



The Main Feature

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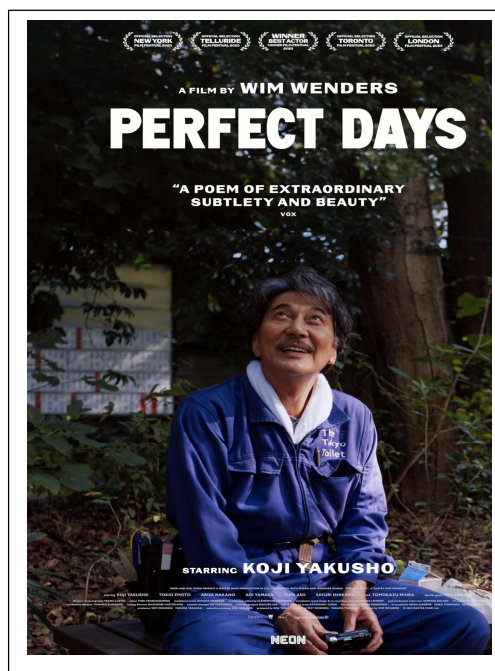
Perfect Days

Japan/Germany 2024
124 mins PG

Director Wim Wenders
Written by Wim Wenders and
Takuma Takasaki

Photography Franz Lustig
Art Director Rakuko Kobayashi
Production Designer Towako Kuwajima

Kôji Yakusho Hirayama
Tokio Emoto Takashi (co-worker)
Aoi Yamada Aya (Takashi's amour)
Arisa Nakano Niko (niece)
Yumi Asô Keiko (sister)
Sayuri Ishikawa Mama (bar hostess)
Tomokazu Miura Tomoyama (Mama's ex)



Our presentation this evening is a slow but increasingly involving character study of the daily life of Hirayama, a sixty-something public toilet cleaner in Tokyo. No - it doesn't sound like a winning story, but the film is enlivened by a superbly nuanced performance from Kôji Yakusho, beautiful photography, and a soundtrack of familiar, largely English language songs from the 1960s and 1970s (including Lou Reed, The Kinks, Patti Smith, The Animals, Van Morrison and Nina Simone).

Hirayama is a taciturn, softly-spoken and methodical single man, who lives in a modest but scrupulously organised apartment. He follows a repetitive regime, rising early to drive across the city to start his shift, working quietly and with great care and precision. He remains unfazed both by his invisibility to the public and by his young, unreliable and lovelorn co-worker (Takashi). Hirayama is clearly a cultured man, with a passion for music (played on cassettes), literature (he falls off to sleep with a book by Faulkner or Highsmith by his floor side) and photography (happily using an old camera to capture pictures of trees and light patterns onto black and white film). He lovingly tends Japanese maple seedlings in his flat. He seems content. His routine is briefly interrupted by the arrival of his teenage niece (Niko) who has run away from home.

Niko's affluent mother Keiko eventually collects her from Hirayama's flat and has a brief and frostily sad conversation with her brother, who is estranged from their dementia-ravaged father. Hirayama falls back into his familiar groove but reacts badly when he sees the hostess of his favourite bar embracing another man. After he discovers the background to what he saw he resumes his minimalist but happy life.

The German director and co-writer Wenders was originally invited to make a documentary about the Tokyo Toilet, a project in which 17 lavatory blocks were re-designed by contemporary architects for the 2021 Olympics as "a symbol of Japan's world-renowned hospitality culture." Wenders instead decided to make a feature film inspired by 'komorebi' – the shimmering of light and shadows that is created by leaves swaying in the wind that exists only once and at that moment. Perfect Days was shot with a largely Japanese crew in just 17 days.

It debuted at Cannes in May 2023, where it won Best Actor for Yakusho and was awarded the Ecumenical Jury Prize (which "honours the power of film to reveal the mysterious depths of human beings through what concerns them, their hurts and failings as well as their hopes.") Wenders had previously won this award for Paris, Texas (shown by the Club in 1985). Perfect Days was also nominated for the Best Foreign Film Oscar in 2024 (but lost out to "The Zone of Interest").

As you may have guessed from the last paragraph – the film was a critical darling. Of the 184 reviews aggregated from around the world by Rotten Tomatoes, only 4 were negative. The Guardian praised an "achingly lovely and unexpectedly life-affirming picture" noting that "Hirayama looks at the world with his eyes, but sees with his heart." Empire's review called Yakusho's performance "a masterclass in nuance. When he does need to express himself more demonstrably, multiple emotions flicker all at once, and it's moving in a way that you can't entirely put your finger on. The whole film is like that: almost out of reach, with much to say while apparently doing so little. It sinks in stealthily." The Hollywood Reporter hailed a "film of deceptive simplicity... observing the tiny details of a routine existence with such clarity, soulfulness and empathy that builds a cumulative emotional power almost without you noticing." The Times praised a "rhapsody in loo [that] doesn't scream must-see but...is really rather lovely." At the time of writing, the IMDb rating is a very respectable 7.9 from over 89,000 reviews.

Perfect Days enjoyed a solid global box-office of \$26m and was a notable hit in Italy (\$6m).

The film provides a few clues to Hirayama's back-story but ultimately leaves gaps in his life largely unfilled. It makes for a thoughtful, absorbing two hours. It is slow. But just stick with it!

Eugene Smith



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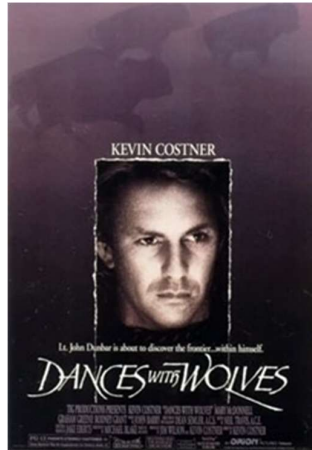
Club website: www.wncc.org.uk. Prefer to leave your comments on the film and your score online rather than on paper? Email to reactions@wncc.org.uk by Wednesday 15th October
Discs of most of our previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

Hirayama prefers cassettes, camera film and paperbacks to their digital equivalents. Kevin Maher (film critic – The Times) prefers DVDs to streamers

Edited from an article published on 17th July 2025

<https://www.thetimes.com/article/f18c9036-20b3-4089-860f-462f76a9102d>

My teenage son was watching the Kevin Costner western series Yellowstone on Netflix. I mentioned that he should probably check out **Dances with Wolves**.



"Nah," he said after a couple of nanoseconds spent surfing every possible streaming service. "It's unavailable." As a digital native he seemed comfortable with that outcome. No streaming access. No Dances with Wolves.

I was furious. I marched into my study, and returned with a single shiny plastic disc. "There!" I said, triumphantly holding it aloft, "Dances with Wolves! Available!"

I hate the streamers. I hate the way that they are increasingly deciding the parameters of cinema. I hate the way they limit access to classic films. I hate their crappy audio and visual quality. I hate their naked hypocrisy - how they occasionally throw a couple of hundred million quid at Scorsese (for **The Irishman** or **Killers of the Flower Moon**) just so they can buy a spot at the Oscar podium but otherwise happily stack their tacky platforms with grim "content" such as **"Saving Bikini Bottom: The Sandy Cheeks Movie."** Scorsese himself is aware of this paradox and in 2021 wrote about how the streamers have systematically "devalued, sidelined and demeaned" cinema.

What I love, conversely, is DVDs. The regular ones, the sharp and rich Blu-ray kind, and the newer and even sharper 4K UHDs (a screen resolution of 4,000 pixels). I love that they are real, they are tangible and that they are for ever. I am not the only one.

"Last year was our busiest year in five years," says John Ramchandani, head of video publishing at the BFI, charting a relatively

recent boom in DVD sales that contradicts the held belief that streaming is king. "People are starting to wake up to the fact that when you buy the physical format it's yours for life. People want to have that physical copy in their hands."

"People want to experience film culture in the same way that, with music, they get into vinyl," says John Rodden, head of UK home entertainment and library at StudioCanal. "They want to see films in cinemas, yes, but also experience those films in the home in great quality."

And that quality, especially on a disc that's presented in 4K, is simply not available via the UK's broadband network. Sorry, streamers, even when you occasionally do the right thing and license the right film, you can't show it the right way.

Rodden adds that "The biggest growth for new entrants into that market is young people. They are people who want to make connections between movies and work out how we got here in film culture, and where we are now. It's not long ago that you had to wait to see films on the TV. We are blessed to have so much of film culture and history available instantly. But equally, the idea that you can subscribe to Netflix or Amazon or several other platforms and have everything available to you at the touch of a button just isn't true."

Back at home my son watched Dances with Wolves — on disc — and loved it. His film knowledge is now enriched.

Meanwhile, have you seen "Saving Bikini Bottom: The Sandy Cheeks Movie"? I hear it's on Netflix.



Comments and reactions to: **Maria** (shown 25th September 2025)

No of reaction slips received = 26

Average score = 6.27

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

Position	Film	Score	Reactions
1	Conclave	8.15	34
2	Maria	6.27	26

Horrible film

So sad, so moving – a Greek tragedy

Just Jolie acting: no real depth of character; shallow story; harsh soundtrack; silly cartoon at start waste of time; v poor

Angelina Jolie exquisite in part – role believable

A bit slow going

A tour de force from Jolie

Angelina was very well cast, doing a sterling job portraying the struggling diva so sensitively. Sumptuous sets too

The price of fame is often difficult to cope with as this film sadly showed

Over complex narrative devices and unconvincing central performance

A very good film which 'grew on me' but not really an enjoyable one

A well-made film but I prefer something with a plot. Everyone our age has heard of Maria Callas but this inspired me to look into her life story. Hopefully the road won't get closed just in front of me next time

I felt rather unmoved but.... new projector is fantastic

Forthcoming attraction: 23rd October – **The Dressmaker**



"About as far from essential viewing as one could imagine, but, for all its brightly glaring flaws, much of it qualifies as a glossy, goofy, guilty pleasure" – The Hollywood Reporter

"Kate Winslet as the star lives the role so perfectly you forget she is not a native born Australian - her accent is flawless; her acting is raw and beautiful. The movie is heart wrenching, darkly funny, shocking and confronting all in a delightful way" – IMDb Reviewer

"The Titanic is now the second-biggest disaster Kate Winslet has ever been associated with" – The New York Post