



The Main Feature

Season 43 – Issue 8 – Screening 11 January 2024

Living

UK/Japan/Sweden 2022

102 mins

Certificate 12A

Directed by

Oliver Hermanus

Written by

Kazuo Ishiguro

Cinematography

Jamie Ramsay

Music

Emilie Levienaise-

Farrouch

Costume Design

Sandy Powell

Production Design

Helen Scott

Cast

Bill Nighy

Mr. Rodney Williams

Aimee Lou Wood

Miss Margaret Harris

Alex Sharp

Mr. Peter Wakeling

Tom Burke

Mr. Sutherland

Adrian Rawlins

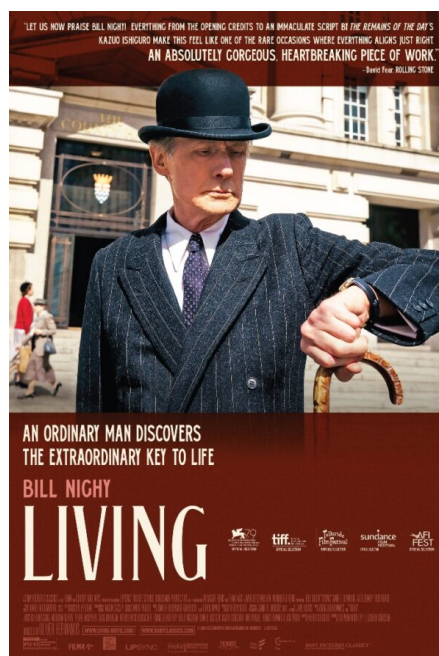
Mr. Middleton

Hubert Burton

Mr. Rusbridger

Oliver Chris

Mr. Hart



Tonight's film is set in London in 1953, loosely adapted from the much-admired Japanese film *Ikiru* (*To Live*) released in 1952. Both films were partly inspired by the 1886 Russian novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* by Leo Tolstoy.

The film's opening pictures a time of steam trains, bowler hats and deference. Bill Nighy is Mr. Williams, head of the Public Works department at County Hall. He is a widower, close to retirement. He is also a buttoned-down, uninspired bureaucrat surrounded by skyscrapers of paper in buff folders. His joyless demeanour inspires the nickname "Mr. Zombie." A petition from a trio of women to develop a World War II bombsite into a modest children's playground is met with studied indifference, trekking pillar to post through various departments and ends up back on Williams' pile - where he intends to let it remain ("there's no harm" he tells his colleagues). A visit to his doctor confirms terminal cancer, and a redemptive odyssey begins, taking in a chance encounter with a bohemian writer (Mr Sutherland) which ends in a boozy (and melodious) night out in a gaudy seaside town; a touching set of innocent meetings in London with a young and vivacious former subordinate (Miss Harris); and a determination to leave a mark by finally championing the playground project. He keeps his diagnosis largely secret, unable to tell his live-in son and his money-obsessed daughter-in-law. After Williams dies, his colleagues compare notes on his out-of-

character behaviour and gently persuasive insistence on pursuing the project despite considerable obstruction ("I don't have time to get angry" he wearily told one unhelpful head of department).

Though there is a strong supporting cast, this is Nighy's film. His languid, sensitive presence defines the story. He was born in Caterham in 1949 and spent his early adult years in relatively menial jobs, before attending the Guildford School of Dance and Drama ("prance and murmur" as he later dubbed it). He repped in Liverpool and made several guest character roles on TV, starting with *Softly, Softly* in 1976. His breakthrough was playing a libidinous academic in BBC2's *The Men's Room* (1991) opposite Harriet Walter. Film credits gradually became more prolific and prominent, from small (*Pride, About Time, Dad's Army*) through to blockbuster (*Pirates of the Caribbean, Harry Potter*) ... and, of course, *Love Actually*.

The director, Oliver Hermanus, is a young South African with just three films on his show reel; the last was *Moffie* (2019) a brutal story of a homosexual man doing National Service during apartheid. He commented "my background is in still photography. The joy of coming into this film was that I was able to approach it with a certain freedom as an outsider that was not too bogged down by my own historical understanding of a lived experience of the UK. I was able to pour over images of photographers who I love and whose work I had seen, a lot of them Americans who had gone to England in the early 50s."



The writer is Japanese-born but has lived in Guildford from an early age. His previous films have included *The Remains of the Day* (from his novel). He was awarded the Nobel prize for Literature in 2017. He reflected "from the age of 11 or 12, I was obsessed with the original movie, *Ikiru*. And as I got older, I had this idea that wouldn't it be great if someone made a version set in England. I just thought it would be a very interesting effect to put that story into a British setting just after the second World War. I could see it would become much more than just a remake."

The Guardian awarded it Film of the Week, commending "a gentle, exquisitely sad film." The NY Times commented "there's a warmth and twinkle to Williams' existential plight; passion mingles elegantly with repression, and Williams emerges as a kind of romantic figure, a man shocked, then delighted, by the thrill of finding himself." The Hollywood Reporter summarised that "it moves from a devastating portrait of a life wasted to an inspirational one of a life reclaimed." Empire noted that "the film craft on show here is uniformly excellent. It's gorgeously executed by Hermanus. A rare remake that only augments and enriches the original. For Bill Nighy it feels in every sense like the role of a lifetime."

Nighy was nominated for the 2022 Best Actor Oscar (losing to Brendan Fraser in *The Whale*) and Ishiguro was up for the Best Adapted Screenplay (won by *Women Talking*).

A final comment from an IMDb reviewer. "Not one for the Marvel generation perhaps, but this film oozes personality. Bill Nighy is ... well ... Bill Nighy, at his very, very best."

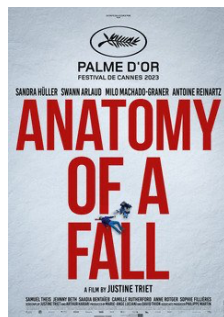
Eugene Smith



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Club website: www.wncc.org.uk. Prefer to leave your comments on the film and your score online rather than on paper? Email to reactions@wncc.org.uk by Wednesday 17 January 2024
Discs of previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

The Economist newspaper has a respected, if concise, arts section. Here are its 14 Best Films of 2023



Anatomy of a Fall (Dir Justine Triet/Fr-Ger/15/151 mins)

A man is found dead in the snow outside his Alpine chalet. Did he jump from the attic window, or was he pushed by his wife?

The winner of the top prize at Cannes Film Festival, this courtroom drama is both a gripping whodunnit and an unsparing examination of the

sexual and professional rivalries within a marriage.

The Boy and the Heron (Hayao Miyazaki/Japan/12/124 mins)

The director (a co-founder of Studio Ghibli) has said that this will be his final film—and what a swansong it is. A cryptic, cosmic fairy tale about letting go of the past, the film is comparable to several of his previous visionary masterpieces.

The Creator (Gareth Edwards/US/12/133 mins)

One of the few recent sci-fi blockbusters not to be based on a superhero comic or film franchise, this impressively gritty war epic stars John David Washington as a soldier in the battle between humans and robots. Artificial intelligence is Hollywood's current favourite villain.

The Holdovers (Alexander Payne/US/15/133 mins)

In 1970 a grouchy history teacher (Paul Giamatti) is forced to spend the Christmas holiday in a boarding school with an unruly student and a bereaved cook. Reuniting the director and the star of "Sideways" (2004) this humane, hilarious comedy already feels like a festive classic.

Holy Spider (Ali Abbasi/Iran/18/118 mins)

A dogged journalist (Zar Amir Ebrahimi) investigates the case of a serial killer who is murdering prostitutes in the Iranian city of Mashhad, only to find that many of the city's residents support the killer. This dark thriller may be an excoriating critique of Iran, but it's relevant to populist politics in the West, too.

How To Have Sex (Molly Manning Walker/UK/15/91 mins)

A heart-wrenching coming-of-age drama about three British schoolgirls on a hedonistic package holiday in Crete. Tara (Mia McKenna-Bruce) seems to be having the time of her life, but the writer-director uncovers the vulnerability beneath the teenage bravado.

Killers of the Flower Moon (Martin Scorsese/US/15/206 mins) – *Apple+ Film*

Robert De Niro and Leonardo DiCaprio co-star in this devastating true-crime saga. De Niro is the land-grabbing cattle baron who has dozens of Osage people murdered in Oklahoma in the 1920s.

Maestro (Bradley Cooper/US/15/129 mins) – *Netflix Film*

Cooper was chastised for sporting a prosthetic nose in his biopic of Leonard Bernstein, but "Maestro", which he also co-wrote and directed, is rich, sensitive and sympathetic, and he brings irresistible verve and pathos to the lead role.



Oppenheimer (Christopher Nolan/US/15/180 mins)

A complex upsetting, technically magnificent biopic of J. Robert Oppenheimer (Cillian Murphy). It skips between several different time periods to examine the politics behind the Manhattan Project.

Past Lives (Celine Song/Can-US/12/105 mins)

A 12-year-old girl moves with her family from Korea to Canada, leaving behind her childhood sweetheart. Twenty-four years later, they meet again in New York. A bittersweet tale musing on fate, ambition, and everything that is gained and lost by moving to a new country.

Poor Things (Yorgos Lanthimos/US/15/141 mins)

In this wildly inventive adaptation of Alasdair Gray's satirical novel, a woman (Emma Stone) is brought back from the dead by a mad scientist (Willem Dafoe) with no memory of her previous life. On an uproarious whirlwind tour of *fin de siècle* Europe, she learns about society's conventions and shatters them all.

The Taste of Things (Anh Hung Tran/France/15/145 mins)

The foodie film to end all foodie films? Much of it consists of mouth-watering French feasts being prepared, slowly and carefully, in an idyllic 19th-century kitchen. As a side dish, there is a tender middle-aged romance between a brilliant chef (Benoît Magimel) and his faithful cook (Juliette Binoche).

Reality (Tina Satter/US/12/83 mins)

The true story of a young whistleblower, Reality Winner (Sydney Sweeney), who was questioned in her home by FBI agents in 2017. All the dialogue is from recordings made at the time, so the drama has the naturalism of a documentary and the tension of a thriller.

The Zone of Interest (Jonathan Glazer/US-Ger/12/105 mins)

An extraordinary triumph, this dramatises the domestic routine of Rudolf Höss (Christian Friedel), the commandant of Auschwitz. He and his family bustle around with their servants, ignoring the industrialised mass murder being committed just over their garden wall.

Comments and reactions to: **Downton Abbey – A New Era**

No of reaction slips received = 26

Average score = 7.58

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	~	~	~	2	2	4	16	1	1

A bit sugary ... better on TV rather than the big screen

For a Downton neophyte like me, too much plot and too many characters were unexplained

Light-hearted entertainment just right for a Christmas show. Good choice!

Good natured but sickly sweet and overindulgent. A perfect Christmas confection!

Very enjoyable but a bit overacted

Light, but very enjoyable

Love the club – long may it reign

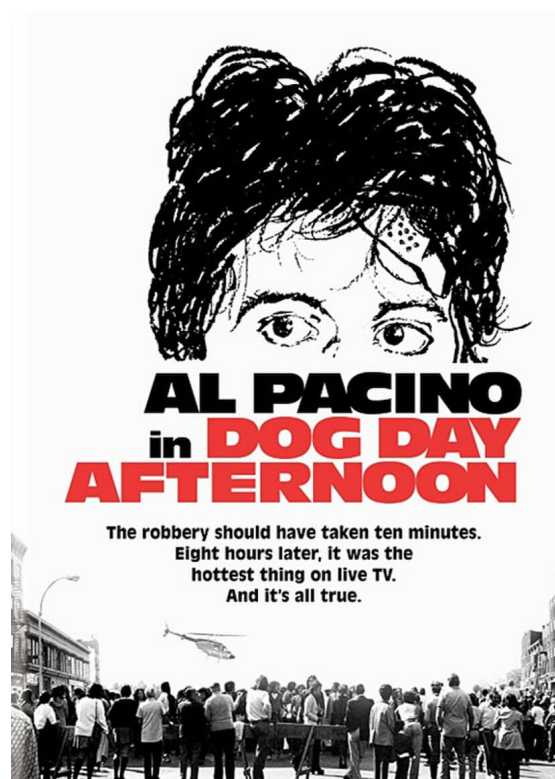
Good to end the year on

A very enjoyable film!

The perfect Christmas film: entertaining, funny, feel-good.

Position	Film	Average score
1=	Mrs Harris Goes to Paris	7.58
1=	Downton Abbey – A New Era	7.58
3	The Lost King	7.38
4	The Banshees of Inisherin	7.06
5	Rams	6.40
6	Three Colours: Blue	6.18
7	Decision to Leave	4.59

Forthcoming attraction: 25 January 2024 – **Dog Day Afternoon**



This film is based on a true-life bank robbery, the proceeds of which were to pay for a sex-change operation. From this material, Sidney Lumet creates a marvellous patchwork of a movie, cutting between the inept but passionate bank robbers (Al Pacino and John Cazale) whose bungled heist turns into a hostage situation, the corpulent cop leading the police siege (Charles Durning) and the mob that gathers outside the bank. It's an insane circus and you know that something, or someone, is going to blow a gasket. Pacino's performance earned him an Oscar nomination, and the whole picture seems infected by his jitters. Radio Times

It's beautifully acted by performers who appear to have grown up on the city's sidewalks in the heat and hopelessness of an endless midsummer. New York Times