

# Mood Indigo (2013)

**Original title: "L'écume des jours"**

Not Rated. Running time: 1 hour 34 min. Our content ratings:  
Violence 2; Language 1; Sex/Nudity 5.

Our rating: (0-5): 3

*The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in  
Jerusalem.*

*Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher,*

*vanity of vanities! All is vanity.  
What do people gain from all the toil  
at which they toil under the sun?*

*A generation goes, and a generation comes,  
but the earth remains forever...*

*For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same;  
as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same  
breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals; for  
all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust,  
and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the human  
spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to  
the earth? So I saw that there is nothing better than that  
all should enjoy their work, for that is their lot; who can  
bring them to see what will be after them?*

*Ecclesiastes 1:1-4; 3:19-22*

Director Michel Gondry's bizarre fairy tale-like romance was adapted from Boris Vian's 1947 novel *Froth on the Daydream*. Much of this fantasy, with its whimsical special effects, looks like it could have been designed and directed by

Salvador Dali in cooperation with Mark Chagall.

The wealthy bachelor Colin (Duris) lives in a Parisian apartment where he shows off his invention, the pianocktail, a piano that mixes a cocktail as he strike the keys. "You get a nostalgic taste from minor chords," he observes. He devours the exotic dishes prepared by his devoted black chef Nicolas (Omar Sy). His doorbell is like a hyperactive mechanical cockroach crawling around the walls that needs to be crushed to get it to stop. Colin and his best friend Chick (Gad Elmaleh) are followers of the philosopher Jean-Sol Partre, an obvious take off on the Existentialist Jean Paul Sartre.

When Chick falls in love, Colin insists that he too must fall in love, which he does at a party while Duke Ellington's song "Chloe" is playing. This happens to be the name of his lover, played by Audrey Tautou. Their courtship is an ardent one, filled with happiness, but then Chloe comes down with a strange illness—a water lily grows inside her lung. As she sinks into her illness, the bright pallet of the film begins to fade and a film or scum begins to spread around the apartment. The only hope for a cure is to keep an endless supply of flowers around her. The last part of the film, shot with all bright colors bleached out contrasts starkly with the gay, madcap first half. Few if any American filmmakers would make such a quick, stark transition from comedy to tragedy.

The crazy plot developments will remind some of the Theater of the Absurd which was spawned by Existentialism. Colin and Chloe ride around Paris on/in a cloud; as party goers dance to jazz music, their legs elongate like they were Plastic Man; a sour puss priest, decreeing that he will perform just one marriage rite that day, makes the lovers race in a small car against another couple; a repeated scene in which people sit at long desks typing (apparently the story we are seeing), and the typewriters move down the line of typists; and on and on.

I am not completely sure what the filmmaker is getting at, but

in so many ways he reminds me of the Book of Ecclesiastes and The Teacher's sobering outlook on life. Nothing earthly, not even the love between a man and a woman, lasts, so enjoy it while you can. A pretty heavy message for a film with such a whimsical style, but then the paintings of the Surrealists also dealt with themes far deeper than their whimsical style would lead a casual onlooker to believe.