



FILM: **LA LA LAND**

FDG RATING: 4.2

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Damien Chazelle: *Director*  
Ryan Gosling: *actor, Sebastian*  
Emma Stone: *actress, Mia*

DATE: January 22, 2017

### DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **LA LA LAND (musical)**

It wasn't just our film discussion participants who had a love versus hate relationship with the musical *La La Land*. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* published both sides of the story, bursting the Oscar bubble of 14 nominations and a record 7 wins at the Golden Globes. Maybe it was just that during these turbulent times with so many films about dysfunctional relationships or violence and destruction at a galactic scale, we welcomed an escape to *La La Land* and opened our hearts, eyes, and ears, to a movie filled with nostalgic, colorful singing, dancing, and the idea of pursuing our dreams.

The story follows aspiring actress, Mia (Emma Stone) and jazz pianist, Sebastian, (Ryan Gosling) as they pursue their dreams in *La La Land*, an endearing name for Los Angeles, referring to L.A.'s movie and artistic community, characterized by frivolous, self-absorption and blissful lack of touch with reality. It is a fitting title for a film filled with dreamy, colorful dance routines (mimicking many of our favorite musicals dating back to the 1930s) and sprinkled with vignettes that pay homage to those memorable movies.

Mia and Sebastian's paths first cross in a traffic jam on the LA freeway launching the opening dance number that threw some of our discussion group critics into a serious state of disappointment. For one outspoken reviewer, dancing on the freeway was stupid and pretentious. A few others in our group nodded in agreement. These critics had a hard time listening to the unpolished voices of the two main characters and criticized the dance routines that lacked the suavity of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers or Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds (*Singing in the Rain*).

But the rest of us suspended reality and soaked in the wistfulness of the city of stars. We attributed the lack of polished singing and dancing to the fact that these are "wannabes" who are still in the process of grooming their talents. After a shaky beginning to their relationship as they mock each other's dreams, Mia and Sebastian realize a close connection edging toward love. But their relationship is second fiddle to their ambition, a theme that moves this musical into modern day. They do live happily ever after, but not as a couple. Told in a dreamy style, the story is a gentle view of harsh reality. Artists often sacrifice personal relationships to pursue their art. What "could have been" is seen in a touching, dreamy, photo montage-video at the end, that envisions they had stayed a couple and raised a family, offering a unique twist that was very poignant.

Touching on the jazz scene, Sebastian refuses to sell out. He stays true to the music he wants to play rather than concede to the music that people want to hear.

Magical, uplifting, and at the same time very human. One reviewer who dozed off in disappointment the first time, changed her tune after giving the film a second chance. She "truly loved it" saying the film was fresh, fun, contemporary, delightful. *La La Land* is a "hang loose" new style of musical that probably won't pass the test of time but it is the entertaining escape that many of us need at exactly this time.

A few solo scores of 2 and 2.5 were over-tempered by a loud chorus of 3s, 4s, and many 5s making this musical a hit in our film discussion group with a stellar 4.2 (scale of 1-5, 5 is the best).

*Footnote: La La Land tied "Titanic" (1998) and "All About Eve" (1950) for the most Oscar nominations.*

Did you catch all the [references](#) to our favorite musicals?



See you at the movies!

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[Film Discussion Group](#) (FDG) organizer