

The Fairy

Cert PG France 2011 94 mins

Crew

Directors/	Dominique Abel
Screenplay	Fiona Gordon Bruno Romy
Cinematography	Claire Childéric
Film editing	Sandrine Deegan

Cast

Dominique Abel	Dom, the hotel clerk
Fiona Gordon	Fiona, the fairy
Philippe Martz	John, the Englishman
Bruno Romy	The bar owner
Vladimir Zongo)
Destiné M'Bikula Mayemba) illegal
Willson Goma) immigrants
Didier Armbruster	The flying man

Synopsis

Le Havre, the recent past, or near future... Dom is a weedy receptionist in a rundown hotel. One evening a disheveled young woman called Fiona walks in - no luggage, no shoes - and saves him from choking on a sandwich. She tells him she is a fairy, and grants him three wishes. It's love at first sight.

Dom, a simple soul, asks for a moped and a lifetime supply of petrol, but he's undecided about his third wish. And before he can finally make up his mind (after a night of skinny-dipping and undersea courtship) Fiona disappears ...



- This is the third film collaboration from Abel, Gordon and Romy, after *L'iceberg* (2005) and *Rumba* (2008). *The Fairy* (*La Fée*) explores the romantic origins of characters already established in their previous films.
- Fiona Gordon (an Australian) and Dominique Abel (from Belgium) met in Paris 32 years ago through their love of the circus, and worked together as comedians and circus clowns before taking up film making. Bruno Romy, whose film making career began in 1992, previously worked as a maths teacher and supermarket manager.



Reviews

Belgium-based actors Dominique Abel, Fiona Gordon and Bruno Romy are the modern generation of a slapstick lineage stretching back through Jacques Tati to Buster Keaton and beyond. While the likes of Rowan Atkinson put the emphasis on general bungling, their physical comedy is altogether more absurdist and, in keeping with this particular film's title, fey.

...The film has a better narrative flow than their earlier movies, although some of the gags inevitably work better than others. Sometimes the visually arresting craft of Gordon and Abel is more to be admired than laughed at, but there is darkly comic joy to be had in some business with a baby, not to mention a dog and a drain, as well as some surprising moments of poignancy courtesy of Kurt Weill's *Youkali* and the plight of the immigrants. Those who dislike slapstick may well find it as funny as being hit on the head with a hammer. Those who do, are in for a treat.

Amber Wilkinson, Eye for Film, November 2011

...The Belgo-Canadian-French trio, who specialize in pantomime and circus-style theatrics, have a clownlike knack for finding humour in the everyday. Ketchup bottles, bicycle chains and folding chairs become instruments of uproarious inspiration — a reminder of the degree to which good, old-fashioned physical comedy has faded from cinema. But unlike Peter Sellers, Jacques Tati and others who've excelled in this department, Dom and Fiona come as a pair, bringing a welcome dash of romance to the proceedings.

...*The Fairy* improves upon their usual formula by building a tighter, more coherent story on which to hang the setpieces, with seemingly random details (such as the appearance of a woman's rugby team) and callbacks to earlier jokes (including co-director Romy's slapstick turn as a near-blind bartender) ensuring a steady stream of laughs.

While *The Fairy* clearly takes advantage of a larger budget and scope, the filmmakers have retained the lo-fi tricks that have always made their sensibility so amusing. Tati did the same as his career progressed, though he spent more with each picture, until he finally bankrupted himself building *Playtime's* elaborate city set. In *The Fairy*, Abel, Gordon and Romy have all of *Le Havre* as their playground. And now that they have established the ideal format for their brand of comicbook-style humour, one can't help but wish they show the good sense to keep it at this level going forward.

Peter Debrugge, Variety, May 2011