

# The Daily Telegraph

## 20,000 Days on Earth, review: 'wonderfully weird'

A day in the life of Nick Cave is a treat – and not just for his fans

★★★★★



By Patrick Smith

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**Dirs: Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard. 15 cert, 88 min.**

What a wonderfully weird film *20,000 Days on Earth* is. Purporting to follow 24 hours in the life of 56-year-old Australian rock poet Nick Cave, it's more than just a screen biography: it's a meditation on an artist's mythology and creative spirit.

The film opens with a dazzling fast-motion montage in which snapshots of Cave's life flood the screen as a counter hurtles towards the number 20,000. The camera cuts to Cave waking up in the bedroom of his home in Brighton. "This," he says looking straight down the lens, "is my 20,000th day on Earth."

From here the co-directors Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard blend drama with documentary to create a fictional account of the day Cave started recording his 2013 album *Push the Sky Away*. Profundity pervades, as a brooding Cave, dressed in black, narrates his own story in intermittent voice over, talking lyrically about topics such as the brevity of life.

Scenes in which he's interviewed by a therapist – about his late father, being a former heroin addict, going to church – are clearly contrived yet the answers feel off-the-cuff, insightful and at times wryly self-deprecating. A trip to his archive, meanwhile, throws up some delights, including Cave's spoof last will and testament, which specifies that all his money be handed to the "Nick Cave Memorial Museum."

*20,000 Days on Earth* features just four interviewees, who randomly materialise in Cave's Jaguar XJ as he drives around Brighton. Ray Winstone (who starred in the 2005 film *The Proposition*, which Cave wrote) speaks philosophically about the idea of a performer reinventing himself, while Kylie Minogue, with whom Cave had the hit *Where the Wild Roses Grow* in the Nineties, discusses Michael Hutchence, the INXS frontman who died in 1997.

There is a beguiling, melancholic quality to *20,000 Days on Earth*, mirroring Cave's personality. Technically the film's outstanding, from Erik Wilson's gorgeous cinematography and Jonathan Amos's razor-sharp editing to Joakim Sundstrom's score, which flits between elegiac and fiery – like Cave's music. This is a treat, and not just for his fans.

*Stella Artois supported the gala screening of 20,000 Days on Earth*