



## The Main Feature

Season 45 – Issue 16 – Screening 14<sup>th</sup> May 2026

### *Still Life*

UK/Italy  
92 minutes

2013  
Certificate 12

Director                      Uberto Pasolini  
Writer                        Uberto Pasolini  
Cinematographer        Stefano Falivene

John May                    Eddie Marsan  
Kelly Stoke                Joanne Froggatt  
Mary                        Karen Drury  
Council Manager        Andrew Buchan



The term “pauper’s funeral” has long been used to indicate that someone was so poor that they had no means to pay for a proper service and burial; no family who would take care of it on their behalf; and no standing in the community. Unloved in life, an inconvenience in death, consigned to the quiet corner of the cemetery with no grave marker. The phrase carried deep shame and was a warning to others not to slack at work and end up beholden to the parish to dispose of their earthly remains, as in the poignant Beatles’ song Eleanor Rigby; someone who had nothing to her name, no-one to see her off but a dutiful clergyman.

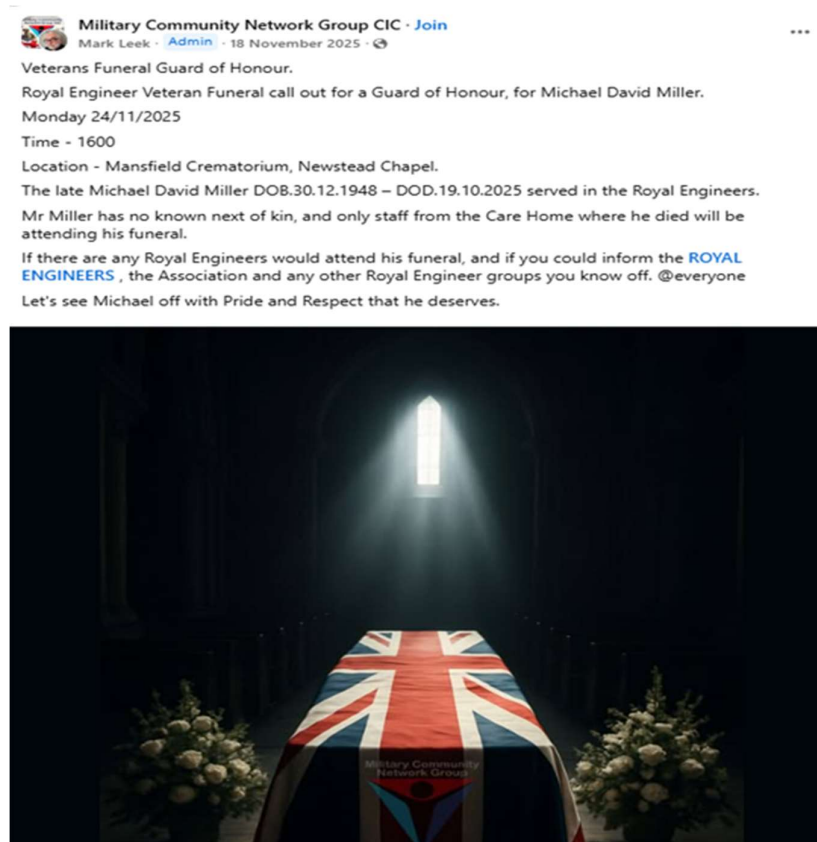
In tonight’s film, the man charged with tracing the next of kin of those who die alone is John May (Eddie Marsan), a quietly efficient and dignified council worker who takes his duty to attempt to locate any relatives when someone dies alone extremely seriously. Using public records and small ads, he attempts to find family, friends or colleagues to ensure everyone has a proper, respectful farewell. If no-one steps forward, he will be the sole mourner at a funeral, having done as much as he can to find out who the deceased was in life, so that he has an understanding of the person he is laying to rest.

Eddie Marsan commented: “[The] character of John May is a man who lives on his own. He’s not a lonely man, he’s just an isolated man and man who lives on his own and within the development of the story he researches the life of a man who lived opposite him, in a block of flats, who died alone and in researching this life it opens up John May’s life... I would describe the movie as being a study on mortality, and loneliness and the importance of sharing your life... It’s about living on your own, and it’s about people who die on their own and lonely. And because of that it’s also a film about values, your family and the people around you. So, it explores one thing by showing the absence of another... It shows the absence of belonging in order to make a film which is... about promoting belonging, really.” (from the DVD extras)

Modern life has led to many fractured connections. As we are all aware, people are more mobile than ever, jobs can take you from one end of the country to another – if not farther – and the very ease with which we can communicate makes it more likely that we will leave it

for another day.

In these days of social media, there are occasional appeals via social networks for anyone who remembers a former colleague from a company, school, armed service or other organisation to attend a funeral to pay their respects. In a world where a death can be unnoticed for weeks, months or even years, some connections remain strong.



Eddie Marsan trained at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, and the Academy of the Science of Acting & Directing. He is a patron for the School of the Science of Acting and Kazzum, a children's theatre company that promotes the acceptance of diversity. In December 2025, he lamented the lack of opportunity for working class students to enter acting; as the son of a lorry driver and a school employee, brought up in Bethnal Green, he should know.

Marsan won the Best Male Performance award at the 2014 Art Film Festival and Best Performance in a British Feature Film at the Edinburgh International Film Festival for Still Life.

Joanne Froggatt's drama school was Red Roofs in Maidenhead, where Kate Winslet was a contemporary. Her breakthrough role was in Coronation Street, as a troubled teenager. From such modest beginnings, she worked her way up to near national treasure status as a regular in Downton Abbey. She has won a Golden Globe and British Independent Film Award, and been an Emmy nominee three-times.

Gill McGlashan



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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 close Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May  
**Discs of most of our previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.**

## Extracts from interview with the writer/director Uberto Pasolini (from the DVD extras)



"I did read an article about funeral officers or people who work for local councils and are in charge of finding the relatives of people who have died alone, and in the absence of relatives they take charge of the funeral arrangements. What struck me was the idea that there are, literally, in this country thousands of funerals every year that are not attended by anybody. Many of the people who do this job, organize funerals and do attend the funeral of their clients. But some people are so busy, or so distracted by other problems in their work, that they arrange the ceremony but then do not attend. And therefore, you have churches, chapels, crematoria where coffin is alone ... it really did strike a very powerful chord, the idea that in a society like ours, and in most western societies in fact, people can not only be forgotten in life, but, even more so, forgotten in death. And the idea that there are people who are in charge of those lost moments, and how some of these people can handle their work with humanity, with the sense of the value of the individual, with the sense of the importance of every single life, in spite of the fact that they know very often very, very little about the life of the person who has died.

So, it is a film about loneliness, but it's also film about, to me, the importance of every single life... The fact that lives are forgotten, the fact that people are forgotten, does not mean that, first of all they should be, and secondly that even in lives that are forgotten, at the end of their journeys, those lives have had an impact on people, the world, society, individuals... along their course.

... As a portrait of our society... it is very damning portrait in... the notion that our world

enables us to forget individuals, to allow people to have no communication with the outside world, to allow people to become so isolated that at the moment of death they are alone, and after the moment of death they remain alone... that is terrible indictment to our society...

... Whether the story is compelling or not I'll leave (to) others to decide... The way I made it compelling to myself is to turn the issue of loneliness in to a personal story, and... the central character, who is himself a lonely character, who is himself the kind of character that could end up not only dying alone, but being buried... with nobody present at the funeral has a lot of me ... He dedicates his whole life to his work, and if he has a family, then his family is made up of his clients, the dead people he ends up burying and at whose funerals he's always, always the only person present. And he dedicates not only his time and his efforts to the lives of his dead clients, but also his emotional life and his imagination, he attempts at creating, recreating ideas, notions of the lives of the dead by the small fragments of lives... that he witnesses in the places of their death, in the places of their life, where they were living when they were found dead. And he writes eulogies for these people, for the priests, for the celebrants to read out at the funerals, at the services, and very often these eulogies are imagined, or certainly have a very great deal of imagination in them to flesh out, to show how he needs to give them a bigger past... a complete, a fuller life than he could gather strictly from the remnants that they have left behind. And... these people are his life, these people are the people he cares for and... in that way he's the example, the best example of a humane society, a society deep in the understanding of the value of lives. No life should be forgotten, and that is what he does, he doesn't accept the notion that simply because someone has died alone, and might have nobody connected, friends, relatives at their funeral, they should be forgotten at that last moment, at that last official moment on earth ... The film, although it deals with sad issues, it deals with weaknesses in our society, it is not... the pressing film at all, in spite of its subject... It has some sad moments, but it is a film that... leaves you with the great deal of love for your fellow human being, and with a very positive sense of the value of life and your neighbour... "

**Mourners gather to remember elderly woman who passed without next of kin -**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crk13z82lnxo>

Comments and reactions to **I'm Still Here** - shown on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2026

No of reaction slips received = 24

Average score = 7.83

| Rating | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Number | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 1  |

| Position | Film                           | Score       | Reactions |
|----------|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1        | Mr. Burton                     | 8.41        | 29        |
| 2        | Touch (Snerting)               | 8.20        | 30        |
| 3        | Conclave                       | 8.15        | 34        |
| 4        | Frantz                         | 7.91        | 32        |
| 5        | The Penguin Lessons [updated]  | 7.89        | 35        |
| 6        | <b>I'm Still Here</b>          | <b>7.83</b> | <b>24</b> |
| 7        | The Dressmaker                 | 7.73        | 26        |
| 8        | Perfect Days                   | 7.34        | 29        |
| 9        | How to Make Millions...Grandma | 7.12        | 26        |
| 10       | Thelma                         | 6.92        | 24        |
| 11       | Chevalier                      | 6.80        | 25        |
| 12       | Girls Will be Girls            | 6.29        | 34        |
| 13       | Maria                          | 6.16        | 25        |
| 14       | Jimi - All is By My Side       | 4.77        | 26        |
| 15       | A Christmas Tale/Conte de Noel | 3.72        | 25        |

#### Additional comment for The Penguin Lessons

A masterful blend of feelgood comedy with a reminder of the evils of military dictatorships. Top performances from Steve Coogan and the penguin

#### And Comments for I'm Still Here

Gripping, powerful and emotional

Excellent

**A very moving and well-acted film**

**Bit too long**

One of the best films of its genre

Excellent, thought-provoking

**Moving, compelling and frightening. Great performance by Fernanda Torres. Didn't see the point of the 2014 update though!**

Not a film I would have chosen to see. Very well done. It is wonderful to live somewhere safe

Rather difficult to watch at times. An interesting story all the same

**Films like this help you understand a country's history**

Absorbing. But I feel it only packs a truly emotional punch if you can relate to Brazil, or a country that has been under military dictatorship

**Very-well acted. A hard, true story very well told**

A very moving and unusual film – excellent direction and acting

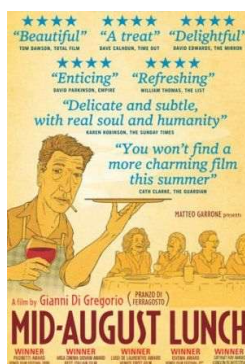
**Superbly acted, inspirational story of love, commitment to family life, endurance and courage not to give up or give in**

A terrific performance by Fernanda Torres in a timely reminder that democracy, for all its faults, beats the alternatives hands down

**Excellent. Best of the season by far**

### **Our Final Film of the Season – 28<sup>th</sup> May – following our AGM**

#### **Mid-August Lunch (Pranzo di ferragosto)**



**Elegantly shot, and with a terrific tango-infused score, this is a quiet gem – Daily Telegraph**

The semi-improvised performances and gently nostalgic tone makes this endearing and captivating – Empire

**The beauty of this picture is that it doesn't shy away from depicting the indignities of growing old - not the least of which is that none of your children wants to look after you - and yet manages to invest all of its elderly characters with dignity – The Times**