

Film Notes - Season 2025-26

11th December 2025

The Marching Band (En Fanfare)

Cert 15 | 1h 43m

Country: France, 2024

Director: Emmanuel Courcol

Stars: Benjamin Lavernhe, Pierre Lottin, Sarah Suco

Language: French (English subtitles)



Synopsis

Acclaimed conductor Thibaut, diagnosed with leukaemia, discovers he was adopted and seeks a bone marrow donor. His search leads him to Jimmy, a long-lost brother who works in a factory cafeteria and plays trombone in a small-town marching band. Their reunion unfolds against the backdrop of industrial decline, as the brothers navigate class divides, family secrets, and the healing power of music. What begins as a medical necessity evolves into a fraternal journey of reconciliation and shared passion.

Context and Craft

Director Emmanuel Courcol, known for *Ceasefire* (2016) and *The Big Hit* (2020), continues his exploration of social realism and human connection. *The Marching Band* blends comedy-drama with musical elements, using the metaphor of ensemble performance to highlight themes of solidarity and resilience. Courcol's restrained direction and Maxence Lemonnier's cinematography emphasize contrasts between the grandeur of orchestral halls and the intimacy of small-town life. The film reflects contemporary French anxieties about industrial closures, while celebrating music as a universal language bridging social divides.

Critical Reception

Premiered at Cannes 2024, *The Marching Band* was praised for its warmth and accessibility:

- *Variety*: "A heartfelt fraternal drama... music as reconciliation across class and circumstance."
- *The Hollywood Reporter*: "Engaging blend of social realism and musical metaphor... Courcol's most audience-friendly work yet."
- *Film Review Daily*: "Thoroughly engaging... designed for wide popular appeal, balancing sentiment with sharp observation".
- *The Observer*: "lived-in performances from an engaging cast of French character actors... a closing sequence so shamelessly and cheerfully manipulative that any resistance is entirely useless. Bring a family pack of tissues".

Conclusion

Emmanuel Courcol's *The Marching Band* is both a family drama and a social parable. Through the story of two estranged brothers united by music, the film critiques economic precarity while affirming the possibility of connection across divides. Its blend of humour, tenderness, and musical energy makes it a resonant meditation on fraternity, resilience, and the redemptive power of art.