



The Main Feature

Season 44 – Issue 16 – Screening 8 May 2025

The Blue Caftan (Le bleu du caftan)

France/Morocco/Belgium/Denmark
2022, 122 mins, Cert 12
In Arabic/with subtitles

Director	Maryam Touzani
Written by	Maryam Touzani and Nabil Ayouch
Cinematography	Virginie Surdej
Music	Kristian Eidnes Andersen
Colourist	Laurent Navarri

Cast

Lubna Azabal	Mina
Saleh Bakri	Halim
Ayoub Missioui	Youssef (apprentice)
Mounia Lamkimel	Blue Caftan Client
Abdelhamid Zoughi	Doctor



Our film this evening is a gently-paced, subtle story of the relationship between a gay man, his wife and their young employee.

Halim is a taciturn middle-aged master tailor (a “maalem”), running a traditional caftan shop in a Moroccan medina with his (sometimes feisty) wife Mina. He is a closeted homosexual, who frequents the local hammam (public bath house). Mina seems to be aware (and accepting) of his orientation but as is gradually revealed this is a strong, loving marriage. They need cash for medical reasons, but the business has demanding and impatient customers. The intricate tailoring work does not lend itself to speed, not least as Halim painstakingly measures, cuts and stitches the finest silks all by hand. No sewing machines here! The titular (petroleum) blue caftan is his gorgeous, shimmering masterwork. The couple hire a talented young man (Youssef) to help, and a clear (platonic) attraction between master and apprentice blossoms. Mina initially sees Youssef as a threat but is gradually reconciled to the situation.



Same-sex relationships are illegal in Morocco (and indeed across the Islamic world). The only explicit sign of repression though comes when the married couple are happily walking home from a café in the evening and as part of a “routine” police inspection rather bizarrely asked to produce their marriage licence.

The screenwriter and director Maryam Touzani said that the film was born

from an encounter with a ladies' hairdresser in Salé, Northern Morocco: "The character of Halim started to build through what I imagined of this man's life. He awakened in me things that I knew in my life, when I was a child. I remembered all those things that were said without being said, whispered, about couples we knew from afar... At the time I didn't understand, but over time yes, and I wanted to put a face on this unsaid, to finally be able to say things." She co-wrote the screenplay with her companion Nabil Ayouch.

The film was the official submission from Morocco for the 'Best International Feature Film' category of the Oscars in 2023: the first ever Moroccan nomination.

Critical reaction was very favourable, with the Rotten Tomatoes aggregation website showing a 96% approval rating from 54 global reviews, summarising the film as “a love story shaped by some surprising contours, [that] surveys the hidden heart with compassion and grace.”

Here, the Guardian described the film as “a gentle piece of Arabic-language storytelling, one that softly, slowly enfolds the audience rather than propels them on a journey” adding that “[it’s a] bit too tasteful and tactful about the pain that Halim and Mina have to suppress, but still, it’s a hugely compassionate and emotionally satisfying movie.” The Times commended “a stunning portrayal of marital sacrifice and devotion. And the ending hits with a wallop.”



It is a very restrained film, with whispered dialogue, dark photography and under-stated acting. But in the words of an IMDb.com reviewer “the script is beautiful and very emotional. And the love and tenderness between the three very different characters is pure and very profound.”

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 14 May 2025
Discs of previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

Films about Fashion

Cutting, pinning and sewing don't sound like the stuff of cinematic action – but there are a (surprising?) number of films featuring tailoring. Here's a selection (or should that be a swatch?)

The BBC Short that Won an Oscar

The Bespoke Overcoat (1955/Dir Jack Clayton/UK/36 mins/U/IMDb rating 7.1)
Fender (Alfie Bass) is a lowly clerk in a



clothing warehouse. His one ambition is to have an overcoat of his own. Refused one by the cold-hearted owner he asks a tailor friend, Morry (David Kossoff) to make him one instead, but dies of cold before he can take delivery of it. He returns as a ghost to persuade Morry to steal the overcoat he so coveted in life. Awarded the Oscar for the Best Short film.

The One we showed in 2018

Phantom Thread (2017/P T Anderson/UK-US/130 mins/15/7.4)

In 1950s post-war London, Reynolds Woodcock (Daniel Day-Lewis in his last role) and his sister Cyril (Lesley Manville) dress high society in their distinct style. Women weave through Woodcock's life, providing the confirmed bachelor with inspiration and companionship, until the strong-willed Alma (Vicky Krieps) becomes a fixture as his muse and lover. Lowest rated film of Season 39 (score 5.56), dismissed as "slow and rather creepy." Still – won the Oscar for Best Costume Design!

The One we showed in 2023

Mrs Harris Goes to Paris (2022/Anthony Fabian/UK/115 mins/PG/7.1)

A widowed cleaning lady in 1950s London (Lesley Manville - again) falls in love with a "New Look" Dior dress. After she raises the funds to pursue her dream, she embarks on an adventure to Paris which changes her

own outlook, and the future of the House of Dior. Co-starring Isabelle Huppert. Scored 7.57 when shown in season 43 last year. "A light, feel-good film. Lesley Manville superb, as she usually is."

The One with Mark Rylance

The Outfit (2022/Graham Moore/US/105 mins/15/7.2)

Leonard (Mark Rylance), a master English tailor in Chicago, runs a shop with his assistant (Zoey Deutch) making beautiful clothes for a family of vicious gangsters. One night, two killers knock on his door in need of a favour, leading to a deadly game of deception and murder. A classy, critically lauded thriller – but a box office disappointment.

The One with Kate Winslet in Australia

The Dressmaker (2015/Jocelyn Moorehouse/Aust/119 mins/15/7.0)

The story of femme fatale (and fashion designer) Tilly Dunnage (Winslet) who returns to her small rural home town to right the wrongs of the past. Judy Davies plays Winslet's irascible mother. A stylish drama with comic undertones about love, revenge and haute couture. Won plaudits as a rare film directed by a woman, produced by a woman, starring a woman, revolving around a mother-daughter relationship, and based upon a book by a woman.

The One with Amélie

Coco before Chanel (2009/Anne Fontaine/France/105 mins/12/6.6)

Several years after leaving the orphanage where her father abandoned her, Gabrielle Chanel (Audrey Tautou) is working in a provincial bar, as a seamstress for the performers and as a singer, adopting the nickname Coco. A liaison with Baron Balsan (Benoît Poelvoorde) offers her an entrée into French society and a chance to develop her gift for designing increasingly popular hats. Visually stunning but slow (and avoids any controversy over her wartime liaisons).

Honourable mentions for *Yves Saint Laurent* (2014); *Bright Star* (2009); *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006).

Eugene Smith

Comments and reactions to: **Poor Things**

No of reaction slips received = 20

Average score = 5.10

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

Different – glad I saw it...BUT!

More weird films like this please

Strange film, 2nd half much better, quite enjoyed it. Good acting.

Dialogue difficult to follow when in sentences as sound is muffled! Costume, scenery and acting more than very good. To describe the film, I would have to review the right-wing extremes of weird, odd and strange in my thesaurus. Overall – an interesting film!

I can honestly say I have never seen anything like this film. Emma Stone was a tour-de-force. Fantastic...

Remarkable – very interesting and thought-provoking

Amazing, remarkable and wonderful

It's a cross between Frankenstein and My Fair Lady!

Left at the interval

Well-acted by the lead but ultimately gratuitous and pointless

Thoroughly enjoyable. Superb sets/cgi. Great acting and highly amusing. A refreshing experience.

Position	Film	Average score
1	One Life	8.80
2	Maudie	7.97
3	The Great Escaper	7.96
4	Wicked Little Letters	7.66
5	The Holdovers	7.62
6	Anatomy of a Fall	7.22
7	The Taste of Things	7.16
8	Chocolat	6.96
9	The Color Purple	6.77
10	Past Lives	6.46
11	Winners	5.88
12	Barbie	5.59
13	Slow	5.54
14	Poor Things	5.10
15	All of Us Strangers	4.75

Forthcoming attraction: 22 May 2025 – **AGM and Three Day Millionaire**



The characters are great sea-salt-of-the-earth types who swap friendly insults as often as crackling one-liners. If you want to watch an entertaining romp about a bunch of bungling but good natured scalliwags taking on The Man, it'll certainly tick all those boxes. Everyone loves a heist movie and, as the marketing says, this isn't so much Ocean's 11, it's more Grimsby's 4.
cmagency.co.uk

Three Day Millionaire is a rollicking black comedy straight from the rain-soaked northern fish docks of Grimsby. It follows a thrill-seeking young fisherman and his pals looking to party hard for three days straight before their world, and Grimsby's lifeblood, comes to a staggering halt. Cinema for All