



The Main Feature

Season 43 – Issue 17 – Screening 23 May 2024

Good Luck to You, Leo Grande

UK, 2022, 97 mins, Cert 15

Director	Sophie Hyde
Writer	Katy Brand
Cinematography	Bryan Mason
Music	Stephen Rennicks
Production design	Miren Marañón

Cast

Emma Thompson	Nancy Stokes
Daryl McCormack	Leo Grande
Isabella Loughland	Becky



Tonight's presentation is a film with two principal characters, and where the action takes place almost entirely in a rather anonymous hotel room.

Nancy Stokes is a 60-something retired teacher of religious education who has been widowed and has two children: a son she finds boring and a needy daughter. She has come to question her life so far, and – in contrast to what has passed before – is yearning for a little adventure. Leo Grande is a young sex worker, hired by Nancy, who uses his skills and charm to help Nancy discover herself. Over the course of their meetings, Nancy opens up to Leo, talking about her past and trying to understand what she wants. But she discovers that he too has aspects of his much briefer life that he has concealed.

Emma Thompson is a distinguished actor and writer with two Academy Awards: best actress for *Howards End* in 1992; and best adapted screenplay for *Sense and Sensibility* in 1995, making her the only person in Oscar history to have won awards for acting and screenwriting. She was also Oscar-nominated for best actress in *The Remains of the Day* (1993), and for best supporting actress in *In the Name of the Father* (1993).

She comes from an acting family. Her father, Eric Thompson, was best known for his adaptation of the French children's television programme *La manège enchantée* as *The Magic Roundabout* for which he provided the scripts and all the voices. Both her mother, Phyllida Law, and her sister, Sophie Thompson are actors.

Emma Thompson came to prominence partly through the cult BBC series *Tutti Frutti* (1987) a portrait of a mythical Scottish rock band, The Majestics, which also featured Robbie Coltrane and Richard Wilson. In 1992 she appeared in the Merchant-Ivory adaptation of E M Forster's *Howard's End* which received nine Oscar nominations. After a pause for motherhood, she returned to the screen in *Love Actually* (2003) and the *Harry Potter* franchise, as well a long-standing project *Nanny McPhee* (2005) and its sequel *Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang* (2010). She starred in *Saving Mr Banks* (2013) about Disney making *Mary Poppins*; and – to mixed reviews – in *Effie Grey* (2014).



In contrast, Daryl McCormack has had a comparatively short career. Born in Ireland to an Irish mother and an African-American father, *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande* is his first starring role for which he was nominated for two BAFTAs (best actor and rising star) and won the Trophée Chopard (awarded to young actors to encourage their career) at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival.

The critics liked the film. Time magazine said: 'Thompson has always been a terrific actor but she reaches a new plane here, a place where her vulnerability as a person and her confidence as a performer mesh into something glorious. She's unafraid to explore Nancy's prickliness—some of the things she says to Leo are simply awful, betraying a deep judgmental streak. The film is beautifully shot—never has hotel-room light looked so meltingly sensual and luxurious.'

Variety said: 'Hyde's film is a psychological conversation piece titillated by the potential of sex. (There isn't much onscreen until it ends with a graphic montage that feels included to prove Thompson's faith in the project.) Over Nancy and Leo's sessions together, they fall into a pattern: he struggles to set the mood, and she smashes it. But while Thompson's character does most of the talking, in the moments she excuses herself to hide in the bathroom, Bryan Mason's camera prefers to stay with him. Leo lets his smile go slack. He studies himself in the mirror. And then when his client re-emerges, he snaps back into character. Leo Grande is fake. But the work it takes to be Leo Grande is genuine.' It went on: 'McCormack is fantastic in a role so subtle it could appear flatlined and phony if people aren't paying attention. He's forced to keep his voice as steady as a horse tamer; the energy flows through his eyes. His Leo stares at Nancy, absorbs her, and through his rapt attention silently tries to convince her that to him, in this moment, she's the only woman in the world. Steve Fanagan's sound design casts a similar spell. Once Leo enters the hotel, the film never leaves. We become hyper-aware of the sound of socks on carpet and hands rustling over shirt collars and hair. Leo and Nancy's hotel room begins to feel like sacred ground. (Composer Stephen Rennicks isn't above adding music that harkens to a religious choir.) "There are nuns out there with more sexual experience than me," Nancy quips. Yes, but here, pleasure is both sacred and practical, a wobbly balance that seduces the audience, too.'



Michael Hipkins



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

Woking Film Club – Programme for 44th season – subject to confirmation

2024 12 Sept	<i>The Great Escaper</i> (UK, 2023, 97 min, cert 12) Bernard Jordan escapes from his care home to attend the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings in France.
26 Sept	<i>Barbie</i> (USA, 2023, 114 min, cert 12) Barbie and Ken are having the time of their lives in the colourful and seemingly perfect world of Barbie Land. However, when they get a chance to go to the real world, they soon discover the joys and perils of living among humans.
10 Oct	<i>Winners</i> (Iran, 2022, 85 min, cert PG) In a small provincial Iranian town, the children work hard to support their families. One day nine-year-old Yahya and his friend Leyla find a precious statue. Sharing a passion for cinema, Yahya's boss Naser Khan (Reza Najji) decides to help them find the owner.
24 Oct	<i>The Colour Purple</i> (USA, 1985, 154 min, cert 15) A tale spanning forty years in the life of Celie, an African-American woman living in the South who survives incredible abuse and bigotry.
14 Nov	<i>The Taste of Things</i> (France, 2023, 134 min, cert 12) The story of Eugenie, an esteemed cook, and Dodin - the fine gourmet chef she has been working for over the last 20 years.
28 Nov	<i>Past Lives</i> (South Korea, 2023, 145 min, cert 12) Nora and Hae Sung, two deeply connected childhood friends, are wrested apart after Nora's family emigrates from South Korea. Twenty years later, they are reunited for one fateful week as they confront notions of love and destiny.
12 Dec	<i>The Holdovers</i> (USA, 2024, 133 min, cert 15) A cranky history teacher at a prep school is forced to remain on campus over the holidays with a grieving cook and a troubled student who has no place to go.
2025 9 Jan	<i>Wicked Little Letters</i> (UK, 2023, 100 min, cert 15) When people in Littlehampton - including conservative local Edith - begin to receive letters full of hilarious profanities, rowdy Irish migrant Rose is charged with the crime. Suspecting that something is amiss, the town's women investigate.
23 Jan	<i>One Life</i> (UK, 2023, 110 min, cert 12) Sir Nicholas 'Nicky' Winton, a young London broker who, in the months leading up to World War II, rescued over 600 children from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia.
13 Feb	<i>Maudie</i> (Canada/Ireland, 115 min, cert 12) An arthritic Nova Scotia woman works as a housekeeper while she hones her skills as an artist and eventually becomes a beloved figure in the community.
27 Feb	<i>Anatomy of a Fall</i> (France, 2023, 152 min, cert 15) A woman is suspected of murder after her husband's death; their half-blind son faces a moral dilemma as the main witness.
13 March	<i>Slow</i> (Lithuania, 2023, 108 min, cert tbc) Dancer Elena and sign language interpreter Dovydas meet and form a beautiful bond. As they dive into a new relationship, they must navigate how to build their own kind of intimacy.
27 March	<i>All of Us Strangers</i> (UK, 2024, 106 min, 15) A screenwriter drawn back to his childhood home enters into a fledgling relationship with his downstairs neighbour while discovering a mysterious new way to heal from losing his parents 30 years ago.
10 April	<i>Chocolat</i> (France, 2016, 116 min, cert 12A) The rise and fall of the famous clown Chocolat, the first black circus performer who revolutionised the stagnant circus acts and conquered Paris of the Belle Époque with his exuberance and originality.
24 April	<i>Poor Things</i> (UK, 2023, 142 min, cert 18) An account of the fantastical evolution of Bella Baxter, a young woman brought back to life by the brilliant and unorthodox scientist Dr. Godwin Baxter.
8 May	<i>The Blue Caftan</i> (Morocco, 2022, 122 min, cert 12) A middle-aged tailor and his wife find their relationship challenged by the arrival of a handsome new apprentice.
22 May (and AGM)	<i>Three Day Millionaire</i> (UK, 2022, 92 min, cert 15) A raucous black comedy about a gang of Grimsby Trawler-men who carry out the heist of a lifetime.

Comments and reactions to: **The Guilty**

No of reaction slips received = 38

Average score = 7.16

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	1	~	~	3	6	12	10	5	1

Gripping – cleverly constructed thriller

Gripping police thriller

The money saved on the location budget obviously went on a first-class script

A most unusual film!

Really good although I had correctly predicted the twist. I am a newbie but I will still come again

Wow

Interesting concept that built well. Good main performance. Slightly theatrical, so a different type of film

Full of suspense. Good choice for club

Excellent in maintaining tension

Excellent suspense on a limited set. Kept you focussed on script

A tour de force of storytelling

Very well-acted and well-directed. Good ending but I saw it coming

Very thrilling with a great twist

Unusual but excellent film. A good choice by the club's film selection committee. Excellent notes

Exemplary economical film-making: engrossingly atmospheric and compulsive.

Good but depressing

An interesting concept for a film, which initially struggled to maintain its tension, although this ramped up

somewhat with the later twists to the story. It was, obviously intentionally, a little one dimensional, which perhaps left the audience a little emotionally unattached.

Good atmospheric film, one actor – well done

Kept me gripped all the way through, in spite of guessing that "the wife did it" during the coffee break.

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	The Guilty	7.16
10	Dog Day Afternoon	7.15
11	The Banshees of Inisherin	7.06
12	Parallel Mothers	6.83
13	Rams	6.40
14	Three Colours: Blue	6.18
15	Vagabond	5.88
16	Decision to Leave	4.59



Opening presentation of the 44th season on 12 September 2024 – **The Great Escaper** (subject to confirmation)

The premise of this real-life pensioner adventure seems tailor-made for a gently comedic big-screen treatment, a chipper flat-capped caper to the continent. But in fact, the film is unexpectedly melancholic in approach, with Caine delivering a gruffly heart-breaking performance as a man belatedly confronting crippling survivor's guilt and the knowledge that the psychological wounds sustained in battle never fully heal. Observer