



# The Main Feature

Season 44 – Issue 1 – Screening 12 September 2024

## *The Great Escaper*

UK, 2023, 97 min, cert 12

|                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Director          | Oliver Parker    |
| Writer            | William Ivory    |
| Cinematography    | Christopher Ross |
| Music             | Craig Armstrong  |
| Production design | Nick Palmer      |

### Cast

|                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Michael Caine      | Bernie Jordan        |
| Glenda Jackson     | Rene Jordan          |
| Will Fletcher      | Young Bernard Jordan |
| Laura Marcus       | Young Irene Jordan   |
| John Standing      | Arthur               |
| Jackie Clune       | Judith               |
| Danielle Vitalis   | Adele                |
| Brennan Reece      | Martin               |
| Wolf Kahler        | Heinrich             |
| Ian Conningham     | LCT Commander Parker |
| Elliott Norman     | Douglas Bennett      |
| Donald Sage Mackay | Nathan               |
| Carlyss Peer       | Vicky                |
| Isabella Domville  | Sudsan Everard       |
| Victor Oshin       | Scott                |



*The Great Escaper* is a 2023 biographical drama which is based on the true story of 89-year-old British World War II Royal Navy veteran Bernard Jordan who 'broke out' of his nursing home to attend the 70th anniversary D-Day commemorations in France in June 2014. The film marked the final screen performances for both lead actors: Glenda Jackson who died in June 2023, nine months after filming finished; and Michael Caine who announced his retirement from acting in October 2023. This is also the last film produced by Pathé UK, after the division announced in November 2023 that they would restructure to focus on premium television and only release films from their parent company.

The film was announced in February 2021, and was scheduled to be shot in June of that year. Principal photography commenced the following year, in September 2022, and director Oliver Parker noted that Glenda Jackson 'shot almost all her big scenes in the first twelve days'. The French street scene was

filmed in Church Street, Twickenham. In early October 2022 filming was taking place in East Sussex, at Camber Sands and Hastings.

The film was shot entirely in the UK, to minimize the travelling involved and the Covid-19 risk to the older cast. John Standing, who appears in the film, claimed it was due to Brexit restrictions, a claim denied by Pathé, one of the film's main production companies. At the time of filming, Caine was 89 and Jackson was 86. They had last made a film together 47 years earlier, *The Romantic Englishwoman* (1975).



Caine announced his retirement from acting in October 2023 in a BBC *Today* radio program interview with Martha Kearney. Referring to *The Great Escaper*, he said 'I keep saying I'm going to retire, well I am now, because I figured, I've had a picture which I played the lead and it's got incredible reviews. The only parts I'm liable to get now are old men, 90-year-old men, well, maybe 85, and I thought well I might as well leave with all this. I've got wonderful reviews. What am I going to do to beat this?'

Michael Caine as Bernie brings plenty of droll and spark to the role, shuffling up and down the seafront, grumpily denouncing the trendy cyclists almost running him over on the pavement as 'tossers' and letting the air out of their tyres. But he is arguably upstaged by Glenda Jackson as Irene, or Rene, who is sarky and sardonic to everyone, including her care worker Adele (an excellent performance from Danielle Vitalis).



Glenda Jackson gets laughs in a way Michael Caine's character doesn't, or not as much. Rene has to cover up for Bernie; she is, after all, in on his plan, and tells the nurses and managers that her absent husband is just out on a long early walk, giving Bernie enough time to get on the ferry before the alarm is raised.

There's a huge amount to enjoy from these legendary performers: Caine and Jackson are a great double-act, despite being apart for much of the film due to Covid restrictions, and the film imagines an interesting and

poignant rapport between Bernie and an elderly ex-RAF officer on the ferry, sympathetically played by John Standing, who is heading for Normandy while crucified by a secret guilt. Caine has a bold flash of rage by the official graves at all the criminal waste of lives created by war.

*The Great Escaper* had its world premiere in London at BFI Southbank on 20 September 2023 and was released in the United Kingdom on 6 October 2023, by Warner Bros Pictures. The film was the highest-grossing UK independent release in 2023 with a total UK box office take of £5.3m

Another film, *The Last Rifleman* starring Pierce Brosnan is also loosely based on Jordan's story. This film did not have a cinema release; instead, it was released on Sky Cinema on 5 November 2023.

Susan Widdup



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Club website: [www.wncc.org.uk](http://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](mailto:reactions@wncc.org.uk) by Wednesday 18 September 2024  
Discs of previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

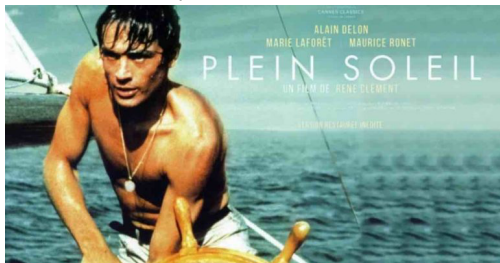
## Alain Delon



The death of Alain Delon was announced at the end of August. He was 88. Peter Bradshaw, the *Guardian* film critic described him as having 'eerie, heart-stopping, almost extraterrestrial gorgeousness. He was one of the most – maybe the most – beautiful male stars in cinema history.' He went on to say 'Delon had a mesmerically demure, long-lashed, almost feline look that could indicate something mysterious, or wounded, or malign, and was very different from the more candid Hollywood beauty of Paul Newman or Robert Redford – and Delon never made it in Hollywood. He had an unlocatable charisma to go with his beauty, the dangerous apparent passivity and stillness of a predator, and it was this that got him cast in some of the most fascinating crime pictures of the era (by French directors René Clément, Jacques Deray and Jean-Pierre Melville) as well as the bold new Italian art cinema of Visconti and Antonioni. He was a tough guy and no dandy, but it was his exquisite face that made him such an exotic figure in working-class stories or lowlife dramas.'

What were his best-known films? Here is a selection of five:

### *Plein Soleil* (Purple Noon) 1960



René Clément's adaptation of the Patricia Highsmith novel *The Talented Mr Ripley* gave Delon his first major role as Ripley. Bradshaw commented 'Delon's Ripley is a Dorian Gray portrait of male beauty and unscrupulous daring, untroubled by conscience'. The film was criticised by Highsmith for changing the ending in the book.

### *The Leopard* (1963)

Delon's third notable Italian film was Visconti's *The Leopard*, in which he played the dashing and cynical young revolutionary Tancredi. As a hot-headed opportunist who represents the future of Italy, Delon's performance is in sharp contrast to Burt Lancaster's contemplative one as his aristocratic uncle, who represents the past.

### *Le Samourai* (1967)

Directed and written by Jean-Pierre Melville, with Delon as the impassive hitman Jef who is disturbed when he realises one of his killings has been observed by a witness. The Blu Spot said 'Utilizing a riveting narrative and a compelling, impassive performance from Alain Delon, *Le Samourai* remains a remarkable classic of the crime thriller genre that is still often cited as a prime example of its kind'

### *La Piscine* (1969)

A psychological thriller written and directed by Jacques Deray with Delon as Jean-Paul and Romy Schneider as his lover Marianne whose seemingly ideal relationship is disturbed when Marianne invites her ex and his sexy teenage daughter (Jane Birkin) to stay, and which leads to jealousy and a drowning.

### *Asterix at the Olympic Games* (2008)



You might not think this an obvious choice, but bear with me. Delon had announced his retirement from film acting in 1997 but returned to the screen as Julius Caesar in this live-action version of the graphic novel. He turns in a wonderfully self-deprecating performance, sending himself up unmercifully. Turning to the mirror, he admires himself and says not 'Ave Caesar' but 'Ave Me'.

Michael Hipkins

## Comments and reactions to: **Good Luck to you, Leo Grande**

No of reaction slips received = 20

Average score = 6.75

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

*Well-acted but sorry, not my sort of film*

*A truly remarkable film to end the season with!*

***Well filmed and acted but not my sort of story/subject***

***Bit of a hard watch but well-acted***

*A good film to end the season on – quite thought-provoking too!*

*Next season – Barbie!*

***Very funny film but also covering some serious issues about hang-ups, and being honest with those near to you.***

***Overextended. limp and unsatisfying***

*I was pleasantly surprised by this film and enjoyed it very much. It was well cast. I appreciated the fine acting and being shot in one room did not diminish the atmosphere.*

| 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       | Good Luck to you, Leo Grande | 6.75          |
| 14       | Rams                         | 6.40          |
| 15       | Three Colours: Blue          | 6.18          |
| 16       | Vagabond                     | 5.88          |
| 17       | Decision to Leave            | 4.59          |

## Forthcoming attraction: 26 September 2024 – **Barbie**



*The feminist parable doesn't always make sense and some characters fail to come to life. But, after a raft of over-polished blockbusters, this messiness feels refreshing.* Daily Express

*It's a riotously entertaining candy-coloured feminist fable that manages simultaneously to celebrate, satirise and deconstruct its happy-plastic subject. Audiences will be delighted. Mattel should be ecstatic.* Observer

*There's a lot of zeitgeist appeasement going on here. But the production values are sensational and there are some excellent jokes, even if Ryan Gosling's Ken leaves Margot Robbie's Barbie standing. They should have called this "Ken".* The Spectator