

# The Main Feature



## Season 31 - Issue 8 (screening 13.1.11)

US Studio: Warner Bros Pictures

134 minutes Cert 12

UK Release Date: 11 December 2009

Directed by Clint Eastwood

Screenplay by Anthony Peckham

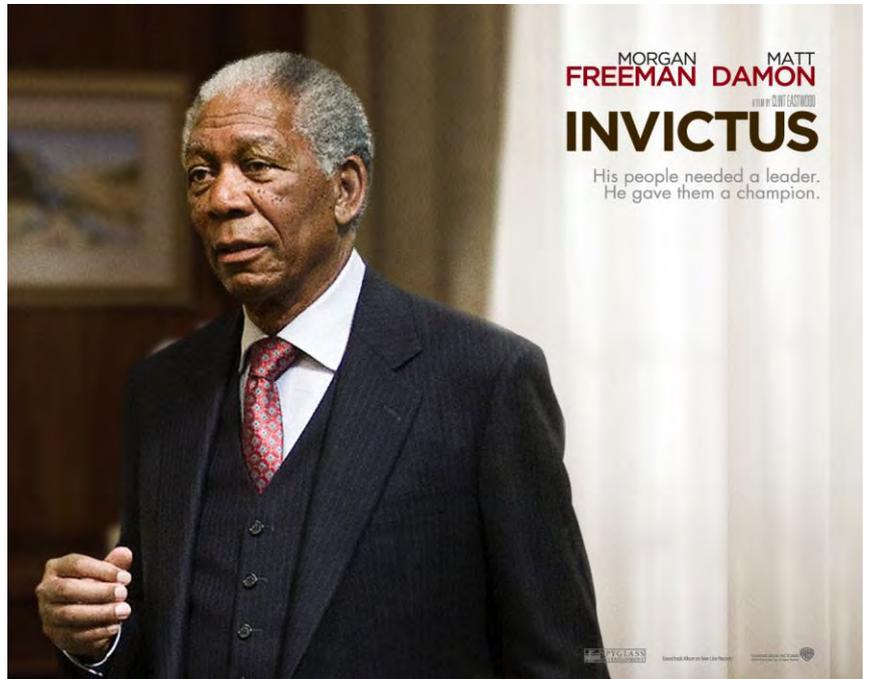
Based on the Book by John Carlin

Original Music by Kyle and Clint Eastwood (son and father)

Producers: Clint Eastwood, Lori McCreary, Robert Lorenz, and Mace Neufeld

### Role and Actor:

Nelson Mandela	-	Morgan Freeman	Francois Pienaar	-	Matt Damon
Tony Jason	-	Tshabalala	Brenda Mazibuko	-	Adjoa Andoh
Springbok coach	-	Louis Minnaar	Francois' father	-	Patrick Lyster
Mary	-	Leleti Khumalo	Jonah Lomu	-	Zak Feunati



**Synopsis:** The film tells the inspiring true story of how Nelson Mandela joined forces with the captain of South Africa's rugby team to help unite their country. Newly elected President Mandela knows his nation remains racially and economically divided in the wake of apartheid. Believing he can bring his people together through the universal language of sport, Mandela rallies South Africa's underdog rugby team as they make an unlikely run to the 1995 World Cup Championship match.

The highest profile rugby movie ever made. No other movie evidences so dramatically Clint Eastwood's remarkable burst of creativity in recent years as a director of awards-worthy films than "Invictus," a historical drama that few if any filmmakers could have launched within the studio system. Here is a movie about Nelson Mandela, South Africa after apartheid and, of all things, the sport of rugby. None is high on any list of topics that studio suits crave, which tend more toward vampires and superheroes. Even the title -- that of a Victoria-era poem -- is obscure (see separate page of this review).

The achievement of Nelson Mandela is one of the few shining moments in recent history. Here is a man who was released after 24 years of breaking rocks in prison and sleeping on the floor to assume leadership of the nation that jailed him. His personal forgiveness of white South Africa was the beacon that illuminated that nation's Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, one of the very few examples in history of people who really had much to



forgive, and forgave it. Let us not forget that both black and white had reasons to grieve, and reasons to forgive, and that in many cases they were facing the actual murderers of their loved ones.

Compared to that, what really does it matter that an underdog Springbok team, all white with one exception, won the World Cup in rugby in the first year of Mandela's rule? In a nation where all the races are unusually obsessed by sport, the World Cup was an electrifying moment when the pariah state stood redeemed before the world -- even if soccer is the black man's game there, and rugby is the white's. It was important in the way the Beijing Olympics were important to China.

Clint Eastwood believed he understood all of these things and sought to make a film in an area where he had an instinct for a connection. Eastwood is too old and too accomplished to have an interest in making a film only for money. He would have probably read the screenplays for the previous Mandela projects. They all had one thing in common: They didn't get made. It was universally agreed that Morgan Freeman was the right actor (Mandela and he met and got along famously), but the story, financing and deal never came together.



Film critics gave the film a mixed reception. A number however rated the film as very good and the film earned Clint Eastwood a nomination for a 2010 Golden Globe Award as Best Director. Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon were nominated for Golden Globe and Academy awards for Acting and Supporting roles. But the film only won USA National Board of Review awards for Clint Eastwood (Best Director) and Morgan Freeman (Best Actor).

One critic, David Ansen, wrote that the story is "one that would be hard to believe if it were fiction. The wonder of *Invictus* is that it actually went down this way". However, as with most films based on actual events, the makers manipulated several aspects to ensure what they considered a coherent narrative.

The film has moments evoking great emotion, as when the black and white members of the presidential security detail (hard-line ANC activists and Afrikaner cops) agree with excruciating difficulty to serve together. And also when Damon's character - Francois Pienaar, as the team captain - is shown the cell where Mandela was held for those long years on Robben Island. The movie shows his very cell, with the thin blankets on the floor. When you see that cell you cannot help but think, here is a great man who waited in faith for his rendezvous with history.



The World Cup was a famous victory. The Springboks faced a New Zealand team so dominant it had crushed every opponent. South Africa won in overtime. About that team name: The South African national teams have been called the Springboks since time immemorial (New Zealand is known as the All Blacks). A springbok is on the tail of every South African Airlines airplane. It's the national logo. Would Mandela change the name to one less associated with the apartheid regime? He would not!

When South Africa won the 1995 rugby world cup just after apartheid had ended, the new president Nelson Mandela donned a jersey and won over a sceptical white population in a symbol of unity for the young democracy. *(The photo is of that event).*

Freeman does a splendid job of evoking the man, who is as much a secular saint as Gandhi (who led his first campaign in Durban, South Africa). He shows him as genial, confident, calming -- over what was clearly a core of tempered steel. The focus is on his early time in office. Damon is effective at playing the

captain, Francois Pienaar, an Afrikaner, child of racist parents, transformed by his contact with "the greatest man I've ever met." Clint Eastwood, a master director, orchestrates all of these notes and has us loving Mandela, proud of Francois and cheering for the plucky Springboks. A great entertainment. Although not, perhaps, the Mandela biopic we might have expected.

Not having seen the film, as yet. it will be interesting to see if it mentions a number of the controversial incidents that have now been largely forgotten: particularly the indirect claims by New Zealand that their players were poisoned and their sleep was deliberately interrupted before the final as well as the speech of Louis Luyt, the then president of South African rugby, which was so disgustingly triumphalist it embarrassed the Springboks who apologised to the other teams.

It is still too early to assess the true significance of the South African Rugby teams triumph and the part rugby played in the unification of post-apartheid South Africa but nobody should doubt that its influence was real.

Mike Widdup (WNCC Cub Film Reviewer)

**"Invictus" - a short Victorian poem by the English poet William Ernest Henley (1849–1903).**

### **Background and publishing history**

At the age of 12, Henley fell victim to tuberculosis of the bone. A few years later, the disease progressed to his foot, and physicians announced that the only way to save his life was to amputate directly below the knee. It was amputated when he was 25. In 1875, he wrote the "Invictus" poem from a hospital bed. Despite his disability, he survived with one foot intact and led an active life until his death at the age of 53.

The poem was written in 1875 and first published in Henley's Book of Verses in 1888, where it was the fourth in a series of poems entitled Life and Death (Echoes): It originally bore no title: The familiar title "Invictus" (Latin for "undefeated") was added by Arthur Quiller-Couch when he included the poem in The Oxford Book Of English Verse (1900).

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.

The poem is referenced several times in the Invictus film. While incarcerated on Robben Island prison, Nelson Mandela recited the poem to other prisoners and was empowered by its message of self mastery.

It becomes the central inspirational gift from Mandela, to the Springbok rugby team captain played by Morgan Freeman. And as Mandela watches the South Africans celebrating together in the car, driving away in the traffic-jammed streets leaving the stadium, we hear Morgan Freeman's voice reciting the poem.

## Reactions to ....[A Touch of Class](#) – 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010

<b>Score</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Votes</b>	~	~	~	~	~	3	9	11	10	2	~

**Total received – 35**

**Average Score – 6.97**

### Your Comments

Good entertainment – some fine one liners.

Worth watching but so dated

Felt bad that they did not have wheelie cases then!

Rather dated but enjoyable – we should have more comedies or don't they make them anymore?

Good in parts

Great fun

Production values high (good pace) but not an Oscar winning performance

Light hearted fun – good choice

Entertaining and good character acting.

Saw this film years ago – had forgotten it but enjoyed it very much today.

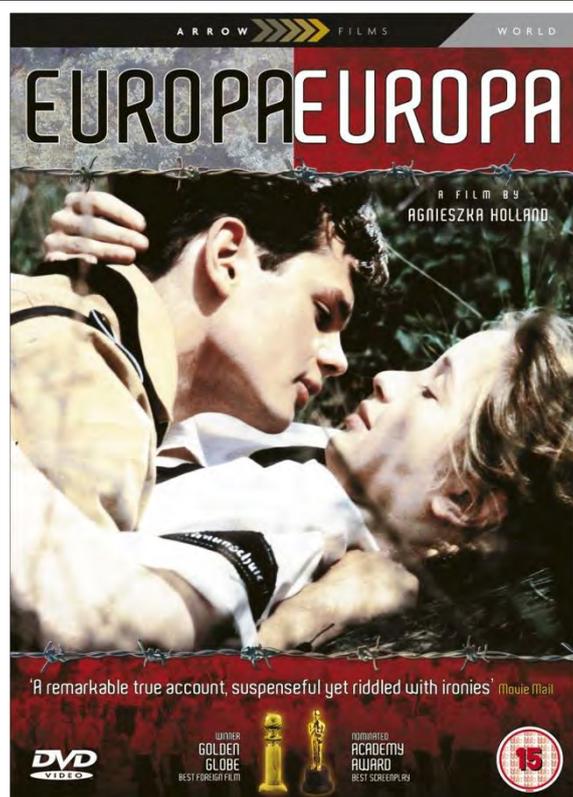
Most enjoyable – how nice to hear the actors speak clearly and intelligibly (Editor – “Oregano”!)

A good one

A bit dated but still witty and entertaining

A touch of class indeed! Very enjoyable – Happy Christmas

Position	Film	Average Score
1 <sup>st</sup>	An Education	7.83
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Le Premier Jour de reste de ta vie	7.54
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Kongekabale ( <i>King's Game</i> )	7.36
4 <sup>th</sup>	The Hurt Locker	7.09
5 <sup>th</sup>	A Touch of Class	6.97
6 <sup>th</sup>	Ushpizin	5.94
7 <sup>th</sup>	Paranormal Activity	2.75



Our next presentation at 8pm on Thursday 27 January:

## Europa Europa

Winner of the Golden Globe award for Best Foreign Language film in 1992, this German film is based on the true story of a Jewish boy separated from his family in the early days of WWII who poses as a German orphan and is taken into the heart of the Nazi world as a 'war hero' and eventually becomes a Hitler Youth.



sponsors photocopying of *the main feature*