

THE ARTIST

Directed by Michael Hazanavicius
Produced by Thomas Langmann
Distributed by The Weinstein Company
Released in 2011

There is a risk in analyzing a good movie that is irrelevant when breaking down a bad movie. Taking a pleasing experience (especially a simple story) and breaking it down to show the possibilities of interpretation and discoursing on the genius of its editing, mise-en-scene, production design, etc. can dull the film's effect. It's much like analyzing a joke (there's ultimately no explaining it; a joke is funny because it's funny) or learning the secrets behind a film's special effects; on subsequent viewings one's capacity for suspension of disbelief could be crippled.

When analysis takes a cinema-goer out of the story, that analysis fails—provided its very purpose was to foster admiration for an exemplary work of art. Analyzing a bad film leaves the reviewer free to be creative. The analysis has a chance to become a work of art itself. The reader may not appreciate the film any more than he did, but he will have enjoyed the analysis.

Analyzing a film, especially a good film, too far risks ruining it on the second go-around because the emotional element has been subsumed by the intellectual. Feeling has been replaced by thought. The viewer now asks, *Why do I feel this way?* or, worse, *Why did I feel this way?*

The Artist is an emotional film. The lead actors are telegenic, expressive, fearless. And the characters they play are archetypal without being predictable. This film, without apology, relies on pathos to grab and hold its audience. For someone willing to be moved and willing to be patient this film can redefine his expectations of modern cinema. *The Artist* is distinctly personal and therefore of universal application. It is a simple tale of pride and love, but its very simplicity was hard-won. It deserves admiration, not pontification.