



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 1, 2010

## Last Song: Positive Film About Love, Family

Contrary to popular belief, *The Last Song* starring Miley Cyrus, an adaptation of Nicholas Sparks' best-selling novel, is not your typical "teeny-bopper" love story. In fact, it is a heart-breaking tale about an estranged father-daughter relationship that is propelled into reconciliation when said daughter must spend her summer with her father, only to discover devastating news. For this reason, this film is not only recommended for teens and young adults, but for all women who consider themselves "daddy's girl."



When rebellious teen Ronnie Miller (Miley Cyrus) is forced to spend the summer with her father Steve (Greg Kinnear) in Tybee, Georgia, she reacts in the way all 17-year-old angst-ridden girls would. Ronnie's anguish is exacerbated by her resentment towards her parents for their divorce and towards her father for "leaving them," moving from their New York City home back to his hometown.

Prior to the divorce, Ronnie and her father were bonded by their love of music, particularly the piano. After her father's departure, however, Ronnie rejected music despite her unbelievable talent.

Quite expectantly, Ronnie meets a young man named Will Blakelee (Liam Hemsworth), whose charms manage to woo and endear the initially resistant young lady. Truth be told, the chemistry between these two is evident and will invoke a smile or two from even the most jaded viewer.

There are several things you can expect should you attend this movie. First, you will be surrounded by swarms of teenage girls who will insist on talking and giggling right up to the opening credits, and that's simply unavoidable. Next, you will hear an inane opus of "aws" and coy giggles whenever Cyrus appears on-screen with her beau, who by any definition is the embodiment of all that a teenage girl would believe to be dreamy. Finally, the distinct sound of sniffing and ruffling tissues will complete the symphony of sounds resonating off the theater's four walls.

Despite these minor annoyances, however, *The Last Song* is redeemed by the presence of Christian themes and innocent love in the film. When Ronnie learns that this is in fact the last summer she will spend with her father, she seems to mature overnight. Suddenly, the world no longer revolves around her or her romance, and she refocuses her attention on the first man she ever loved, her father. For the first time, she accepts the notion that "to err is human, to forgive, divine," especially when she realizes that her own imperfections should prohibit her from harshly judging her father's. She transforms from an unruly, defiant teenager to a young woman who learns to honor her parents.

Likewise, there are several undertones in the film about what behaviors women should accept from the men in their lives, and how the presence of a strong father helps to establish those boundaries. In a precious and oh so humorous scene bound to make all teenage girls squirm in their seats, Ronnie's father is uncomfortable with the proximity between Ronnie and her suitor as they sit together on the beach. Acting in the way all good fathers should, Steve makes his presence known to Will and separates



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Ronnie's seat from Will's by a generous four feet. To drive his point home, he draws a line in the sand that nonverbally clarifies for Will that Steve means business. A definite moment of levity! Later, after Steve drives Ronnie to a wedding where she will act as Will's date, Steve warns Will to avoid any compulsions to be lascivious.

This type of father-daughter relationship is pertinent to the health of the daughter's future relationships, exemplified in the film and novel by Ronnie's lack of sexual promiscuity. For Ronnie's friend Blaze, however, no such father figure exists. Not surprisingly, Blaze allows herself to be manhandled and mistreated by the venomous Marcus. She sabotages all of her healthy relationships to safeguard the one relationship she should seek to end.

To my dismay, *The Last Song* has faced several harsh reviews, particularly focused on Miley Cyrus' portrayal of Ronnie. I found Cyrus' character to be rather believable, perhaps because I still maintain a clear picture of what it felt like to be 17 years old, and Cyrus nailed it.

I will grant that Sparks may have been a bit confused when he constructed Ronnie's character. I mean, his intent was to portray a rebellious teen, but what we get instead is a girl who stole one time from a store, instantly regretted it, and has elected to spend her free time reading Tolstoy and saving sea turtles. In other words, Hollywood's version of a rebel.

Viewers are confused by the transition from clichéd love story to a dramatic family tearjerker that is more intricately connected in the novel than it was in the film. Since I was lucky enough to read *The Last Song* before seeing the film, I knew what to expect and was prepared for an abbreviated version of a much longer story.

Overall, *The Last Song* is a healthy choice for young girls, both the novel and the film. With minimal violence, zero sexual explicitness, and one curse word, parents have little about which to be concerned. My prediction is that it will prompt all girls who are lucky enough to have a close relationship to their fathers to call their dads the minute they leave the theater just to say "I love you." I'm not ashamed to admit that it was the first thing I did after the movie ended. Any movie that can do that will always be ranked highly in my book.



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