



[The Artist](#)

Screened at [Cornerhouse, Manchester](#)

Reviewed by [Anne Ryan](#) January

This film opened to such universal praise I was almost afraid to go and see it for myself. Tipped for Oscar success – it has moved strong reviewers to tears of joy – could it really be this good? The short answer is yes!

It is easy to think that a French made silent film in black and white could be a festival success, but **The Artist** has gained popular success as well as critical plaudits. And the reason is simple, The Artist reminds us of the magic of cinema.

Michel Hazanavicius has directed a story in the tradition of *Singing in the Rain* and *A Star is Born* about the impact of sound on Hollywood, and in paying tribute to this lost world he has created something new, fresh and utterly beautiful.

It stars Berenice Bejo, as the rising ingenue and Jean Dujardin, as the established star; surrounded by Hollywood actors who look as if they could have stepped out of the 1930s – John Goodman, James Cromwell, Malcolm McDowell and Penelope Ann Miller.

I had previously seen, and enjoyed silent films with wonderful musical scores, but I had always been conscious that this was a relic of another age, *The Artist* is a film that is not strange or old - it is like any other contemporary release, except it is much, much better.



The story is familiar, but the treatment is fresh. Cineastes will pick up on the numerous

references to classic Hollywood – the leading actors resemble John Gilbert and Clara Bow, at one point it visually echoes Citizen Kane as it shows the crumbling of a marriage and at one moment Peppy says that she wants to be alone. But there is no need to know about the sources to enjoy The Artist.

Hazanavicius understands classical Hollywood, but is not in thrall to it – he treats this material with wit and lightness.

The miracle of The Artist is that it has broken out of the film festival to gain a multiplex audience, a popular audience to mirror the critical acclaim.

This is not a pastiche, but a film made as if colour and sound, or more accurately recorded dialogue, had never been developed. It is a truly magical film – and the dog is good as well!