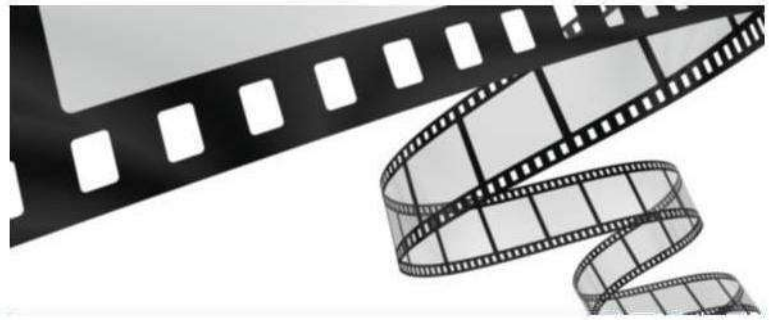


CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

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Happy End 2017

France 107 Minutes

Director: Michael Haneke

Writer: Michael Haneke



Cast:

Isabelle Huppert: *Anne Laurent*; Jean-Louis Trintignant: *Georges Laurent*; Mathieu Kassovitz: *Thomas Laurent*; Fantine Harduin: *Eve Laurent*; Franz Rogowski: *Pierre Laurent*; Laura Verlinden: *Anaïs Laurent*; Toby Jones: *Lawrence Bradshaw*

It has been suggested by several commentators that, with his film *Happy End*, Haneke is just re-reading old ground (John Bleasdale, writing for *CineVue*, described the film as ‘a greatest hits mixtape’). Certainly, many of Haneke’s old tropes appear (the surreptitious filming of *Caché* (2005), the jagged, disorientating style of *Benny’s Video* (1992) and *Code Unknown* (2000), as just a few examples). However, rather than just revisited, in *Happy End* they are somewhat subverted (unlike *Caché*, the audience know the source of the filming, a comment on today’s teenagers constantly recording events around them on their mobile phone). In addition, the humour here is lighter and more direct than in much of Haneke’s previous work.

The story revolves around the wealthy Laurent family, a Calais construction dynasty that has just lost a worker in a fatal accident, partly due to negligence on the part of Pierre Laurent, who is destined – one day – to inherit the family business. With her attempts to downplay the tragedy, Pierre’s business-obsessed mother, Anne (Isabelle Huppert), emerges as the strongest member of the clan. Contrast Anne with her softer brother, Thomas (Mathieu Kassovitz) – a prosperous doctor who is forced to bring 13-year old Eve (his daughter from a previous marriage) to live with his new wife and their infant child (with another Mistress in the background). Overseeing all, and with his own closet skeletons, is the declining, domineering patriarch, Georges (Jean-Louis Trintignant, who we last saw in [Amour](#), playing another Georges, nursing his wife through her final days following a stroke). As the film progresses, Haneke dangles the carrot that this may be the same Georges – excepting that in the earlier film he was a retired music teacher and his daughter (also played by Huppert), was Eva rather than Anne. For her part Fantine Harduin, playing the young Eve, more than holds her own against the stellar cast around her.

Haneke’s unique filmmaking style may not be for everyone, and the film is not perfect; Although the action is set in Calais, the film makes a few references to the infamous Jungle refugee camp, that don’t really go anywhere, and the relationship between Anne and Pierre is, to some degree, a less effective take on the mother/son relationship from the Oscar winning [Elle](#). The film unfolds in short, disjointed scenes with little or no exposition, offering multiple points of entry into the narrative, and

with no main protagonist, in the style of a TV Soap Opera. Through long, static cuts over formal dinners in the family mansion, we eavesdrop on conversations where the Laurents talk about everything other than the issues that guide their decisions. As well as the aforementioned, voyeuristic, mobile phone footage, we see poetically obscene text messages being written and Construction Site Security Camera footage.

Although failing (unusually for Haneke) to secure any prizes at Cannes, nevertheless Happy End is an extremely clever, thought-provoking and dark reflection on life, death and family relations.

Our previous presentation:

Based on the feedback slips returned on the night, you rated **The Salesman** (the last film of the 2017/18 season), 4.28 stars out of 5. Please visit the Archive pages at <http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk> to read all the feedback comments.

You can still provide feedback on this, or any other film, by visiting the Discussions page (<http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk/discussion/>).

Our next presentation:

Lady Bird will be shown on 8th October, starting at 8:00pm. The film will be preceded by a short AGM.