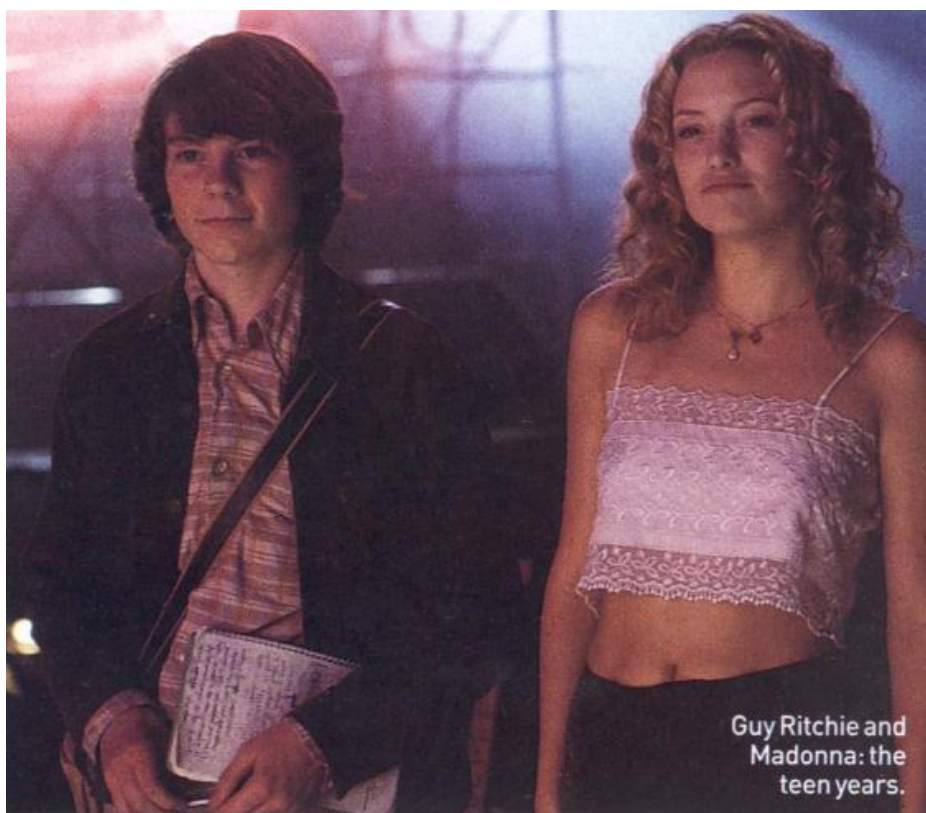


Almost Famous

UK : 2001 : dir. Cameron Crowe : Columbia TriStar : 123 min
 prod: Ian Bryce & Cameron Crowe : scr: Cameron Crowe : dir.ph.:
[Patrick Fugit](#) [d]
 Billy Crudup; Philip Seymour Hoffman; Frances McDormand; Kate Hudson

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ € Z ♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Two groupies, basking in the reflected glow of celebrity. One with an exposed navel, the other with a notepad, the tributes they offer are not so very different. "Power," Henry Kissinger once observed, "is the ultimate aphrodisiac." But fame is greater still.
 Source: Empire – Feb 2001

Empire – February 2001 – review:

"William Miller is a 15-year old aspiring music writer in the 1970s. Given the dream assignment of going on the road with band Stillwater for a *Rolling Stone* feature, he embarks on the trip with enthusiasm, much to the chagrin of his mother. Once on the road, he feels his life changing forever."

"God bless Brad Pitt. His last minute decision not to play the leader of fictional band Stillwater made way here for the genuinely

almost famous Billy Crudup, and ensured the story of writer/director Cameron Crowe's adolescent affair with rock is a manifesto for misfits rather than an advertisement for charisma. At its centre is an unknown 15-year old (Patrick Fugit) and not a superstar. This is how it should be. The senior writer says to the kid, "The only true currency in this bankrupt world is what you share with someone else when you're uncool." Not an image that would survive proximity to Brad.

Crowe shot his own script based on his adventures as a teenage rock writer in the era

of The Allman Brothers, Lynyrd Skynyrd and The Eagles. His film is a thank you to those who made him: his cross, perplexed mother, played by Frances McDormand; the late rock critic Lester Bangs, depicted with an inch too much charm by the majestic Philip Seymour Hoffman, and Penny Lane, the tender spirit at the head of the swaggering army of groupies (or "band aids" as they preferred), following the denim infantry as they scale the heights of the nascent rock industry.

It's a good-hearted film and sentimental with it: a busload of longhairs singing along with Elton John's "Tiny Dancer"; a rock god turning up on a young writer's doorstep; a boy gently deflowered by three groupies¹; a farcical crisis on a plane. Crowe gets away with it because he doesn't try to be smart; he catches every detail perfectly (the brilliant opening montage, the sleeping band shots modelled after old *Rolling Stone* pics, the kid attempting to compose his first review by flashlight as the band play) and lets music as rich and off-centre as The Beach Boys' "Feel Flows" and The Allmans' "One Way Out" take the strain.

It's the most convincing account yet of what rock and roll felt like to the people backstage as it turned from a movement into a career. Those who were there will love the detail. Those who weren't, well, they'll wish they had been. **** "

– David Hepworth

Radio Times (video) review:

"This is a bright, funny observation of one lad's heady initiation into adulthood [*sic*], loosely based on writer/director Cameron Crowe's own experiences as a teenage journalist in the seventies, when he covered the tours of rock bands such as Led Zeppelin.

William Miller (played by 15-year old newcomer Patrick Fugit) is a bright, naïve kid who, with the help and guidance of celebrated music journalist Lester Bangs (Philip Seymour Hoffman), wangles himself a job with *Rolling Stone* magazine. When he's dispatched to cover the nationwide tour of an up-and-coming band, Stillwater, William's protective mother (a beautifully balanced performance by Frances McDormand) is horrified, fearing her little boy will turn into a junkie. The band's initial reaction is one of indifference, barely

noticing the lad's presence while William himself is overwhelmed by the lifestyle as well as the friendship of a young groupie, Penny Lane (Kate Hudson).

William's metamorphosis from starstruck hanger-on to mature observer is subtle; pursued by his mother's exhortations not to take drugs and eventually repulsed by the decadence he witnesses, his hero-worship turns to contempt. This rite of passage [*cliché!*] is skilfully conveyed by Crowe's insightful script – its message isn't hammered home, but is there for the viewer to discover."

– Emma Norman

The Metro (DVD) review:

"Back in the 1970s when rock'n'roll still clung precariously to the idea it could change the world, a ludicrously young music obsessive got to travel with a band for *Rolling Stone* magazine. That boy was Cameron Crowe and he's fictionalised his experience into the travels and travails of 15-year old William Miller (Patrick Fugit), who finds out about groupies (Kate Hudson, saccharine sweet), editors and, of course, rock stars, while remaining improbably innocent. Except for the wonderful Frances McDormand, superbly acidic as Will's ineffably opinionated Mum, the film is entirely sugar-coated: tasty but unsatisfying. *** "



Source: Metro

¹ Or "sex offenders", given that the boy was 15 at the time and hence, as the law tells us, unable to consent to such molestations.

No further information currently available. So why give a “sugar-coated, unsatisfying” film three stars out of a maximum possible five? (Can anybody make sense of these absurd rating systems?) The proposition of a fifteen-year old British rock journalist, even in the early 70s, stretches the credulity to start with, but we have to let that pass if the director is drawing on his own earlier life. The acid test, for this critic at least, would not be on the hard truth versus sentimentality scale, because sentimentality does not necessarily preclude truth, but in the rigour of its period accuracy. I hate to see earlier decades (and epochs) refashioned to suit the sensibilities, values and preoccupations of the present one. Pop culture, more than anything else, is acutely ephemeral by nature, making it essential that one capture the actual mood and mores of the day, not recast it in MTV terms.

See subject index under **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TITLES, JOURNALISTS (and other liars)** and **MUSIC**.