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**Clair, René (b. 11 November 1898,** René-Lucien Chomette, Paris, France; d.15 March, 1985, Neuilly-sur-Seine, Paris, France)

Filmmaker, novelist, and critic René Clair (original name René-Lucien Chomette) was one of the foremost French film directors of the 1920s and 1930s. His first film, *Paris qui dort* (*The Crazy Ray*, 1923) combined surrealism and science fiction and generated images of a Paris frozen in time. His second, *Entr’acte* (1924), created to be shown between the acts of Francis Picabia’s Dada ballet *Relache*, became the epitome of Dadaist film with its innovative comedy and random images. His lyrical Eiffel Tower documentary, *La Tour* (*The Tower*, 1928), presents an impressionistic montage of the structure’s details. Clair’s silent features, such as *Un Chapeau de paille d’Italie* (*An Italian Straw Hat*, 1927), achieved international renown, and he dominated the early sound period with *Sous les toits de Paris* (*Under the Roofs of Paris*, 1930) and *A nous la liberté* (1931). The latter’s sophisticated use of diegetic and non-diegetic sound demonstrated a profound mastery of the new technology. Its surrealism-tinged take on capitalism arguably influenced sections of Chaplin’s *Modern Times* (1936). A recurring Clair theme concerns his protagonist achieving wealth and then losing it but nonetheless (re)gaining happiness. Clair’s career continued with comedies and fantasies in England and America and a post-war return to France, but his critical standing never regained its 1930s’ heights, partly due to the biases of *nouvelle vague* (French New Wave) critics.

**Selected Filmography**

*Paris qui dort* (*The Crazy Ray*, also *At 3:25*, 1923)

*Entr’acte* (1924)

*Un Chapeau de paille d’Italie* (*An Italian Straw Hat*, 1927)

*La Tour* (*The Tower*, 1928)

*Sous les toits de Paris* (*Under the Roofs of Paris*, 1930)

*Le Million* (1931)

*A nous la liberté* (1931)

*Le dernier milliardaire* (1934)

*The Ghost Goes West* (1935)

*I Married a Witch* (1942)

*It Happened Tomorrow* (1944)

*Le Silence est d’or* (1947)

*La Beauté du diable* (1950)

**References and Further Reading**

Dale, R. C. (1986) *The Films of René Clair, Volume I: Exposition and Analysis.* Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

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Greene, N. (1985) *René Clair: a guide to references and resources.* Boston: G. K. Hall & Co.

McGerr, C. (1980) *René Clair.* Boston: Twayne Publishers.

**Paratextual**

*Entr’acte* on UbuWeb: <http://www.ubu.com/film/clair_entracte.html>

*Paris qui dort* on UbuWeb: <http://www.ubu.com/film/clair_paris.html>

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