

YESTERDAY posters decoded

"Yesterday" is a 2019 fantasy romantic comedy directed by **Danny Boyle** and with a script by **Jack Barth** and **Richard Curtis**.

Like any movie today, there are a range of poster variants used to publicise the film. In this post we will look at two of them and discuss **TECHNICAL CODES**, **CULTURAL CODES**, **GENRE CONVENTIONS** and **TARGET AUDIENCE**.

There are several variants of the main character walking on a pedestrian road crossing, with the name of the film in a large stylised yellow font.



TECHNICAL CODES:

- main image of road, perspective
- main character front and centre, young, wearing casual clothes and a guitar on his back
- title of film is large upper case, yellow, stylised font

CULTURAL CODES:

- main character is a young man, casual clothes, denims
- guitar on his back suggesting he is a musician, possibly a singer/performer

GENRE CONVENTIONS:

- the image is modern day, contemporary and possibly a musical (guitar)

TARGET AUDIENCE:

- young market, possibly 18-35 (based on perceived age of character)
- Fans of the music of THE BEATLES.

Let us unpack/decode that last statement. For music fans or fans of **The Beatles** in particular, this poster taps into their pre-existing knowledge of the band in our culture.

HOW?



Firstly, the poster references (pays homage) to the cover of The Beatles album **ABBEY ROAD**.

This iconic image is a famous album cover. It is also a very striking image. The pedestrian crossing in Abbey Road, London is a tourist attraction where many fans try to recreate the album cover.

This means that the filmmakers are hoping fans will **quickly tune into the references** to The Beatles, making it **faster** and **easier** to get **attention of potential customers**.



Secondly, the poster uses the yellow uppercase stylised font for the film's title.

This font is the same font that is used on merchandise for the band and very recognisable in the cover of the album **YELLOW SUBMARINE** (which was also an animated film).

Thirdly, the title of the film itself "Yesterday" is also the title of one of the band's most famous songs.

These **technical** and **cultural codes** will attract a particular sector of the audience.

YET...

While *The Beatles* have a huge legacy in music and popular culture, and "older" audience members will tune into the references in the poster, there will be many people in the younger demographic who might not connect with this poster in the same way.

For example, nothing in the "Abbey Road" version of the poster indicates that this is a romantic comedy, a fantasy, or perhaps intended for a younger audience. There may be many people in the audience who are not fully aware of who *The Beatles* are.

So there are **two** options - add more detail to that image - or create different yet complimentary images to publicise the film.

The additional text at the top of the image neatly summarises the **high concept fantasy storyline**.

Beneath the title, the marketing team are making appeals to the audience:

- Quality: "from the Academy Award-Winning director (Danny Boyle)..."
- Genre: "...of *SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE*" (a fresh, energetic, colourful, fun romantic movie) "and the writer of *LOVE ACTUALLY*" (Richard Curtis, known for various romantic comedies).



This additional wording will broaden the appeal of the movie, attracting audiences who are interested in Award-Winning movies or directors, or fans of Danny Boyle's movies or Richard Curtis' back catalogue of very successful comedies (*Love Actually*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*). And they have even pasted in an image of *Lily James* as a nod to the potential romantic comedy.

BUT THEN AGAIN...

Let's say someone passes this banner poster on a bus, or flicks past it when looking through a newspaper or magazine - if they can't connect with the image, or won't spend a few seconds reading the text - how can you make them stop and look?

You have a **variant** poster. And you use some tried and tested **genre conventions** (stereotypes):

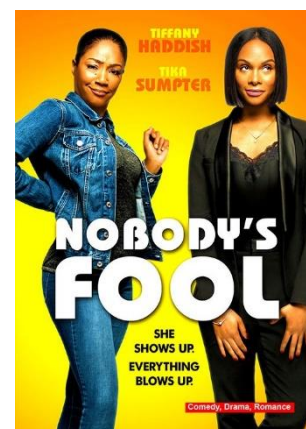
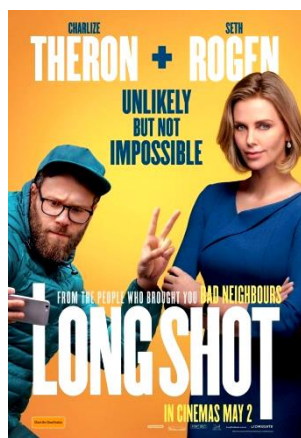
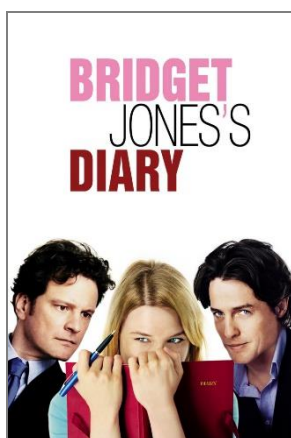
- Yellow of the font is now the big colourful background
- connotations of yellow - warm, funny, sunshine, brightness, light-hearted - although you could also see it as cowardly or as deceitful (watch the film!)
- and - many independent films use yellow as a background

While the poster avoids the trope of having the couple standing back to back (although that is usually used where there is a 'will-they-won't-they' theme, or where they are at "battle" throughout the film - Yesterday doesn't have that theme.



But they do have the **two character heads, looking out at us**, with appropriate facial expressions: he is looking at us, a little surprised. She is looking at us, smiling, hand up to her mouth as if being coy or nervous, or unsure.

Does this type of poster look familiar?



Good - because they **WANT** you to feel that the posters are familiar. If you as an audience member are looking for a light-hearted, romantic comedy, a date movie perhaps, then these kinds of posters seem to hint that.

You kind of know what to expect. And that might make you buy a ticket.

And of course, having the **actors** face out, makes it more likely that we will **recognise** them: for **Lily James** and **Himesh Patel** are two young upcoming stars with their own fan base!

That is why the DVD cover uses the variant style image - for some famous faces will catch your eye as you stroll past the shelves or scroll down the page!

