

## Blu-Ray Review: Palme d'Or Winner 'The Class' Gets Great Release

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 17, 2009 - 1:20pm

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CHICAGO – It's truly amazing how very few films not in the English language find audiences in this country. A film as universally acclaimed as "The Class," the winner of the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and a nominee for the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, should have been able to find an audience, but the fact is that most people skipped it in theaters and I worry they will on Blu-Ray and DVD as well. Don't miss this one.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Laurent Cantet's near-documentary style drama is about the trend of modern education towards the median. Smart kids are not encouraged because it's assumed that they don't need the help and kids who arguably are never going to succeed take all of the professor's time. We're all moving toward the average.



The Class was released on Blu-Ray on August 11th, 2009.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Video

And that's just one of the many interesting themes in "The Class," a film that details a year at a tough inner-city middle school in Paris in the classroom of Mr. Marin (Francois Begaudeau). Based on the actor's semi-autobiographical book, Begaudeau perfectly portrays a teacher with an unusual style, trying to relate to the kids as much as possible but also subject to the fact that there are some lines that should not be crossed between teacher and student.

The other teachers at Marin's school are basically lethargic drones, but they also don't risk getting too personal with their students. Should a teacher just be a boring automaton? Should students be encouraged to display their personalities or simply fall in line? Has our education system become one that discourages individuality in both teacher and student?

"The Class" came to US shores with a monstrous amount of publicity including the Palme d'Or and the Oscar nomination. I don't want to over-sell the film like I believe those awards do a little bit. Don't get me wrong. It's a very good film but I was a little surprised at how many top ten lists it ended up on at the end of 2008. It can sometimes be a bit too talky for its own good and it drags at times. I actually like Cantet's "Time Out" a bit more.

But you should still see "The Class". There is some deeply moving material here and anyone interested in realistic drama that blurs the line between fiction and reality doesn't want to miss this film. Some of it feels more genuine than most documentaries about teenagers (certainly moreso than "American Teen").

The Blu-Ray release for "The Class" from Sony includes a Making-of Featurette, Commentary on Select Scenes, "Actors' Workshop," and "Actors' Self-Potraits". The film is perfectly presented in 1080p High Definition with a 2.35:1 aspect ration and accompanied by a French, English Dolby TrueHD 3.0 track. Video and audio are not key to the experience of "The Class" but there are no noticeable problems in either arena on the Blu-Ray release.

The featurette is interesting, but the main draw of the release is still the film itself, one that should find a wider audience through its home release. Powerful, provocative, and intelligent, "The Class" deserves more students.

*'The Class' is released by Sony Pictures Home Video and stars Francois Begaudeau. It was written by Begaudeau, Laurent Cantet, & Robin Campillo and directed by Cantet. The Blu-Ray and DVD were released on August 11th, 2009. It is rated PG-13.*



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