

Thursday January 26th 2023

Les Demoiselles de Rochefort

France

1967

125mins

Cert U

Jacques Demy, in his follow-up to *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (1964), has created a grand work which, although being a success in its native France when originally released, was panned by some major USA critics and never enjoyed the plaudits it deserved (possibly because the USA release was a dubbed English language version). Over the years, however, and thanks in no small part to the efforts of Demy's wife Agnes Varda, it has come to be universally recognised as the great film it really is.

The song and dance numbers are playful, the story is meaningful, the performances marvellously refreshing and the plush settings colourful. It is a film that borrows freely from the Hollywood musical but adds its own very French touch of romantic spice and vibrancy. The score, by Michel Legrand, is easy on the ear and the narrative, told almost exclusively in song, features lyrics by Demy himself. There is also a tribute to swing, with much of the scat music being from the likes of Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Lionel Hampton.

The spirited choreography is eye-catching in a film where music is everywhere - when a fair comes to town, pedestrians suddenly break into a dance number, which gives the story an odd touch of unintended reality. As in his other romantic films, Demy points out that the prospects of meeting your ideal love mate depend more on chance and good timing than on anything else.

The film, taking place over a long weekend, is centred on a small seaside town in south west France, whose square is painted in stunning pastel colours and where twin sisters Delphine (Catherine Deneuve) and Solange (Françoise Dorleac) harbour unfulfilled dreams of escaping their dull lives by going to Paris in search of romance. When a funfair comes to town, with its young, free-spirited carnies, the sisters see a way to realise their hopes and dreams - and get a free ride to Paris

Despite Hollywood musicals being somewhat passé at the time of its release, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* nevertheless gained a nomination for Best Musical Score at the 41st Academy Awards.

Audiences now have a chance to catch up with a great film that has been passed over through no fault of its own.

Acknowledgments: Dennis Schwartz, dennisschwartzreviews.com

“Jacques Demy's [1967] take on the big American musical [...] is pure joy. From the first frame to the last, it's packed with smiles and passion and a giddy sense of its own fun”
Jamie S Rich, *Criterion Collection*

Leading Players

Catherine Deneuve
Francoise Dorleac
Danielle Darrieux
Gene Kelly
Michel Piccoli

Delphine Garnier
Solange Garnier
Yvonne Garnier
Andy Miller
Simon Dame

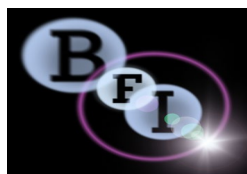
Production Credits

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Director | Jacques Demy |
| Producers | Gilbert de Goldschmidt, Mag Bodard |
| Screenplay | Jacques Demy |
| Cinematography | Ghislain Cloquet |
| Original Music | Michel Legrand |

Coming soon

February 23rd

LUCKY (USA, 2018, 88mins, Cert 15) Marking the directorial debut of prolific actor John Carroll Lynch, *Lucky* features the last performance of the legendary Harry Dean Stanton, in a film which is a meditation on mortality and is as much about Stanton himself as it is about the eponymous character he plays. Moving entirely at its own measured pace, the film explores themes of mortality, routine, friendship, impermanence, love, loss, regret and hope. Anon, *IMDb*



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