

NEWSREEL

1 FEBRUARY- 8 APRIL 2021



TRESOR FILMS PRESENTE

LAMBERT WILSON OLGA KURYLENKO RICCARDO SCAMARCIO SIOSE BABETT KNUDSEN EDUARDO NORIEGA ALEX LAWATHER ANNA MARIA STURM FRÉDÉRIC CHAU MARIA LEITE MANOLIS MAVROMATAKIS SARA GIRAUDEAU

1 roman phénomène

10 pages fuient sur internet

tous suspects...

LES TRADUCTEURS
UN FILM DE RÉGIS ROINSARD

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SCÉNARIO, ADAPTATION, DIALOGUES RÉGIS ROINSARD, DANIEL PRÉSLEY, ROMAIN COMPINGT
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launceston film society

www.lfs.org.au

PO Box 60, Launceston, 7250

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- 🎬 **Visit our website** www.lfs.org.au for:
 - ✓ **Film voting results** and our film discussion page, please add your comments.
 - ✓ Replacement cards (\$10 fee). Your new card will be posted to you.
 - ✓ Changing address? Please notify us to receive your NEWSREEL.
 - ✓ Member's film requests: if there is a current film you would like to see.
- 🎬 The Village Cinema offers a concession to LFS members for most of their screenings.
- 🎬 For those unable to see the bottom of the screen, booster cushions are available.
- 🎬 LFS screenings are usually in Cinema 3.
- 🎬 A lift is available to avoid the stairs between the foyer and Cinema 3.
- 🎬 In the interest of everyone's enjoyment, please:
 - ✓ Be seated before the film starts and turn off your mobile phone.
 - ✓ Minimise noise including eating, drinking or talking once the film commences.
 - ✓ Do not sit or stand at the back wall as this is a fire safety issue.
 - ✓ Village rules for food and beverages apply.
- 🎬 The LFS committee assist the cinema with the queue and process members' admission: we cannot be admitted to the theatre if another film is still screening.

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

- **The LFS is a "Members Only" society.** Our screening agreement requires that your membership card cannot be loaned to another, even if you will not be attending the film.
- **Membership cards will be scanned** before admission and is valid for one screening per week. If you do not have your card please provide an alternative form of identification to the committee member at the door. Membership cards remain the property of the LFS.
- **Seating is not guaranteed at LFS screenings.** The Launceston Film Society proudly boasts about 1500 members. The largest cinema at the Village holds around 300 people.
- **Reserved seats** at the rear of the theatre are available for people with special needs. Please make your need known to a committee member *before* admission.
- **Censorship classifications.** Films classified as R and MA 15+ and MA are often selected, and persons under the appropriate age limit will not be admitted.

Please check consumer warnings given for each film for individual suitability.

LFS LIFE MEMBERS

Barbara Murphy, Caroline Ball, David Heath, Michèle McGill, Peter Gillard, Stan Gottschalk, Rodney O'Keefe and Kim Pridham.

LITIGANTE

Director: Frank Lollo

Featuring: Carolina Sanin, Antonio Martinez, Alejandra Sarria, David Roa

Language: Spanish

Origin: Columbia, France 2019



Running time: 95 minutes

Coarse language



1, 3, 4 February

Litigante provides a powerful and insightful Colombian domestic drama. Single parenthood is far from the only stressor in this affectingly authentic Colombian film, the second from director Franco Lolli following 2014's acclaimed *Gente De Bien*. It pivots around a spellbinding performance from Carolina Sanín, playing Silvia, a lawyer caring for her young son and terminally ill mother whilst dealing with corruption in her public realm workplace.

Romance is also on Silvia's overflowing agenda when she's pursued at a party by hirsute radio host Abel (Vladimir Durán), with whom she's already tangled during a testy interview. Her dying mother Leticia (Leticia Gómez, Lolli's own mum) – who's gone big on self-pity – vocally disapproves of this new man, like she has of Silvia's other choices, and they bicker furiously and irresistibly, lobbing hateful accusations at each other, in what is their lifelong routine. Beautifully shot by Luis Armando Arteaga in a way that's both intimate and discreet, the camera clings to Silvia in her sorrow and strain, capturing the way she's lost in her thoughts or forgotten amid scenes of gaiety, and how she occasionally gets swept up in happier times, allowing herself to feel fleeting moments of hope and joy. The way this intelligent and opinionated woman has been diminished by her struggles is written all over her weary face.

A film about the relentlessness of life's trials should feel like a slog, yet *Litigante* is anything but. Remaining gorgeously humane in its fascination with the most difficult of dynamics, it boasts a screenplay which understands how affection can endure even in relationships that are defined by anger, and how when loss seems imminent the love shines through. It can be funny, too, with Leticia's maudlin outbursts tipping into full-on melodrama. If Leticia exaggerates her own pain, through Silvia's often-wordless worry, Sanín (Lolli's cousin and the inspiration for the character, in what is, astonishingly, her first screen performance) manages to say so much. The admiration Lolli has for his ordinary heroine and the way she keeps it together is truly touching, in a film that raises her up every time she puts herself down..

Original review: Emma Simmonds, *The List*

Extracted by: Gail Bendall

CORPUS CHRISTI

8, 10, 11 February



Director: Jan Komasa

Featuring: Bartosz Bielenia,
Aleksandra Konieczna,
Eliza Rycembel

Language: Polish

Origin: Poland 2019



Strong violence, sex scenes and coarse language

Running time: 115 minutes

“Each of us is the priest of Christ,” a juvenile detention centre priest tells the members of his wayward flock, advice one of them takes very literally to heart in the Polish drama *Corpus Christi*.

That young man is Daniel, who leaves the correctional centre at age 20 after serving time for unnamed crimes. Having experienced a spiritual epiphany behind bars, he’d like to pursue a career in the clergy, which his mentor, Father Tomasz, tells him is impossible because he’s been a convict. But you can practically see the light bulb go on over Daniel’s head when he hears the priest’s powerful words, and rather than report for duty at the small-town sawmill where he has a job lined up, he walks into the Catholic church, kneels down in a pew and begins praying.

In no time, the same streetwise survival instincts that got him in trouble as a kid kick in, and he tells a young woman praying near him that he’s a priest—quite convincingly, actually. Soon he’s donning a clerical collar and agreeing to take over at the parish when the aging vicar becomes ill. Watching Daniel fake his way through his first meeting with the elder priest, you’ll find yourself holding your breath, hoping he’ll tell the right lies.

Daniel seems cognisant of the gravity his new job requires, but he also brazenly shakes things up in this insular place and forces people to face feelings they’d rather suppress. He thinks he’s doing the right thing for the greater good but eventually asserts himself further as he feels his influence grow, and puts himself in danger in the process. *Corpus Christi* is interested in exploring the potential grey areas of pious deeds, and doesn’t necessarily make the road to redemption a smooth one.

Original review: Christy Lemire, *Rogerebert.com*

Extracted by: Ian Meikle

FISHERMAN'S FRIENDS



Director: Chris Foggin

Featuring: James Purefoy, David Hayman, Maggie Steed, Meadow Nobrega

Origin: UK 2019

Running time: 111 minutes

Coarse language



15, 17, 18 February

Modesty may well be British cinema's most successful export. It's spawned a genre. Its heroes are unassuming people who get together for a good cause and end up becoming famous, having charmed all those who can relate to a story about lovable underdogs coming out on top.

Fisherman's Friends is a fanciful tale which happens to be drawn from life – with the usual fictional flourishes added to spice up the characters and tidy up the storyline. We're used to that. Moviemakers don't have much time for lives that can't be neatly divided into three acts and reality rarely obliges. In this case, however, truth really is stranger than fiction, for the basic facts of the story are harder to believe than the made-up bits. These triumphant underdogs are Cornish fishermen whose sea shanties have turned them into Britain's unlikeliest pop stars.

In 2010, they signed a big contract with Island Records and they have since performed at Glastonbury and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. In another melding of fact and fiction, they come from the north Cornwall village of Port Isaac, home of British television's habitually grumpy Doc Martin. Headline writers addicted to bad puns have labelled them a "buoy band".

They first got together in 1995, putting on outdoor concerts for the Port Isaac locals. The word got around and they were spotted by some music industry executives from London – a meeting that gives the film's screenwriters, Nick Moorcroft, Meg Leonard and Piers Ashworth, the chance to unleash their imaginations. In their version, Danny (Daniel Mays), a talent manager who's in Cornwall for a bucks' party, is conned by his so-called friends into believing their London recording company will sign up the singers. By the time they get around to telling him they were joking, he's become a fan, convinced that he can give them a future in show business. It's a cheering success story highlighting the homely pleasures and eccentricities of English village life.

Original review: Sandra Hall, *Sydney Morning Herald*

Extracted by: Gail Bendall

THE SWALLOWS OF KABUL

22, 24, 25 February



Les hirondelles de Kaboul

Director: Zabou Breitman, Eléa Gobbé-Mévellec

Featuring: Simon Abkarian, Zita Hanrot, Swann Arlaud

Language: French

Origin: France 2018



Mature themes and animated violence

Running time: 81 minutes

Set in Kabul in 1998 – when it was under Taliban control – this film gets us in immediately with its exquisite naturalistic animation. The sights – and equally the sounds – of the city’s street life are uncannily vivid. Given the context, it comes as no surprise that events quickly unfold in a very heavy and brutal way. We witness a woman being stoned to death for “fornication”, and various less stark but crushing examples of the depressing nature of war. All of this is cleverly offset – yet not undermined – by the delicate subtle ‘look’; it’s all pastel or muted colours, like a watercolour painting come to life.

The focus initially is on young and liberal-minded married couple Mohsen and Zunaira. He’s a teacher and she’s an artist. Without giving anything away, let’s just say that a key tragic event changes their lives irrevocably. There is also another couple at the heart of this story, or rather modern fable: prison guard Atiq and his wife Mussarat, who is dying of cancer. Atiq has a stern and stoical manner, and follows the rules. That is, needless to say, not easy to do in a ‘world’ where people are clubbed with rifles for the slightest infraction, and women are casually whipped in the street. The misogyny and fanaticism are so extreme that a friend of Atiq can advise him that “No man owes anything to a woman”, so he should dump Mussarat and “find a virgin and have children”.

The Swallows of Kabul is proof – if any were needed after so many prior instances – that animated films can be serious adult art. Occasionally it teeters on the edge of cliché, but then it pulls back and redeems itself. It’s very powerful, and a superb parable, with a lump-in-the-throat ending that’s more moving than most live-action movies. Amidst the ugliness there is beauty here too, both moral and visual, in the snow capped mountains and even – somehow – the dilapidated buildings.

Original review: Mark Demetrius, *Film Ink*

Extracted by: Anne Green

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 6pm, Monday 22nd February, before the screening of *The Swallows of Kabul*.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

22 February

The Launceston Film Society started the year on a good note with a full membership and a good program ahead. But the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic caused us to stop after seven screenings in Term 1, and no screenings in Term 2. Immediately the offerings of suitable films dried up. We thought that it was possible that we would not be able to screen in Term 3 and prepared a program for term 4.

Rescue came from the Village Theatre, when Michelle Turner called and offered a plan. We could restart our program in Term 3 with social distancing simultaneously in three theatres. Fortunately we had previously prepared a program for Term 2 and were able to access those movies at short notice for Term 3. (Normally it takes at least 2 months to book a program and get the Newsreel printed.) The result is that we got a lot of complaints from members about screening *The Lighthouse* at the start when they were looking forward to something lighter.

Another change has been that we were not able to host our "voting" nights and ice creams on Wednesday afternoons. Again, this is due to the social distancing requirements. But voting has been made possible online through our website. However, I hope that we will be able to return to holding our usual voting nights in the near future.

In October Edward Broomhall died. Edward was a life member of the LFS and had served on the committee from 1977 to 1997. Those who served with him on the LFS committee remember him as a gentle and artistic man, dedicated to film as an art form. Unfortunately because of illness in the last few years, he was unable to attend a lot of our screenings. Some of the present and past committee members who knew him attended the funeral.

I have decided not to nominate for the committee this year; I joined in 1994 and have served as president since 2010. Time to move on. The committee has served me extraordinarily well over this time and I thank them all for their work. I should remind members that the committee members are all volunteers. Leigh Thompson is not a committee member, he contracts to us and we value his service highly. Also special thanks to Michelle Turner and her team at the Village for their co-operation and service provided at this venue, and especially so in the difficult year of the pandemic.

Peter Gillard

President

Launceston Film Society

CÉSAR AWARDS



France can, with some justification, claim to have invented the whole concept of cinema. Film historians call *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*, the 50-second film by the Lumière brothers first screened in 1895, the birth of the medium. The best-known early pioneer, who made films with some kind of narrative value, was Georges Méliès, whose 1902 short film, *A Trip to the Moon*, is generally heralded as the first science-fiction film, and a landmark in cinematic special effects.

The Académie des Arts et Techniques du Cinéma was founded by French journalist Georges Cravenne in 1975, and the following year the first French national César Awards were awarded for twelve categories of filmmaking. Supported by the French Ministry of Culture, the awards, usually held in February, will be held on 12th March 2021. Today there are 22 awards in 9 subcategories in France's equivalent of the Academy Awards.

The "César" is the trophy awarded each year to the winners of the César Ceremony. It is a personalised reproduction of the work created especially by the sculptor César Baldaccini (1921–1998) at the request of Georges Cravenne, during the founding of the Academy. César created a first version for the 1976 Ceremony, before completing the current statuette for the 2nd Ceremony in 1977. The César measures 30 cm and weighs about 3.7 kg.

Voting for César Awards is conducted through two ballots by mail: the first to establish nominations per category (three to five, depending on the discipline), and the second to decide the winner. Voters are professionals in the field, numbering about 4,000, divided into 12 colleges (actors, directors, writers, technicians, producers, distributors and international vendors, operators, agents artistic, technical industries, casting directors, press officers and members associates).

Over the years, the Launceston Film Society has shown a number of Best Films from the César Awards including *Of Gods and Men* (T3, 2011), *Amour* (T3 2013), *Elle* (T2 2017), and *Custody* (T1 2019). Plus some of France's key actors have starred in a number of LFS screened films: Daniel Auteuil (14 Best Actor nominations) last appeared on our screen in *La Belle Époque* (T4 2020) and Juliet Binoche too has been a regular (14 Best Actress nominations) last appearing in *Who You Think I Am* (T4 2019).

Last year's 45th César Awards awarded Best Film to *Les Misérables*, to be shown at LFS in Term 1 2021.

Sources:

<https://www.academie-cinema.org/lacademie/histoire/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/mar/22/french-cinema-short-history>

<https://www.euronews.com/living/2018/03/02/five-things-you-might-not-know-about-the-cesar-awards>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%C3%A9sar_Awards



THE MYSTERY OF HENRI PICK

1, 3, 4 March

Le Mystère Henri Pic

Director: Rémi Bezançon

Featuring: Fabrice Luchini, Camille Cottin, Alice Isaaz

Language: French, Russian

Origin: France, Belgium 2019



Running time: 100 minutes

Coarse language



Daphné Despero (Alice Isaaz) has a junior role at a bustling Parisian publishing house and lives with her struggling novelist boyfriend Fred Koskas (Bastien Bouillon), whose latest novel, *The Bathroom* has just been brushed off by critics. One weekend while at her father's house on the Crozon peninsula in Brittany, Delphine learns of the existence of a library of unpublished literary works which were rejected by publishing houses. Daphné soon discovers a manuscript that entrances her, *Les Dernières Heures d'une histoire d'amour* (*The Last Hours of a Love Affair*), a story that recounts the end of an affair and the agony of the Russian writer Pushkin. The author, Henri Pick, used to run a pizzeria in the local area and recently passed away. A taciturn dude who was never seen to read a book, he kept his writing and literary aspirations a complete secret from his family, who are bewildered to learn of his talent.

The work is published by Daphné and becomes a best-selling phenomenon. It leads to Pick's widow appearing on a cultural television show hosted by elitist literary critic Jean-Michel Rouche (Fabrice Luchini). He snobbishly voices his doubts about the author's real identity, and the subsequent backlash sees him losing both his job and his wife. Rouche undergoes a late midlife crisis and demonstrating that he was right soon becomes a personal matter, and so begins a story-within-a-story investigation. New clues are soon uncovered by Rouche with the aid of Joséphine (Camille Cottin), Henri Pick's headstrong daughter.

In the hands of a less-skilled director, this could be quite silly. But *The Mystery of Henri Pick* is deftly handled by Bezançon. A sedate and civilised movie, Bezançon unspools the story with care, keeping the tone light and playful, the mystery intriguing and gently teased out.

For a film about the harsh realities of the publishing industry and a man ruining his life over (possibly) a great literary fraud, *The Mystery of Henri Pick* is a surprisingly pleasant, sophisticated and light-hearted crowd-pleaser.

Original review: Jake Watt, SWITCH

Extracted by: Gill Ireland

THE TRANSLATORS

8, 10, 11 March



Les Tradacteurs

Director: Régis Roinsard

Featuring: Lambert Wilson, Olga Kurylenko, Riccardo Scamarcio

Language: French

Origin: Belgium, France 2019



Mature themes; violence, sexual references and course language

Running time: 105 minutes

The Translators is set within the bookish confines of best-selling paperbacks and their ruthless publishers, following a group of talented polyglots caught in a scenario straight out of Agatha Christie. What could have been a dull and very French lecture in modern linguistics becomes a high-stakes whodunit where the usual suspects are not your typical movie culprits. Superficial but enjoyable, in a guilty, pleasure sort of way, just like any good airport novel.

The plot revolves around the upcoming release of the third instalment in the fictive Daedalus trilogy, a Millennium-style global sensation that's made the fortune of Angstrom Publishing and its sinister CEO, Eric Lambert. In order to put the book out simultaneously in all major territories, Eric has hired a crack team of nine translators with just over a month to get the job done, giving them draconian working rules that keep them under armed surveillance in a tricked-out bunker beneath a chateau. With bilingual dictionaries aplenty, the group hails from around the world and uses French as a common language, with occasional forays into their native tongues.

When the first 10 pages of the novel leak online, with more to come if Angstrom doesn't pay a hefty ransom, Eric forces a nuclear lock-down to find out who the culprit is. Fingers get pointed, rooms get searched, nationalities get insulted and soon, guns are drawn and shots fired. It all seems like a bit much for a manuscript, but when you realise the Millennium books have sold over 100 million copies worldwide it's clear what the stakes are here.

There are plenty of hints to help us solve the enigma, including the introduction of an old bookseller who becomes a key factor of the plot, but the director is also smart enough not to give his full game away until the closing minutes. Things pick up nicely again toward the start of the last act, especially during a well-crafted Paris-set heist sequence, leading to a denouement that tosses in more twists for the road.

Original review: Lynden Barber, *Limelight*

Extracted by: Peter Gillard

LES MISÉRABLES



Director: Ladj Ly

Featuring: Damien Bonnard, Alexis Manenti, Djibril Zonga

Language: French, Bambara

Origin: France 2019

Running time: 104 minutes

Strong coarse language



15, 17, 18 March

Mali-born director Ladj Ly's decision to borrow the title of Victor Hugo's 1862 novel for his sweaty feature debut might seem odd, but there are indeed connections between that apparently archaic text and this scarily contemporary saga. Partially set in the Montfermeil district where Hugo set the book, this also features similar themes of vengeance and the persecution of the poor, and it concludes with a Hugo quote that could have been penned yesterday.

Drawn from Ly's 2017 short film and a factual case from 2008 (which he witnessed and filmed), we open in 2018 after the French team won the FIFA World Cup, a moment of national solidarity, and then follow events shortly afterwards that demonstrate the exact opposite.

A new police officer, Stéphane Ruiz (Damien Bonnard), joins squad leader Chris (Alexis Manenti) and brigadier Gwada (Djibril Zonga) in Montfermeil, and is cruelly nicknamed 'Greaser'. Chris plays power games with local teens, and while Gwada disapproves, he does nothing, although Stéphane grows increasingly uncomfortable. Elaborate circumstances then have a local kid, Issa (Issa Perica), commit a theft, which leads to aggressive circus owner Zorro (Raymond Lopez) threatening to attack an apartment block guarded by 'The Mayor' (Steve Tientcheu) in a sequence that's stressful to watch with all of its improvised yelling.

When a small riot breaks out between the kids and the cops, someone naturally gets hurt, and this is filmed by young Buzz (Al-Hassan Ly), who previously just wanted to peep at girls, but suddenly finds himself targeted as we reach a series of dangerous flashpoints. And yes, it's hard not to think that this plot thread seems to prophesise the murder of George Floyd in the US, and the resultant near burning-down of the country. A wild, unruly and disturbing experience, cast mostly with untested unknowns, this is nevertheless an important film, and surely Victor Hugo would have greatly approved. And don't worry: no one sings.

Original review: David Bradley, *Adelaide Review*

Extracted by: Mark Horner

22, 24, 25 March

THE FURNACE



Director: Roderick MacKay

Featuring: David Wenham, Ahmed Malek, Jay Ryan, Baykali Ganambarr, Kaushik Das

Language: English, Pushto, Punjabi, Cantonese, Badimaya (Aboriginal Language)

Origin: Australia 2020



Strong themes and violence

Running time: 116 minutes

This Oz western delivers racial sensitivity and good old-fashioned storytelling. It opens in 1897, when a title explains that Western Australia was crisscrossed by camel caravans whose drivers, brought by the British largely from Afghanistan, India, and Persia, ensured the transportation of goods across the punishing desert. Unlike the white settlers, these predominantly Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu traders developed close relations with the indigenous population whose knowledge of the terrain was vital for survival. Young Afghani Hanif Gial Abdullah works with Jundah, his good-natured Sikh foreman, and together they have formed a close bond with Woorak and his tribe, even communicating in the Aboriginal language, Badimaya. One day a racist settler shoots Jundah dead, and Hanif stumbles upon the bodies of massacred Chinese men alongside Mal Riley, a severely wounded white man.

Mal's carrying stolen gold bars but, because they are stamped with an identifying crown, he needs to get them to a furnace so they can be melted down and reformed. Given his injuries, making a partnership with Hanif and his camels is the only way he will be able to get the bars to a smelter he knows, yet neither is willing to trust the other. For Hanif, exhausted by unrewarding years in the outback, a share in the ill-gotten loot could get him back home, so he hesitantly agrees. Gold of course never brought anyone luck in a Western, and they've got the army on their tails, led by short-tempered Sergeant Shaw.

MacKay, the director, makes no secret of his intentions, which are to ensure that a suppressed chapter of this country's development be acknowledged. This goes not just for the contributions made by Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu caravan drivers, but even more for the friendships they made with Aboriginal people, brought together by the contempt of European descendants. There's something gratifying about seeing communication and mutual respect between multi-ethnic communities.

Original review: Jay Weissberg, *Variety*

Extracted by: Janez Zagoda

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES ALWAYS

Director: Eliza Hittman

Featuring: Sidney Flanigan, Talia Ryder, Théodore Pellerin

Origin: USA 2020



29, 31 March, 1 April

Running time: 101 minutes

Mature themes and coarse language



Faced with an unintended pregnancy and a lack of familial support at home, Autumn and her cousin, Skylar, travel across state to New York City on a fraught journey of friendship, courage and compassion. In Pennsylvania, teens need parental consent in order to terminate a pregnancy. In New York, the system is marginally less oppressive, resulting in a road trip, with Autumn enlisting her more outgoing cousin as travelling companion. It's here the film becomes the story of two girls on an adventure in the big city, albeit the least joyous of all imaginable versions of this trope.

Nonetheless, there is a touch of poetry to this possible wild goose chase, with Hittman's use of grainy 16-millimetre film reinforcing the drawn out, wintry mood. There is also an aura of ambiguity around Autumn which also extends to other characters they meet along the way, especially college-age Jasper (Theodore Pellerin), whose clumsily persistent pick-up attempts could be those of the goofy but endearing heartthrob in a different sort of teen movie. From the girls' perspective, the issue is whether he's an ally, a neutral element or a predator. For the audience, the answer matters much less than the context that triggers this inquiry - the sense of the city as a dark and dangerous war zone where it's necessary to be on constant alert.

Much goes unspoken in *Never Rarely Sometimes Always*, but Hittman's sensitive script and the strong performances still make it feel authentic and true. The scene that gives the film its title — a pre-procedure interview by a Planned Parenthood counsellor — is never explicit in the trauma(s) experienced by Autumn, and it doesn't need to be. Those who have had related experiences know first-hand that this is not a black-and-white issue, but one filled with grey areas for which there are no cut-and-dry answers.

Original review: Jack Wilson, *Age* and Charlotte O'Sullivan, *London Evening Standard*

Extracted by: Ed Beswick

LUCKY GRANDMA

5, 7, 8 April



Director: Sasie Sealy

Featuring: Tsai Chin, Hsiao-Yuan Ha, Michael Tow

Language: English, Mandarin, Cantonese

Origin: USA 2019



Mature themes, violence and coarse language

Running time: 88 minutes

There's something particularly pleasing about an elderly troublemaker and *Lucky Grandma* gives us a beauty. This is an extremely confident and wildly humorous calling card, enhanced immeasurably by a gloriously grumpy Tsai Chin in the title role.

The 87-year-old Chinese star of *The Joy Luck Club* – who also featured in both *You Only Live Twice* and *Casino Royale* – plays widow Grandma Wong, who has fallen into financial ignominy after a lifetime of toil. Based in a small apartment in New York's Chinatown, she's being pressured by her affluent son Howard to move in with him and his family, but is fiercely independent and will seemingly do anything to stay that way.

When a trip to an Atlantic City casino ends in disappointment, a fortune teller's prediction regarding what should be Grandma's lucky day is borne out with the discovery of a bag full of stolen cash, triggering a gang war with Grandma right at the centre. After finding herself a target for the Red Dragon crew the diminutive pensioner hires man-mountain bodyguard Big Pong from rivals the Zhongliang gang, and this mismatched duo become quite the double act, getting stuck into and dodging all manner of scrapes.

The hilarity of Andrew Orkin's high drama music wonderfully counters Chin's more subtle scowls, near-indiscernible eye-rolls and bare-minimum utterances; with a cigarette hanging lazily from her lips and unkempt in a way that suggests she's stopped giving a damn, the actress manages to turn this little old lady into a bona fide badass, even before her character gets caught up with crooks. Grandma is infuriating as hell, but hugely cheering in her resilience and refusal to be bullied. This sneaky senior is a breath of fresh air in a tired genre, as she takes the shenanigans of various gangsters in her stride; add Big Pong to the mix and this really is a crime caper to savour.

Original review: Emma Simmonds, *The List*

Extracted by: Peter Gillard

TSAI CHIN



From Bond girl to badass grandmas, Tsai Chin has had an extraordinary career. As LFS members we will experience this in *Lucky Grandma*, but most will have seen Chin in one of her many roles from Lindo, the mother in *Joy Luck Club* to Auntie in *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Yet there is far more to her story.

Tsai Chin learned to be tough, she reckons, from her mother, Shanghai socialite Lilian Qiu. “She instilled early in me a sense of my self-worth, which served me well throughout my life, especially in the profession I have chosen.” Her father was Peking Opera master Zhou Xinfang. Tsai Chin was

born on 1 September 1933 and by about 19 had arrived in London from her native Shanghai via Hong Kong. Her aim: to study drama.

Her big break came in the 1959 West End production of *The World of Suzie Wong*, a critically damned but popular adaptation of Richard Mason’s novel about a British painter who meets and falls for a sex worker in a Hong Kong brothel. “Suzie Wong was based on girls who left the mainland after the Communist takeover in 1949 and got stuck in Hong Kong with no other way to make a living,” she explains.

The following year she had a global hit with Lionel Bart’s ‘The Ding Dong Song’. “Lionel asked me if I wanted to make a record. Being young, foolish and fearless, I said yes. Before I knew it, I was in the Decca studio with a large orchestra behind me. I had never taken a singing lesson before. Millions were sold but most were pirated so I didn’t get any money.”

Tsai Chin was one of the very few Chinese faces on British TV during the 1960s, appearing in *Emergency Ward 10*, *Dixon of Dock Green* and *That Was the Week That Was*. She became so famous that in 1965, London Zoo named a leopard after her. But this was only a prelude to her greater celebrity. In 1967, she starred as Ling, one of two Asian Bond girls in *You Only Live Twice*. “People nowadays are SO impressed that I was a Bond Girl,” she sighs. “So I might as well go along with it. People also ask me what was it like being in bed with Sean Connery. I said, ‘Fine.’”

In the 1960s, Tsai Chin starred in five films as Fu Manchu’s daughter. The oriental megalomaniac was played by the Belgravia-born Christopher Lee. Did she have to fight to make Asian roles less stereotyped? “You bet!” The institutionalised racism of the times meant she rarely got good roles. How would she describe the 60s? “While we in London began swinging and loving, China began swinging but hating. My parents suffered and died.” Her mother died after rough treatment by the Red Guards. In 1975, her father died in Shanghai. Tsai Chin suffered financial ruin in London in the 1970s and struggled with mental health problems, in part because of her parents’ fate. Only since Mao’s death in 1976 has she been able to return to China.

Sources:

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/nov/03/tsai-chin-bed-sean-connery-bond-girl-lucky-grandma>

PROGRAMME: 1 FEBRUARY- 8 APRIL 2021

SESSION TIMES		MOVIE	LENGTH
1, 3, 4	FEBRUARY	Litigante (M)	95 Minutes
8, 10, 11	FEBRUARY	Corpus Christi (MA 15+)	115 Minutes
15, 17, 18	FEBRUARY	Fisherman's Friends (M)	111 Minutes
22, 24, 25	FEBRUARY	The Swallows of Kabul (M) Les hirondelles de Kaboul	81 Minutes
22	FEBRUARY	Annual General Meeting	
1, 3, 4	MARCH	The Mystery of Henri Pick (M) Le Mystère Henri Pic	100 Minutes
8, 10, 11	MARCH	The Translators (M) Les Tradacteurs	105 Minutes
15, 17, 18	MARCH	Les Miserables MA (15+)	104 Minutes
22, 24, 25	MARCH	The Furnace (MA15+)	116 Minutes
29, 31 1	MARCH APRIL	Never Rarely Sometimes Always (M)	101 Minutes
5, 7, 8	APRIL	Lucky Grandma (M)	88 Minutes
26	APRIL	Next screening	

Visit our website www.lfs.org.au for film voting results and film discussion.
Please check consumer warnings given for each film for individual suitability.

Screening times:

Monday 6 pm

Wednesday 4 pm & 6.30 pm

Thursday 6 pm

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The Village Cinemas in Launceston have been supporting the Launceston Film Society since 1983.



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