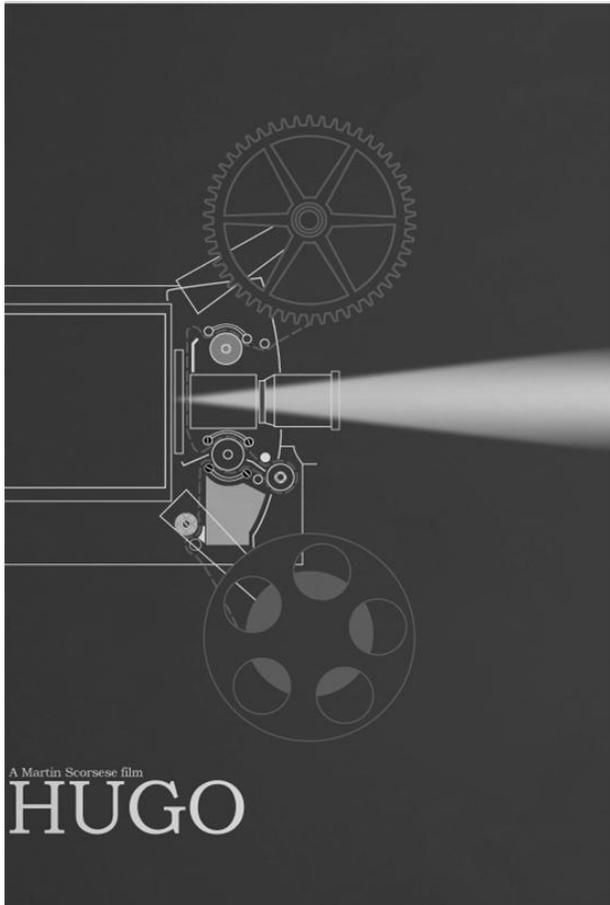


The Main Feature

Season 33 - Issue 6 (screening 22.11.12)



US 126 minutes
 Cert U UK release 2.12.11

Director Martin Scorsese
 Cinematography Robert Richardson
 Score Howard Shore
 Screenplay John Logan
 Based on the book "The Invention of Hugo Cabret" by Brian Selznick

Cast

Ben Kingsley	Georges Méliès
Sacha Baron Cohen	Station Inspector
Asa Butterfield	Hugo Cabret
Chloe Moretz	Isabelle
Jude Law	Hugo's Father
Ray Winstone	Uncle Claude
Christopher Lee	Monsieur Labisse
Helen McCrory	Mama Jeanne
Frances De La Tour	Madame Emilie
Richard Griffiths	Monsieur Frick
Emily Mortimer	Lisette
Michael Stuhlbarg	Rene Tabard

For those thinking this is merely a children's or family film, think again.

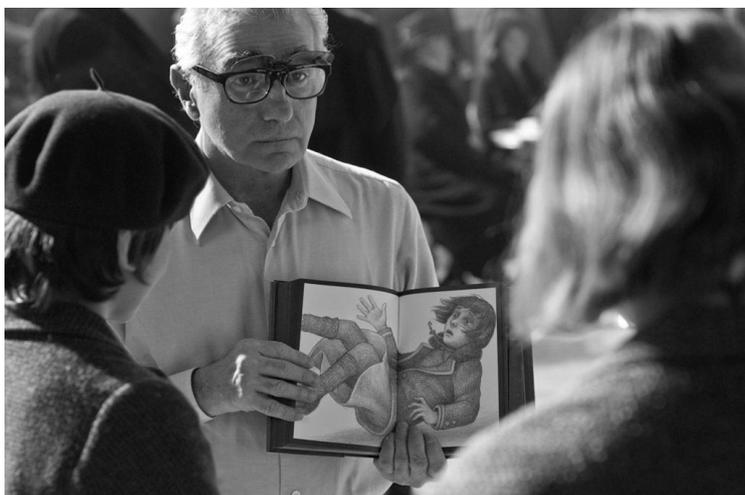
Hugo is a love-letter to the history of cinema and particularly the very early work of Georges Méliès. The film is all of that, and perhaps the most eloquent and beautiful tribute to the power and history of film since *Cinema Paradiso*. Some will understandably wonder, though, if the film will function for those not already film-obsessed. And it does, it absolutely does. Beyond Scorsese's love of film, this is fantastic family film, part *Boy's Adventure*, part *Oliver Twist* and part Jules Verne.

For once, no one gets attacked, shot or beaten - it isn't that kind of 'family' movie. In fact, the film most unlike anything Martin Scorsese has ever made is one of the most personal of his career. It's the director's first PG rated film in 18 years and his first feature film in twelve years not to feature Leonardo DiCaprio.

Hugo is a smart movie, but it also has heart. Those with a passion for early cinema are likely to adore it, although a knowledge of and appreciation for Melies is not requisite to enjoy Scorsese's loving homage. The film deserves to be seen in 3-D as it was conceived, but the story is strong enough for it to survive intact in a 2-D conversion. As un-Scorsese-like as *Hugo* may be in many ways, it is nevertheless a worthwhile and important addition to the work of one of the best living filmmakers.

Hugo won five Oscars this year —for Best Cinematography, Best Art Direction, Best Visual Effects, Best Sound Mixing, and Best Sound Editing—and its 11 total nominations (including Best Picture) was the most for the evening.

Scorsese pays homage on several occasions to one of the earliest films, the Lumieres' *Arrival of a Train at the Station*. Indeed, with Melies - one of the pioneers of early film technique and special effects - as a main character, *Hugo* reveals much about film during the silent era.



By telling Melies' story, Scorsese has not only an opportunity to explore the innovations and inventiveness of filmmaking during its primitive, formative era, but also a opening to incorporate a message about the importance of preserving films for posterity (see *Thelma Schooner interview on following page*).

From Edwin S Porter to Harold Lloyd, from Cabiria to La Roue, Scorsese (quite literally at one point) riffles through the history book of cinema. Scorsese recalled 'For me, it was the little boy that made me want to do the film. It was his story. It was only later that people around me, people I was working with, began to

draw the links between the film and my work in restoration and rediscovering filmmakers.' One of those filmmakers was Michael Powell, who, back in the late 1970s, Scorsese brought back from the filmmaking wilderness by declaring his 1960 film 'Peeping Tom', which conservative critics and colleagues had damned as near-pornographic, a masterpiece. 'It was only later on that Thelma [Schoonmaker, Scorsese's long-term editor and Powell's widow] pointed out the link between "Hugo" and me and Powell,' he adds.

In researching this film I found that one of the film locations was "Longcross Studios, Chobham Lane, Longcross, Surrey, England, UK" which is also credited for the films War Horse and John Carter. "This former tank factory and test track provides a large backlot and a huge central building, comparable in size to Pinewood Studios cavernous 007 Stage. Although the main stage lacks many of the support facilities available at Pinewood and Shepperton, It costs film companies a fraction of the cost to rent."

The cast is all very good. Butterfield (previously seen in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*) and Moretz have a youthful and innocent chemistry together. They're too young for it to be romantic, but you could see it going that way in a few years. Ben Kingsley is as reliable as ever and the station is populated by a cast of familiar character actors who help bring the story to life.



With a wonderful production design, the film possesses great lessons for young and old audiences, and everyone in between. This film provides an emotional and intellectual viewing experience, allowing for a much more worthwhile and in-depth experience opposed to other films of its kind.

Iain McGlashan

PS

The book's author, Brian Selznick, was born in East Brunswick, New Jersey; his grandfather was a cousin to David O Selznick, producer of the original *King Kong* and *Gone with the Wind*. "I come," he once joked, "from the dry-cleaning side of the family."

Selznick was told by Dante Ferretti, the production designer: "I just did everything you drew."

PPS

For those who saw our last film and think during Hugo, "I've heard that song somewhere":

When the dachshunds are being introduced at the station café, a song is playing in the background, a female vocalist singing "Frou-Frou." This is the song Le lieutenant Maréchal, the Jean Gabin character, is listening to on a record at the beginning of Jean Renoir's film *La Grande Illusion*.

Further evidence that the Club does think about the sequence of films!

The name Thelma Schoonmaker may not ring a bell with everyone, but as Martin Scorsese's three-time Oscar winning editor, she is one of the most trusted names in film editing.

The BBC caught up with the 72 year old to hear about her experience working with one of the greatest filmmakers of the 21st Century, and their side project to restore the classic films of Michael Powell (to whom she was married for six years until his death in 1990) and Emeric Pressburger to their original glory.

You obviously bring a mass of technical skill to your job as editor, but working with the same director - one as significant as Scorsese - for more than three decades, presumably you've built up a very personal relationship with him.

All great directors or anyone who has a strong vision like Scorsese needs to have a lot of support around them. I think from the very beginning - when we met each other - he realised he could trust me to do what was right for his movies. [Rather than] making a name for myself, I would be hand in glove with him in terms of carrying through what he tries to lay down when he shoots. He says I bring out the humanity in his films. I don't think that's really true - he lays it down there - but I think as a woman, perhaps I'm more tuned in to emotional things in the films that maybe I pull out more. We work as a team and I understand what he is trying to do and what he approves and disapproves of in terms of acting. He has this thing about eyebrows. He thinks [they] are too easy a thing for actors, so he discourages the use of eyebrows too much. That's the kind of depth and it's that kind of thing that - over the years - you learn.

Scorsese's work with actors often involves giving them the freedom to improvise and deviate from the script, so does this complicate your job?

The film we're filming now is called Wolf of Wall Street and it's filled with improvisation. He's being very brave in the way he's using improvisation and the actors are having a hell of a time coming up with great original humour. He loves working that way; taking this rich ore and mining it and shaping it as they're shooting. Then I have to deal with all the problems that causes because things don't match. But that's not important, what's important is to get the power of the scene across and don't worry about whether things match, or find another way to get around it. It's such fun!

What was it about Powell and Pressburger's 1943 film The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp that made you and Scorsese feel it deserved to be brought back to life?

We've both seen the movie over and over again and we both feel so deeply about it. It's a very unusual film, you never know what's coming next. It portrays people and the way life buffets them in an extraordinary way. You go through the main character understanding very early in his life that he's lost the woman that he loves because he doesn't realise he loved her until too late. She gives him the signals but he waits too long and another man marries her. That sadness and sense of loss pervades the rest of the film but not in a way that makes you feel bad. It's examining something that many people feel in life all the time.

What did Scorsese bring to the project?

Scorsese was so deeply influenced as a film maker by [Powell and Pressburger] and the fact they were so unusual and never cliched or sentimental. His commitment is to restore every film that needs it. My husband said the first time he met him he couldn't believe this young director knew every shot [he'd] ever taken and the blood started to run in [his] veins again. They had a wonderful friendship and [Scorsese] brought him back to the world.

You were involved with the project to remaster The Red Shoes, Powell and Pressburger's classic 1948 film. What challenges are associated with restoring old films renowned for their mastery in Technicolor cinematography?

Some of the film was covered in mould, a common problem that occurs in archive. The mould was actually eating into the emulsion of the film. But the result [of the restoration] is that Blimp has become alive, it's so vivid. That vividness has brought the humour to the fore, a loving examination of bureaucrats and the strange people who made up that world at the time. Instead of just being plainly satirical or savage, it's an understanding portrayal of what these people were like at this time.

Despite making influential films through the 1940s and 1950s, Powell and Pressburger were lesser known than their contemporaries such as Alfred Hitchcock.

Their films were very unusual, every film was different and my husband said the reason critics didn't support them as well as they should have was because they had to go in and engage with the film, they had to experience something new and when they were writing eight reviews a week, it was a bit annoying. Now, [their films] are considered masterpieces, but at that time people thought they might have been a little too weird, too emotional. The other thing is they never spent any money on self publicising themselves. They were too busy making movies. David Lean and Hitchcock had big Hollywood publicity machines behind them.

Reactions to **La Grande Illusion** 25 October 2012

Score **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** **6** **7** **8** **9** **10**
Votes ~ ~ ~ 1 7 9 11 9 2 ~

Total received – 39 Average Score – 6.67

Your Comments

The Colditz story for WW1 but oh so slow

Great film – cannot believe it is that old

An odd film – certainly not a great film

Good old fashioned filming – very enjoyable

Wonderful print, but the film's reputation seems slightly exaggerated

I enjoyed the film and thought the quality was amazing for the age of the film

Found the background music a bit overpowering

Very good – not what I expected: more cheerful

A classic at the time, but second world war escape films reduce the impact

A fine film - Jean Gabin particularly

At last a happy ending!

Weren't they slow in those days!

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	The Artist	8.28
2 nd	My Week With Marilyn	7.56
3 rd	A Separation	6.97
4 th	La Grande Illusion	6.67
5 th	Peepli Live!	6.17



Our next film

**8pm on Thursday
 13 December 2012**

An early Xmas treat with great songs including:

"Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered",

"The Lady is a Tramp", "I Could Write a Book" and

"My Funny Valentine".



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sponsors photocopying of *the main feature*

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