

REVIEW
MIDNIGHT IN PARIS

5 The soufflé rises as it has not done for many years in Woody Allen's new
film *Midnight in Paris*, which (incredibly) is already the most commercially
successful of his career. It's a funny, slight comedy whose time-travel conceit is
managed effortlessly; there's something of Allen's 1985 movie *The Purple Rose of*
Cairo as well as his 1977 short story *The Kugelmass Episode*, about the guy who
10 enters the world of *Madame Bovary*. Allen is famously a film-maker who has
outlived his heyday, and whose continuing output seems uneasy and dated in the
21st century. So perhaps it's the fantasy-nostalgist theme of this movie, the
retreat from the present day, that has restored his mojo. In the present, the film
clunks a bit. But in the past, it zips along.

15 The modern setting is luxury-tourist Paris, five-star hotel Paris, the Paris
routinely available to wealthy and middle-aged visitors, and the film begins with
a montage tribute of picture-postcard images to Allen's trad-jazz score; it's
weirdly like the one that began *Manhattan*, though without the voiceover and it's
unmistakably the work of an outsider. (It's possible that Allen has seen the
20 brisker, shrewder Paris streetscape montage that begins *Mia Hansen-Løve's*
movie *Father of My Children*. Perhaps someone will now do a YouTube mashup
of *banlieue* scenes from *La Haine* to Allen's clarinet.)

Owen Wilson takes the proxy-Woody role as Gil, a disillusioned Hollywood
screenwriter who comes on a tense trip to Paris with his gorgeous fiancée Inez
(Rachel McAdams) and her parents. Idolising the bohemian Paris of the 1920s,
25 Gil finds that the city has revived his dormant longing to be a serious novelist.
One night, while strolling alone in the city, Gil sees a mysterious antique vehicle
roll up and its champagne-swilling occupants urge him to jump in. He travels
back in time with them to a party where he encounters F Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest
Hemingway and Cole Porter – and falls in love with Picasso's mistress, played
30 by Marion Cotillard.

Wilson plays it exactly right: bemused, excited, throwaway, and Cotillard has
delicacy and charm. There are real laughs, witty touches galore, beguiling
cameos – and the film is actually about something. When the action returns to
the present, the fizz declines, and I have to say the final, crucial confrontation
35 between Gil and Inez doesn't work. But for simple pleasure, the sort of reliably
stimulating pleasure Allen used to deliver all the time, that confectionery of
sophisticated wit ... *Midnight in Paris* does well. This may not be a return to the
glory days, but it's a vivid reminder of them. That's almost as good.

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| souffle | vánek |
| conceit | metafora |
| heyday | vrchol |
| retreat | stažení se, úkryt |
| mojo | kouzlo |
| to clunk | žuchnout, buchnout |

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|--------------------|-----------------------|
| to zip along | svištět |
| brisker | ráznější, svižnější |
| shrewder | bystřejší |
| streetscape | obraz ulice |
| proxy- | náhrada, v zastoupení |
| disillusioned | zbavený iluzí |
| dormant longing | dřímající touha |
| champagne-swilling | šampaňské-nasávající |
| to urge | pobízet |
| bemused | vyvedený z míry |
| throwaway | odpadlík |
| galore | spousta |
| beguiling | okouzlený |
| fizz | jiskra |
| to decline | upadat |
| confectionary | cukrovinky |