



The Main Feature

Season 41 – Issue 1 - Screening 9 September 2021

Nomadland

USA, 2021
112 min, Certificate 12A

Director Chloé Zhao
Screenplay Chloé Zhao, based on the book by Jessica Bruder
Producers Frances McDormand, Peter Spears, Mollye Asher, Dan Janvey and Chloé Zhao
Cinematography Joshua James Richards
Music Ludovico Einaudi

Cast

Frances McDormand	Fern
David Strathairn	Dave
Linda May	Linda
Swankie	Swankie
Bob Wells	Bob
Angela Reyes	Angela
Carl R Hughes	Carl
Douglas G Soul	Doug
Ryan Aquino	Ryan



Jessica Bruder is a journalist. In 2017, she published a book *Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century*. In it she describes how millions of Americans are wrestling with the impossibility of a traditional middle-class existence. 'In homes across the country', she says, 'kitchen tables are strewn with unpaid bills. Lights burn late into the night. The same calculations get performed again and again, through exhaustion and sometimes tears. Wages minus grocery receipts. Minus medical bills. Minus credit card debt. Minus utility fees. Minus student loan and car payments. Minus the biggest expense of all: rent. In the widening gap between credits and debits hangs a question: which bits of this life are you willing to give up, so you can keep on living?'

She spent three years on the project, and drove over 15,000 miles. 'During three years of research for my book, I spent time with hundreds of people who had arrived at the same answer. They gave up traditional housing and moved into "wheel estate": RVs, travel trailers, vans, pickup campers, even a salvaged Prius and other sedans. For many, sacrificing some material comforts had allowed them to survive, while reclaiming a small measure of freedom and autonomy. But that didn't mean life on the road was easy.'

It seems the global financial crash of 2008 helped create a new 'precariat', some in their 60s and 70s, who could neither afford to stop working or to pay the rent. So they took up an itinerant lifestyle, 'workamping', doing temporary, sometimes seasonal jobs for low wages. That work might be agricultural, or to help with the pre-Christmas rush at Amazon where they are a recognised group called WorkCampers by the company.

One workamper called Don described himself and others like him to Jessica Bruder. He said:

'Workampers are modern mobile travellers who take temporary jobs around the US in exchange for a free campsite – usually including power, water and sewer connections – and perhaps a stipend. You may think that workamping is a modern phenomenon, but we come from a long, long tradition. We followed the

Roman legions, sharpening swords and repairing armour. We roamed the new cities of America, fixing clocks and machines, repairing cookware, building stone walls for a penny a foot and all the hard cider we could drink.

'We followed the emigration west in our wagons with our tools and skills, sharpening knives, fixing anything that was broken, helping clear the land, roof the cabin, plough the fields and bring in the harvest for a meal and pocket money, then moving on to the next job. Our forebears are the tinkers. We have upgraded the tinker's wagon to a comfortable motor coach or fifth-wheel trailer.

'Mostly retired now, we have added to our repertoire the skills of a lifetime in business. We can help run your shop, handle the front or back of the house, drive your trucks and forklifts, pick and pack your goods for shipment, fix your machines, coddle your computers and networks, work your beet harvest, landscape your grounds or clean your bathrooms. We are the techno-tinkers.'



Nomadland is a blend of documentary and fiction based on Jessica Bruder's book. The director, Chloé Zhao, introduces a fictional character (Fern, played by Frances McDormand in her third performance to win the Best Actress Oscar), a widow and replacement teacher who finds her town has effectively shut down because of a factory closure. The film interweaves the real lives of the workampers with Fern, so that many of the characters in the film are played by real people. The exception is Dave (David Strathairn), a fellow workamper who takes a shine to Fern.



Chloé Zhao was born in Beijing to a wealthy family, was partly educated in the UK and then moved to the US where her education was completed. *Nomadland* is her third feature film, following *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* (2015) which depicts the relationship between a Lakota Sioux and his sister; and *The Rider* (2017) a contemporary western which follows a young cowboy's journey to self-discovery after a near-fatal accident ends his professional riding career. In both of these films, Zhao used non-actors who lived near the location of filming.

Peter Bradshaw, writing in the Guardian, said 'The [...] movie is not directionally shaped by narrative – that is, a narrative towards disaster – in the usual way, although there are important plot developments concerning Fern's relationship with her shy suitor. It is more of a group portrait and a portrait of the times, brought off with exceptional intelligence and style. Arguably it is not angry enough about the economic forces that are causing all this but it still looks superbly forthright. There is real greatness in Chloé Zhao's film-making.'

The Oscar judges agreed with Bradshaw, with the film winning Best Director, Best Picture and Best Actress at the 2021 ceremony. Zhao is only the second woman to win Best Director; and she is the first woman of Asian descent to be awarded Best Director at the Golden Globe awards.

Michael Hipkins



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

Don't forget to fill in your reaction sheet

The programme for the remainder of the 41st season

23 September 2021

Parasite (South Korea, 2019)

Greed and class discrimination threaten the newly formed symbiotic relationship between the wealthy Park family and the destitute Kim clan.

14 October 2021

Baby Driver (USA, 2017)

After being coerced into working for a crime boss, a young getaway driver finds himself taking part in a heist doomed to fail.

28 October 2021 (One World Week)

Permission (Iran, 2019)

Afroz is the captain of the women's futsal team in Iran. After 11 years of hard work, Iran is in the final of the Asian Nations Cup. But when she embarks for Malaysia, she learns that her husband forbids her to leave the territory.

11 November 2021 (plus Season 40 AGM)

Bait (UK, 2018)

Martin is a fisherman without a boat, his brother Steven having re-purposed it as a tourist tripper. With their childhood home now a get-away for London money, Martin is displaced to the estate above the harbour.

25 November 2021

The Farewell (US/China, 2019)

A Chinese family discovers their grandmother has only a short while left to live and decide to keep her in the dark, scheduling a wedding to gather before she dies.

9 December 2021

(To be confirmed) The Crimson Pirate (US, 1952)

During the 1700s, pirate Captain Vallo seizes a British warship and gets involved in various money-making schemes involving Caribbean rebels led by El Libre, British envoy Baron Jose Gruda, and a beautiful courtesan named Consuelo.

13 January 2022

The Personal History of David Copperfield (UK, 2020)

A modern take on Charles Dickens's classic tale of a young orphan who is able to triumph over many obstacles.

27 January 2022

Pain and Glory (Spain 2018)

A film director reflects on the choices he's made in life as the past and present come crashing down around him.

10 February 2022

Breakfast at Tiffany's (USA, 1961)

A young New York socialite becomes interested in a young man who has moved into her apartment building, but her past threatens to get in the way.

24 February 2022

Jojo Rabbit (UK, 2019)

A young boy in Hitler's army finds out his mother is hiding a Jewish girl in their home.

10 March 2022

Limbo (UK, 2020)

Omar is a promising young musician. Separated from his Syrian family, he is stuck on a remote Scottish island awaiting the fate of his asylum request.

24 March 2022

Portrait of a Lady on Fire (France, 2019)

On an isolated island in Brittany at the end of the eighteenth century, a female painter is obliged to paint a wedding portrait of a young woman.

14 April 2022

Official Secrets (UK, 2019)

The true story of a British whistle-blower who leaked information to the press about an illegal NSA spy operation designed to push the UN Security Council into sanctioning the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

28 April 2022

Another Round (Denmark, 2021)

Four high school teachers consume alcohol on a daily basis to see how it affects their social and professional lives.

12 May 2022

My Dog Tulip (UK, 2009)

The story of a man who rescues a German shepherd and how the two become fast friends.

26 May 2022 (plus Season 41 AGM)

Larceny Inc (USA, 1942)

Three ex-cons buy a luggage shop to tunnel into the bank vault next door. But despite all they can do, the shop prospers...

Comments and reactions to: **The Lunchbox**

No of reaction slips received = 16

Average score = 7.13

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	~	~	1	~	1	9	4	1	~

Don't they have big lunches!

Dabbawala workers makes Deliveroo and Just Eat look amateurs

Limited biopic very slow and rather boring. The background of Indian life saved the evening.

A subtle little film that held the interest despite a certainty that there could be no fairy tale ending in Bhutan

Engrossing. The two main leads were believable and well-rounded. Strong local flavour - appreciated that it won't have a sequel and can't be re-made (badly) in Hollywood.

Thoroughly enjoyed it, as it was so authentic at a good pace with just enough amusing and sweet-sour injections, as not to make it gooey; but that is India and I love it.

Fascinating film, the reality of the dabbawalla seems harder to believe than the story line. The reactions of the people seemed slow and deliberate, presumably that's the style and pace of the film, or is it me learning something about the culture?

Engaging imaging and story let down by a couple of plot holes especially the ending.

Despite the busy-ness of Mumbai, there was an underlying melancholy which chimed with the open ending.

I enjoyed this foreign language film. A thoughtful yet heart-breaking observation of love, life and organised chaos.

Position	Film	Average score
1	Green Book	8.43
2	Bohemian Rhapsody	8.35
3	The Magnificent Seven	8.05
4	The White Crow	7.29
5	Il Capitale umano (Human Capital)	7.22
6	Before the Flood	7.17
7	The Lunchbox	7.13
8	Pillow Talk	7.11
9	Swimming with Men	7.00
10	Stan and Ollie	6.92
11	Ballon (Balloon)	6.91
12	Todos lo saben (Everybody Knows)	6.71
13=	Sherlock Jr	6.52
13=	La Tortue Rouge (The Red Turtle)	6.52
15	Manbiki kazoku (Shoplifters)	6.45

This summary of the 40th season covers two calendar years: members may recall the showing of *Stan and Ollie* was on 12 September 2019. Despite being disjointed, your reaction sheets show the season attracted the highest average score for a decade.

Forthcoming attraction: 23 September 2021 - **Parasite**

Palme d'Or 2019; four Oscars (Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best International Feature) 2020

A miracle of a film. It feels like Bong Joon-ho's already extraordinary career has been building to this: a riotous social satire that's as gloriously entertaining as it is deeply sardonic. Empire

Described by its creator as "a comedy without clowns, a tragedy without villains", *Parasite* is more Shakespearean than Hitchcockian – a tale of two families from opposite ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, told with the trademark genre. The Observer

