



The Main Feature

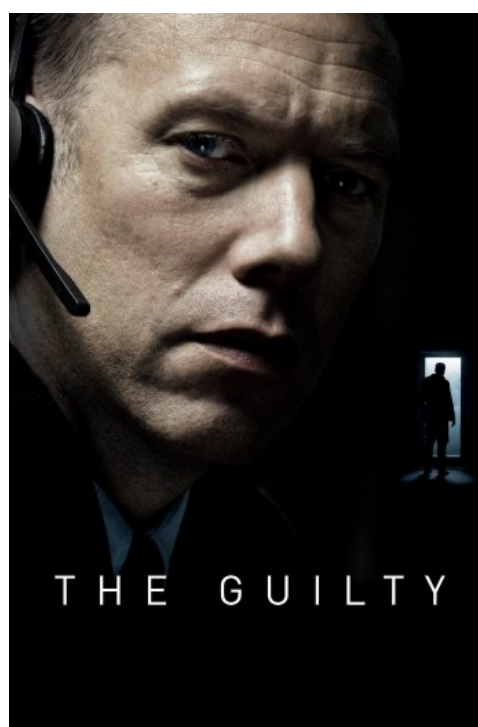
Season 43 – Issue 16 – Screening 9 May 2024

The Guilty (Den skyldige)

Denmark	2018
85 mins	Certificate 15
Director	Gustav Möller
Screenplay	Gustav Möller and Emil Nygaard Albertsen
Cinematography	Jasper Spanning
Editing	Carla Luffe
Sound Effects Editor	Philip Nicolai Flindt
Sound Effects Designer	Oskar Skriver
Production Design	Gustav Pontoppidan

Cast

Jakob Cedergren	Asger Holm
Jessica Dinnage	Iben Østergård
Johan Gotthardt Olsen	Michael Østergård
Katinka Evers-Jahnsen	Mathilde Østergård
Omar Shargawi	Rashid
Jacob Lohmann	Bo



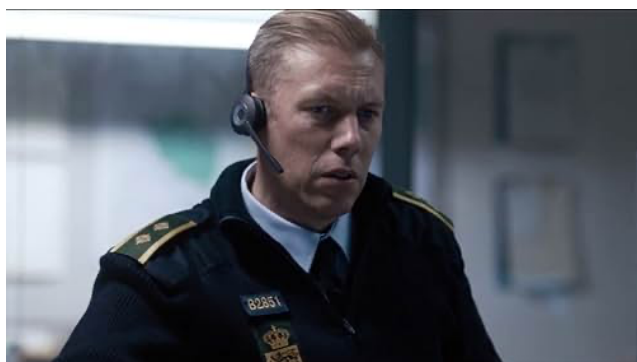
This evening, we present a taut and twisty thriller from Denmark.

The film is set entirely in an emergency call centre and the story unfolds via a series of phone conversations. Asger Holm is a Copenhagen police officer assigned to temporary duty there while awaiting a disciplinary trial (the details of which are gradually revealed). He is dead-eyed bored, displaying minimal empathy brusquely deflecting messages from a spaced-out cyclist and from a businessman mugged in a red-light district. He then takes a call from a distressed woman (Iben) who speaks to him as if he were a child: he has to tease out that she has been kidnapped; is being driven away in a white van with her estranged husband (Michael) and is pretending to be talking to Mathilde (their 6-year-old daughter). His police training clicks in and he sends out a patrol car to intercept the van; talks to the young girl left home alone with her baby brother; and persuades Rashid, his reluctant former partner (and key witness at his imminent hearing) to break into the husband's flat to hunt for clues to a possible destination. It emerges that the father has a criminal record and that there has been a distressing incident at the family home - but that the kidnap is not what it seems.

It was director and co-writer Möller's first feature film, and was inspired by a YouTube clip of a woman calling an emergency dispatcher while her kidnapper sat nearby. Möller said he was struck by how much

an audio clip could convey on its own with no visual accompaniment. "It felt like I was seeing images just listening to sound," he said. "It felt like I had seen this woman; I had an idea of the car she was sitting in and the road they were driving on." The film is a technical tour-de-force. It took just 13 days to shoot: but the post-production sound editing took another eight weeks.

It was first shown in the US at the Sundance Film Festival, winning great acclaim and subsequently became an Awards Darling, with 38 wins and 43 nominations listed at IMDb. The film won 5 "Roberts" (the Danish film Industry's BAFTA/Oscar) in 2019 for best film, actor, director, sound and editing. The modest budget of €0.5m was amply repaid by a €4.6m box office gross.



British critics were generally impressed. Empire Magazine praised a "tense, real-time thriller" where the "use of ambient sound and disarming silence...ratchets up the suspense." The Guardian lauded "a masterclass in wringing breathless tension from just a few key ingredients" and noted "you almost forget to breathe." The Telegraph was slightly more sceptical stating that "*The Guilty* stays afloat, but it never builds to the armrest-clutching peaks of suspense that the premise promises" and highlighted the implausibility of Asger

being able to "go rogue" on the case, evading any supervision or queries about the escalating situation.

More positively, The Hollywood Reporter praised the pared-down sensibility stating "[it] emerges as a twisty crime thriller that's every bit as pulse-pounding and involving as its action-oriented, adrenaline-soaked counterparts" whilst lauding the lead actor as "a flawed character who has a weakness for acting on impulse and a history of overstepping boundaries, [his] need for personal redemption would appear to spur him on just as urgently as his fevered attempts to potentially save another person's life." It added "while the term 'Hitchcockian' gets thrown around a lot, it rightfully applies to Möller's painstakingly precise direction as well as to the sinewy script."

That same review prophetically remarked "it could easily lend itself to an English-language remake that would be a terrific fit for a Ryan Gosling or Michael Fassbender."

Well, yes - Hollywood *did* indeed come sniffing for an English language remake.

Möller and his crew sensibly declined any personal involvement preferring instead to work on new projects. The rights were bought by Jake Gyllenhaal (*Zodiac*, *Spiderman*) who brought in Antoine Fuqua (*Training Day*, *The Equaliser*) to direct. The resulting film was set in Los Angeles during wildfire season, with Gyllenhaal himself playing the Asger character (renamed Joe) and Riley Keough as Emily (the kidnapped). Netflix purchased the finished article in 2020 for \$30m and it remains on their site. I managed to watch 30 minutes. It is a word-for-word remake with (naturally) a far glossier call centre (and better teeth) but – in my view anyway – fails to replicate the intimacy and tension of the Danish original

So (as the Danes might say) – enjoy the best version of the film in the world. Probably.

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 15 May 2024
Discs of previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

Real Time Films

The Guilty is shot “real-time” - events unfold as they happen with no time jumps or flashbacks. Here are 6 more examples.

The Famous One

High Noon (1951/Dir Fred Zinnemann/85 mins/PG/IMDb rating 8.0)



Gary Cooper plays newlywed Marshall Kane – who can either leave town or await the arrival of a criminal bent on revenge. The film features several clock cutaways to signal when the villain will arrive – (spoiler) – mid-day. Won 4 Oscars (Cooper as Best Actor, and for editing, musical score and song). Former US Presidents Eisenhower, Reagan and Clinton apparently rated this as their favourite film.

The Hitchcock Novelty

Rope (1948/A Hitchcock/80 mins/12/7.9)

Two friends attempt to prove that they committed the perfect crime by hosting a dinner party after strangling their former classmate. Based on an infamous 1924 murder case. The film is a series of long takes shot on one sound stage. Shown by the Club in Season 17 (1996 - no rating available).

One from France

Cléo de 5 à 7 (1962/Agnès Varda/90 mins/NR/7.8)



Cleo, a singer and hypochondriac, becomes increasingly worried that she might have cancer while awaiting test results from her doctor. She tries to continue her flippant lifestyle but comes to see the shallowness of her life, rejecting

frrippery. A 2019 BBC poll ranked it as the second best film directed by a woman (*The Piano* – Jane Campion – was first).

The Nuclear One

Fail Safe (1964/Sidney Lumet/112 mins/PG/8.0)

One of several films made after the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962). The US President (Henry Fonda) has to convince the Russians that an accidental attack on Moscow should not lead to an all-out nuclear conflict. Then-President Johnson was outraged by the suggestion that a computer malfunction could bring about such a catastrophe (hmmmm...) and the filmmakers received no co-operation from the US Armed Forces. Beaten at the box office by *Dr Strangelove* which was released first (and leavened the terror with some humour).

The One with Two Men Talking at Dinner

My Dinner with Andre (1981/Louis Malle/110 mins/PG/7.7)

Wallace Shawn (an actor and writer) and Andre Gregory (an avant-garde director) share their



lives over the course of an evening meal at a NY restaurant. Championed by critic Roger Ebert, who chose it as the best film of 1981, and later ranked it as the fifth-best film of the 1980s. Pithily summarised by an amateur IMDb critic as “pretentious, simple, boring, fascinating.”

The One about 9/11

United 93 (2006/Paul Greengrass/111 mins/15/7.6)

As the advertising stated.... “September 11, 2001. Four planes were hijacked. Three of them reached their target. This is the story of the fourth.” The harrowing story of how the passengers thwarted the hijackers and crash-landed the plane in rural Pennsylvania well away from its target (Washington DC).

Eugene Smith

Comments and reactions to: **Till**

No of reaction slips received = 28

Average score = 7.61

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

Excellent acting, beautiful photography. Surprisingly positive given the awful subject matter. Quite stunning to find out at the end that a new anti-lynching law was introduced in the USA in 2022 to strengthen the law in this area.

A powerful film – there is still some way to go

Excellent, American Black History

Very well acted and directed. A hard story sensitively handled

A hard watch, but worth it. Thought-provoking, superbly performed

A brave film, eternally relevant, heartbreakingly well-acted

A tragic film with great [...] of Mamie

Enjoyable? Not very, but significant and well-made

A powerful movie, powerful performances

Difficult subject handled with care, and held together by an excellent central performance.

I have lived in a mixed-race society so it hit home. Very moving

Very sad story very well told

Powerful, tense movie and profoundly sad

No Justice, No Peace

Very moving. A very well-made film of a very wrong time in American history

The failure to Oscar-nominate Danielle Deadwyler speaks volumes. Surely an inspired decision to focus on the main issues and avoid showing a graphic depiction of the murder.

Position	Film	Average score
1	Where the Crawdads Sing	7.83
2	Living	7.62
3	Till	7.61
4=	Mrs Harris Goes to Paris	7.58
4=	Downton Abbey – A New Era	7.58
6	Empire of Light	7.46
7	Top Gun: Maverick	7.41
8	The Lost King	7.38
9	Dog Day Afternoon	7.15
10	The Banshees of Inisherin	7.06
11	Parallel Mothers	6.83
12	Rams	6.40
13	Three Colours: Blue	6.18
14	Vagabond	5.88
15	Decision to Leave	4.59

Forthcoming attraction: 23 May 2024 – **Good Luck to You, Leo Grande**



Deftly handled direction from Sophie Hyde and a thoroughly impressive dual performance from Emma Thompson and Daryl McCormack enlivens an electric script, tackling taboo sexual subjects with wit, flair and welcome realism.

Empire

Manages to keep one foot firmly on the floor of enjoyably progressive entertainment even as it dances around a peculiarly British minefield in which anxiety and openness about intimacy collide. Observer

Empowerment is only one piece of the puzzle, which together forms a refreshingly nuanced portrait of sex work, desire and self-perception.

Independent