

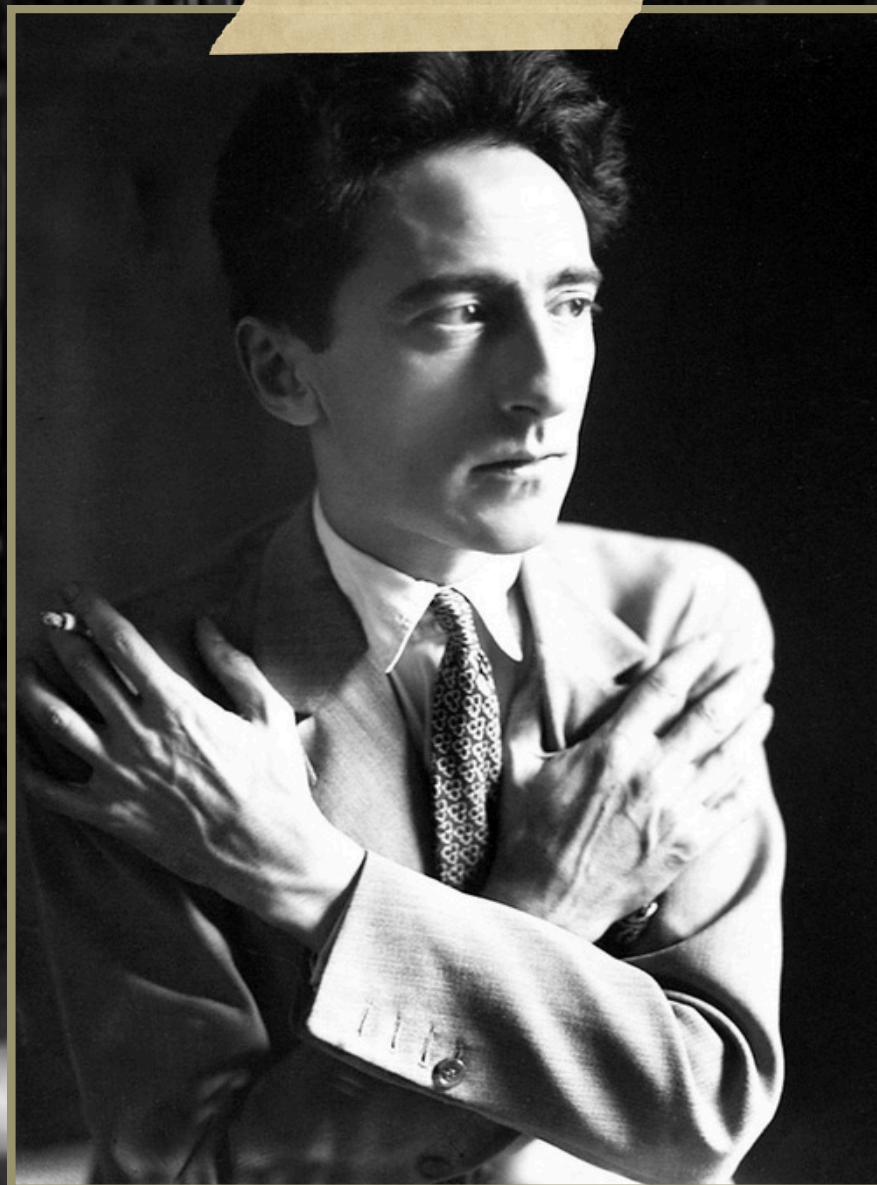


SATIE et COCTEAU

“...a re-creation of a memory of a memory of actual events.”

Rehearsal book: Producer's edit

A screenplay about two of the most influential avant-garde artists of the 20th century.



JEAN COCTEAU



ERIK SATIE

Why now?

We are living in absurd times. Reality is becoming indistinguishable from madness. So let us immerse ourselves in something both emotionally devastating, joyous, human yet surreal, and a defiant, unabashed celebration of art.

Erik Satie and Jean Cocteau are not necessarily household names, and yes, this could be considered a niche project, but, it is internationally niche. From universities to museums to the general art lover, all over the world, these are not unfamiliar names. They are studied and discovered anew with each generation and there is an opening for these two innovators to be celebrated. The 20th century and current art landscape, from film to music to fine art would be far less interesting without their influence.

But this film is not only about two artists, it's about two people, a director and an actor, navigating a script. It's about two lovers, battling through a liaison not built on love, but on need and ambition. It's about two people, two broken people, needing to be seen. And that is universal. Those underlying storylines, no matter the synopsis, are desires everyone can connect with.

Logline: New York. 1939.

Jean Cocteau enters the theatre for one final rehearsal.

Only one actor is called.

The play will never open.

The audience will never arrive.

The man being rehearsed has been dead for fifteen years.

By the end of the day, Cocteau intends to make peace with the ghost of Erik Satie, or destroy what's left of himself trying.

During an all-night rehearsal, Cocteau directs a young American actor through the life of Erik Satie. As the rehearsal progresses, the boundaries between performance, memory and confession collapse. The actor becomes Satie. Cocteau becomes his own unreliable witness. The rehearsal reveals itself not as preparation for a production, but as an elaborate act of exorcism.

Synopsis:

Satie et Cocteau

New York, 1939. Fifteen years after the death of composer Erik Satie, Jean Cocteau has written a new play called "Soyons Vulgaires" about the only artist he could never escape. Today is its final rehearsal.

As Cocteau guides a young American actor through the role of Satie, the rehearsal grows beyond performance into something far more dangerous. Scene by scene, biographical truth slips away and memory overtakes theatre. The actor begins to inhabit Satie's eccentric brilliance and uncompromising philosophies, while Cocteau, drifting through an opium haze, is forced to confront the friendship, the rivalry and the guilt that have haunted him since Satie's death. What begins as a rehearsal slowly reveals itself to be an act of exorcism.

Within an unfinished stage set, time and space become fluid. Cardboard cityscapes, shadow puppets, stacked grand pianos and fragments of Parisian cafés transform the stage into a surreal landscape where decades collapse into a single night. Episodes from Satie's extraordinary life are conjured not as historical reconstructions, but as Cocteau remembers, or, chooses to remember them. Every scene raises the question of whether memory preserves the truth or rewrites it.

Running beneath this theatrical illusion is another, more intimate drama. The relationship between Cocteau and the actor is quietly unraveling. Once rescued by the celebrated poet at the lowest point of his life, the actor has become both protégé and prisoner, caught in the same pattern of dependence that marked so many of Cocteau's relationships. As the rehearsal intensify, buried resentments, deception and betrayal surface, culminating in the revelation that the production has already lost its financial backing. The play they are rehearsing will never be performed.

...continued

Synopsis (cont):

Satie et Cocteau

Deprived of an audience, the rehearsal is no longer preparation for a production, but for Cocteau's final attempt to summon, and finally release the ghost of Erik Satie, a man whose influence shaped his artistic life and whose refusal to see him on his deathbed became an enduring wound.

Blending historical fact with theatrical invention, *Satie et Cocteau* explores the fragile boundaries between memory and myth, artistic creation and possession, performance and confession. It is a frenetic meditation on friendship, ambition, love, regret, and the stories artists tell themselves in order to survive.

Or, more simply, the reconstruction of a lost rehearsal from the rediscovered journal of an anonymous actor—an account whose authenticity remains delightfully uncertain. “...a re-creation of a memory of a memory of actual events.”

UK composer and renowned Satie scholar, Robert Orledge, described the original stage-play as:

“...a truly excellent piece of theatre which deals convincingly and imaginatively with one of the most fraught love-hate relationships in modern French art. It has real depth and excellent dramatic pacing and is a work of art in itself.”

INT. DRESSING ROOM OF THEATRE - DAY

Sleeping on a bench in the dressing room is ACTOR. Mid-thirties, disheveled, hung-over. He has a goatee/beard and he is wearing an undershirt and pants, unbuttoned. He wakes up, it's painful. He sits, takes in the space, his life. It's been better.



Rehearsal book margin note:

***No original manuscript of Cocteau's 'Soyons Vulgaires' has ever been discovered.**

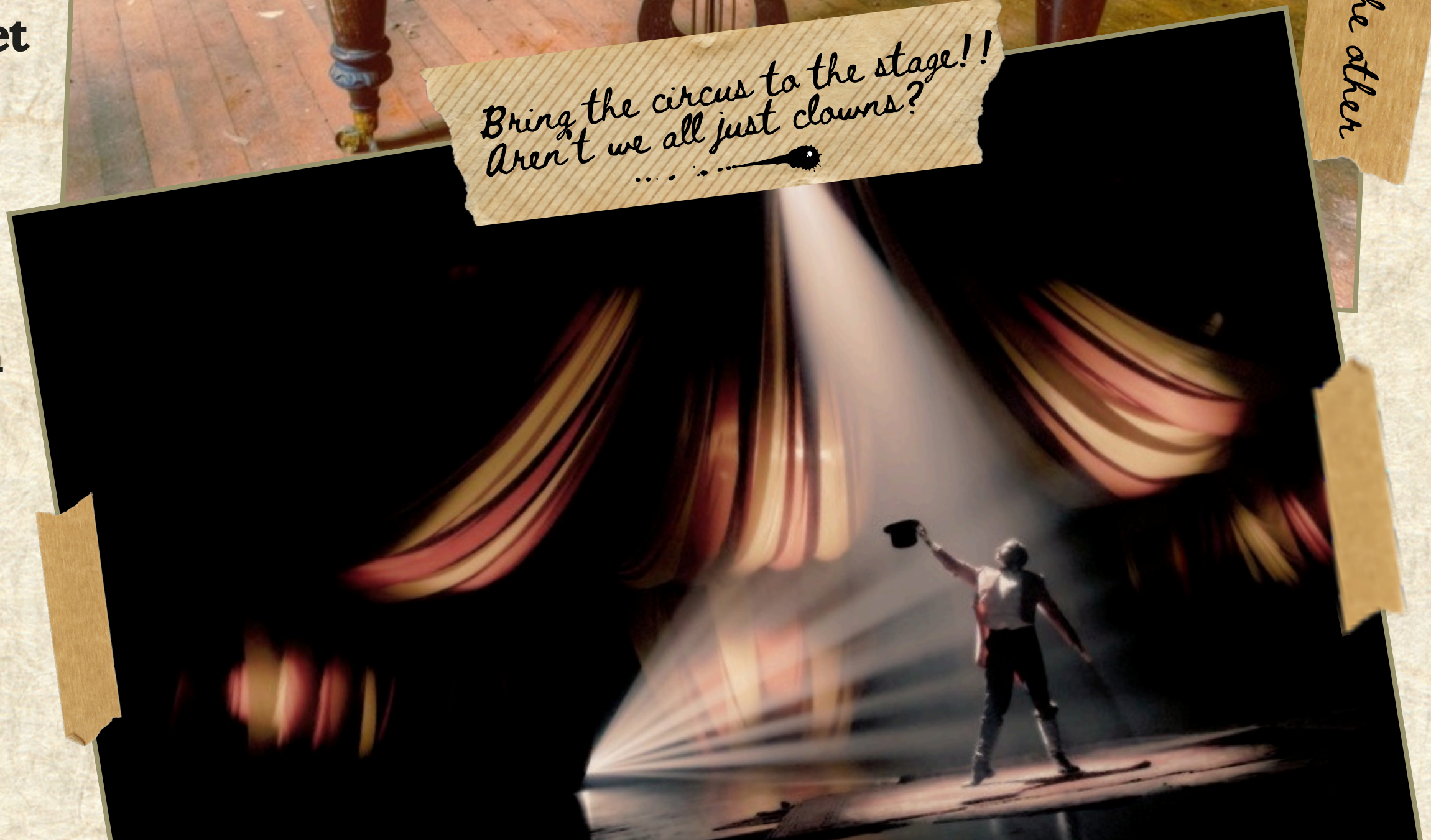
The events depicted in 'Satie et Cocteau' have been reconstructed from the rehearsal journal of the anonymous American actor, reportedly purchased for one dollar at a barn sale in Ohio in 1972.

Authentication remains... uncertain.



*Bring the circus to the stage!!
Aren't we all just clowns?*

Two pianos, one on top of the other



Parade - Les Ballet Russes. 1917
Erik Satie: Music
Jean Cocteau: Scenario
Pablo Picasso: Sets and Costumes
Léonide Massine: Choreography



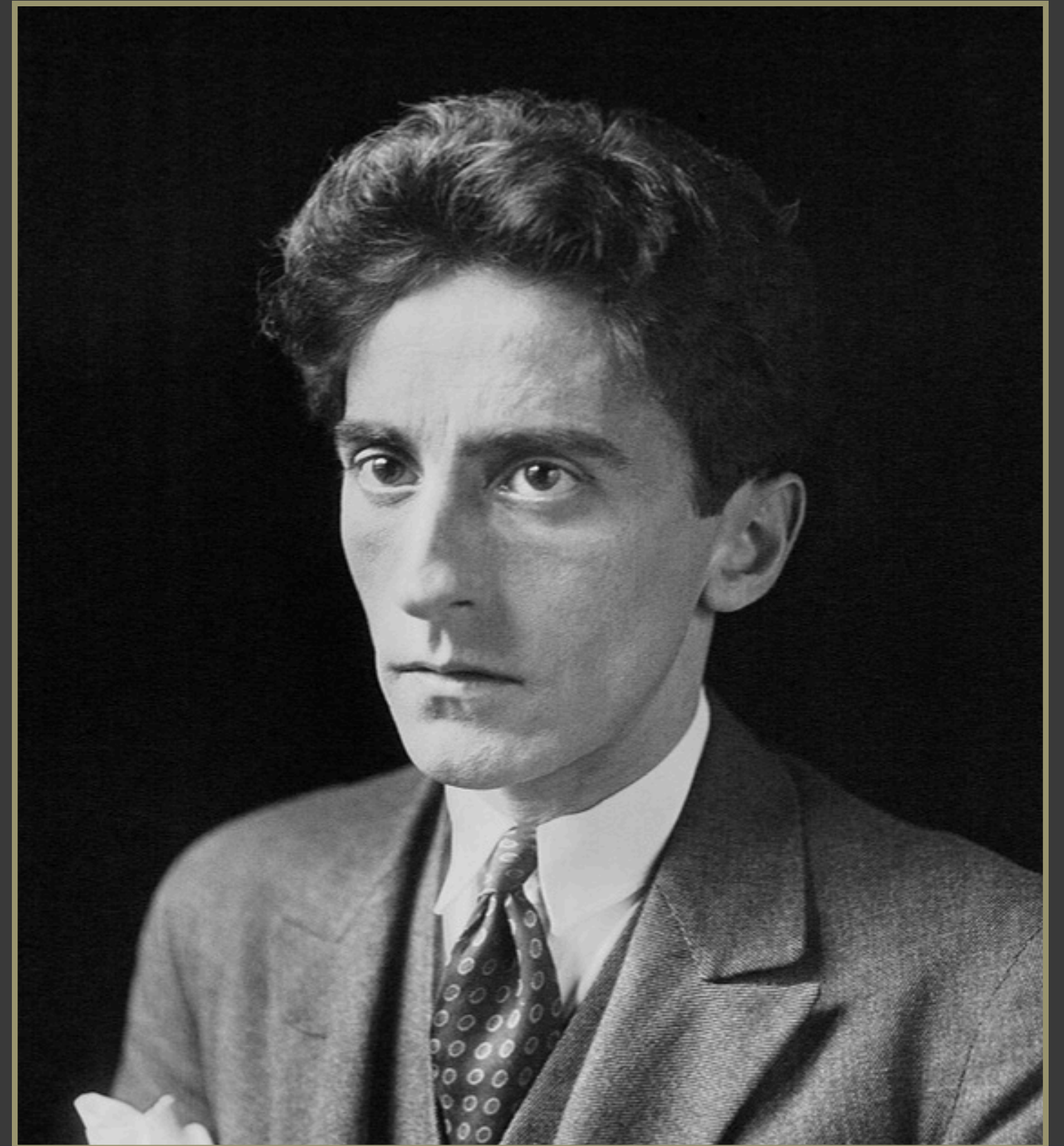
Jean Cocteau:

Cocteau, 50, thin, focused, arrogant and at times very dramatic.

A surrealist poet, novelist, painter, graphic artist, playwright and filmmaker. He knew everyone and everyone knew him. The opposite of Satie. An open book, literally, as he authored many books and articles about himself and art more generally. But he also knew how to use memory to suit his needs. At this point in his life he is struggling with his opium use and this film suggests that part of it is his obsession with exorcising Satie from his life.

Cocteau feels he is responsible for giving Satie's music new life and in return Cocteau 'borrowed' many of Satie's philosophies. But Satie never acknowledged Cocteau and at times treated him as a silly nuisance.

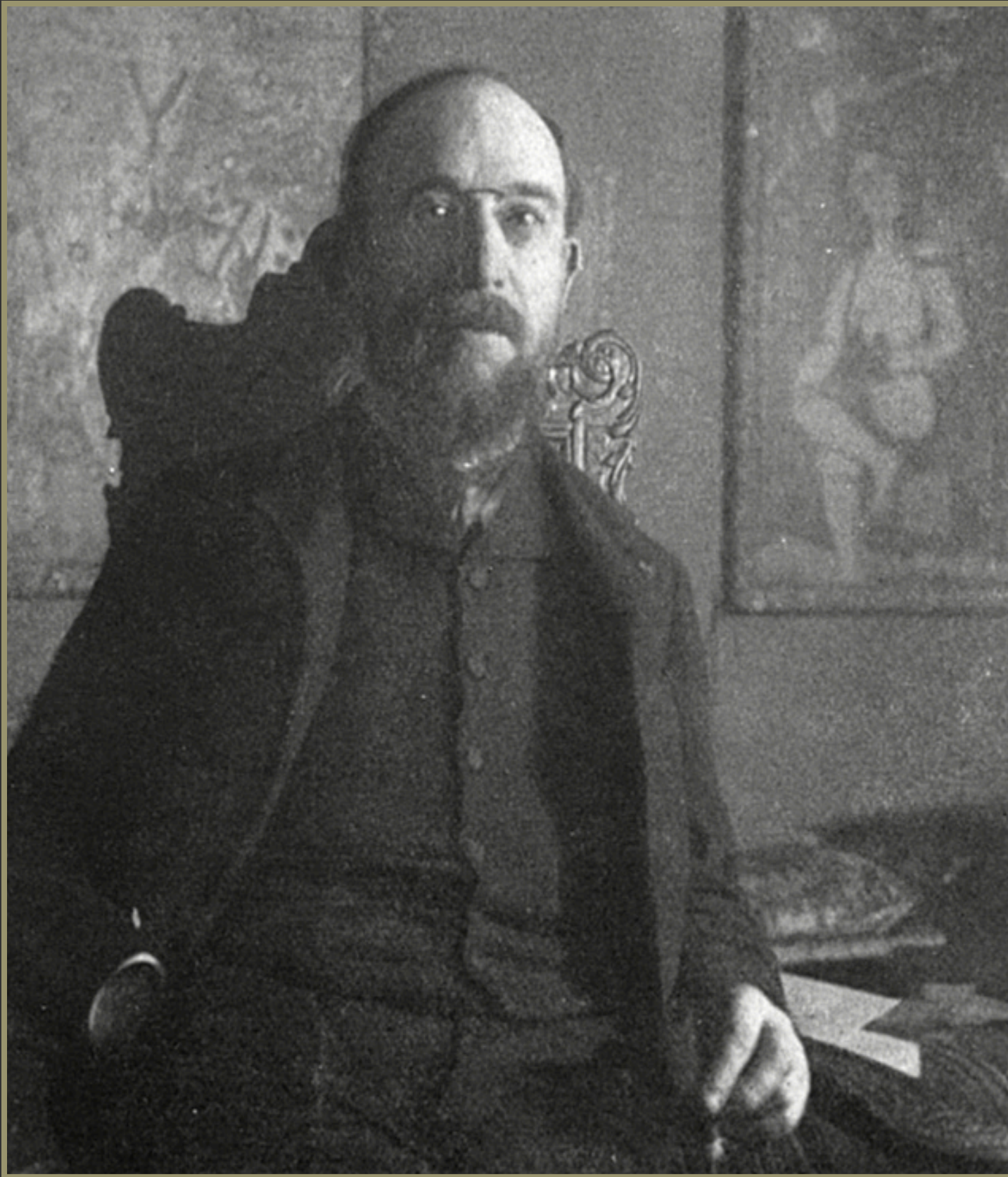
Cocteau is also desperate as he feels this is his final opportunity to rid himself of this weight. The consequences and damage done will not matter if he can achieve this invocation.



COCTEAU

Realistic? No, réalisme is... boring. It holds no truth. We, no, you are going to move beyond these simple things like Réalisme and Naturalisme and find poetry, find the, how would you say, essence of the man. Do you know what surréalisme means? I called Parade a Ballet Réaliste because Satie, Picasso and myself ignored the usual myths and presented real life, only not realistically. With lies. Do you understand the difference?





Actor/Satie:

Erik Satie was an odd man, a precursor to everything from Minimalism to Elevator music. He was a mystery to anyone he allowed to get close, and there were few. The composers Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky, the Dada Artist Man Ray, and painters from Toulouse Lautrec to Picasso, all crossed his path and all were changed because of it. He died at the age of 59.

Actor, mid 30's, imposing, passionate. Once a celebrated performer, but arrogance and alcohol took their toll, and he has fallen on hard times. 'Discovered' by Cocteau, He is now responsible for playing Satie in *Soyons Vulgaire*.

Shifting tastes, bad behaviour, rumours of his personal life and too much drink have made him desperate. He is talented, but is now reduced to begging for small parts. Until Cocteau showed up and offered him the role he so desperately needed. When they met, Actor was in awe of him and Cocteau knew it. The relationship got intimate quickly. But now, Actor has grown cautious of his older lover, and the relationship has been frayed by the stress of rehearsals and Cocteau's opium use.

ACTOR

I trusted you... I truly have nothing now. But I guess the great Cocteau is the only one who knows what loss is.

COCTEAU

I can't do anything without his presence, his smirk, his music, always in my head.

ACTOR

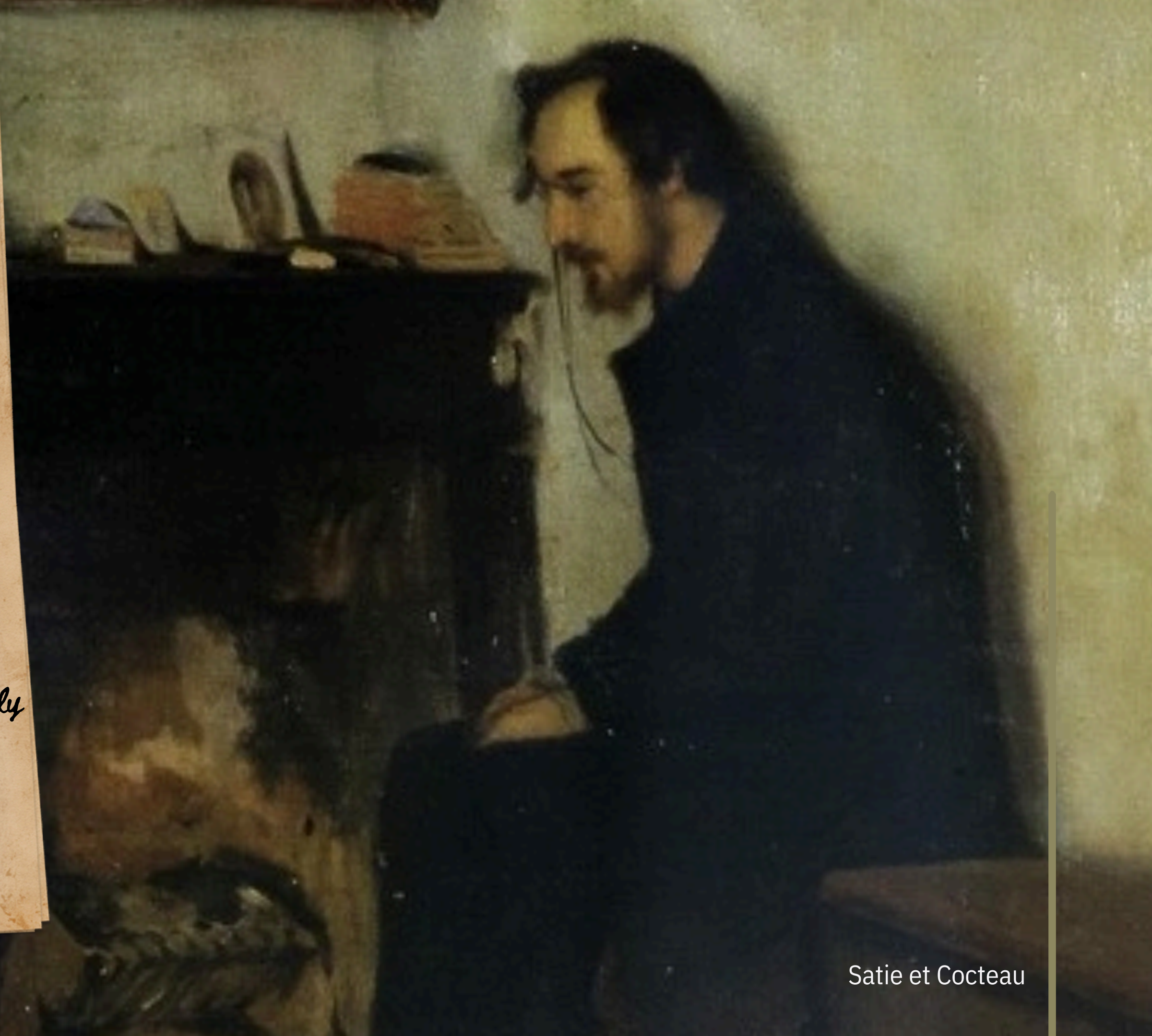
I believed the things you told me..

COCTEAU

He was everything to Paris, surrealism, Dada, cabaret, opera, ballet, theatre, film... He influenced us all but he never cared, he would simply move on to the next whim.

ACTOR

Can't you see what's right in front of you?!



Scenic Notes:

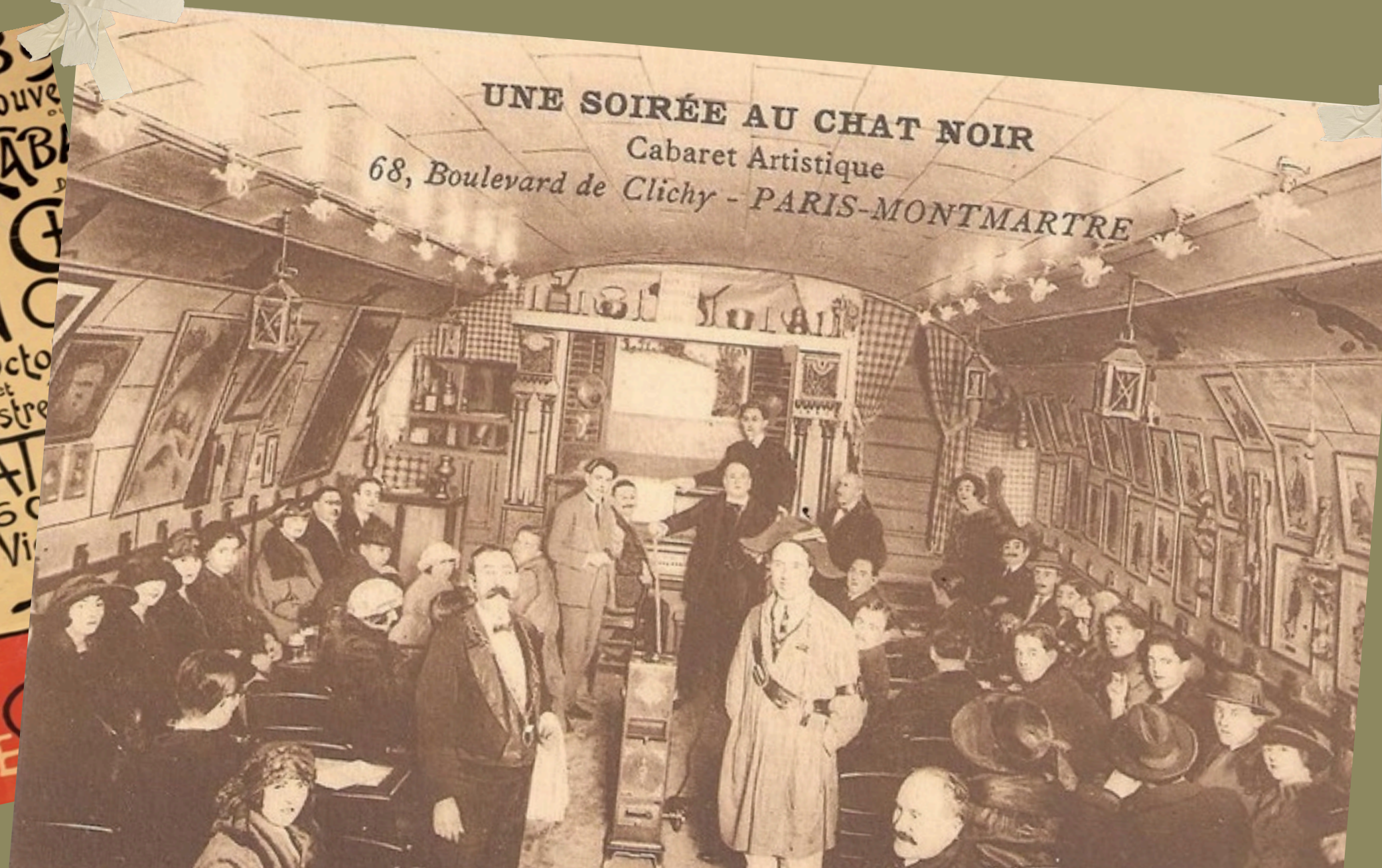
“We are in a theatre so it will look like we are in a theatre.”

This line in the film, delivered by Cocteau, sums up the aesthetic philosophy. Yes, the language of cinema is very much present, but the feel of live theatre is equally embedded; long takes mixed with close ups, live and recorded music and sound, kinetic hand-held shots and static framing, realism and surrealism co-existing freely just as Cocteau created with his own work.

Both film and theatre are not real, only the appearance of reality. So, anything could be real. The premise of the film is an impossibility, to bring someone back to life on a stage. It's a magic trick, smoke and mirrors. In this case, every scene will include a question; is this actually happening?

From vibrant colour, to black and white, to animation and shadow puppets, *Satie et Cocteau* could go anywhere the imagination requires.





INT. CHAT NOIR CABARET - NIGHT

Actor walks into the crowded, smoke filled club. Cocteau is already standing in the back, right next to the PIANO PLAYER. Actor moves through the crowd, heads right for him.

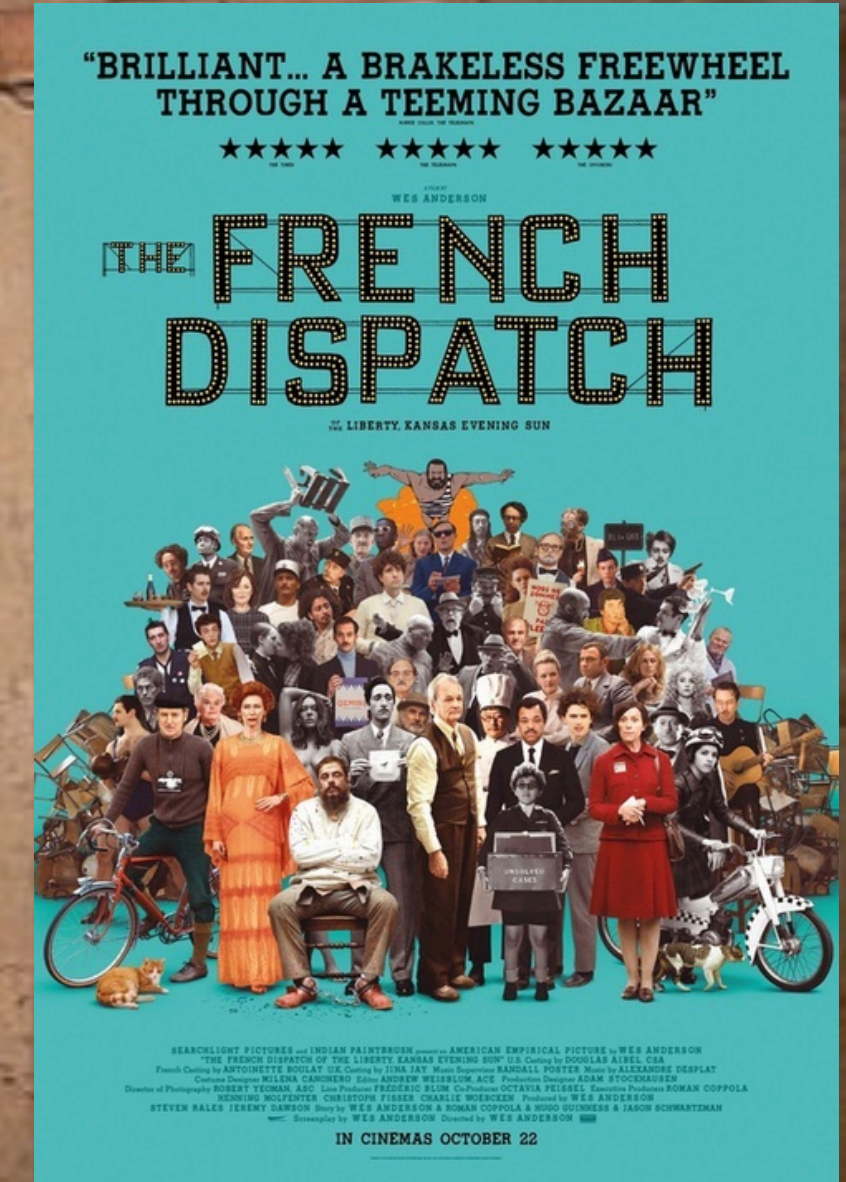
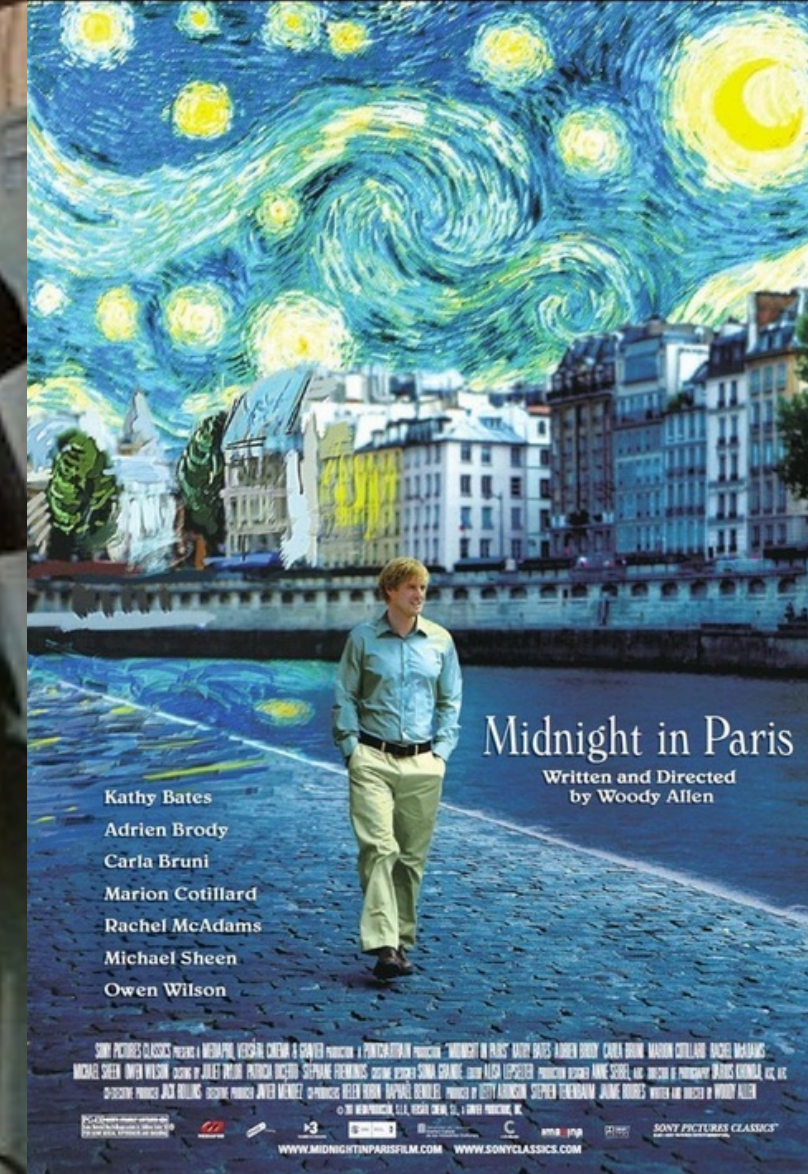
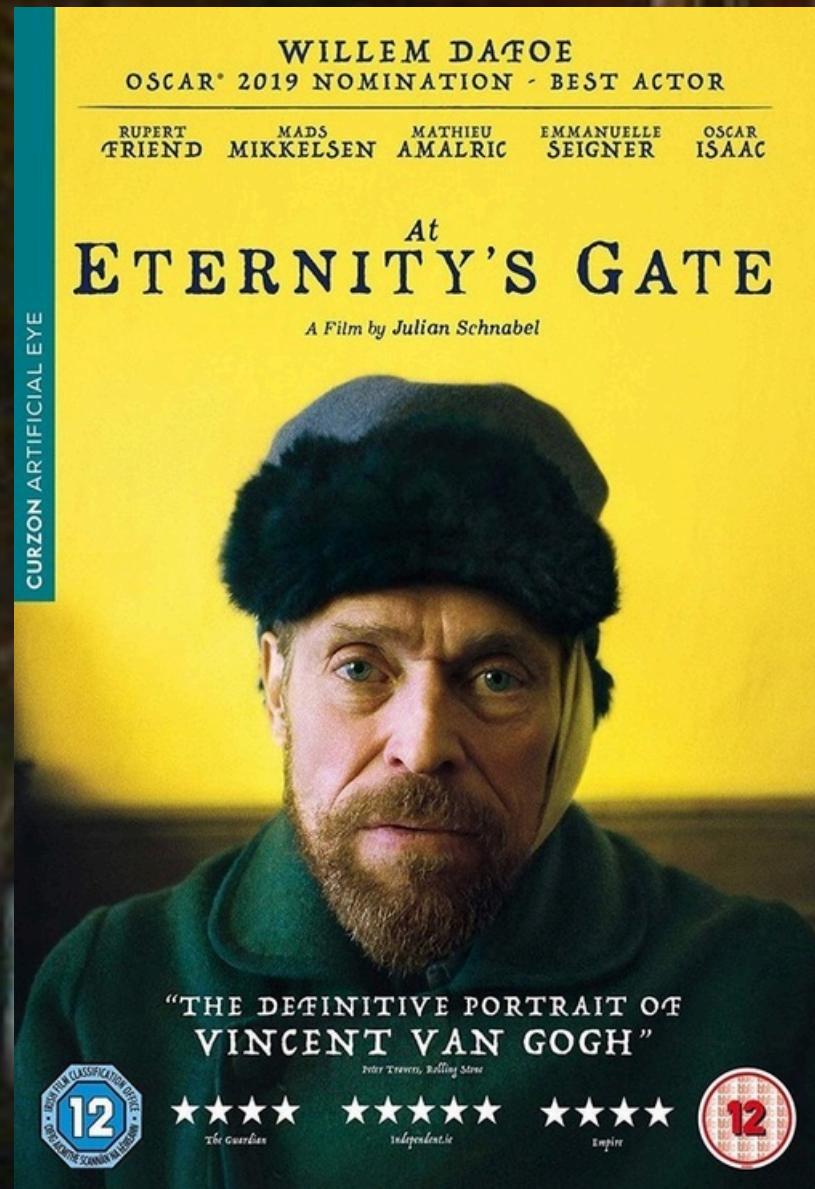
INT. LA NOUVELLE ATHENES - NIGHT

This café is a little more upscale but still filled with the same clientele of artists in almost identical places. Only the walls are changing.



Comparables:

:



Budget: 7 million
Box Office (world): 12 Million

Budget: 22 million
Box Office (world): 50 Million

Budget: 17 million
Box Office (world): 155 Million

Budget: 25 million
Box Office (world): 46 Million

Budget Considerations:

Satie et Cocteau

With only two main characters, two speaking parts, there is the potential to attract strong, adventurous, and well established actors. Both would need to be able to play piano and one should have an excellent French accent. The option to film an English and French version simultaneously is also exciting.

The contained location of the theatre, and only 5 or 6 other exterior locations, has the potential for a modest and very manageable shoot. The theatre space/stage also has the built in stylistic option to be transformed completely into those other spaces.

The many extras needed for some of the theatre and café scenes can be shot in a few days. Clothing and set decoration are the main challenges.

All the music is now public domain and would need to be re-recorded, but that also offers the opportunity of a unique soundtrack*.

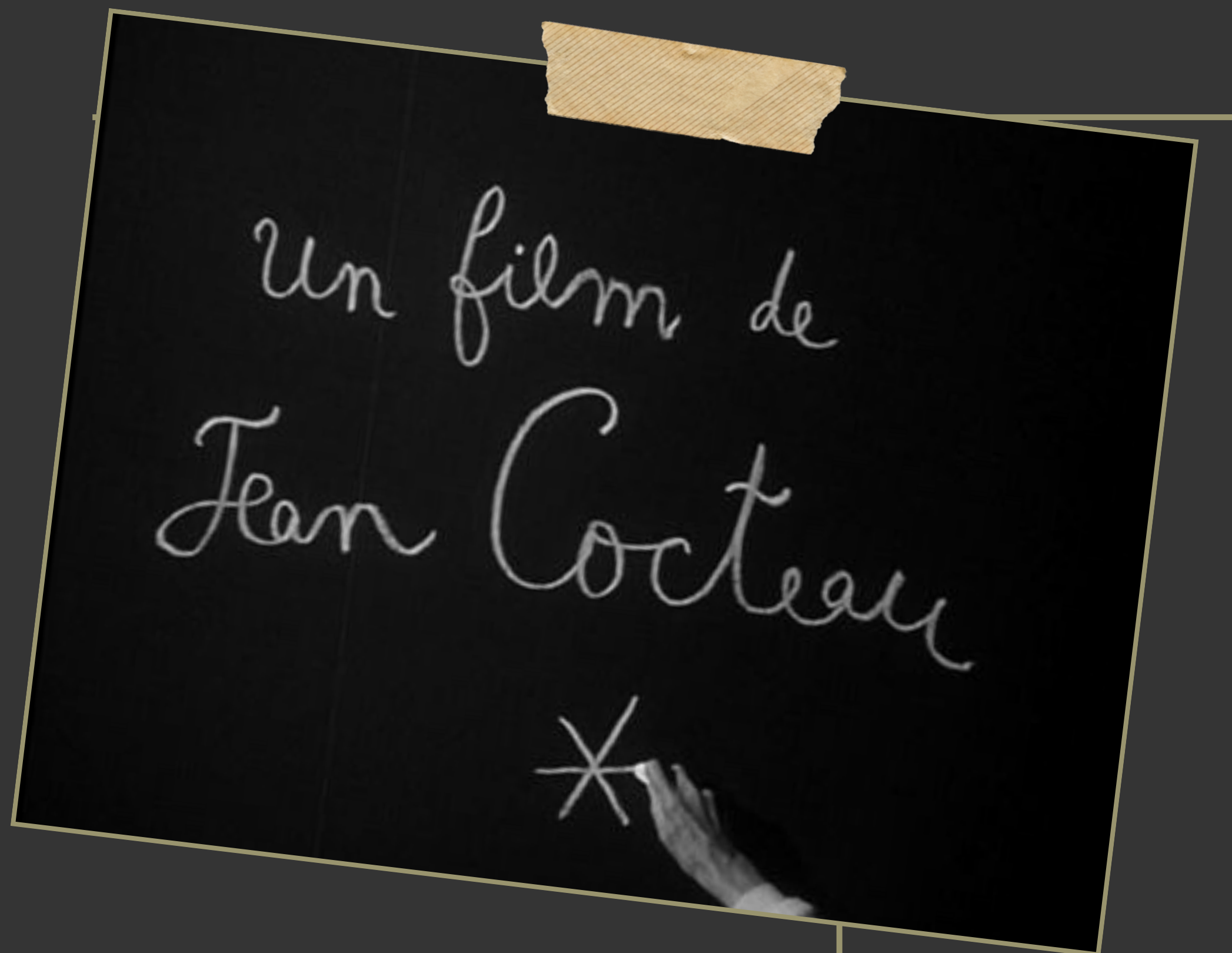
* An exciting option exists to reach out to modern classical and alternative artists to perform reimagined versions of some of the music.

Cocteau's Rehearsal Diary - 1939

...He is close, but still lost in his own way. I have told the rest of the cast that they do not need to come to the theatre today. It will only be the two of us.

Why can't I release myself of his presence!? That smirk, that aloofness, his refusal to honour me, to celebrate what I have done for him! He's a monstrous phantom, hovering, mocking, laughing at me. I hate him. But I love him.

Last night, I waited for him to help me forget, and he never arrived, silence, I was alone again.



*Set Design
Parade*



SATIE et COCTEAU

Screenplay by Mike Czuba
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Available upon request

czuba.mike@gmail.com