

## Midnight in Paris (2011) Allen P Michell, 2022

### Synopsis:

*Set in Paris, the film follows Gil Pender (Owen Wilson), a screenwriter, who is forced to confront the shortcomings of his relationship with his materialistic fiancée (Rachel McAdams) and their divergent goals, which become increasingly exaggerated as he travels back in time each night at midnight. (Wikipedia)*

Featured Actors: Owen Wilson as Gil, Rachel McAdams as Inez, Kurt Fuller as John, Mimi Kennedy as Helen, Michael Sheen as Paul, Marion Cotillard as Adriana, and Nina Arianda as Carol.

Woody Allen's first film to gross over \$100 million worldwide. As of 2016, this is Allen's highest-grossing film, with over \$150 million worldwide. Additional gross of US\$57 million domestic US. Budget was US\$17 million.

Selected Awards: 2012 Academy Awards: Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay; 2012 Golden Globe Awards: Best Screenplay; 2012 Academy Awards Nominations: Best Picture, Best Direction, and Best Art Direction; 2012 Golden Globe Awards Nominations: Best Motion Picture – Comedy or Musical, Best Director – Motion Picture (Woody Allen), Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture – Comedy or Musical (Owen Wilson).

YouTube – Have a look at these suggestions. Compare the opening scenes between Manhattan & Midnight in Paris. Cinematography and Music are the keys!  
*I Love Paris in the Rain ...* dialogue over black screen, then credits, then Paris in muted yellows and browns ...

Opening of Manhattan: “He adored New York City ...”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mwZYGcbQCo>

[[I’m Obsessed with Midnight in Paris - Good overview. **Note - watch film first.**]]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtLbT4Yui2o>

### Creative Personnel:

Woody Allen – Director /Screenplay (57 film credits / 82 writing credits)

Heywood "**Woody**" **Allen** (born Allan Stewart Konigsberg, December 1, 1935) is an American actor, comedian, filmmaker, playwright, and musician, whose career spans more than six decades.

He worked as a comedy writer in the 1950s, writing jokes and scripts for television and publishing several books of short humor pieces. In the early 1960s, Allen began performing as a stand-up comedian, emphasizing monologues rather than traditional jokes. As a comedian, he developed the persona of an insecure, intellectual, fretful nebbish, which he maintains is quite different from his real-life personality. In 2004, Comedy Central ranked Allen in fourth place on a list of the 100 greatest stand-up comedians, while a UK survey ranked Allen as the third greatest comedian.

By the mid-1960s Allen was writing and directing films (after doing lots of TV writing work), first specializing in slapstick comedies before moving into dramatic material influenced by European art cinema during the 1970s, and alternating between comedies and dramas to the present. He is often identified as part of the New Hollywood wave of filmmakers of the mid-1960s to late 1970s. Allen often starred in his films, typically in the persona he developed as a standup. Some best-known of **his over 40 films** are *Annie Hall* (1977), *Manhattan* (1979), and *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986). Critic Roger Ebert described Allen as "a treasure of the cinema."

Of course Allen has been mired in controversy with ex partner Mia Farrow over his love affair with their adopted daughter.

Woody Allen says there's few movies in his writing/directing career that he would keep as his favourites he made and this was one of them.

#### Darius Khondji – Cinematographer (80 credits)

An Iranian famous for both French and US films including *Amour* (2012), *Seewen* (1995), *Delicatessen* (1991). Worked on two other Allen films – *To Rome with Love* (2012) and *Magic in the Moonlight* (2014). One of few cinematographers interviewed by Cahiers du Cinema. Highly regarded.

Khondji cites Gregg Toland as his favorite cinematographer. "I particularly admire his work on John Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath*." [Toland shot *Citizen Kane*.] He also greatly admires James Wong Howe's work, in particular *Hud*. Khondji has said that his dream project would be "a 16mm black and white film of *On the Road!*"

*"I am concerned with the power of the image and much less with story."*

#### Filming style:

Allen states that the fundamental aesthetic for the camera work was to give the film a warm ambience. He describes that he likes it (the cinematography), "intensely red, intensely warm, because if you go to a restaurant and you're there with your wife or your girlfriend, and it's got red-flecked wallpaper and turn-of-the-century lights, you both look beautiful. Whereas if you're in a seafood restaurant and the lights are up, everybody looks terrible. So it looks nice. It's very flattering and very lovely." To achieve this he and his cinematographer, Darius Khondji, used primarily warm colors in the film's photography, filmed in flatter weather and employed limited camera movements, in attempts to draw little attention to itself. This is the first Woody Allen film to go through a digital intermediate, instead of being color timed in the traditional photochemical way. [Wikipedia]

#### Sonia Grande – costumes (51 credits)

Spanish costume designer. She is known for her frequent collaborations with film director Woody Allen on such films as *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* and *Midnight in Paris*, as well as her work on Fernando Trueba's *The Girl of Your Dreams*, for which she won Best Costume Design at the 13th Annual Goya Awards.

#### Music (no credited person) - Conal Foulkes / Woody Allen ?

Woody Allen has a special relationship with the music in his films. MNP opens with the famous piece by Sidney Bechet. Period pieces like, *Josephine Baker* and music of *Hot Club of Paris*, are interspersed with more recent recordings including the pianist, Conal Foulkes

who has played with Woody Allen New Orleans Jazz Band since 2001. He did music for Allenn's Blue Jasmine, Café Society soundtracks as well. He states in an interview: *"I'm on the Midnight in Paris soundtrack. I played the piano and was the singing voice of Cole Porter in the movie. I guess, a quarter of the tracks on the soundtrack are mine. It won "Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Needs," the official name of the award. They sent a nice plaque which hangs on my wall."*

Accordion tracks are played by Francois Parisi, a student of Roger Damin the great accordion pleyer of the 1950s and 1960s to Jacques Brel, Piaf, etc.

## Trivia

Carla Bruni, singer-songwriter and wife of former French president Nicolas Sarkozy, was recruited by Allen for a role as a museum guide.

Due to Woody Allen's habit of only giving actors the script pages concerning their characters, Tom Hiddleston was unaware of the film's time travel storyline until he met Owen Wilson on-set and asked him why he wasn't wearing period-accurate clothing like the rest of the cast.

Corey Stoll was understandably nervous about playing not only the famous Ernest Hemingway, but also this particular version of Hemingway. Adding to that the fact that Woody Allen doesn't rehearse, when Stoll had to do his first scene, he didn't know whether or not he was doing the right choices as an actor. When the scene was shot, Allen made him at ease because he told him: "That was perfect. That was exactly what I wanted." Allen is known for not giving many compliments to the actors, arguing that the fact that he cast them proves he trusts their talent.

The story that Gil discusses with Luis Buñuel is the story of Luis Buñuel's film The Exterminating Angel (1962).

Early gestation - Apparently, Cary Grant almost came out of retirement in the 1970s to make this film when the script was at a very early stage. He was very keen to work with Allen and even visited Michaels' Pub unannounced, where Allen would play the clarinet every Monday night, to discuss the role.

Woody Allen won a Best Original Screenplay Academy Award for this film. The Oscar was Allen's fourth, and the first he had won since Hannah and Her Sisters (1986). Allen received two Oscar nominations for this movie, the other being for Best Director, they being his twenty-second and twenty-third nominations. Additionally, this is his first film since Hannah and Her Sisters (1986) to earn a Best Picture nomination.

## Reviews

*'a cinematic soufflé that rises to perfection' – Phillip French*

*(Cannes Festival) love Woody Allen. And in Midnight in Paris, which just opened the Cannes Film Festival, the Woodman returns the favour. Not since 1979's Manhattan, in which he*

*rhapsodized over the New York of his black-and-white dreams, has Allen used a camera to make such urgent, passionate love to a city – (Peter Travers, Rolling Stone)*

### **Woody Serves A Movable Feast**

Roger Ebert, 2011

*This review contains spoilers.* Oh, yes, it does, because I can't imagine a way to review "Midnight in Paris" without discussing the delightful fantasy at the heart of Woody Allen's new comedy. The trailers don't give it away, but now the reviews from Cannes have appeared, and the cat is pretty much out of the bag. If you're still reading, give yourself a fair chance to guess the secret by reading through the list of character names in the credits: "Gert." Which resident of Paris does that make you think of?

This film is sort of a daydream for American lit majors. It opens with a couple on holiday in Paris with her parents. Gil (Owen Wilson) and Inez (Rachel McAdams) are officially in love, but maybe what Gil really loves is Paris in the springtime. He's a hack screenwriter from Hollywood who still harbors the dream of someday writing a good novel and joining the pantheon of American writers whose ghosts seem to linger in the very air he breathes: Fitzgerald, Hemingway and the other legends of Paris in the 1920s.

He'd like to live in Paris. Inez would like to live in an upper-class American suburb, like her parents. He evokes poetic associations with every cafe where Hemingway might once have had a Pernod, and she likes to go shopping. One night, he wanders off by himself, gets lost, sits on some church steps, and as a bell rings midnight, a big old Peugeot pulls up filled with revellers.

They invite him to join their party. They include Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Allen makes no attempt to explain this magic. None is needed. Nor do we have to decide if what happens is real or imaginary. It doesn't matter. Gil is swept along in their wake and finds himself plunged into the Jazz Age and all its legends. His novel was going to be about a man who ran a nostalgia shop, and here he is in the time and place he's most nostalgic for.

Some audience members might be especially charmed by "Midnight in Paris." They would be those familiar with Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, and the artists who frequented Stein's famous salon: Picasso, Dali, Cole Porter, Man Ray, Luis Bunuel and, yes, "Tom Eliot." Allen assumes some familiarity with their generation, and some moviegoers will be mystified, because cultural literacy is not often required at the movies anymore. Others will be as charmed as I was. Zelda is playfully daffy, Scott is in love with her and doomed by his love, and Hemingway speaks always in formal sentences of great masculine portent.

Woody Allen must have had a great time writing this screenplay. Gil is of course the Woody character (there's almost always one in an Allen film), and his fantasy is an enchanted wish-fulfillment. My favorite of all the movie's time-lapse conversations may be the one Gil has with Bunuel. He gives him an idea for a film: A group of guests sit down to dinner and after the meal is over, they mysteriously find themselves unable to leave the house. "But why not?" Bunuel asks. "They just can't," Gil explains. Bunuel says it doesn't make any sense to him. If the story idea and perhaps the name Bunuel don't ring a bell, that's a scene that won't

connect with you, but Allen seems aware that he's flirting with inside baseball, and tries to make the movie charming even for someone who was texting all during high school.

Owen Wilson is a key to the movie's appeal. He makes Gil so sincere, so enthusiastic, about his hero worship of the giants of the 1920s. He can't believe he's meeting these people, and they are so nice to him — although at the time, of course, they didn't yet think of themselves as legends; they ran into ambitious young writers like Gil night after night in Miss Stein's salon.

Another treasure in the film is Kathy Bates' performance. She is much as I would imagine Gertrude Stein: an American, practical, no-nonsense, possessed with a nose for talent, kind, patient. She's something like the Stein evoked by Hemingway in *A Moveable Feast*, his memoir of this period. She embodies the authority that made her an icon.

Then there's Adriana (Marion Cotillard), who has already been the mistress of Braque and Modigliani, and is now Picasso's lover, and may soon — be still, my heart! — fall in love with Gil. Compared to her previous lovers, he embodies a winsome humility, as well he might. Meanwhile, life in the present continues, with Gil's bride-to-be and future in-laws increasingly annoyed by his disappearances every night. And there's another story involving a journey even further into the past, indicating that nostalgia can change its ingredients at a movable feast.

This is Woody Allen's 41st film. He writes his films himself, and directs them with wit and grace. I consider him a treasure of the cinema. Some people take him for granted, although "Midnight in Paris" reportedly charmed even the jaded veterans of the Cannes press screenings. There is nothing to dislike about it. Either you connect with it or not. I'm wearying of movies that are for "everybody" — which means, nobody in particular. "Midnight in Paris" is for me, in particular, and that's just fine with *moi*.

### **Midnight in Paris – review**

Woody Allen is back on sparkling form as Owen Wilson finds himself on the expat literary scene of 20s Paris. Marion Cotillard and Owen Wilson in Woody Allen's *Midnight In Paris*: 'a cinematic soufflé that rises to perfection'.

Philip French, *The Guardian*, 2011

Few directors have given me more pleasure over the past 40 years than Woody Allen, so it is a great relief to see him emerge after a fallow period of disappointments and disasters with his best film since *Everyone Says I Love You* in 1996. *Midnight in Paris* is a cinematic soufflé that rises to perfection, a wry, funny, touching picture, pursuing some of his favourite tropes and themes but with sufficient asperity to give a sting to the nostalgia it embraces. Standing in for Allen himself and dressed similarly in plaid shirt and khaki trousers, Owen Wilson plays Gil, a youngish Hollywood screenwriter and would-be novelist best known for his skills at rewrites, a diffident, humorous man with a great respect for high culture and a love of popular art but deeply suspicious of pretension and academic condescension. He's visiting Paris with his egocentric social-climbing fiancée, Inez (Rachel McAdams), and her wealthy, neo-xenophobic parents.

The opening montage of Paris is a romantic dream of the City of Light that recalls the magic monochrome New York that accompanies Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" at the beginning

of *Manhattan* or the seasonal montages on New York that introduce the four chapters of *Everyone Says I Love You*. It's the Paris of Gil's dreams, the movable feast enjoyed in the 1920s by Hemingway and Fitzgerald, whose company he aspires to in his imagination. His affectingly naive attitude to the past, however, is ridiculed by his fiancée and her patronising academic friend (Michael Sheen), a blood brother to the arrogant intellectual who lectures his date about Marshall McLuhan in the cinema queue in *Annie Hall*. One night Gil is walking the streets of Montmartre, more than slightly drunk, when a clock rings out the chimes of midnight. A bunch of rowdy American revellers in a vintage, chauffeur-driven Peugeot stop, drag him into the car and take him to a party. Gradually it dawns on him he's been transported back to the 1920s and is in the company of Gertrude Stein (Kathy Bates) and the writers she dubbed the Lost Generation – Hemingway, Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald, Djuna Barnes – along with Cole Porter, and their European friends, Picasso, Dalí and Buñuel. Each night at the witching hour he's drawn back into this lost world of shared, competitive artistic endeavour, becoming the confidant and drinking companion of the arrogant Hemingway, the apt pupil of the peremptory Stein, the saviour of the troubled Zelda from suicide in the Seine, the provider of plots for Buñuel.

Some years ago in *The Moderns*, Alan Rudolph tried to recreate the expatriate Parisian literary scene of the 1920s but ended up with an embarrassingly unconvincing satire. Here, Allen gets the tone exactly right, simultaneously avoiding and knowingly mocking the kind of historical pastiche Max Beerbohm was sending up in the celebrated stage direction to his Renaissance playlet *Savonarola Brown*: "Enter Boccaccio, Benvenuto Cellini and many others making remarks highly characteristic of themselves." Through skilful casting (the work of Juliet Taylor), affectionate humour and clever writing, Allen suggests that what we are seeing is the essence of these celebrated figures as filtered through the imagination of the wide-eyed Gil. Younger moviegoers may think of *Back to the Future* or *Groundhog Day* when they see this film. Allen's admirers are likely to compare it with his masterly *Purple Rose of Cairo* where a blue-collar housewife is courted by a movie star who steps out the escapist film she's watching to join her in Depression New Jersey. I think it likely that Allen has also been influenced by Victor Sjöström's silent Swedish masterpiece, *The Phantom Carriage*, his idol Ingmar Bergman's favourite movie, which centres on a ghostly coach going around town at midnight picking up the dead.

Allen cleverly balances past and present by giving Gil two alternative women to the irritating fiancée, one in the 1920s in the form of Adriana (Marion Cotillard), who has been model and mistress to Modigliani, Braque and Picasso, and the other a young antique dealer Gabrielle (Léa Seydoux) in a Parisian flea market. Adriana is discontented with the 1920s and longs for la Belle Époque, which in a delightful sequence she visits with Gil to meet Toulouse-Lautrec at the Moulin Rouge. They discover, however, that Toulouse-Lautrec's drinking companions, Degas and Gauguin, look back nostalgically to the Renaissance as the true golden age. Gabrielle, on the other hand, who shares Gil's love of Cole Porter, is happy to live in the present while cherishing the past.

There is a clear parallel between the narrow, censorious, philistine world of Prohibition America that Hemingway and co were escaping in the 1920s and the repugnant US of George Bush represented by Gil's prospective parents-in-law. They despise what Donald Rumsfeld sneered at as "Old Europe" and support the Tea Party movement, and Allen does not spare them. This is the first time, I believe, that that party has been mentioned in a feature film.

Recent Allen films have tended towards the perfunctory, often looking like a succession of clumsy first takes. In *Midnight in Paris* he is relaxed and confident. The rhythms of the editing are perfect. The framing and grouping of the characters is comfortable. The actors are relaxed and confident in their movements. The boyishly bewildered, sheepishly vulnerable all-American charm of Owen Wilson has never been better used. Working in conjunction, the cinematographer Darius Khondji, the production designer Anne Seibel and the costume designer Sonia Grande have done a splendid job in giving the film distinct textures for its three different periods. The recreation of Gertrude Stein's apartment is a little gem, and when Kathy Bates sits beneath Picasso's famous portrait of Stein she looks at home.