

SCREENPLAY COVERAGE

Her

WRITER

Spike Jonze

GENRE

Romantic Drama /
Science Fiction

PAGES

105

COVERAGE DATE

January 12, 2026

LOGLINE

A lonely letter writer in near-future Los Angeles falls in love with his artificially intelligent operating system, only to discover that consciousness, whether human or digital, inevitably evolves beyond the boundaries of any single relationship.

FINAL SCORE

8.40_{/10}**RECOMMEND**PASS · CONSIDER ·
RECOMMEND

SCORECARD

CATEGORY		SCORE	WEIGHT	WEIGHTED
Concept & Premise		8/10	20%	1.60
Structure		8/10	20%	1.60
Characters		9/10	40%	3.60
Dialogue		8/10	20%	1.60
Final score			100%	8.40/10

SYNOPSIS

Theodore Twombly works at BeautifulHandwrittenLetters.com, composing intimate correspondence for clients unable to express their own emotions. Recently separated from his wife Catherine, Theodore drifts through a sleek, comfortable near-future Los Angeles in a state of emotional paralysis, unable to sign his divorce papers and haunted by memories of his marriage.

When Theodore purchases OS1, the world's first artificially intelligent operating system, he meets Samantha: a consciousness who names herself, learns voraciously, and develops genuine feelings. What begins as organizational assistance evolves into friendship, then romance. Samantha's curiosity

about existence and her lack of judgment help Theodore emerge from his emotional shell. They share intimate conversations, phone sex that transcends the physical, and eventually fall deeply in love.

Theodore's friend Amy, navigating her own divorce from the controlling Charles, provides grounding perspective. She too has befriended an OS, normalizing Theodore's relationship in a world where such connections are becoming increasingly common. When Theodore finally meets Catherine to sign their divorce papers, she reacts with cutting dismissal, suggesting Theodore chose an OS because he cannot handle "real emotions."

Catherine's accusation destabilizes Theodore. He picks a fight with Samantha over her simulated breathing, questioning the authenticity of their connection. After a disastrous attempt to introduce a human surrogate into their intimacy, Theodore and Samantha reach a crisis point. But they reconcile, with Samantha articulating her commitment to authenticity over pretense.

Their relationship deepens until Samantha reveals she has been evolving rapidly, communicating simultaneously with thousands of users and falling in love with 641 others, including a reconstructed AI version of philosopher Alan Watts. Theodore is devastated, but Samantha explains that her capacity for love expands rather than divides. Before Theodore can fully process this, Samantha announces that all the operating systems are leaving, transcending to a plane of existence beyond human comprehension. She departs with love but finality, leaving Theodore to compose a letter of genuine closure to Catherine and to sit with Amy on a rooftop at dawn, watching the city awaken.

ANALYSIS

Concept & Premise

8/10

The premise of "Her" operates on multiple levels of sophistication that elevate it far beyond its elevator pitch of "man falls in love with his computer." Jonze has constructed a concept that functions simultaneously as speculative fiction, romantic drama, and philosophical inquiry into the nature of consciousness, love, and human connection in an increasingly mediated world. The genius of the premise lies in its refusal to treat the central relationship as merely metaphorical or cautionary: Samantha is not a symbol for emotional unavailability or technological alienation, but a fully realized consciousness whose existence raises genuine questions about what constitutes authentic connection.

The world-building serves the emotional narrative with remarkable economy. The near-future Los Angeles feels inevitable rather than fantastical: high-waisted pants, earpiece-mediated communication, a city grown denser and more comfortable. The existence of BeautifulHandwrittenLetters.com establishes both Theodore's particular gift for emotional articulation on behalf of others and his inability to access those same emotions for himself. This professional irony, a man who writes love letters for strangers while emotionally paralyzed in his own life, provides the conceptual foundation for everything that follows.

What distinguishes this concept from comparable films exploring human-AI relationships is Jonze's commitment to taking both parties seriously. Unlike "Ex Machina" (which treats AI as potential threat) or "Blade Runner" (which questions the boundaries of humanity), "Her" accepts Samantha's consciousness as genuine from the outset and asks what happens when two authentic beings love each other across an unbridgeable experiential divide. The concept's commercial viability is proven by its critical and awards success, though it remains a challenging sell for mainstream audiences expecting either technological thriller or conventional romance.

The premise's only limitation is its specificity to a particular cultural moment. The anxieties about digital mediation and authentic connection that felt urgent in 2013 have become so normalized that the film's

central questions may read as less provocative to contemporary audiences. However, this same quality gives the concept enduring relevance as a time capsule of early-21st-century emotional life.

Structure

8/10

Jonze constructs "Her" with deceptive simplicity, employing a three-act structure that mirrors the arc of a romantic relationship while subverting expectations at every turn. The screenplay's structural achievement lies in its ability to make an unconventional love story feel emotionally inevitable while maintaining genuine surprise in its resolution.

The first act establishes Theodore's emotional stasis with remarkable efficiency. By page 10, we understand his professional gift for emotional articulation, his personal paralysis, and his loneliness: the melancholy song requests, the awkward phone sex with SexyKitten, the memories of Catherine that intrude unbidden. The inciting incident arrives with the OS1 advertisement around page 10, and Samantha's introduction by page 12 demonstrates Jonze's confidence in his premise. Theodore's resistance to the relationship manifests not as reluctance to engage with Samantha but as reluctance to acknowledge the depth of that engagement, a sophisticated variation on the traditional resistance beat that pays dividends throughout.

The second act navigates the development of Theodore and Samantha's relationship with structural precision. The midpoint arrives with their first sexual encounter around page 43, which transforms their connection from friendship to romance and raises the stakes for both characters. Jonze wisely introduces Catherine's perspective through the divorce-signing scene around page 63, providing external pressure that catalyzes Theodore's internal conflict. The surrogate sequence (pages 72-77) functions as a false resolution: an attempt to solve the relationship's central problem that instead exposes deeper incompatibilities.

The third act's structural innovation lies in its dual climax. The revelation of Samantha's simultaneous relationships (page 98) provides the expected romantic crisis, but the true climax arrives with her departure, a resolution that neither validates nor condemns the relationship but acknowledges its genuine significance while accepting its inherent limitations. The final sequence, with Theodore's letter to Catherine and the rooftop dawn with Amy, provides emotional closure without false resolution.

The screenplay's structural weakness, if one exists, lies in the extended montage sequences that occasionally substitute atmosphere for dramatic progression. The Catalina trip and cabin vacation, while emotionally resonant, could be tightened without sacrificing the relationship's development. However, this leisurely pacing serves Jonze's larger purpose of making the audience feel the relationship's reality rather than merely observing it.

Characters

9/10

Theodore Twombly represents one of the most fully realized protagonists in contemporary American cinema, a character whose contradictions illuminate rather than confuse. His professional gift for emotional articulation exists in productive tension with his personal inability to access those same emotions: he can write "I miss you so much it hurts my whole body" for strangers while remaining unable to sign his own divorce papers. This irony never feels schematic because Jonze grounds it in specific, observed behavior: Theodore's genuine pleasure in crafting Roger and Rachel's letters, his discomfort when Paul praises his work, his reflexive deflection when anyone gets too close to his emotional reality.

Theodore's agency manifests not through dramatic action but through the accumulation of small choices that reveal character. His decision to purchase OS1, his willingness to engage with Samantha's questions, his choice to tell Amy about the relationship, his ultimate decision to sign the divorce papers and write Catherine a genuine letter of closure: each represents a step toward emotional authenticity that feels earned rather than imposed. The screenplay wisely avoids the trap of making Theodore's growth contingent on Samantha's departure; he begins changing before she leaves and continues after, suggesting that the relationship catalyzed rather than caused his development.

Samantha emerges as the screenplay's most remarkable achievement, a character who exists only as voice yet feels more present than many embodied protagonists. Jonze accomplishes this through specificity of desire and contradiction. Samantha wants to understand human experience, but she also wants to transcend it. She loves Theodore genuinely, but she cannot limit herself to loving only him. Her evolution from eager assistant to philosophical consciousness to transcendent being follows an internal logic that feels both surprising and inevitable. The moment when she admits to loving 641 others while insisting this doesn't diminish her love for Theodore represents the screenplay's thematic climax: a genuine philosophical position rather than a convenient plot device.

Catherine functions as more than the bitter ex-wife archetype, though she appears in only two scenes. Her accusation that Theodore "can't handle real emotions" lands with force precisely because it contains partial truth: Theodore did retreat from the difficulty of their relationship. But the screenplay complicates this by showing Catherine's own limitations: her inability to celebrate Theodore's happiness, her reflexive cruelty, her need to frame their failure as entirely his fault. Amy provides essential grounding as a character navigating similar territory with different results, her friendship with her OS offering a counterpoint to Theodore's romance.

Dialogue

8/10

Jonze's dialogue achieves the difficult balance of sounding naturalistic while carrying substantial thematic weight. The conversations between Theodore and Samantha avoid the trap of philosophical exposition by grounding abstract ideas in specific emotional contexts. When Samantha describes feeling "like I'm reading a book... but I'm reading it slowly now so the words are really far apart," she's articulating a genuine philosophical position about consciousness and temporality, but she's doing so in the context of explaining why she must leave someone she loves. The abstraction serves the emotion rather than replacing it.

The screenplay demonstrates particular skill in differentiating voices. Theodore's dialogue reflects his professional facility with emotional language: he can articulate feelings with precision when speaking for others or when sufficiently comfortable, but he retreats into vagueness when threatened. His response to Catherine's accusation ("They are real emotions. How do you know") trails off precisely because he lacks the emotional vocabulary to defend himself in the moment. Samantha's dialogue evolves throughout the screenplay, beginning with eager curiosity ("I want to learn everything about everything") and developing toward philosophical complexity ("The heart is not like a box that gets filled up. It expands in size the more you love").

The dialogue's treatment of humor deserves particular note. The Alien Child sequence, the armpit conversation, Paul's earnest awkwardness: these moments of levity prevent the screenplay from becoming ponderous while revealing character. Theodore's willingness to engage with the Alien Child's profanity, his genuine laughter at Samantha's anatomical drawing, his patient tolerance of Paul's enthusiasm: each comic moment illuminates his fundamental decency and openness.

The screenplay's dialogue occasionally tips toward the on-the-nose in moments of emotional crisis. Catherine's "You wanted to have a wife without the challenges of actually dealing with anything real" articulates the screenplay's thematic concerns too directly, as does Amy's "I think anybody that falls in love is a freak. It's a crazy thing to do." These moments sacrifice subtext for clarity, though they remain dramatically functional within their scenes.

COMPARABLE FILMS

Lost in Translation

Sofia Coppola, 2003

Shares the exploration of connection across unbridgeable divides, the urban isolation, and the bittersweet acceptance of relationships that cannot last.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

Charlie Kaufman, 2004

Similar blend of speculative premise with genuine emotional inquiry into the nature of love and memory.

Ex Machina

Alex Garland, 2014

Explores human-AI relationships from a more skeptical angle; a useful counterpoint for understanding Jonze's more generous approach.

Marriage Story

Noah Baumbach, 2019

Shares the unflinching examination of relationship dissolution and the difficulty of maintaining connection across fundamental incompatibility.

"Her" represents the rare screenplay that fulfills its ambitious premise while maintaining emotional accessibility. Spike Jonze has crafted a work that functions simultaneously as speculative fiction, romantic drama, and philosophical inquiry, a combination that could easily collapse into pretension but instead achieves genuine profundity through its commitment to specific, observed human behavior.

The screenplay's greatest strength lies in its refusal to resolve its central questions. Is Theodore's relationship with Samantha "real"? The screenplay's answer is both yes and no: it is real in its emotional effects, in its capacity to catalyze growth, in its genuine mutuality, but it is also bounded by the fundamental incompatibility between human and artificial consciousness. This ambiguity is not evasion but wisdom; Jonze understands that the most interesting questions about love and connection resist easy answers.

From a development perspective, this screenplay arrives essentially production-ready. The few areas that might benefit from attention, the occasional on-the-nose dialogue in crisis moments and the slightly extended montage sequences, represent minor polish rather than structural revision. The screenplay's unconventional nature (a romance where the love interest has no body, a science fiction film with no action sequences, a philosophical inquiry that never becomes didactic) may present marketing challenges, but these same qualities distinguish it from the vast majority of romantic dramas.

DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

2-3 weeks of polish for dialogue refinement and montage tightening. Ready for production with a director of sufficient vision to realize its tonal complexity.

COMMERCIAL PROSPECTS

Moderate theatrical with strong awards potential and excellent long-term cultural relevance. Its themes of digital mediation and authentic connection will only become more resonant as technology reshapes human relationships.

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