



# COLD SOULS

USA / France | 2009 | 101m | 12A

**Director:** Sophie Barthes

**Screenplay:** Sophie Barthes

**Cinematography:** Andrij Parekh

**Editing:** Andrew Mondshein

**Original Music:** Dickon Hinchliffe

**Leading Players:** Paul Giamatti, Dina Korzun, Emily Watson, David Strathairn

**filmnote**

Meet Paul Giamatti (played by Paul Giamatti). He is your typical neurotic, anxious and slightly paranoid actor who finds himself unable to play his latest role right. His interpretation of Uncle Vanya for the famous eponymous Russian play is not running smoothly and Paul is getting desperate. If only there was a way to extract his crippling anxiety and deliver the role! What Paul then stumbles upon seems to be the answer to his prayers. He finds an advert in a magazine for The Soul Storage Company who specialises in removing one's soul and storing it. Paul sees this as his only chance to survive this ordeal and decides that it's time to say "bye-bye" to himself.

Dr. Flinstein (David Strathairn), a competent-looking doctor, promises the utmost safety for his extracted soul. The terrifying machinery which looks like a CT scanner quickly rids Paul of his soul which surprisingly is only the size of a chickpea. Burden gone, a better life can begin, or can it? Paul, now neither neurotic nor happy, nor anything really, feels like an empty shell. Quite frankly, he does not feel at all for his life has turned into a pointless, numb and unyielding existence which not only dissatisfies Paul but also his wife Claire (Emily Watson), who notes that he does not even smell right.

Naturally it's best to be paranoid than being nothing at all and Paul soon rushes back to his well missed soul, only to find it's nowhere to be found. Dr. Flinstein assures him that this has never happened before but his excuses do not brighten the journey Paul has ahead of him now, soul searching! It appears that money cannot only be made with human and organ trafficking but also with soul handling. Nina (Dina Korzun), who acted as a vessel for the stolen soul tells Paul that his pursuit will lead him to St. Petersburg, Russia. There he realises that his soul has been given to a talentless soap opera actress... Whoops!

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This dark sci-fi comedy reminds one of a Charlie Kaufman scenario. Although Sophie Barthes might be fed up with hearing this, *Cold Souls* has an undeniably similar theme, though any dark comedy which depicts a metaphysical experience with an awkward actor in the main role might get this comparison. But it is not only the theme itself which seems like *deja vu* but the fictional company has a fake website for promotional purposes not unlike the Lacuna Inc. company from *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* which also included customer reviews. Is it just clever marketing or coincidence? It is up to the viewer to decide.

That aside is it not rather positive to be compared to the likes of Charlie Kaufman or Michel Gondry? Surely for an up-and-coming director it might be more flattering than offending to hear this. It is definitely not a criticism and the audience, both who have and haven't seen *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, will enjoy this quirky comedy that might leave one puzzled and thoughtful but definitely entertained. The excellent performance from Paul Giamatti gives this comedy depth, though how much real acting was involved in depicting himself is questionable. Regardless of that, the film carefully balances reality and sci-fi without losing credibility. There is only one thing we have to ask ourselves now - how big is your soul?

<http://coldsoulsthemovie.com>     <http://thesoulstoragecompany.com>

**BFF Filmnote by Lia Schopmeyer**

**This weekend at Bath Film Festival 2009**

Saturday 14 November, Little Theatre, 6.00pm | £7 / £5

**Big River Man**

John Maringouin | USA, UK | 2009 | 101m | 15 | [bigriverman.com](http://bigriverman.com)

This bizarre and captivating documentary begins as a humorous road (river?) movie but shifts to something much darker as barrel shaped Slovenian Martin Strel, having swum the Yangtze, Danube and Mississippi, makes an insane attempt to swim the longest and most perilous river in the world, the Amazon.

Sunday 15 November, Little Theatre, 1.15pm | £5 / £4

**Encounters 2009 International Highlights**

various directors | Denmark, Australia, UK | 2008 / 09 | 78m | 15 | sub-titles | [encounters-festival.org.uk](http://encounters-festival.org.uk)

A sneak preview of some international highlights from this year's Encounters Short Film Festival, which is celebrating 15 years as the UK's leading short film festival. Includes the BAFTA-winning *A Matter of Loaf and Death* starring Wallace and Gromit, and other amazing new films from Denmark and Australia.

Sunday 15 November, Rondo Theatre, 4.00pm / 5.50pm | £6 / £4

**Bath Debut kicks off at the Rondo Theatre, Larkhall**

Our run of eight films you shouldn't have missed earlier this year kicks off with Kelly Reichardt's touching US road movie *Wendy and Lucy* followed by Andrezej Jakimowski's delightful Polish comedy *Tricks*.



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