



WOKING FILM CLUB

The Main Feature

Season 45 – Issue 17 – Screening 28th May 2026

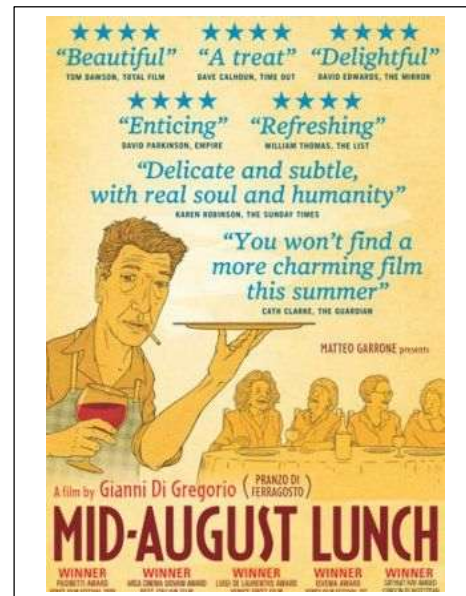
Mid-August Lunch

(*Pranzo di Ferragosto*)

Italy 2008
75 minutes Certificate u

Director Gianni di Gregorio
Writers Gianni di Gregorio, Simone Riccardini
Cinematography Gogò Bianchi

Gianni Gianni di Gregorio
Gianni's mother Valeria De Franciscis
Marina Marina Cacciotti
Maria Maria Cali
Grazia Grazia Cesarini Sforza
Alfonso Alfonso Santagata
Marcello the doctor Marcello Ottolenghi



Who doesn't love a Bank Holiday? The chance of a break from routine, to get away somewhere nice, to see the family. There are downsides, of course: traffic jams; closed shops; and – inexplicably – the railways schedule disruptive maintenance works. Great Britain has eight public holidays every year; France has 11. The Economist newspaper once ran an article asking how the French managed to increase their productivity faster than the British when they have more *jours fériés*? The answer in part is that when a French bank holiday falls at the weekend it is 'the boss's holiday' because there is no day in lieu.

In Italy there are even more public holidays – 12 every year - one of which is Ferragosto, which falls on August 15th. It has its origins in the Feriae Augusti, the festival of Emperor Augustus, who in 18 BCE made 1 August a day of rest after weeks of hard work on the land. It became a custom for the workers to wish their employers buon Ferragosto and receive a tip in return. This became law during the 15th and 16th centuries throughout the Papal States. As the festivity was created for political reasons, the Catholic Church decided to move the festivity to 15th August (the Assumption of Mary) allowing them to include this in the festivity.

Tonight's film Mid-August Lunch (*Pranzo di Ferragosto*) is set in Rome's Trastevere neighbourhood, not far from the River Tiber. Gianni (Gianni di Gregorio) is out shopping, buying food for himself and his ninety-something year old mother (Valeria De Franciscis) who he looks after. He stops at the wine shop and has an inconsequential conversation over a glass with his friend. It is not clear whether he works, but he certainly likes his wine. And it is equally certain that he is broke. He puts the wine he buys on the tab and when he gets home, he is visited by Alfonso (Alfonso Santagata), the administrator of the block where he and his mother live. The repair bill is unpaid. There is a large electricity bill and he risks being cut off. The neighbours are threatening legal action. It all looks rather bleak.

Then Alfonso makes an unusual proposition. He has to be out of town for Ferragosto and needs someone to look after his elderly mother whilst he is away. Could Gianni do it? He is adamant he can't, until he realises Alfonso could lose certain items from the unpaid invoices in exchange. Gianni consults his mother and finally gives way and agrees.

But that is only the start of the problems and the disruption of Gianni's peaceful routine. He consults his doctor friend Marcello (Marcello Ottolenghi) who asks a favour in return. He has to work the night shift at the hospital, and could Gianni look after his mother including her diet and medication? Then Alfonso turns up with his mother – but also with his aunt in tow. The accommodation becomes cramped. Fortunately, Gianni can cook but there is the question of what to provide for the celebratory lunch on 15 August when the shops are shut.

The film is Gianni di Gregorio's – it was his directorial debut and he also co-wrote the story, wrote the screenplay and played the principal character. Asked why he did so, di Gregorio is reported as saying 'I played the leading role because when we were preparing the film, while I was explaining to the crew that we need to find a middle-aged man, more or less an alcoholic, who had lived for years with his mother, I realized that all eyes were turned to me.' The film is short (75 minutes) and has a slight plot. Its charm lies in the details of domestic life – the rivalries between the four quirky elderly women (all played by non-professional actors, and with an average age of 88) and their different characters. It is mostly filmed inside the flat with a hand-held camera with the odd glimpse of Rome. Don't expect a car chase or even any dramatic tension: this is a slice of Roman life, with food and wine and relationships – especially with the elderly - to the fore.



The film was warmly greeted by the critics. The Observer remarked 'A wonderfully patient, delicately observed film; warm, generous, never for a moment sentimental or patronising, never exploiting dottiness and eccentricity'; Time Out said 'Underlying this amiable, thoughtful film is an assumption that age should bring with it respect - and however exasperated he gets, Gianni abides by this code completely'; and The Times noted '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 Los Angeles Times added 'Mid-August Lunch is inescapably a small-scale endeavour, but it is brought to life by how much filmmaker De Gregorio, like the character he plays, admires these strong-minded, gesticulating, quintessentially Italian grand dames. The whole thing is as satisfying as a meal at a slow food restaurant, and when Gianni's mother gratefully tells her son, "you mellow these hours," we wholeheartedly agree.'

The film won awards at Venice, London and Bologna. In 2024 it was remade as Four Mothers, set in Ireland. And the characters of Gianni and his mother made a return in The Salt of Life (Gianni e le donne) in Gianni di Gregorio's second film as a director, released in 2011.

Michael Hipkins



We thank Red Eye for subsidising the cost of printing these notes. Red Eye Print, Unit 2D, Lansbury Estate, 102 Lower, GU21 2EP Tel: 01483 772111

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 close Tuesday 2nd June
We're clearing out our DVDs and Blu-rays – please feel free to take some home!

Season 46

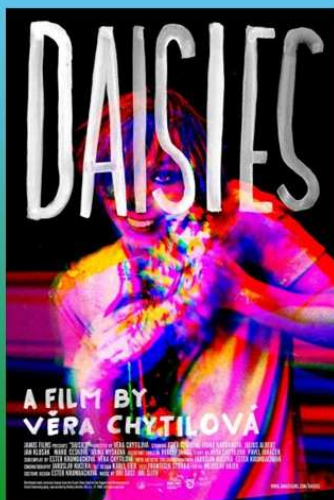
All films on Thursdays from 8pm



- 10th Sept - **Hamnet** (2025/Dir Chloe Zhao/UK/125 mins/12A)
After losing son Hamnet to the plague, Agnes (Jessie Buckley – Oscar and BAFTA winner) and William (Paul Mescal) grapple with grief and tend their surviving children.
- 24th Sept - **I Swear** (2025/K Jones/UK/120mins/15)
Emotional (true) story of alienated Tourette's syndrome sufferer, starring Robert Aramayo with Peter Mullan and Maxine Peake. Won 2 BAFTAs.
- 8th Oct - **The Marching Band** (En Fanfare) (2024/E Courcol/France/103 mins/15)
Acclaimed conductor diagnosed with leukaemia bonds with a possible donor – a previously unknown older brother (who is a musician and a factory worker).
- 22nd Oct - **The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie** (1969/R Neame/UK/116mins/12)
An eccentric, liberated teacher (Maggie Smith in an iconic Oscar-winning performance) influences her young gels in 1930s Edinburgh, leading to conflicts with the Head.
- 12th Nov - **The Choral** (2025/N Hytner/UK/113mins/15)
A choral society loses its males to The Great War, so recruits teenagers pre-conscription. Stars Ralph Fiennes and Roger Allam. Co-written by Alan Bennett.
- 26th Nov - **Rental Family** (2025/Hikari/US-Jpn/109/12A)
A disillusioned American actor in Tokyo (Brendan Fraser) works for an agency playing stand-in roles for strangers in a touching exploration of loneliness and connection.
- 10th Dec - **Song Sung Blue** (2025/C Brewer/US/138mins/12A) **Christmas Film**
A married couple (Hugh Jackman and Kate Hudson) experience success and failure as a Neil Diamond tribute act ("Lightning and Thunder"). So good, so good...
- 7th Jan - **A Private Life** (Vie privée) (2025/R Zlotowski/France/105mins/15)
Jodie Foster plays a bi-lingual psychiatrist in Paris investigating the death of a former client whom she thinks has been murdered. Blends thrills and dark comedy.
- 21st Jan - **Lee** (2024/E Kuras/UK/117mins/15)
True story of multi-talented female war correspondent/photographer (Kate Winslet) who travels to the front line of WW2; reminiscences later with son (Josh O'Connor)
- 11th Feb - **The Ballad of Wallis Island** (2024/J Griffiths/UK/99mins/12A)
An eccentric lottery winner living alone on a remote island organises a folk music concert. A charming, understated comedy-drama with Tim Key and Sian Clifford.
- 25th Feb - **Rule Breakers** (2025/B Guttentag/Afgh-US/120mins/12)
Rousing feelgood and inspirational real-life story of an Afghan girls' robotics team that overcomes local opposition to enter a competition in the US.
- 11th Mar - **Young Mothers** (Jeunes Mères) (2025/Dardennes Bros/Bel/105mins/12A)
Five young mothers living in a shelter strive for a better future amidst challenging upbringings. Understated, graceful and moving. Presented to mark Mother's Day.
- 25th Mar - **Force Majeure** (Turist) (2014/R Ostlund/Swed-Fr/119 mins/15)
A Swedish family suffer in a devastating avalanche in the French Alps. A dark comedy/drama about paternal responsibilities. Remade (badly) as Downhill (2020).
- 8th April - **Dead of Winter** (2025/B Kirk/US/98mins/15)
In snowbound Minnesota, a grieving widow (Emma Thompson) interrupts the kidnapping of a teenage girl...and there's no cellphone signal. Filmed in Finland.
- 22nd April - **Don't Let's Go To The Dogs Tonight** (2024/E Davidtz/SA/99 mins/15)
Heartfelt girl's-eye view of last days of (White) Rhodesia in 1980. Newcomer Lexi Venter won praise as 8-year-old Bobo. Writer/director Embeth Davidtz is her mother.
- 13th May - **Santosh** (2025/S Suri/India/120mins/15)
Gripping female-led police procedural and a thought-provoking examination of India's caste system, police corruption, and gender inequality.
- 27th May - **Le Havre** (2011/A Kaurismaki/France/2011/93mins/PG)
An African boy arrives by cargo ship in the port of Le Havre; an ageing (and unwell) shoe shiner takes pity on him. Our AGM will precede this film.

FEMME FILMS

Next Showing: 27 May



Věra Chytilová: the Czech New Wave director banned by her government.

Synopsis

Daisies is a gluttonously absurd comedy that, through its psychedelic imagery and biting satire, defined the age. It tells the story of two girls (Marie 1 and Marie 2) who decide that, since everything is going bad, they must be going bad too.

Join us at **New House Art Space,**
and **Fridas Coffee House Guildford.**

17:30 – 21:00

Fays Passage, Bedford Rd, Guildford GU1 4SQ



Comments and reactions to **Still Life** - shown on May 14th 2026

No of reaction slips received = **24**

Average score = **7.13**

Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number	0	0	1	0	0	6	6	10	0	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	7.89	35
6	I'm Still Here	7.83	24
7	The Dressmaker	7.73	26
8	Perfect Days	7.34	29
9	Still Life	7.13	24
10	How to Make Millions...Grandma	7.12	26
11	Thelma	6.92	24
12	Chevalier	6.80	25
13	Girls Will be Girls	6.29	34
14	Maria	6.16	25
15	Jimi - All is By My Side	4.77	26
16	A Christmas Tale/Conte de Noel	3.72	25

Wonderful film but the ending was not what I expected – a real shock!

Well-acted. However, I found the film difficult to follow in the first half. I missed there being no cakes at half-time

A very touching film – absorbing!

Well-acted. A surprising end

Excellent film but very sad

Beautiful poignant story, very enjoyable

Thought-provoking

Sad reflection of modern lonely life but also a wake-up call to life and living

Interesting story which makes you think about how life can turn out. Unexpected ending which was very moving

A beautifully paced film with wonderful acting

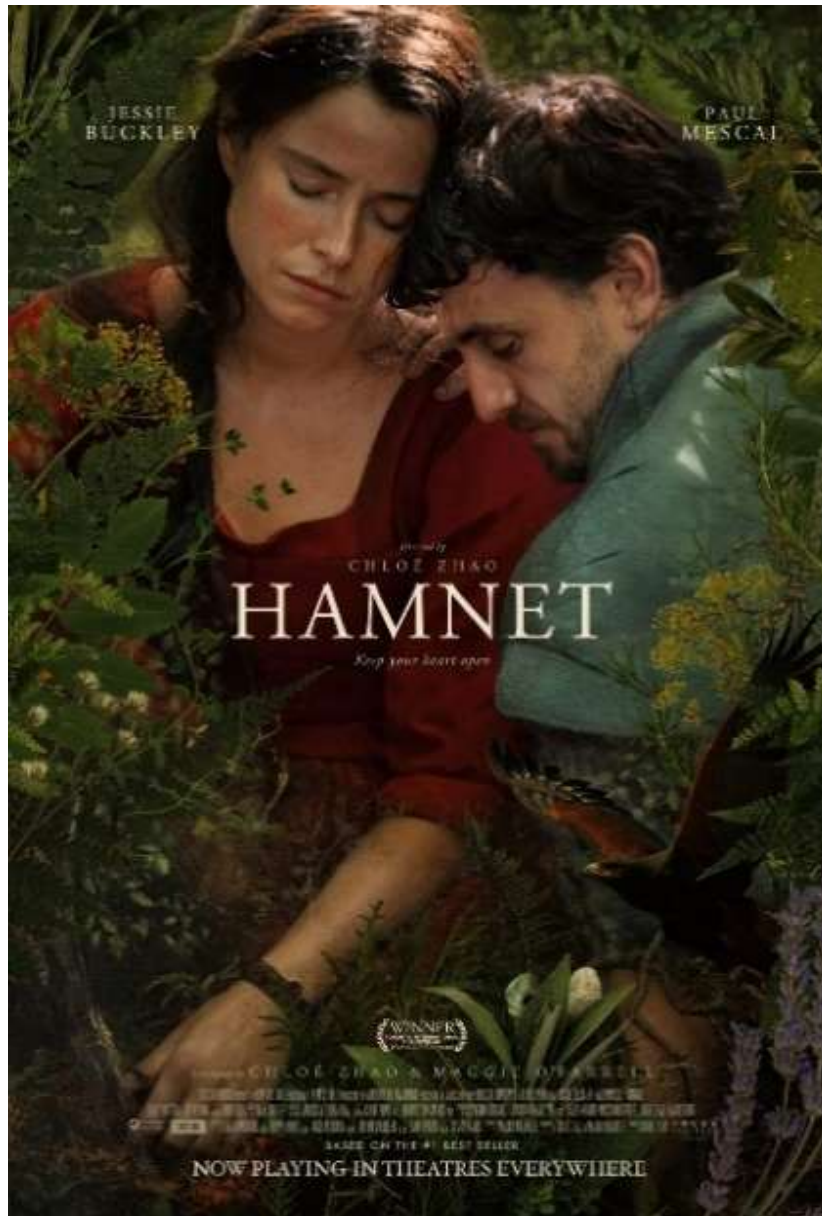
Excellent – but pity about lack of subtitles as sound was quite poor (no change there then)

Touching, Sad, Beautifully observed. Someone who cares swamped by [a] jobsworth. Lovely film

Pity about quality of the disc – no subtitles and poor sound (improved 2nd half), but still found the film interesting. Rather than the expected romance flowering, the ghosts of those he'd worked for attending his grave was a moving ending

A perfect performance by Eddie Marsan as the "little man" who takes great pride in his work. Superb ending, with a good turnout of the people he found on his final case, followed by the appearance at his grave of the ghosts of all the people he'd tried to help

Our Next Film – Thursday 10th September – Hamnet



Mescal, rightly, takes a back seat while Buckley lets rip with the most astounding ferocity. It is ruthlessly manipulative and maybe you will be able to resist. But I'd take a hanky all the same – The Spectator

A beautifully crafted punch to the gut – Washington Post

This is, instantly, the essential Shakespeare movie – The Times

It blows you back onto the street on a gust of pure exhilaration – The Telegraph