



AWARDS

# 'Our Friend' cast builds tight bonds — just don't ask about the Super Bowl



Jason Segel as Dane Faucheux, Casey Affleck as Matt Teague in "Our Friend." (Claire Fogler/Gravitas Ventures/Universal Pictures Home Entertainment)

By RANDEE DAWN

MARCH 7, 2021 5:30 AM PT



On the surface, [“Our Friend”](#) seems like familiar awards-movie territory: Beautiful young mother dying of cancer, steadfast man by her side. But there’s more going on here than that. The film, which stars Dakota Johnson and Casey Affleck as the couple, includes the curveball of Jason Segel — a friend who puts his own life on hold to stay with them, helping with her care, and with their two young girls. Not only that, but the film, from director Gabriela Cowperthwaite, is based on a real-life story.

All three actors joined Zoom in early February to chat with The Envelope to address early critical reception, how they bonded on set, and misunderstanding [the Super Bowl](#). But if you haven’t seen the film, note that there are spoilers ahead.

**In the film, you three are a very tightknit group who has to deal with a lot of serious emotional wrestling. What was your working dynamic like?**

**Dakota Johnson:** Both of these guys were able to bring levity and depth when needed. We all luckily heard the same music and were able to hang out. Sometimes on movies, between takes, everyone kind of disappears. We all stayed together. Instead of going back to our trailers and waiting, we’d hang out and play and keep the relationships going.

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**One aspect of the film that feels so fresh is the male friendship. We see a lot of buddy comedies, but I don’t know that movies spend a lot of time with guys who are actual friends.**

**Casey Affleck:** I want to disagree with you. We get a lot of those movies. What I don't see is men and women in friendships that are complicated, unless they're going to involve sex. I love the relationship between Jason and Dakota. That's something you don't see a ton of.

Dakota Johnson and Casey Affleck in the movie "Our Friend." (Claire Folger/Gravitas Ventures/Universal Pictures Home Entertainment)

**Jason Segel:** This movie did get a type of intimacy in male friendships, where there's a need for one another — as opposed to “we're different, but we have to learn to get along.” This movie offered, like, a softness, a lack of bravado, among the male dynamic. You don't see men say “I need help” a lot — and the whole premise of this movie is a guy finally saying, “I need help.”

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**You all read Matthew Teague's essay, “My Friend,” which the movie is based on. Some dialogue in the film is taken directly from that essay, but there are key areas in the essay that aren't addressed in the film. What did you think about the differences?**

**Affleck:** I've heard that topic come up. I don't think that the essay has some proximity to the truth that the film doesn't. Gabby [Cowperthwaite] never intended to say, “This is the story of X; that's exactly how it happened.” The first time I talked to her, she said, “I want to make a story that isn't punishing to watch.” It doesn't beat you over the head with the sadness of the event. And I think she did that really well. The essay was sort of warts and all, brave look at cancer and die. But that isn't the movie Gabby wanted to make.

**Yet there's a raft of films out there in which someone young undergoes a slow, tragic death. How would you say “Our Friend” is different from Ali**

**MacGraw in “Love Story” or Julia Roberts in “Dying Young” — just to name two?**

**Johnson:** The levity, the comedy in it — being able to laugh in moments of severe pain. Also, maybe the time — (pauses, laughs). You’re such a piece of s—, Jason.

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Jason Segal and Dakota Johnson in the movie "Our Friend." (Claire Fogler/Gravitas Ventures/Universal Pictures Home Entertainment  
)

## **Wait, what did he do?**

**Johnson:** He just texted me, saying, "It's because Dakota isn't that young anymore." It's true, I'm aging. It seems to be happening faster during COVID. But [the film] really does touch on the comedy of life, the hilarity and tragedy. Gabriela's background as a documentarian is really important, because there are moments that are so real and not contrived, that are so human. It's a devastating time right now, and the only thing you can do is just love each other and make the choice to do that.

**Segel:** Gabby wanted to focus on a different element — this complicated friendship dynamic that got them through it. I think that probably informed her whole choice to focus on these friendships over the years, instead of just watching Dakota scene by scene get worse and worse.

**Have you heard from Matt or Dane, Matt's friend who came over to assist?**

**Segel:** I haven't heard anything from Dane at all. He's a very private person. I was in Toronto with him and Dakota, and he seemed happy. He's one of the writers of the movie — very involved in it.

**Affleck:** Matt said he was really proud of it. I don't know how he's felt reading the reviews, because I bet that was an emotional experience, having people talk about the events in your life in the way people are used to talking about movies, which is sort of callously. It can be pretty unpleasant and blunt and snarky.

**So to wrap things up, we're on the cusp of the Super Bowl. Who are you all rooting for?**

**Affleck:** Tampa.

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**Johnson:** Green Bay.

**Affleck:** Did you say *Green Bay*?

**Johnson:** Yeah, 49ers.

**Segel:** That's not how it works.

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**Affleck:** Nothing you said was right.

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