

Berwick Film Society - mini-season Autumn 2021

The BFS season for 2019/2020 was interrupted in March 2020 by the Covid-19 lockdown. Screenings resumed in October/December 2021, and the following four films were shown in lieu of those which we were not able to show in the original programme.

WEDNESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2021

Minari (12A)

USA 2020 (UK release 2021) | 1hr 55m | Dir: Lee Isaac Chung | Steven Yeun, Yeri Han, Alam Kim, Yuh-Jung Youn | Language: Korean, English | Awards: 108 wins including 3 Oscars, 216 nominations

An intimate, wrenching portrait of family and its assimilation into 1980s America, *Minari* follows a Korean-American family who move to a tiny Arkansas farm in search of a better life. The fifth film from acclaimed Korean-American filmmaker Lee Isaac Chung (*Lucky Life*, *Abigail Harm*), directly inspired by his own Arkansas childhood, this movie has won countless international film awards.

The family's move from California to rugged, rural Arkansas presents quandries and stokes emotions. While they try to settle in to a testing new life, Grandmother Soonja arrives from South Korea and proves to be somewhat off the dotting stereotype.

Minari covers extensive ground as it explores the challenges of the Asian-American experience – one which despite recent high profile titles, remains much-underrepresented by Hollywood – alongside the specific demands of life in the Ozark plateau. Restrained and richly textured, in turns amusing, moving and sharply insightful, it draws its audience into the lives of a family straining to realise their American dream.

“Chung’s drama [is] inspired by his own family history and boosted by terrific performances, glowing visuals and a wonderful music score” Mark Kermode, The Observer

WEDNESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2021

3 Faces (Se rokh) (15)

Iran 2018 (UK release 2019) | 1hr 40min | Dir: Jafar Panahi | Cast: Behnaz Jafari, Jafar Panahi, Marziyeh Rezaei | Language: Persian, Azerbaijani, Turkish with English subtitles | Awards: 5 wins, 8 nominations

Still living under long-term house arrest, banned Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi devises a further probe into his society, this time through a rural mystery. A famous actor abandons her film set, accompanied by the director (played by Panahi) to embark on a search for a young woman who appears to have taken a drastic stand against her family's filial control. In the remote villages of Iran, traditional patriarchal customs appear firmly intact, sometimes playfully observed here, at other times disconcerting. As a quasi-realist allegory, such insight into Iranian traditions in a little-seen region underpins this film's quiet impact.

Championing Iranian New Wave cinema, Panahi's works have received universal critical acclaim. Screening it worldwide represents a stand against those authorities who attempt to prevent its release.

“Part intriguing mystery, part examination of clashing traditional and modern cultures, it once again exhibits [director] Panahi’s ability to interrogate Iran’s inner divisions without imposing judgements.” Raphael Abraham, The Financial Times

WEDNESDAY 17 NOVEMBER

Limbo (12A)

UK 2020 | 1hr 44m | Dir: Ben Sharrock | Amir El-Masry, Kwabena Ansah, Vikash Bhai, Sidse Babbett Knudsen | Language: English, Arabic | Awards: 7 wins, 11 nominations including BAFTA 2021

Scottish writer-director Ben Sharrock's slow-burn narrative imbued with both melancholic mood and lighter moments has won festival awards and warm reviews since its Toronto Film Festival premiere.

On Scotland's remote island of North Uist, surrounded by gale-force winds and stormy seas, gifted Syrian musician Omar (Amir El-Masry) and his fellow asylum seekers endure puzzling cultural-awareness lessons from an oddball pair of locals. Awaiting news of their claims for refugee status, they otherwise spend much of their time queuing to call loved ones on the island's only payphone or binge-watching Friends. Keeping his grandfather's oud, a treasured musical instrument from his homeland, close to his side while wandering the bleak, thistly landscape, Omar questions his decision to leave his homeland..

Drawing on stories from Sharrock's own friends in Damascus, Limbo imbues its characters, a group of lost souls awaiting both visas and freedom from war, with dignity and individuality. Recalling the quiet, occasionally surreal absurdism of the films of Palestinian actor-director Elia Suleiman and Finnish director Aki Kaurismäki, here's a sincere and perceptive film about the internal and external reckonings forced upon refugees that also has a wider resonance for audiences in these recent socially distanced times.

"A film as sweet as it is sad, as pertinent as it is absurd, Limbo is an experience where not much seems to happen but where little things mean the world" Alex Godfrey, Empire Magazine

WEDNESDAY 1 DECEMBER

The Truffle Hunters (12A)

Italy/Greece/USA 2020 | 1hr 24m | Dirs: Michael Dweck, Gregory Kershaw
Language: Italian with English subtitles | Awards: 5 wins, 20 nominations

Michael Dweck and Gregory Kershaw's film is an eccentric, charming, beautifully composed and spiritually nourishing study of elderly Italian truffle hunters, produced by Luca Guadagnino.

Deep in the Italian forests of Piedmont, a handful of septo and octogenarians hunt for the rare white Alba truffle. Demand is constantly increasing – even as supply dwindles due to climate chaos and deforestation. Now the secrets of the truffle hunters' dying art have become more coveted than ever before.

Guided by tradition and an arcane knowledge passed down through generations (as well as by the woffling noses of their cherished, expertly trained dogs), untethered to the internet or mobile phones, they evince the power of a simpler, slower way of life in concert with their animals, their community and the landscape.

With its focus on these mischievous, fascinating and stubborn old men, coupled with quirkiness and good humour, *The Truffle Hunters* will feel like a balm to audiences after a couple of tough years, even as it depicts the fragility of the wondrous tradition it celebrates.

"Here is a documentary that is simple but contains multitudes" Benji Wilson, Daily Telegraph