

Blu-ray Review: Woody Allen's Exquisite, Romantic 'Midnight in Paris'

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CHICAGO – At times, Woody Allen's new film releases stink like an old glove, and thankfully there are times when they fit like an old glove. His latest is "Midnight in Paris," just released on Blu-ray and DVD. This is classic romantic Woody, set in the City of Lights, and featuring Owen Wilson taking on the Allen persona. It's also featured in my [Top 10 Films of 2011](#). [18]



Blu-Ray Rating: **5.0/5.0**

It is the idea that is sound in this film, and Allen follows through beautifully, allowing the humor to flow from the absurd situation, which in turn leads to a life lesson that is warm and deep. The ensemble cast is perfectly formed, and Owen Wilson leads them through some interesting comic and introspective circumstances. It has both the funny and familiar rhythms for veteran Woody Allen admirers, and surprising fun for newcomers.



Paris When it Sizzled: Alison Pill (Zelda Fitzgerald) and Owen Wilson (Gil) in 'Midnight in Paris'
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

Owen Wilson is a California dude named Gil, a successful screenwriter, who is taking a sabbatical in his favorite city, Paris, to write a long-gestating novel. He is tagging along with his fiancée Inez's (Rachel McAdams) family, "ugly Americans" who are negotiating a business deal in the City of Lights. He is clearly an outsider in comparison to his material-based companions, as he ruminates on the romantic 1920s past of Paris, when writers like Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway hung out in the bistros and talked about their art.

When Inez hooks up with a friend named Paul (Michael Sheen), Gil does everything in his power to get away from her scheduled activities. He finds himself at midnight on the streets of Paris, when an old car stops and the revelers inside beckon him to join in. Magically, he is transported to his favorite time, Paris in the 1920s, and he meets with his laundry list of iconic composers, film directors, artists and writers, including an impressive Gertrude Stein (Kathy Bates) and Ernest Hemingway (Corey Stoll), who is itching for an adventure or a fight. Gil also hooks up with the mysterious French flapper Adriana (Marion Cotillard), and his life changes with each new midnight visit.



This is mirth and merriment, especially in the 1920s Paris scenes, because Allen chose to highly romanticize it to the point of absurdity. This could all be Gil's mass delusion, because all of the artists of the era act exactly as he wants them to, and he meets seemingly everyone. Corey Stoll's Hemingway is a revelation, for he completely delivers the Papa-esque prose that Allen created for the god-like writer with an hilarious forthrightness that is a highlight. Cameos like Adrian Brody's expressive Salvador Dali also add to the general amusement.

This is also the type of riveting situations that used to characterize all of Woody Allen's films. Like the movie characters that step out of the screen in "The Purple Rose of Cairo," Allen's 1920s Paris is a Mad Magazine-like collection of exciting personalities and atmosphere, and is fascinating and funny throughout. Also, the old saying of "be careful what you wish for, you just might get it" comes to form as a lesson in morality, which also is characteristic in the best Woody Allen fables.

Allen is famous for eschewing any "extras" in his DVD releases, and this Blu-ray package is no exception. There is a lone featurette on "Midnight in Cannes," a documentary about the director and cast at the Cannes Film Festival, a Photo Gallery and nothing else, not even a commentary track. The film, which is beautifully shot and performed, is enough.

As he is now over 40 years as a director and movie star, Woody Allen continues to produce films virtually in a one-a-year average. His 2012 release will be called "Nero Fiddled" and will feature Ellen Page, Jesse Eisenberg, Alec Baldwin and Allen himself behind and in front of the camera. And although his last ten years has been good and bad, strange and indifferent, like one of his most famous movie lines, we need those films like we "need the eggs."

The Blu-ray and DVD of "Midnight in Paris" was released by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment on December 20th. Featuring Owen Wilson, Rachel McAdams, Alison Pill, Michael Sheen, Carla Bruni, Marion Cotillard, Adrian Brody, Kathy Bates and Corey Stoll. Written and directed by Woody Allen. Rated "PG-13"



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [20]
Senior Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [19]

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