



The Main Feature

Season 45 – Issue 6 – Screening 27th November 2025

Jimi - All is By My Side

US/Ireland/UK 118 mins	2014 Certificate 15
Director	John Ridley
Written by	John Ridley
Photography	Tim Fleming
Composers	Danny Bramson, Waddy Wachtel
Art Director	Adam A. Makin
Production Design	Paul Cross
André Benjamin	Jimi Hendrix
Hayley Atwell	Kathy Etchingham
Imogen Poots	Linda Keith
Ruth Negga	Ida
Andrew Buckley	Bryan 'Chas' Chandler
Adrian Lester	Michael X
Oliver Bennett	Noel Redding
Tom Dunlea	'Mitch' Mitchell



Our presentation for Thanksgiving is a controversial biopic of two formative years in the life of Jimi Hendrix, described on his posthumous election to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992 as “arguably the greatest instrumentalist in the history of rock music.”

The film opens in 1966 with Hendrix playing back-up guitar at New York’s Cheetah Club. He makes a lasting impression on the visiting Linda Keith, a posh, pushy British model (and Keith Richards’ girlfriend). She convinces ‘Chas’ Chandler (previously bassist with the Animals) to become Hendrix’s manager and they persuade him to relocate to London to develop his career. There, he meets Kathy Etchingham, an earthy and volatile hairdresser. Hendrix hooks up with a drummer (Mitchell) and bassist (Redding) to form ‘The Jimi Hendrix Experience’ and overcomes his natural diffidence to write and sing, as well as play his electric guitar. A third woman (Ida – a serene black activist) enters his life, but he is wary of politicising his music despite her attentions, a nasty encounter with the London police and a meeting with Michael X. The film ends with a wildly successful concert at The Saville Theatre, before The

Experience jet off to play a career-defining set at the Monterey Festival in California in June 1967.

I described the film as controversial above. Why? Firstly, the Hendrix Estate would not allow access to his catalogue, so the film's music consists of covers and specially written pieces. As the Times lamented "what is the point of a musician biopic if you don't get to hear the soundtrack to their life?" The second contentious issue was the depiction of Kathy Etchingham. She objected long and loudly to her portrayal, calling it "derogatory and potentially defamatory," and described the film as "absolute garbage" and "confusing and dull." There is one violent scene she was particularly upset with ("it was not true.") She threatened legal action if the film opened in Australia (where she was by now living). It was not released there.

The film was written and directed by John Ridley, who wrote the Oscar-winning "12 Years a Slave" (2012). The Kathy Etchingham character was described as a composite of "several girlfriends" and it was noted that some characters (notably Ida) were invented for the screenplay. Hendrix is played by André Benjamin, a rapper with the hip hop duo Outkast, with his guitar work largely performed by Waddy Wachtel (who also wrote the original music). Hendrix is depicted as a rather insecure and enigmatic but easy-going musician who is slow to anger (one scene aside). The contrasting characters of Kathy and Linda were well-played. The London exteriors feel slightly awkward (possibly as the film was shot in Dublin!)

Critical reaction was at best mixed. Empire magazine commented that "groovy costumes and a strong performance from André Benjamin do not [make] a memorable biopic of rock's most electrifying guitarist. The refusal to use his music is a huge problem, not solved by soap operatics, clumsy editing and arty/odd sound." The Guardian described it as "an unpredictable film, a difficult approximation of a biopic. But it delivers a Jimi Hendrix experience somehow the richer for sidelining the man and subverting his music." Roger Ebert.com was the most positive, suggesting that "we can't quite capture it all, Ridley seems to be saying, just as a biopic couldn't possibly capture the complete nature of a towering cultural titan. It might prove frustrating for filmgoers who'd prefer a more traditional narrative. Instead, [it] shines a light on a formative time in his all-too short career, and on the women who nurtured, shaped and loved him."

The film ends without any indication of "what happened next." For completeness, by the time Hendrix played Woodstock (1969) and the Isle of Wight Festival (1970) he was the highest-paid rock musician in the world. He died of asphyxia while intoxicated with barbiturates in London in September 1970. Chas Chandler went on to manage Slade (with great chart success) but died (natural causes) in 1996. Linda Keith was apparently the inspiration for the Stones' song "Ruby Tuesday" and is now married to musician and record producer John Porter. Hendrix is celebrated at the Handel-Hendrix House museum in Mayfair (the musicians lived next door to each other, albeit 200 years apart!). See <https://handelhendrix.org/>



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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 3rd December
Discs of most of our previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

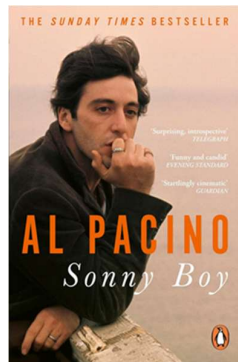
What book to buy a film buff for Christmas?

It used to be so easy. Every couple of years, a revised/expanded edition of the various film guides (Halliwell, Maltin, Time Out...) would be published, providing capsule reviews and key information. The advent of the CD-ROM (remember "Cinemanía"?), and then the internet (and particularly IMDb.com) meant everything you could ever want to know about that "film-you-sort-of-remember" was a few keystrokes away - so the Film Guides disappeared. But here are 6 hardcopy alternatives to give and/or enjoy over Christmas...

Al Pacino – Sonny Boy

(Paperback/£8.99 Amazon.co.uk /2024/384pp)

The octogenarian's autobiography (written without a ghostwriter) provides an insightful view of his long and (mostly) distinguished career, including his inauspicious childhood in the Bronx with his mentally-unstable mother. His (charming and affable) BBC interview to promote the book is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kJzbn3yfwc>



Box Office Poison – Tim Robey

(PB/£9.59/2024/352 pages)

Hollywood's Story in a Century of Flops

The Telegraph's film critic provides some seasonal schadenfreude in a sharp-tongued trawl through budget excess, poor scripts and bad casting. Naturally, 'Cats' gets a chapter. Of course, none of these films will ever be shown by the Club...

Lives Behind the Silver Screen

(Hardback/£14.19/2025/416 pages)

Era-Defining Obituaries of Iconic Film Stars

A collection of Times obituaries, unchanged from their original publication. Over time, deference has declined so there's been progressively less inclination to gloss over troubled personal lives and poor career choices.

The Last Action Heroes – Nick de Semlyen

(PB/£10.54/2024/368pp)

The Triumphs, Flops and Feuds of Hollywood's Kings of Carnage From the editor of Empire magazine, a history of 1980's action pictures ("from The Terminator to Die Hard") with the emphasis on personalities and the link to Cold War Reaganism. Big budgets and mindless action (but no CGI).

Erotic Vagrancy – Roger Lewis

(HB/£18.25/2023/656 pages)

The life and loves of Burton and Taylor. Detailed and scholarly (apparently it took 13 years to research and write). All rather wearing but an interesting companion piece to our opening film in January about Burton's early life ("Mr. Burton"). The title comes from the Vatican's condemnatory description of their high-profile/brazen adultery in Rome while shooting 'Cleopatra.'



Oscar Wars – Michael Schulman

(PB/£15.63/2024/608 pages)

A History of Hollywood in Gold, Sweat and Tears. "America does not have royalty. It has the Academy Awards." A gossip history – it's sobering to note how many garlanded films and performances have aged so badly and/or been forgotten. 'Cavalcade,' 'Crash' or 'Ordinary People' anyone?

And if my family are reading this – too late, I've read (or listened to) all six. Sorry!
...but 2 of the books above will be prizes in our Christmas Raffle on 11th December...

Comments and reactions to: **Frantz** (shown 13th November 2025)

No of reaction slips received = 32

Average score = 7.91

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
~	~	~	~	~	~	~	2	10	13	3	4

Position	Film	Score	Reactions
1	Conclave	8.15	34
2	Frantz	7.91	32
3	The Dressmaker	7.73	26
4	Perfect Days	7.34	29
5	Maria	6.16	25

Intriguing story of love and loss and the idiocy of war

Constantly surprising story. Wonderful acting. Expressive photography.

A lovely film – beautiful acting and music

A very fine film about the awful repercussions of war

Interesting story well told and excellent performances. Strange how it went from b/w to colour at times

A tender love story

How is Anna going to explain her new boyfriend to the parents of Frantz?

Excellent – very atmospheric in black and white

Very real reactions and experienced still today. A chance to live in present and love again

Nicely paced, black and white footage excellent

Very enjoyable, strange ending. I thought it would be a happy one...

Beautiful film

Moving story, very well acted. Enjoyable

I don't think enjoyed is what I felt, but I did appreciate the acting and the storyline

Very well acted, very atmospheric

A sobering reminder that war doesn't end when the "hostilities" do. Great choices this season!

Visually beautiful, sensitive, profound, half sad, half optimistic

An emotional journey, beautifully portrayed

Excellent - very thought provoking (in many ways - life after the 1st world war, the negative feelings towards others suffering the same sorrow, the lies we all tell to 'protect' people or to be able to live the lives we want, the challenges facing those who 'did their duty' despite their personal feelings, the need for enjoyment) and great use of colour to enhance the mood of the moment. A very appropriate film for the time of year, and a great short too.

Great acting and photography - had me gripped from start to end, but very sad

Superb. Great acting and thought-provoking storyline. One of the best films I've seen. Great notes too.

Our Next Film on 11th December – **A Christmas Tale (Un conte de Noël)**



Perfect timing for a wickedly off-kilter movie about a French family Christmas in extremis – The Times

It's maddening and it's exhilarating – The Telegraph

[It] will make anyone dreading the holidays with their family grateful for what strife they may face. It's nothing compared to what the Vuillard clan gets up to – The Toronto Star

A triumph of willed optimism (or perhaps more accurately, of grudging good nature) over unhappy experiences - Time Magazine