



The Main Feature

Season 45 – Issue 8 – Screening 8th January 2026

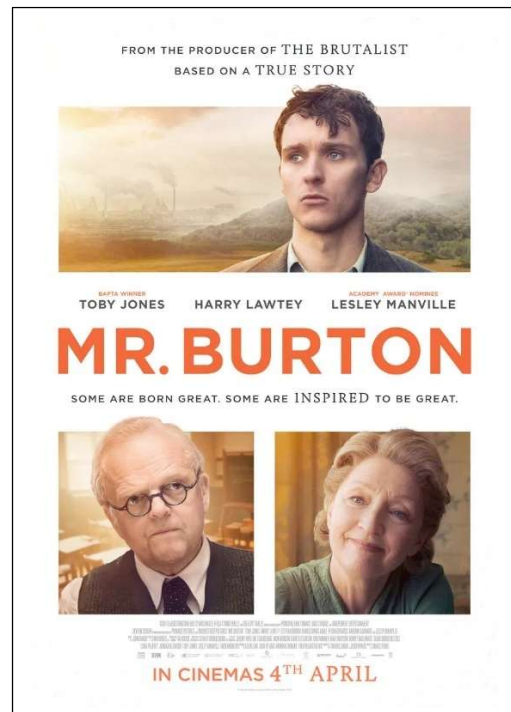
Mr. Burton

UK 2025
124 mins Certificate 12A

Director Marc Evans
Written By Tom Bullough & Josh Hyams
Photography Stuart Biddlecombe
Production Design Tim Dickel
Art Director Guto Humphreys
Editor Tim Hodges

Cast

Harry Lawtey	Rich
Toby Jones	Philip Burton
Lesley Manville	Ma Smith
Aimee-Ffion Edwards	Cis
Steffan Rhodri	Dic Jenkins
Aneurin Barnard	Elfed



Mr. Burton, directed by Marc Evans and written by Tom Bullough and Josh Hyams, is a biographical drama centring on the early life of Welsh acting icon Richard Burton. The film takes place in Port Talbot during the 1940s, chronicling the transformative mentorship of schoolteacher Philip Burton (played by Toby Jones) over a troubled teenager Richard Jenkins, later known as Richard Burton (played by Harry Lawtey).

Toby Jones delivers a quietly powerful performance, imbuing the character with dignity, restraint, and subtle emotional weight. His portrayal of a closeted gay man navigating societal prejudice is both tender and convincing. **Harry Lawtey**, as the young Richard, brings charisma and ambition to the role. Although some critics found his age slightly mismatched for a schoolboy, he nevertheless channels Burton's emerging intensity and vocal promise effectively. **Lesley Manville** adds warmth and moral grounding as Ma Smith, the landlady, offering emotional support amid the film's more austere tones.

Richard Jenkins was born in Pontrhydyfen in the Afan Valley, Wales, to a working-class family (his father was a miner and his mother a barmaid). His early talent for drama and acting was noticed by a teacher, Philip Burton, who became an important influence in his life. The film focuses on his formative years (teenage/early adulthood),

during World War II, which is when much of this mentoring took place. As with all “true story” biographies there are some inventions for dramatic purposes. The film is trying to show emotional truth more than simply the bare facts. It emphasises shame, pride, resentment, conflict, inner turmoil – all are harder to document in exact detail. Certain scenes may simplify or compress time or events for narrative flow.

The film explores class prejudice, working-class struggles, and the contrasts between local roots in Wales and the expectations, and sometimes snobbery of the higher-status theatre or drama settings. The film also portrays the tension and the personal hardship; the family, poverty and parental problems around him. This is consistent with historical biographical sources. The production uses real locations, or close stand-ins from Burton’s life in Pontrhydyfen to evoke a Wales that once was. Philip Burton did tutor Richard Jenkins and recognised his raw talent and had a strong influence both educationally and personally. That Richard Jenkins took the name ‘Burton’ (after Philip) is true.

The film shows Philip Burton becoming Richard’s guardian (legal ward) and that this was tied to a payment, often cited in the film as £50, to Richard’s father in return for relinquishing legal guardianship. Some reviewers of the film say this payment is disputed. The film includes a character ‘Ma Smith’ a landlady who seems partially fictional, who serves as a chaperone and confidante. There are dramatic scenes which may not have direct documentary confirmation. For example, an embarrassing encounter in a bedroom with both Philip and Richard clad in pyjamas is probably included to show emotional dynamics rather than as a strictly documented fact.

Mr Burton doesn’t aim for cinematic flamboyance. Instead, it offers an intimate exploration of how a teacher’s belief can redirect a life. Toby Jones performance anchors the film with emotional authenticity, and Harry Lawtey conveys the spark of greatness tempered by personal struggles.

Its greatest strength lies in the quiet dignity of its central relationship and the sense that greatness often germinates in unexpected settings. Yet a sluggish pace, prevents it from attaining broader emotional or narrative sweep.

For those fascinated by the making of legends - and the unsung mentors who guide them - Mr Burton provides a thoughtful, if occasionally flawed, tribute worth watching. The film earned four BAFTA Cymru nominations in 2025, including Best Actor for Lawtey and recognition for sound, editing, and lighting attesting to its craftsmanship even if it was not universally acclaimed by critics.

Michael and Susan Widdup



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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 14th January
Discs of most of our previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

Best Films of 2025 (according to the Economist)

Films included were released in the US or UK between December 2024 and last November. Over the past 2 seasons, we have shown 9 films from these lists (including 'Conclave' and 'Perfect Days' this year). Not all films are suitable (too long, too violent) or may be unavailable (e.g. Netflix films).

Please note any other suggestions for next year's programme on your reaction sheets. Your committee will be meeting in April to finalise Season 46!
Eugene Smith

28 Years Later (UK/Dir Danny Boyle/115 mins/Cert 15/IMDb rating 6.6)

The sequel to "28 Days Later" (2002), an influential zombie film written by Alex Garland. A haunting folk-horror which probes Britain's isolationism.

The Brutalist (US/Brady Corbet/216 mins/18/7.3)

An uncompromising period drama about a Jewish-Hungarian architect (Adrien Brody) who comes to America after the second world war.

Flow (Latvia/Gints Zilbalodis/85 mins/U/7.9)

An enigmatic and luminously beautiful eco-fable cartoon about a curious cat who drifts around by boat after flood waters engulf Earth. Won the Oscar for Best Animated Feature.

Hamnet (US-UK/Chloé Zhao/125 mins/12A/8.2)

How Shakespeare might have been influenced by marriage to Anne Hathaway and the death of their 11-year-old son. A raw depiction of bereavement and a tribute to the power of art.

I'm Still Here (Brazil/Walter Salles/137 mins/15/8.1)

A true story of survival under Brazil's military dictatorship that won this year's Oscar for Best International Feature Film. Being shown by the Club on 23rd April.

Is This Thing On? (US/Bradley Cooper/124 mins/15/7.3)

A bored financier (Will Arnett) separated from his wife stumbles into stand-up comedy. An optimistic account of a mid-life crisis inspired by the experiences of comedian John Bishop.

It Was Just an Accident (Iran/Jafar Panahi /103 mins/12A /7.7)

A mechanic, Vahid (Vahid Mobasseri) abducts one of his customers in the belief that the man used to be a sadistic prison warden. But has he made a mistake? Won Palme D'or at Cannes.

One Battle After Another (US/P T Anderson/161 mins/15/8.1)

Leonardo DiCaprio as a washed-up activist whose past catches up with him. Exhilarating.

The Secret Agent (Brazil/Kleber Mendonça Filho/158 mins/15/8.0)

Wagner Moura stars as an academic on the wrong side of a corrupt politician who has to leave Brazil with his young son before he is caught by two hitmen.

Sentimental Value (Norway/Joachim Trier/133 mins/15/8.0)

A wry drama. Renate Reinsve plays an actress stricken by stage fright; her narcissistic director father offers her the lead role in a semi-autobiographical film. Exploitation or bonding?

Sinners (US/Ryan Coogler/137 mins/15/7.6)

A defiantly original horror film. Gun-toting twin brothers open a juke joint in their Mississippi hometown in 1932, where they have to fend off vampires and the Ku Klux Klan.

Weapons (US/Zach Cregger/128 mins/18/7.5)

17 children from the same class disappear on the same night. An exploration of small-town life and the torment suffered by a schoolteacher (Julia Garner) and others.

Wake Up Dead Man (US/Rian Johnson/140 mins/12A/7.9) **A Netflix film**

Another "Knives Out" murder-mystery, with a star-studded ensemble cast, some pithy satire and an ingenious solution to a far-fetched crime.

A House of Dynamite (US/Kathryn Bigelow/112 mins/15/6.4) **A Netflix film**

If a nuclear missile were heading towards the US, and nobody could be certain who launched it, what would happen? A terrifyingly plausible ticking-clock thriller.

Comments and reactions to: **Un Conte de Noel** (shown 11th December 2025)
 No of reaction slips received = 25 Average score = 3.72

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

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
6	Jimi - All is By My Side	4.77	26
7	A Christmas Tale/Conte de Noel	3.72	25

I can't give it a score as I didn't understand the film

Half expected a cheer when the son was punched!

Got better as it went along but too long and not really a Christmas film

Dreadful film

A watchable film but too long

What a complicated story

Didn't really enjoy it

Exhausting! Although it held my interest

I found it confusing and too long. But found I wanted to continue watching!

Can't say I enjoyed it. Worst film of the season so far

Hard to follow. Rattled along in places like a Ferrari while I tried to keep up on a moped

Not my type of film. I wouldn't watch it again. Hard work to follow

Weird, very depressing and confusing

Disjointed and confusing. Some good photography still shots. But really did not understand this family's life!!

Not a happy film – and it was for Christmas [emoji sad face]

You can't have peaks without valleys – and this was a valley

Not my sort of film. Just about getting the gist did not improve my enjoyment. Too fast to move between screen and subtitles

Confused and confusing – not even a soupçon of humour let alone any “joie de vivre”

Ghastly people, disjointed narrative, failed to engage. If this was anyone's first French film, please be assured it is not the peak of French cinema!

Our Next Film - 22nd January - Chevalier



Entertainingly soapy fare with an unabashedly brash and anachronistic approach to its 18th-century tale – The Observer

The latter half of Chevalier is a little by-the-numbers compared to its energetic opening violin duel, though it is uplifted by its sharp critique of white institutions, and a strong performance from Kelvin Harrison Jr. – Empire

As a portrait of a thrillingly toxic friendship, Chevalier hits all the right notes – London Evening Standard

Lush and visually stunning – IMDb reviewer