

Film Notes: Season 2025–26

23rd April 2026

Nouvelle Vague

Cert 12A | 1h 46m

Country: France, United States (2025)

Director: Richard Linklater

Stars: Guillaume Marbeck, Zoey Deutch, Aubry Dullin

Language: Primarily French (with English subtitles)



Synopsis

Paris, summer 1959. A young Jean-Luc Godard sets out to shoot *À bout de souffle* (*Breathless*), a production that looks chaotic, improvised, and under-funded, but is driven by a fierce, almost mischievous conviction that cinema can be made differently. Following the shoot day by day, the film tracks the spark (and frictions) between Godard, his collaborators, and his stars Jean Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo, capturing the moment just before a movie (and a movement) rewired film history.

Context and Craft

Linklater approaches *Nouvelle Vague* as a ‘making-of’ film that doubles as a love letter to the French New Wave, to a particular Parisian film culture, and to the DIY audacity of first features. Cannes’ own write-up frames it as a cinephile’s declaration of love that recreates the period’s methods and atmosphere. Linklater’s choices reinforce the “time-capsule” feel: the deliberate imitation of mid-century film grammar and texture; a lovingly detailed re-staging of the *Breathless* shoot rather than a modern re-interpretation. At the same time, the film’s big idea is its tension: it honours Godard’s radicalism, but does so through a smoother, more classical flow, making the film feel warm, witty, and accessible even when it’s depicting a famously disruptive artist.

Critical Reception

- “A stylish, reverent homage that’s slick and cinephile-forward-admiring”. — *The Guardian*
- “Joyful tribute energy, dense with period knowledge and affection for the New Wave’s free spirits”. — *BFI Sight and Sound*
- ”A second look notes the ensemble’s charm... unmistakably a Linklater film even while saluting Godard.” — *BFI Sight and Sound*
- “An American director making a French-language, black-and-white film about a French cinematic “holy text,” and the care taken to recreate the original shoot.” — *Reuters / AP*

Conclusion

Nouvelle Vague is best enjoyed as a brisk, affectionate reenactment of a creative explosion: less a psychological portrait than a buoyant reconstruction of how *Breathless* got made. Full of detail, in-jokes, and the romantic excitement of artists inventing new rules on the fly. Even when it softens Godard’s jagged edge, it offers a lively route back into the moment when cinema decided it could start again from scratch.