

I FEEL PRETTY (2018)

- Released US April 20, 2018
- 110 minutes
- \$32 million Budget
- Written and Directed by Abby Kohn and Marc Silverstein
- Production: Voltage Pictures, Wonderland Sound and Vision
- Rated PG-13 for sexual content, some partial nudity, and language

QUICK THOUGHTS

- Marisa Serafini
- Phil Svitek

DEVELOPMENT

- Kohn and Silverstein pulled inspiration from character-driven comedies from the '80s like *Big*, *Tootsie* and *Working Girl*
- “In terms of the idea itself, we were kicking around what kind of movies we love, what kind of movies are not getting made as much anymore. We thought, [let's] sort of use those tropes and poke fun at those movies but also get at the real emotional core of the films.” -Silverstein
- Kohn and Silverstein were able to pull from their own experiences in Hollywood, being in an industry where the idea of looking good is so important
- Kohn first came up with the idea and pitched it to Silverstein, he was originally hesitant and unsure of whether that could sustain an entire movie
- Silverstein and Kohn thought Schumer was perfect for the part, she read the script, loved it, and told the writers that she absolutely had to be in it

WRITING Abby Kohn & Marc Silverstein

- Writing partners Kohn and Silverstein are rom-com screenwriting professionals
 - *Never Been Kissed*, *He's Just Not That Into You*, *The Vow*, *Valentine's Day* and *How To Be Single*
- “Their smartest choice is to resist the impulse to show the audience what Renee sees when she looks into the mirror and declares herself beautiful.” -Caroline Siede
- So [we thought], we need to set aside some time to write something for ourselves to direct and take full ownership of it — not sell it to a studio, not write it for anybody else — for ourselves and hold on to it and attach ourselves as directors. So that's how we did it. -Silverstein
- “We totally understand why people would call it a romantic comedy, but for us the romance is not the main story, the main story is this character, Renee, learning to love what's already there about herself and what she can finally recognize.” -Kohn
- “I think Abby's responsible for how our movies are so acceptable, and I'm responsible for the fact that they're not exactly like all the other movies in that genre.” -Silverstein

- They met while earning their MFAs in Film Production at the University of Southern California
- Meanwhile they were romantically involved, dating seven years before an engagement that broke off in the early 2000s. While most people avoid their exes, these two kept co-writing screenplays

STORY/TOPICS

- Renee Barrett (Schumer) is a young, professional woman who struggles with debilitating feelings of inadequacy about her appearance. She frequently apologizes, and has trouble getting people to pay attention to her or treat her with respect.
- She works as the website manager for a large cosmetics company called Lily LeClaire; however, she resents that her office is in a basement in Chinatown and not at the corporate Fifth Avenue headquarters.
- She learns that LeClaire is hiring for a new receptionist, but Renee does not see a point in applying because she does not feel like she is confident or attractive enough to serve as the "face" of LeClaire.
- Renee attends a SoulCycle class but falls off her bike and hits her head. Once she regains consciousness, she is unable to see her body as it actually is. Instead, when she looks in the mirror or at photographs of herself, she sees a body of a thin and conventionally attractive woman.
- This head injury gives her a newfound confidence. She becomes instantly happier and more energetic and she is allowing herself to interact with the world differently.
- She mistakenly believes that a man is hitting on her in a dry cleaner and exchanges numbers with him and she applies for the receptionist position at LeClaire.
- While being interviewed, she impresses the company's CEO, Avery LeClaire (Williams), with her confidence, and subsequently lands the job. Renee proves herself to be efficient at her job, with Grant LeClaire, Avery's brother, taking notice with how Renee handles herself.
- Renee calls Ethan, the man from the dry cleaner, and asks him to go on a date. On their date, Ethan admits to being slightly afraid of Renee. Renee enters a bikini contest at a bar, and he is concerned that she is about to embarrass herself because she is not as thin as the other women in the competition.
- Renee gets the crowd behind her by making self-deprecating jokes about herself and dancing wildly. Even though she does not win the contest, she tells Ethan that she's okay with that because she knows she is attractive and she doesn't need any external validation.
- As Ethan and Renee's relationship grows more serious, he admits to having self esteem issues and he tells Renee that he's attracted to her because she knows what makes her awesome instead of focusing on the stuff she doesn't like about herself. They end up having sex at Renee's apartment.
- As Renee brings water into a meeting at LeClaire, she accidentally drops a blush product, which breaks apart on the floor. As she is picking up all of the pieces, she announces to the room that she can't seem to find the applicator anywhere. Avery tells

her that there is no applicator for the product because LeClaire does not usually provide applicators.

- Renee is surprised upon learning this and Avery inquires why that would surprise her. Renee educates the room that the average woman buying makeup at Target is not going to have high end makeup brushes. Women buying less expensive makeup expect the applicator to come with the product.
- This is new information to everyone else in the room and Avery is grateful for Renee's insight.
- As time goes on, however, Renee's confidence is making her increasingly inconsiderate of others. She was invited to a private work party and decided to bring her two closest friends, Vivian (Bryant) and Jane (Phillips), but Renee ditches them because her coworkers throwing the party would only allow Renee in.
- She then embarrasses her friends on a group date because she was trying to help them seem attractive and sexy to the men by getting everyone drunk and suggesting they dance provocatively instead of allowing them to have actual conversations. When her friends get angry with her, Renee calls them boring. They tell her she should leave.
- One day at work, Avery tells Renee that she frequently feels insecure about how her high pitch voice makes people think she's unintelligent. She then invites Renee to a dinner.
- Renee arrives at the dinner with Ethan, expecting it to be a large work function when in reality it was an intimate dinner with Avery, Grant and their grandmother Lily LeClaire.
- Renee hits it off with Lily, whom Avery is attempting to impress so Avery announces that she will bring Renee to Boston to help with the business pitch.
- Once in Boston, as Renee is practicing her speech for the pitch, Grant comes to her hotel room to order room service, since his room service bill isn't being covered by the LeClaire business.
- Renee and Grant almost kiss, but Renee pulls away at the last second when she sees a Snapchat message from Ethan.
- Renee locks herself in the bathroom to separate herself from Grant. She steps into the large glass shower and begins to have a panic attack when Grant shouts something from the other room. As Renee turns to leave the shower, she walks right into the glass door and loses consciousness.
- This blow to the head undoes the mental distortion she was experiencing about her appearance. Renee wakes up several hours later to learn that what she believes is a physically transformational spell was breaking.
- She grows so discouraged that she flies back to New York, abandoning Avery at the pitch meeting. She becomes depressed once in New York and she goes to her friends to try to make up, but they are uninterested in spending time with her. She also breaks up with Ethan because she is convinced that he would not find her attractive anymore.
- Renee attends another SoulCycle class attempting to recreate the first head injury, but it does not work. In the locker room, she runs into Mallory (Ratajkowski), whom she had met earlier in the movie.

- Mallory is emotional over a break up and Renee offers her some comfort. Because of how beautiful Mallory is, Renee assumes that Mallory broke up with her boyfriend, but Mallory says that her boyfriend dumped her. Renee is bewildered by this.
- Mallory then tells Renee that she feels really insecure sometimes, to which Renee responds with comedic anger. Renee starts comparing Mallory's body to her own, pointing out how flawless she believes Mallory to be.
- She then says she wants "to punch Mallory in her dumb face." Mallory is upset by the word "dumb," calling it triggering because it's an area she feels insecure about.
- Mallory then ends the conversation because she has to go to a modeling audition at LeClaire, which Renee realizes is probably for the Target makeup line. This concerns Renee because she believes the Target line should use a more ordinary looking woman as their brand ambassador rather than a woman who is as conventionally attractive as Mallory.
- Renee devises a plan to crash the launch speech. Once she is on the stage, she begins to tell her story of how she went from conventionally attractive woman to what she looks like now.
- On a screen behind the stage, she shows the audience what she thinks are before and after photos, but in reality the photos of her look exactly the same. Everyone in the audience is confused by what Renee is telling them.
- Renee turns around and looks at the photos and realizes that there was never any physical transformation. She then gives a speech about how every person is good enough just the way they are now. The crowd goes wild. The launch is a success.
- Renee then makes up with Avery, her friends and Ethan after she realizes that "it was her the whole time." The movie ends with her enjoying another SoulCycle class.

THEMES

- The plot follows an insecure woman who, after suffering a head injury, gains extreme self-confidence and believes she is considerably more attractive
- Deals with:
 - Body image issues among women
 - Self-love
 - Confidence

CAST:

- Amy Schumer as Renee Barrett
 - an ordinary woman who struggles with feelings of insecurity and inadequacy on a daily basis.
 - She wakes up from a fall believing she is beautiful and capable, despite looking and being the same as always
 - You may know Schumer from her hit sketch show *Inside Amy Schumer* and her breakout R-rated rom-com *Trainwreck*
 - Schumer stated she took the role due to the message in the movie

- Schumer met Scovel on the stand-up comedy circuit 12 years ago auditioning for the Montreal Comedy Festival during auditions at the Comic Strip comedy club in New York City.
- Michelle Williams as Avery LeClaire
 - Renee's stunning cosmetics company boss and Grant's sister
 - Known from *Brokeback Mountain*, *Manchester by the Sea*, *My Week with Marilyn* and *Shutter Island*
 - For Williams, the empowered and confident character marked a departure from her previous roles, and Peter Debruge of *Variety* considered it to be "the funniest performance of her career"
 - Writer's described Avery's voice as "strange" but the creation of the voice was completely Williams' doing
 - William's character Avery LeClaire is an unlikely CEO, primed but mousy, Wharton-educated but with the breathy voice of an airhead.
 - "We don't need a bitchy foil; we don't need a woman to be a bitch in this movie; it's not necessary; so we made a choice to not do that." -Kohn said of the Avery LeClaire character
 - Williams became involved with the project in part due to her friendship with Director Marc Silverstein's wife Busy Phillips (she plays the part of one of Renee's friends in the movie). Silverstein knew that Williams had the potential to play a light, funny character even though she hasn't necessarily done it before
- Emily Ratajkowski as Mallory
 - A woman who Renee knows from the gym and looks up to because of her beauty and thin body
 - Renee views Mallory as someone perfect with no problems in her life
 - "This is an interesting film because it is not your traditional hot-girl-meets-hot-guy and they have funny jokes and fall in love. You don't really expect what is coming, so it's part of a new generation of rom-coms unlike what we are used to." - Ratajkowski
- Rory Scovel as Ethan
 - Renee's love interest, someone she would normally think was out of her league
 - a sensitive, soft-spoken guy who gets swept along in the whirlwind of her newfound confidence
 - "He feels and (tbh) looks like someone you might know in your real life, the kind of guy that you could see in a whole new light after he makes a cheesy joke — which is only appropriate for a movie emphasizing that it's what's on the inside that counts." -Lea Palmieri
 - "Ethan as a romantic lead is not your typical dashing guy that you would expect, he's got his own insecurities and that makes him more attractive in a weird reverse way" -Silverstein

- Tom Hopper as Grant LeClaire,
 - Avery's good-looking brother that is also employed by LeClaire
 - Known from *Game of Thrones*, *Kill Ratio*, *Black Sails* and *Merlin*

TRIVIA

- This movie reunites Michelle Williams and Busy Philipps, real life best friends, who also worked on Dawson's Creek together
- Model Naomi Campbell has a role in the movie
- Schumer's character Renee dances to four-minute song "Swalla," by Jason Derulo featuring Nicki Minaj & Ty Dolla \$ign. For this scene, SNL choreographer Danielle Flora gave Schumer the idea to pour water on herself

DIRECTING Abby Kohn & Marc Silverstein

- This was the directorial debut for both Kohn and Silverstein
- "The directing duo have a particular knack for capturing Schumer's body in funny but non-exploitative ways, particularly during a bikini contest scene that seems to be setting up a bit of cringe comedy, only to swerve and offer something sweeter and more unexpected instead." -Caroline Siede
- "When we wrote it, we knew that this was going to be the one that we wanted to direct. We really knew that it was going to be us directing this one or we were not going to put it out there." -Kohn

CINEMATOGRAPHY Florian Ballhaus

- He is known for his work on *Definitely, Maybe*, *The Time Traveler's Wife*, *The Devil Wears Prada* and *The Divergent Series*.
- Production plays with music and camera angles to contrast how Renee newly sees herself in the world—strutting through a crowd with the perfect song punctuating every step
- Schumer signed on in April 2017, shooting began July 2017 and lasted only 34 days

SOUND/MUSIC Michael Andrews

- Andrews is an American multi-instrumental musician and film score composer
- He is best known for a cover version of the Tears for Fears song "Mad World", which he recorded with Gary Jules for the *Donnie Darko* soundtrack
- Female empowerment anthems like Alicia Keys' "Girl On Fire," Meghan Trainor's "Me Too," and Lizzo's "Good As Hell"

Soundtrack includes:

1. What Lovers Do (feat. SZA) - Maroon 5
2. Thinning - Snail Mail
3. What's Cool - Marieme
4. Who's Up? - LunchMoney Lewis
5. Dare You (feat. Matthew Koma) - Hardwell

6. Me Too - Meghan Trainor
7. Perfect Day - Ben Talmi
8. Congratulations (feat. Suzy Shinn) - 1985
9. Can't Get Enough of Myself (feat. BC Unidos) - Santigold
10. Downtown - Majical Cloudz
11. Don't Let It Get to You (Reprise) - Rostam
12. I Feel Pretty - Michael Andrews
13. Renee and Ethan - Michael Andrews
14. Wish Transformation - Michael Andrews

PROMOTION

- Tagline: "What if you could change everything, without changing anything?"
- The trailer premiered on 'The Ellen Degeneres Show' on 2/15/18
- *I Feel Pretty* was initially scheduled to be released on June 29, 2018, by STX Entertainment, but was moved up to April 27, 2018, due to solid test screening results
- The release date was later changed again to April 20, 2018, a week earlier, to avoid competition with *Avengers: Infinity War*

BOX OFFICE

- Launched to a soft \$16 million in the US and Canada on its first weekend and \$2.4 million in other territories, making it Schumer's lowest opening for a film yet
- So far, the film has grossed \$22 million worldwide
- In the United States and Canada, *I Feel Pretty* was released alongside *Traffik* and *Super Troopers 2*, and was projected to gross \$13–15 million from 3,440 theaters and open at number three in the box office in its opening weekend
- By the end of the weekend, *I Feel Pretty* had finished third behind *A Quiet Place* and *Rampage*

RECEPTION

- Rotten Tomatoes: 33%
- IMDB:3.9/10
- Cinemascore: B+
- It received mixed reviews from critics, with many saying it did not fully commit to its premise or tone, although the performances of Schumer and Williams were praised
- "But despite its good intentions, *I Feel Pretty* is also very much at odds with itself. On the one hand, the film argues that Renee is limited solely by her lack of self-confidence. On the other, it objectively proves that Renee's insecurities aren't just in her head by including scene after scene in which Renee is mistreated, sneered at, and judged (to her face!) by pretty much everyone around her" -Caroline Siede
- Before the movie came out, there was major backlash just on the concept of the film. However, directors and cast were confident that once people actually saw the movie they would change their minds

- One writer online pointed out that elements of *I Feel Pretty* appeared to resemble the plot of the 1945 film *The Enchanted Cottage*, without crediting it as an inspiration
- Others accused the film of body shaming, with *Cosmopolitan* writing, "[it's] insulting to anyone and everyone — from Amy herself all the way to women that are larger, less able-bodied...AKA, all the things that are promoted in society to be better"
- "Regardless of performance, there is one thing her last two disappointing films have in common: Schumer didn't write them. Given her background in stand-up, it's no surprise she penned her most successful project to date. It's fair to say her movies could benefit from Schumer having a stronger hand in the screenplay." -Rebecca Rubin, *Variety*
- Writing for *Rolling Stone*, Peter Travers gave the film 2 out of 4 stars, and criticized what he termed the hypocrisy of the filmmakers, saying, "...still: Is it really OK to get off making plus-size jokes just because you tack on a moralizing ending that teaches a lesson about body positivity? Can you have it both ways?"
- *Variety's* Peter Debruge gave the film a moderately positive review, saying, "What sets *I Feel Pretty* apart is the inspired premise that Renee's transformation takes place entirely in her head, while those around her are left befuddled by her sudden change of attitude — a concept that begs the question of why our society encourages women to second-guess their self-image in the first place."