

Film Review: Gorgeous 'Hugo' Plays Like Cinematic Snow Globe

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 23, 2011 - 2:07pm

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CHICAGO – Martin Scorsese's "Hugo" is a deeply personal piece, a magical tale about imagination and the importance of film preservation presented with some of the most technical expertise in years. It is also a strikingly cold film, an adventure that doesn't contain the whimsy, pace, or charm that it really needed to in order to connect emotionally as well as intellectually. It's a film that's easy to admire with your brain, but hard to love with your heart.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

First and foremost, as he often has throughout his career, arguably our best living director has presented a piece that is technically marvelous. This is arguably the most impressive use of 3D to date as it's used not merely as gimmick but to enhance the storytelling and even play with the theme of the piece, as "Hugo," believe it or not, is really a film about the magic of movies. The art direction, cinematography, use of score, etc. – it's all stellar and the film really is worth seeing as a technical exercise.



[Read Brian Tallerico's full review of "Hugo" in our reviews section.](#) [17]

However, there's a heart and soul that's missing from this perfectly made machine. In the film, the title character finds a broken-down automaton, a robot that he works to fix with his father. "Hugo" the film is not unlike that automaton – stunningly made but hollow and expressionless. I was constantly aware of the craft of filmmaking on display without being adequately sucked into the storytelling on an emotional level. With the regularly blowing snow around the Paris setting of the piece, it reminded me of a beautiful, stunning snow globe – amazing to look at but behind glass.

Hugo Cabret (Asa Butterfield) lives behind the clocks at a crowded Parisian train station. He watches the world go by between the four and the five and marvels at the regulars like the librarian (Christopher Lee), florist (Emily Mortimer), guard (Sacha Baron Cohen), and, most of all, the toy shop owner (Ben Kingsley). In the opening scene of the film, the toy maker named Papa George catches Hugo trying to steal from him and confiscates the waif's notebook, only to be struck by a clear personal connection to it. Emotionally shattered, George threatens to burn the notebook, but a child who has been living with him named Isabelle (Chloe Grace Moretz) takes it back for Hugo. How the notebook relates to George's past, the connection between the work that Hugo was doing with his father (played by Jude Law, briefly in flashback) and George, and the very history of filmmaking will play major roles in this sweeping fairy tale.



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Hugo

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

"Hugo" stars Asa Butterfield, Chloe Grace Moretz, Ben Kingsley, Sacha Baron Cohen, Christopher Lee, Emily Mortimer, Ray Winstone, Helen McCrory, Michael Stuhlbarg, and Jude Law. It was adapted by John Logan and directed by Martin Scorsese. It was released on November 23rd, 2011 and is rated PG.

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