

# How to Watch a Foreign Film Together

By James Egan

"I kinda liked *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, but they didn't have enough duck hunting in it."

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"I think all that running around in the *Lord of the Rings* in order to destroy a perfectly good wedding band sends a mixed signal to today's youth."

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"I saw *The King's Speech*, but even after that English dude got his lips on right, I could tell he didn't speak any better than Mitch McConnell."



Alas, these types of comments are heard all too often when someone and his/her GEFN are discussing the types of films that they might possibly enjoy together. The problem of selection can be made more difficult if one wants to branch out and try a foreign film that some big-city reviewer has recommended. It so happens that *Four Weddings* is a popular British film, but many foreign films contain subtitles, sometimes because the director was inconsiderate about not making the film using English-speaking actors classically trained in daytime TV dramas.

To make your foreign film viewing experience more enjoyable with your GEFN, I suggest testing the foreign film waters with an excellent film that has been specially edited for the novice, or infrequent subtitle reader. I've described some simple procedures for getting ready for the big show, and what to do during the actual viewing.

Now for the suggested film: *Girl on the Bridge - the Optician's Cut* - a drama/romance-comedy.

OK, so who's in it? Vanessa Paradis ("Pahr-ah-dee") - she lives with Johnny Depp in France, so already she has "vineyard cred," and Daniel Autueil - the "Tom Hanks of France" - actually, the better one.

**The basic story.** A young woman (Vanessa), who believes she has no luck and intends to commit suicide from a Paris bridge, is rescued by an aging knife throwing performer (Daniel), who needs a target to narrowly miss, but if he doesn't, no big thing because she was going to jump off a bridge anyway. This seems like a good deal to the woman, so they travel around, she has sex with practically everyone she bumps into, and he misses her - with his knives. They have good luck making money together, split up when she thinks she's going to get married, but, apart, their luck is bad. Both realize they need each other and eventually they find each other just as they had started out - on a bridge, only this time it's a bridge in Istanbul with really ugly views. Luckily, this panoramic eyesore is partially blocked by a huge eye chart held by a peg-legged sailor, and a small one-eyed dog.

**Preparation.** Before you start the DVD, or streaming from NetFlix, you should be aware of certain aspects of French (or European) films. One of the first things you will notice is the absence of very explicit sex scenes, car chases, gunfights, and explosions. These sequences are known as "Le Filler," and since the last three don't happen in real life, they are usually omitted from French films so the story can get to the talking, of which most French films contain plenty. Besides, everything costs a lot in France, and gunfights and \$8-a-gallon car chases are expensive. Talk is just cheaper, and it appeals to many women, who also believe, for some reason, that the "thrill of the chase" should include jewelry not automatic weapons fire.

Our film, however, does contain knife throwing, because that's what Daniel's character does for a living. That's one of the cool things about Europe. They still have some "old-timey" jobs that just can't be computerized. Yet.

**The viewing.** In addition to the usual FBI warnings about showing the film at smelly places like oil rigs, instead of just your home, which hopefully isn't that smelly, nor an oil rig, a huge eye chart is presented at the start of the film. This gives you both an opportunity to find your glasses, or put in your contacts. Mr. OverVoice will ask you in 20 languages to read the third line from the bottom; that's the one containing the letters N A S C A R & Q V C. If either of you can't see that line, or even the chart, take a time-out and head over to Walmart or Lenscrafters.

All set? Let's get into the film. You both will notice that during the brief sex scenes, the view is blocked by smaller eye charts. (There is one scene where Vanessa's character has sex with a contortionist, but it's so confusing that the eye chart blocker has been omitted.)

Since sex scenes tend to focus the viewer's attention, these charts offer an opportunity to test for possible "ocular shock and awe," known in professional terms as "Indiana bug-eye." Also, Vanessa's character will occasionally look at the viewer and motion to come forward. She will then blow gently in an eye. If you feel any pressure, anywhere, we can probably rule out ED, but it may still be a sign of temporary "virtual glaucoma."

If your GEFN is a guy, and during the on-screen sex scenes he tries to peek around the eye chart in order to see the naughty bits, he may have third-dimension and other space-time continuum problems. These should be discussed with a reputable physicist as soon as the film is over.

**The slo-mo problem.** Nothing may be quite as embarrassing as being out of sync with each other when it comes to the ability to actually read the subtitles. Are you, or the GEFN, mouthing the words, or running a popcorn-battered finger below the subtitles? If one of you is still trying to read the opening dialog as the film ends, not only will there be a problem discussing the film afterwards, but someone will likely appear to be "not fully tarded." That may have long-term implications, particularly if you have been thinking of green-lighting the GEFN for a software/hardware upgrade (read: license/ring, or Assassin's Creed/Xbox). There may also be an affect on your social life. For example: "... couldn't make the party because (s)he's at home reading the water bill."

**Wrap-up.** As you will probably observe, besides the opportunity to have a rewarding viewing experience, you may learn something about each other while watching a foreign film. Next time - hopefully, there will be a next time - try the standard "groinal" version of the film.

That's about it. In the next article in this series, "How to Watch a Thick Flick," I'll discuss how to view a typical manly film in which dialog, logical story line, and civil behavior are irrelevant.