FILMBOX

Thursday, 17th April 2025
Studio 609, 7.30 pm



First Film of the Summer!

The Critic

UK, 2024, 15, 1 hr 41 mins
Dir: Anand Tucker
Writers: Patrick Marber based on the novel "Curtain Call" by Anthony Quin
Producers: David Gilbery, Bill Kenwright and Jolyon Symonds
Crime, Drama, Thriller

A renowned and feared theatre critic in 1930s London becomes entangled in a web of deceit and murder and takes drastic action to protect his career. Dark and acerbically witty.

Cast includes (selected)

Ian McKellen	Jimmy Erskine
Alfred Enoch	Tom Turner
Ben Barnes	Stephen Wyley
Mark Strong	David Brooke
Gemma Arterton	Nina Land
Lesley Manville	Annabel Land

Film Notes by Mike Darbon

A richly atmospheric period thriller set in 1930s London, **The Critic** is a tale of ambition, deception, and power struggles within the world of British theatre. Directed by Anand Tucker and adapted by playwright Patrick Marber from Anthony Quinn's novel ***Curtain Call***, the film delves into the murky ethics of the critic, the precarious lives of performers and the shifting dynamics of the relationships between the two.

At the heart of the story is Jimmy Erskine (Ian McKellen), a feared and influential theatre critic whose scathing reviews can make or break careers. When his position at a prominent newspaper comes under threat, Erskine finds himself caught in a dangerous game of manipulation and survival. Alongside him is the ambitious young actress Nina Land (Gemma Arterton), who is determined to rise in the theatre world—by any means necessary. Meanwhile, Erskine's new employer at the ***Daily Chronicle***, Viscount David Brooke (Mark Strong), seeks to shake up the establishment, leading to a clash of egos and agendas that threatens to unravel dark secrets.

The project underwent several early cast changes before it started filming. Originally, Colin Firth was set for the lead, but he dropped out due to scheduling conflicts and Ian McKellen took on the role of Erskine. Other changes, including the departure of Simon Russell Beale, who was to play David Brooke, and Paapa Essiedu, who was originally cast as Tom Turner, were also the result of creative delays, shifting production schedules and other commitments. They were respectively replaced by the aforementioned Mark Strong and rising star, Alfred Enoch, most recently seen in **Miss Austen** on the BBC.

The Critic was filmed in studios and locations in London, Buckinghamshire and at the Theatre Royal in Windsor. London-based director, Anand Tucker, is better known as a producer of films such as **The Girl with the Pearl Earring** (2003) and **The Railway Man** (2013), but he has a knack for character-driven drama, which serves this film's tense narrative well. Screenwriter Patrick Marber, originally a comedy writer and performer, is best known for his play **Closer**, which he later adapted into a 2004 film starring Julia Roberts and Jude Law, and for the film **Notes on a Scandal,** with Cate Blanchett and Judi Dench. Marber was approached to adapt Quinn's ***Curtain Call*** due to his sharp wit and deep understanding of the theatre world. He changed the film's title from ***Curtain Call*** to **The Critic** to better reflect its central conflict—power struggles within the world of arts criticism.

The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in 2023, where it was praised for its performances—particularly McKellen's—though, ironically, some critics felt the film struggled to fully balance its thriller elements with its more introspective drama. Its performance at the box reflected its status as a niche period piece rather than a mainstream hit, but while **The Critic** may not offer us a conventional hero to root for—most characters operate in shades of murky grey—it instead provides a fascinating look at the cutthroat world of theatre and journalism. It's a film of great wit, rich period detail and a stellar British cast, even without its original actors, so expect an evening of dark intrigue, sharp dialogue and just a touch of theatrical decadence!

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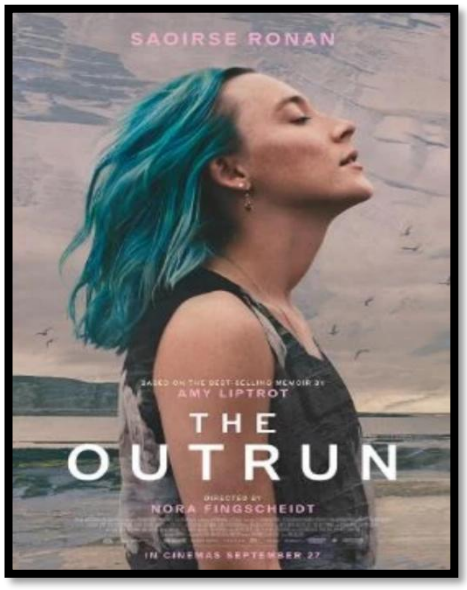
Friday, 2nd May 2025

In Studio 609 at 7.30pm

Touch

Iceland, UK, Japan, 2024, 15, 2 hr 1 min
Dir: Baltasar Kormákur
Drama, Romance
In English, Japanese and Icelandic (with subtitles)

A romantic and thrilling story that spans several decades and continents, **Touch** follows one man's emotional journey to find his first love, who disappeared 50 years ago, before his time runs out.



Wednesday, 21st May 2025

In Studio 609 at 7.30pm

The Outrun

Germany/UK, 2024, 15, 1 hr 58 mins
Dir: Nora Fingscheidt
Drama

After living life on the edge in London, Rona attempts to come to terms with her troubled past. Hoping to heal, she returns to the wild beauty of Scotland's Orkney Islands where she grew up.

Latest Audience Film Ratings

