

CHENNAI: Father-daughter relationships on screen come in many forms. While one of the best I have seen was the 2016 “Toni Erdmann” from Germany, the Paul Weitz-directed “Fatherhood,” now on Netflix and starring Kevin Hart, is rather different. Here, the focus is on a very young girl and her bonding with her widowed father.



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The movie opens with Matthew Logelin (Hart) standing in a church completely devastated by his young wife’s death just hours after their baby girl, Maddy, is born. Based on Logelin’s 2011 bestseller, “Two Kisses for Maddy: A Memoir of Loss and Love,” Weitz’s work is a tender tale of how a young father grapples with bringing up his infant girl, juggling between his strenuous corporate job and the demands of the baby.





The film stars Kevin Hart and Melody Hurd. Supplied

When she never stops crying, his friend suggests he use some kind of sound to lull her into sleep. And it works. His mother-in-law and his own mom both offer to stay with Matthew, but he says he wants to do it all by himself, playing both father and mother.

Even his two best friends, Jordan (Lil Rel Howery) and Oscar (Anthony Carrigan), are not sure that Matthew would be able to handle fatherhood. They have known him for years as one who took life easy and did not think much about responsibilities.



The emotional film touches on the relationship between a single father and his daughter. Supplied

But Matthew proves them all wrong, and the first half of the movie follows him through the ups and downs of single parenting, from changing diapers to sleep training.

A touching relationship evolves between the father and daughter, and we see her grow up into a perky five-year old, full of questions and pranks, but her father, in spite of pressing work assignments, never loses his patience. The tragedy seems to have completely elevated him into a finer human being, and he even lets go a relationship with his girlfriend when he finds that it comes in the way of his caring for Maddie.



With “Fatherhood,” Hart has transformed himself into a more serious actor. Supplied

“Fatherhood” is a tearjerker, and we see a very different side of Hart, who has been well known for comedy roles in films such as “Think Like A Man,” “The Secret Life of Pets” and “About Last Night.”

He has been a brilliant stand-up comedian, but with “Fatherhood” he has transformed himself into a more serious actor. It came as a lucky break for him when he was being accused of bitterly homophobic utterances.

“Fatherhood” appears to have pushed all these into the shadows, with Hart giving a wonderfully nuanced performance. But it is Maddy’s Melody Hurd who is completely adorable and a natural.
