



# Anthem Of A Teenage Prophet (2018) Movie Review from

Eye for Film

## Anthem Of A Teenage Prophet

Reviewed by: [Jennie Kermode](#)



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For thousands of years, tales of prophecy have been complicated by the same unnerving question: what if a person who predicts an event is actually causing it? It's a question whose implications go beyond belief in the supernatural. A sense of guilt following a bereavement is common, as is the belief that one might have seen death coming and ought to have done more to prevent it. Anthem Of A Teenage Prophet uses its supernatural premise to explore the broader issue of what it's like to lose somebody when still at an age when life is just taking shape.

It begins when Luke (Cameron Monaghan), smoking cannabis with friends, suddenly announces that one of them is going to die the next day, mowed down by a truck with out-of-state license plates. It's one of those very specific pronouncements, made with great authority, that people sometimes come out with when seriously wasted, and it prompts the other boys present to laugh. But then, the next day, Stan (Alex MacNicoll) dies exactly as Luke predicted, and everything changes. Other kids, unable to make sense of it, react with aggression and ridicule. Random people approach Luke to ask about his supernatural powers. Journalists lay siege to his house. In the midst of all this, he tries to come to terms with the shock of it all.



Monaghan, who made a name for himself as not-the-Joker-honest (there were copyright issues) in Gotham, reels back a long way, actively damping down his natural charisma to play the troubled teen. It's a rare individual who, at such a young age, focuses on acting at the expense of the qualities that make him a natural star, but his studiously downbeat performance pays dividends. It reflects a sense of restraint in the film as a whole. Consciously slow pacing undermines the impact of the central premise and that's fine because it makes way for an examination of the process through which Luke tries to come to terms with his guilt and understand what, as a young adult, he is and is not responsible for.

Whilst we stick with Luke's perspective throughout, life goes on around him in ways it's clear he doesn't really understand. His hippy mother (Juliette Lewis on impressive form) has her own adjustment to make after the terror of hearing early news reports that made her think her son was dead. Stan's girlfriend Faith (Peyton List) tries desperately to get close to Luke, who is suspicious of her motives and fails to fully grasp what's going on with her own grieving process. Then there's remaining friend Fang (Grayson Gabriel), who is dealing with an additional set of challenges that Luke hasn't even imagined. Each character is carefully drawn and the result is a drama aimed at teenagers that treats them like real human beings.

Some viewers will undoubtedly be disappointed by the downplaying of the supernatural element in the film or by the degree to which it shuns easy answers. Fans of Monaghan's work in Gotham may be frustrated by how different he is here. Regrettably, the film's best qualities make it a harder sell, but there's a lot here that's worth watching. There's a real dearth of intelligent, thoughtful films aimed at this age group and Anthem Of A Teenage Prophet deserves attention.

*Reviewed on: 05 Jan 2019*