



Ambassador's Activities

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Speech by *HE Bernard Emié*,
French Ambassador to the UK

Gala evening – London's Favourite French Film

Ciné Lumière, 21 September 2011

Dear friends,

I'm very pleased to be presiding over the award ceremony for London's Favourite French Film 2011, organized by "France in London" – a remarkable website for everything French in London!

French cinema is in good shape.

With 206 million tickets sold, 2010 beat the box office record in France – a record which had stood for 43 years. Each year we produce more than 200 feature films, including many co-productions with film-makers from the widest range of countries. And while there are still too few Franco-British co-productions, very fine films like Stephen Frears' "Chéri" and Ken Loach's "Looking for Eric" show how fruitful our *entente cordiale* can be in the world of cinema.

In the UK, too, French cinema is in good shape.

It occupies a special place, and the British public are passionate about it. Thanks to the British distributors – to whom I'd like to pay a warm tribute, because without them our films wouldn't see the light of day here – film buffs can enjoy a very broad choice of French films, especially drama; animation hasn't been outdone in recent months, with Sylvain Chomet's "L'illusionniste" and Luc Besson's "Arthur"; and exceptional documentaries have been released, including Nicolas Philibert's "Nénette", about the orang-utan in the Jardin des Plantes, and "Benda Bililli", about those disabled musicians in Kinshasa who laugh in the face of adversity.

This year, too, the 5,500 web-surfers (double last year's number) who voted on the "France in London" website had a choice of 34 French films screened in British cinemas over the year. Alain Resnais' "Les Herbes folles", Olivier Assayas' "Carlos", Guillaume Canet's "Little White Lies/Les petits mouchoirs", Mathieu Amalric's "On Tour", Joann Sfar's "Gainsbourg", and Xavier Beauvois' "Of Gods and Men" attracted audiences of nearly a million to cinemas throughout the country, from London to Edinburgh and Brighton to Manchester.

French cinema also occupies a prime position within the programme of the London Film Festival, which kicks off next month with some 30 previously unreleased films, including the long-awaited "The Artist", starring Jean Dujardin. Moreover, Ciné Lumière will be one of the festival's 10 cinemas.

Then, in November, the 19th French Film Festival begins, touring some 10 towns and cities up and down the country and providing a chance to discover many unreleased films. Obviously, the London leg of the tour will take place within these walls, at Ciné Lumière. Daniel Auteuil will do us the honour of joining us in person to introduce his first film as director, "La Fille du puisatier", on 11 November.

As you can see, there are many opportunities to see our films here at the cinema. The Cinemoi television channel, our partner this evening, enables us – brilliantly – to keep watching French films on the small screen, too, and TV5 Monde offers you several French films every week.

I can't finish without thanking Patricia Connel and her team at "France in London", who work tirelessly to promote our films in the UK.

Finally, a question for our friends the distributors, who have honoured us with their presence here tonight. The 300,000 or so French people living in the greater London are a tremendous potential audience and source of box-office takings; how can we ensure films come out here earlier, shortly after their release in France? I'm sure the team at the *Institut français* would give them the best possible welcome. As you know, this cinema belongs to you. It's open to every genre and every audience.

We're gathered this evening to showcase the Favourite French Film of the year. If we had to say which is the best cinema in town, there's no need to look very far: it's here of course, Ciné Lumière!

Thank you.