperger's **seek counseling**.

In the film, it's clear that Beth loves Adam. She sees his obsession with space as energetic passion, his explicit confusion in romantic situations as honest, and his weird gifts as sweet. As a teacher and writer of children's books, she appreciates his child-like naiveté and attentiveness, a welcome change from the manipulative men of her previous relationships.

What's not clear, because he can't tell her, is whether Adam loves Beth's values and goals and thoughts, or merely her assistance and companionship — a constant tension that the couple finally confronts at the movie's emotional climax.

I highly recommend the film for anyone who wants to think about the nature of 'autistic love' — or any other kind.