

High Fidelity by Stephen Frears, screenplay by Nick Hornby

Rob: John Cusack

Charlie: Katherine Zeta Jones

Liz: Joan Cusack

Laura:

Sarah: Lili Taylor

Ian: Tim Robbins

Barry: Jack Black

Dick:

and Bruce Springsteen as himself

"What came first, the music or the misery? People worry about kids playing with guns, or watching violent videos like some sort of culture of violence will take them over. But nobody worries about kids listening to thousands--literally thousands--of songs about heartbreak, rejection, pain, misery and loss. Did I listen to pop music because I was miserable? Or, was I miserable because I listened to pop music?"

A. Laura leaves. In apartment talking to camera.

"If you really wanted to mess me up you should've gotten to me earlier."
My desert island top five all time most miserable break-ups...

B. Number 1: Allison Ashmore. 3 min.

Flashback to Grade school playground. Discovering breasts "suddenly everywhere... We didn't even know what we wanted; we just knew it was interesting, and disturbing... My relationship lasted 6 hours... the two hours before the Rockford Files each afternoon. (like to think he'd progressed since then, but...) All my romantic stories are a scrambled version of that first one."

C. Number 2: Penny Hardwick Catching the train in Chicago. Flash to high school grounds...

"Penny was great looking and her top five recording artists were Carly Simon, Carole King, James Taylor, Cat Stevens and Elton John." ...make out party..."but she was too nice... What's the point, it never goes anywhere?" (sexual frustration) Break up in hopes of more action from another girl; irony ensues.

D. Championship Vinyl 6min Chicago in the present;

"...bare minimum of window shoppers. I get by mostly because the people make a special effort to shop here. Mostly young men--who spend all their time looking for Smiths singles and original, not re-released, Frank Zappa Lp's... Fetish properties, are not unlike porn. I'd feel guilty taking their money, if I wasn't kind of one of them."

--Meet Dick (the sensitive, gentle, and frail emo kid) and Barry (the brash, irreverent, vintage and indie punk rocker) each with a different listening option.

"I thought this tape was gonna be a... conversation stimulator, man!"

"I can't fire them, I hired these guys for three days a week and they just started showing up every day. That was four years ago."

E. Number 3: Charlie Nicholson 10 min. Flash from record store to...college campus/coffee shop...

"she talked about books and music and politics and...she talked a lot and she liked me...why would someone like Charlie like me... I felt like a fraud...I worried...and she left me...(screaming to her window in the rain)...I lost it all: faith, dignity, 15 pounds...when I woke I found I had flunked out of school and opened up a record shop...some people never get over Nam, or when their band opened for Nirvana; I guess I never got over Charlie...Charlie's out of my class: too pretty, too smart too witty too much...I'm not the dumbest, I've read books like...and I think I've understood them...but my all time favorite book is Johnny Cash's autobiography Cash by Johnny Cash."

--Laura calls to pick up stuff.

--Barry berates customer for seeking "I just Called to Say I love You" by Stevie Wonder.

--Argument between Barry and Rob on affronts to good taste "That's a Cosby sweater."

--Dick's offer to "talk about it" turned down.

--Back in Rob's apartment. "The River" by Springsteen

F. Number 4: Sarah Walking by the river in Chicago.

Both dumped and miserable. "It made sense to pool our collective loathing for the opposite sex."
She meets someone else.

G. Rearranging records; Pressure from mom; A new flame 19 min.

--Dick stops by to invite Rob to a show (drops some heavy cross references) as Rob is rearranging his record collection **AUTOBIOGRAPHICALLY!!!** (Deep Purple to Howlin Wolf in 25 moves...etc.)

--Mom calls. Disappointed that Laura has left. Mom cries. "What are you gonna do Rob?"

Some cold sh@t from mom.

--Rob goes to the show, mentions Dillinger being gunned down due to betrayal by his girlfriend. "Is that Peter... Frampton???" "I always hated that song.. now I kinda like it...the boys fantasize about dating/living with a musician. Barry and Dick puppy dogs meeting singer; Rob plays it cool.

--Liz calls, common friend to Rob and Laura (back in Rob's apartment)

H. Laura stops by for her stuff 26 min. Rob's apartment.

Next morning. Laura shows up. Do you still love me? What should I have done to make you happy?

Nothing; make yourself happy... **"You have to allow things to happen to people, most of all to yourself, and you don't Rob so what' the use."**

I. Record shop routine.

Top Five lists...side one's track one's. "A sly declaration of new status slipped into a list of old favorites."

Barry messes with a customer who wants a record a bit too much. Sells it to Lewis. "You guys are snobs...No we're not...Seriously, you're totally elitist. You feel like the unappreciated scholars so you sh@t on the people who know less than you...No!...Which is everybody...Yeah...And that's just sad"

J. Jealousy, thy name is Ian (this time) 30 min. Record shop to apartment.

--Rob calls Liz. Rob finds out about Ian, just as Marie De Salle (the dreamy musician shows up).

--Rob freaks out. Returns to apartment. Figures out who Ian is. Rips on Ian's world music flavor of the month taste, rings on his fingers and awful cooking smells...hatred boils. "No woman in the history of the world is having better sex than the sex you are having with Ian, in my head."

Laura earns the Number 5 slot.

--Record Shop. Liz delivers a message, unexplained.

K. Number 5: Laura 34 min. Flashback from piano bar, Rob drinking, to...dance club...

met Laura while Dj-ing...**connection:** "That's a kick-a@s record...Yeah, I know...hey, comeback and I'll make you a tape"...things move along...she didn't make me miserable or ill at ease, it sounds boring but it wasn't. It was just spectacular either, it was just...good. Really good...

So, **how come I'm suddenly an as@hole?**" Laura reveals to Liz 2 of 3:

1. Rob slept with someone while she was pregnant, 2. led to her terminating the pregnancy,

3. after the abortion he borrowed large sum of money, not repaid, 4. shortly before she left him,

he said he was looking around for someone else. Now did he say and do these things?...39 min.

Rob's Rationale. On a train. No excuse for money. Tricked into #4. Didn't know she was pregnant til way later. "Brief and ill advised bout of self righteousness."

L. Rob looking for answers. in his apartment

--"Why am I doomed to be left?" Calls #1, Allison. She married Kevin Bannister, from grad school.

Rob ecstatic with fate; the fact that Allison's destiny has nothing to do with him.

Conversation with the Boss about saying that final goodbye to the top 5 and moving on.

--Rob's date with #2. Movies, good time, and launches into it. Penny ruined by Rob, self esteem, etc.

All he hears is..."I broke up with her!" Happy, unthinking of Penny's pain.

--Rob's date with #4. Sarah still a mess. No heart for the rejection conversation. "I could have had sex back there. And **what better way to exorcise rejection demons than to screw the person who rejected you. But you wouldn't b sleeping with a person.You'd be sleeping with a whole sad single person culture. It'd be like sleeping with Talia Shire in Rocky if you weren't Rocky. I feel guilty enough."**

--Number 3: Charlie. Found in the phone book (a shock!?)...I'll leave a message and she'll never call back.

M. Sales and Shoplifting at the Record Shop.

Barry making a sale. Dick chatting up a young lady on the Green Day tip. Rob sells simply by playing a record. "It's good...I know." Chasing shoplifting skateboarders. Eclectic choices and a home recording mag in the deep pockets...

N. Laura show up at closing time. She'd like to come over to pick up some things.

Laura is trying to be fair. Rob is mean. "I'm at a point where I kinda want to get my sh@t together and I can't see that ever happening with you..." "So...there's a chance then?" Rob happy that Laura hasn't had sex with Ian, yet (sex is not better; sleeping together is better, but not sex).

"We Are the Champions." Rob feels so much better that he goes out and sleeps with Marie De Salle.

O. Montage of hanging out with Marie De Salle.

"A while back, Dick, Barry and I agreed it's what you like, NOT what you are like. Books, records, films, these things matter. Call me shallow; it's the... truth."

They talk about ex's. Rob "invents a sketch of a guy with deep sensitive emotions."

And "it works, I guess." He sleeps at her place. "You think sex is a basic human right?" They part.

Rob's thoughts turn immediately. What does "yet" mean?

--Record shop. Figuring out "yet" through a hypothetical situation.

"What would you think if I said I haven't seen *Evil Dead 2* yet?" Rob harasses Laura by phone.

P. Obsessing about Laura (with Ian)

--Rob and Laura meet for dinner. "How are you doing?" Have you slept with him yet?"

Home through the rain. Wet Rob at home. Laura calls to soften the blow. Rob not interested.

--Rob prank calls Ian and Laura repeatedly from pay phone outside.

(Ian sedate, hippy type, grows angry "Conflict Resolution is my job")

--Liz at dinner with Rob. You've got to stop calling. You're forming a unit. Them against you....

Can I ask you question and you can think about it if you want to...Why do you want Laura back so badly?

Q. Record shop. Charlie calls, Ian shows up

--Charlie..."he was going through one of those What does it all mean kind of things. He wanted to see me and rehash the past--Do all men go through that?...Never heard of it before." "Are you in or out? Are we friends or are we not?" Invite to a party.

--Ian shows up at the store to preach respect in an awkward, pseudo hip style, "No what I mean, G."

Rob deposes of him in a number of ways (all fantasies). Ian leaves.

R. Rob at Laura's dinner party. Swank apartment. Doomed to die a slow death.

Figuring it out: envy--"Sure I want their money and clothes and opinions, and I'd like to have advice on jet lag, but that's not it. I mean they're not bad people and I'm not a class warrior. It's something else."

Then it dawns on him, Charlie's awful...doesn't listen to anyone, talks garbage, etc...

"How did I manage to edit all this out? How had I made this girl the answer to all the world's problems?"

Why did you dump me for Marco--more glamorous, sunnier...

S. Record Shop Boys w/ lives of their own...

Barry forming a band. Dick has a date with Anna Moss. Barry has to write lyrics.

Rob has no one to go to the club with.

--Laura waiting for Rob at his apartment. Top five dream jobs.

Laura convinces Rob that his 5th top job is Record Shop owner. Laura takes the last of her stuff.

T. Top 5 things I miss about Laura: On a bridge in Chicago...

1. sense of humor, very dry, also warm and forgiving, best laugh in the history of all time laughs she laughs with her entire body,
2. she's got character, loyal and honest and doesn't even take it out on people when she's having a bad day,
3. I miss her smell and the way she tastes, some people just feel like home,
4. the way she walks around, unaffected, gives her grace,
5. rubs her feet together when she goes to sleep.

U. Top Five Records puts out the Kinky Wizards; Laura's Dad dies. Record Shop.

Listening to Vince and Justin, Kate-shoplifters. Really good. Rob offers to put out their record.

Barry jealous. **Laura calls, her dad died. Barry insensitive. Top five songs about death, a Laura's dad tribute list. "...and "You can't always get what you want"...no, no, immediate disqualification for it's involvement in *The Big Chill*...oh, no, you're right!" Laura's mom wants Rob at the funeral.

V. Funeral, reunion...

--Top 5 Songs at my funeral...Tension between Liz and Rob (Rob obsessing about their relationship despite circumstances). "I can't go on apologizing my whole life...I think just the once would do... Laura, I'm sorry."

--Walking in the rain. (Bob Dylan). **"I can see now I never really committed to Laura. I always had one foot out the door. And that prevented me from doing other things. Like thinkin about my future and, I guess it made more sense to commit to nothing, keep my options open. And that's suicide, by tiny tiny increments."**

Hiding from Laura. A short drive, memories of dad..."Rob, would you have sex with me, cuz I want to feel something else besides this..."**"I'm too tired not to be with you"**

W. Montage of good times, the next temptation

And so we got back together, and it was great "How can you like Art Garfunkl and Marvin Gaye; that's like saying you support the Israelis and the Palestinians"...It was everything he ever wanted, but...

--Record shop. Caroline the columnist comes by, flirts with Rob.

--Laura sets up record release party. Rob freaks out.

Sonic Death Monkey (Barry's band) to play for the party.

--Rob tries to back out. "It's just that you're making something. You the critic, the professional appreciator are putting something new into the world."

--Rob uses Laura's words on phone in interview/flirtation with Caroline. Commits to making a mixed tape. **"Now the making of a good compilation tape is a very subtle art. Many do's and don't's. First of all, you're using someone else's poetry to express how you feel; this is a delicate thing...When is this gonna stop!!!"**

X. Contemplating, the big question.

in a field. lunch with Laura.

"So what am I gonna do now? Just keep jumping from rock to rock for the rest of my life until there aren't any rocks left? Should I bolt every time I get that feeling in my gut when I meet someone new? I been thinkin with my gut since I was fourteen years old. And frankly speaking, I've come to the conclusion that my guts have sh@t for brains."

--Laura meets Rob for lunch. "I want to talk about whether or not you want to get married."

Laura laughs, sarcastically exposes Rob's lack of romanticism. "Those other girls are just fantasies...I'm tired of the fantasy, cuz it doesn't really exist and it never really...delivers?...delivers, right...and I'm tired of it. And I'm tired of everything else for that matter...But I never seem to get tired of you."

Laura thanks him for asking.

Y. Record release party.

Rob spins "I Sold My Mom's Wheelchair" by the Kinky Wizards. Introduces, Sonic Death Monkey.

They play Laura and Rob's song. Everybody gets it on on the dance floor to Barry Jive and the Uptown Five. Laura and Rob, Dick and Anna, Vince and Justin stealing from Rob.

Z. Rob making a mixed tape for Laura. One *she* will like.

Assignment options. (complete at least 2 of the following for h.w. credit)

1. Catalog your music collection autobiographically w/brief explanations (counts as 2)
2. List the top 5 songs and artists for your funeral with at least two lines of explanation for each.
3. What do you think of Rob's proposal (section X). Be specific (1 paragraph minimum)
4. Rob asks two questions to open the film. Answer his query and discuss.
5. What do you think of Rob as a person? be specific. (1 prgph min.)
6. Look closely at Rob's philosophy in section O. How do you feel about this idea? Do you share the opinion? Do you know others who do? What does this philosophy get Rob (positive and negative)?
7. Look closely at section T. List your top 5 favorite particular, unique things you would (or do) miss about one of your close friends. Be specific, explain each.