

## ***La La Land***

I don't love the phrase *La La Land* itself, but I come to think this is a very good title, meaning:

a) Fantasy - the film is a fantasy: it's not going to be naturalism: people are going to burst into song and even fly (which still surprised me in the film though I'd seen it in a trailer).

b) Fantasy - the film is about fantasies: the barista's fantasy of being a Hollywood actress, the unemployed musician's fantasy of running a jazz club, belong to mere la-la land. At the end of the film they don't, though at least the idea of combining these achievements with the two characters being an item does.

c) Music: the film is full of music so it goes la-la-la: the musical genre in that sense is la-la land.

d) LA, Los Angeles: the film is set in LA Land. In that case it's a Hollywood film, about Hollywood (some of it is set on the Warner Brothers lot), named for the place it's from: like *City of Angels* (1976) or *Hollywoodland* (2006), not far from *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) or *Mulholland Dr.* (2001).

e) LA is a la-la land, a realm of fantasy and delusion.

f) Or if you like, la-la is LA-LA: two LAs. Which are? Maybe the relatively realistic LA in which the action happens, and the musical LA that the action diverts into, a second city. So La-La Land would be like Julian Barnes' *England, England* (1998) where the second country is a simulation or pastiche of the first; or, if you prefer, China Miéville's *The City and the City* (2009). La & La. Maybe the two cities could also be the real LA of failure, and the delusive LA of success (though, as I say, it does seem possible to have real success here). Maybe such a film could even be about two LAs, socially, upper-class and lower, or white and black, though this film doesn't get into that: it shows a great deal of the happy coexistence of white and black people, but nothing about class. But I'm not going to complain about that - see a) above.

One use of the word 'La' unsignalled in this film is the phatic Scouse sound roughly equivalent to 'mate' or 'lad' – as when amid the last lines of *Boys from the Blackstuff* (1982) Chrissie asks 'What is going wrong, Loggo? What's going wrong?', and Loggo replies: 'Everything, la, everything'. If only Carla Lane (1928-2016) were still with us, she could write a sit-com in which someone leaves a house in Wallasey with the words 'I'm off to see *La La Land*, la', and hilarious consequences ensue.