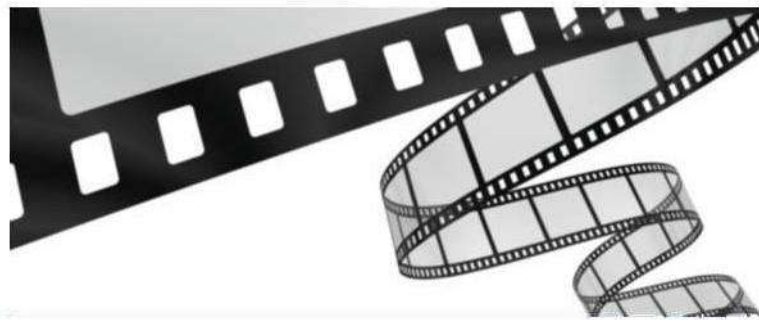


CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

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Tuesday 23rd April 2019

Under The Tree (2017)

Iceland **89 minutes**

Director: **Hafstein Gunnar Sigurðsson**

Cast: **Steinþór Hróar Steinþórsson, Edda Björgvinsdóttir, Lára Jóhanna Jónsdóttir**



Reviews:

Cath Clarke – The Guardian

Lest the people of Iceland be getting complacent about their ranking as the fourth happiest country in the world, here's an unsettling film sniffing at something rotten at the back of the fridge – behind the paid-for higher education, hang-up-free sex and tastefully minimal interiors.

The film's director, Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurðsson, has said his inspiration for Under the Tree was Iceland's high rate of "neighbour rage": over-the-fence feuds between ordinary respectable people. Blame the Viking DNA. He skilfully constructs his film as part-thriller, part-intelligent relationship drama, topped with a juicy dollop of savage black comedy.

It begins with young mother Agnes (Lára Jóhanna Jónsdóttir) walking in on her partner Atli (Steinþór Hróar Steinþórsson) watching a sex tape on his laptop of himself with another woman. When she kicks him out, Atli skulks back to mum and dad in the suburbs. His parents are locked in a dispute with neighbours over a tree in their garden blocking sunlight on to next door's patio. When his mum Inga (Edda Björgvinsdóttir) refuses to trim the tree, the battle lines are drawn.

The two stories play out in parallel. Agnes ghosts Atli, changing the locks and refusing him access to their daughter. At his parents' house things get nasty: tyres slashed, a dog disappears, and some unspeakable business happens in the garage with a nail gun.

It is not so much a criticism as an observation to say that, until minutes before the end, Under the Tree is meticulously balanced and measured. Sigurðsson is no misanthrope and his humane message – that everyone is muddling along as best they can – makes all the feuding and bile easier to stomach. Some may prefer a little more bite. And there is enough here to prompt a little Nordic envy, too: beautiful mid-century kitchen cabinets and an absurdly good-looking blond male nursery worker wearing a homespun Fair Isle jumper, the likes of which we haven't seen since [Sarah Lund](#).

Club notices:

Our last presentation: "I Am Not A Witch"

There were 23 Audience Reaction slips returned after the showing of this film the breakdown from these slips were as follows:

- 'Excellent': 4 votes
- 'Very Good': 15 votes
- 'Good': 4 votes
- 'Satisfactory': 0 votes
- 'Poor': 0 votes

Please visit the current season page at <http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk> to read all the feedback comments.

Our Next Season:

The film selection list for next season is now available on the website at <http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk>. Member selections have been received and the Selection Committee will be meeting in the coming weeks to begin creating next season's programme.