

For the first time, in 2012, *Vertigo*, made in 1958, was voted 'the greatest film ever made' by *Sight and Sound* magazine. Why should the film be so highly regarded today?



Level 4

- An excellent, detailed knowledge and understanding of *Vertigo*.
- An ability to recognise aspects of the film that give it high critical status
- An ability to answer the question directly which includes a strong focus on ‘today’ – on the ways in which the film strikes a contemporary audience as a film of distinction.
- (The very best candidates) ... will be distinguished by the sophistication of their argument and the range of arguments presented.



High Critical Status?

Contemporary reviews criticise the film's 'dottiness' and implausibility.

The Manchester Guardian called it, 'slow and wordy'.

What has changed?



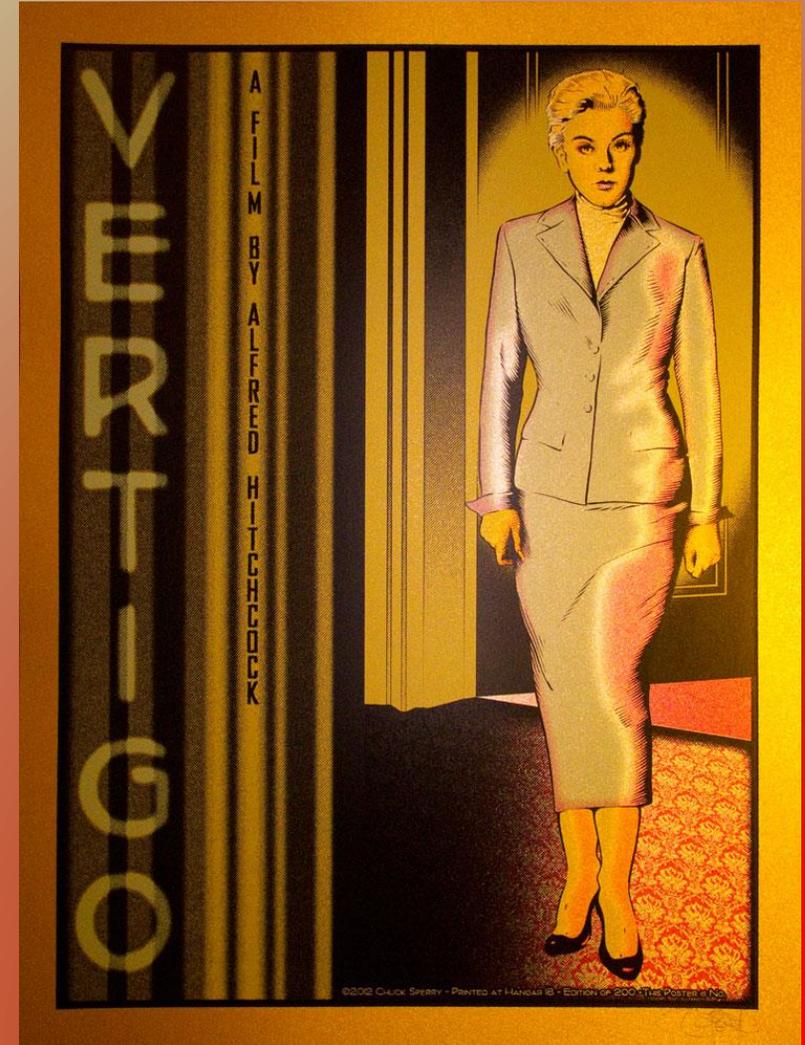
Now?

In 2015, Hitchcock is the current favourite to be the new face of the £20.00 note.



James Gray, director We Own the Night, The Immigrant in [2013 interview](#)

“When I first saw Vertigo I said “what the f is this movie, Jimmy Stewart’s driving around in a car for an hour, this is boring” and then I had to see it again the next day. And again and again and I couldn’t stop. I was obsessed. I only came to understand Vertigo completely many viewings in, and one of the things that became so beautiful about Vertigo was how much it validated Kim Novak’s Madeleine...”***



...The best moment in the history of cinema is when she comes out of the bathroom in Vertigo and fulfills his fetish. It's so genius cause it validates his notion of her perfection but it's her tragedy more than his. The whole thing is completely beautiful because both characters have their moment. How could I tweet this?"

Is it that the film needs close analysis or repeated viewings?

What was your initial reaction compared to now?



Consider

- Cinematic technique (cinematography, sound, performance, editing, colour, mise-en-scene)
- Manipulation of audience expectation
- The key themes (circularity, etc)
- The film's structure

How much of this did you initially notice?



Critical readings of the films

How have critical readings of the film changed the way you evaluate it?



You could consider that we consider it 'great' because so many others have spent the last 67 years telling us it is!

Go ahead, analyses a scene

What key scenes can I cover?

Some of many examples:

- Scottie first sees Madeleine
- Scottie and Midge discuss the accident
- Scottie first sees Madeleine
- Scottie follows Madeleine from her home to the hotel
- Scottie's dream
- Judy's flashback
- 'Madeleine's resurrection and the 360° kiss



An ability to answer the question directly which includes a strong focus on 'today' – on the ways in which the film strikes a contemporary audience as a film of distinction.



- Consider modern attitudes – including gender issues and psychoanalysis, as well as considerations of spectatorship
- Ideally, name your critics

Overall...



- Consider the film's ambiguities and openness to different interpretations as strengths.
- Like Roland Barthes suggested, modern academia is far more interested in asking interesting questions than discovering certainties.
- The 21st century approach to gender and sexual identity is far more flexible and complicated than imagined in the mid 20th century.

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