



I Swear

Season 46 – 2nd Film – Screening 24th September 2026

UK	2025
UK Release date	10 th October 2025
120 minutes	Certificate 15
Director & Writer	Kirk Jones
Cinematography	James Blann
Set Decorator	Felicity Good
Art Director	David Konix
Editor	Sam Sneade
Scott Ellis Watson	John Davidson (boy)
Robert Aramayo	John Davidson
Shirley Henderson	Heather (Mother)
Steven Cree	David (Father)
Ron Donachie	Headmaster
Francesco Piacentini-Smith	Murray Achenbach
Maxine Peake	Dottie Achenbach
Peter Mullan	Tommy Trotter
Gary French	Procurator Fiscal
Andrea Bissett	Lucy (girl in car)



Our presentation this evening is a bittersweet but ultimately endearing and uplifting exploration of John Davidson's life with Tourette's Syndrome. The film opens in 2019 with Davidson nervously awaiting the award of an MBE from The Queen in Edinburgh. He characteristically blurts out an inappropriate statement as he enters the Grand Hall...

We move back to 1983. John is the eldest of 4 children, a talented goalkeeper who enjoys fishing, and has just started senior school in Galashiels. He suddenly develops uncontrollable tics, accompanied by coprolalia (involuntary swearing) and severe physical clumsiness. His condition is undiagnosed - public awareness of Tourette's was virtually non-existent at the time - and he is variously told to have "a hot bath and an early night"; and to "stop clowning around." John falls out with his peers and the strap-happy, stern Headmaster at school and in the first of several achingly emotional scenes loses the chance of a schoolboy football trial to his father's bitter disappointment. His parents struggle to cope with his new personality: his mother orders John to eat away from the dinner table and his father abandons the family.

The film skims forward to 1996. John is 25, the sole offspring living at home with his cold-hearted mother Heather. He is jobless and heavily medicated. He meets a former friend (Murray) who has returned from Australia to help his own mother (Dottie) recently diagnosed with terminal liver cancer. Dottie is a warm, patient and nurturing former psychiatric nurse who sees through John's pain and adopts him as a project, moving him into her home (to Heather's displeasure); weaning him off medication and

helping him find (and hold down) a job as assistant caretaker to the kindly if crusty Tommy Trotter at the Community Centre. John's behaviour still attracts sometimes (very) violent reactions from locals and suspicion from the police and Courts. He helps Tourettes' sufferers (and their carers) with a series of workshops, discovering a flair for campaigning (hence the MBE award). In 2023 he becomes involved in trials of a non-invasive median nerve stimulation device ("Neupulse") worn as a bracelet to calm (but not cure) the condition.

The film ends with footage of the real John Davidson, the subject of several BBC documentaries, starting with "QED - John's Not Mad" first shown in 1989 (and available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxJDPd3XcY>). Well worth watching.

Aramayo won the Best Actor BAFTA earlier this year (beating Timothée Chalamet and Leonardo DiCaprio). This was fully deserved given the universal praise for his magnificent performance – "full of intelligence and charm" (The Guardian) and "astonishing...an intensely committed performance of every twitch, shout and click" (Wall Street Journal). The Times praised the film for "[the] balance it consistently strikes between mirth and misery." The Guardian added "this is an absorbing, compassionate film...funny, fierce and full of heart." The Telegraph commended "a film which does justice to those living with Tourette's, honouring without judging, celebrating without condescending." A rare dissenting opinion came from the New York Times – "an aggressively bland, cliché-ridden biopic." You can't please them all.

The film's writer-director is best known for Waking Ned (1998) and Nanny McPhee (2005). His next project is a live-action version of Mr Benn (yep, the cartoon that was a staple of Watch With Mother from 1971 – or so I'm told...). I Swear is an optimistic film that doesn't sugarcoat the downsides of Tourettes (which affects 300,000 people across the UK). The supporting cast is excellent (especially Shirley Henderson in a largely joyless, unsympathetic role).

Final words to the critic Mark Kermode - "it is a drama with three-dimensional people, facing three-dimensional problems and dealing with them... I absolutely loved it."



< Robert Aramayo pictured with John Davidson

More reading?

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/tourette-syndrome/>

<https://www.tourettes-action.org.uk/>

Eugene Smith



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

Club website: www.wncc.org.uk. Prefer to leave your comments on the film and your score online rather than on paper? Email to reactions@wncc.org.uk by close Tuesday 29th September

DVDs and Blu-Rays from previous presentations are available to borrow!



Your Film Club Needs You!



How Can You Help?

First and foremost – **come along to the films!** Preferably join as a member but guests are always welcome. Remember that you can convert guest attendance into membership before the end of our 3rd film – guest payments can be offset against the full cost of a year's membership (£68). If you watch 10 or more films from our programme you will save money by becoming a member.

We always appreciate **members and guests rating and commenting on the films**. It's very helpful to the Committee to receive constructive feedback and criticism.

Would you like to help some more? **Invite a friend or neighbour to accompany you**. Word of mouth is always the best advertising. It can be daunting for a prospective new member to come along on their own to a show – I only joined when a couple of members invited me along (so thank you Jean and Roy).

If this is all you can do – thank you. But please consider if you'd like to give the club some extra help, even if it's only on an occasional basis

- Join our **“front of house”** team to welcome members and guests and help issue tokens and take payments
- Help **set up the hall** before our presentations and/or help **tidy away afterwards**
- Bake a **cake** or offer to help with **teas and coffees** at the intermission

We have an **urgent** need for someone to **shadow our only projectionist John**, to assist with shows and occasionally run evenings. Full training will be given.

Our **Treasurer** Steve will be retiring at the end of this season – we need a new one!

We also need someone to own our **social media presence** – we have a (dormant) Facebook account. Our website is a wonderful resource but could always benefit from more work and a new approach.

Finally, consider joining **the Committee**. We meet 4 times a year for a few hours to assess the Club's direction, keep tabs on issues and select the next season's films.

Please speak to any member of the Committee for more information!

Thanks again - Eugene Smith, Chairman

Comments and reactions to **Hamnet** - shown on September 10th 2026
 No of reaction slips received = **25** Average score = **7.36**

Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number	0	0	0	0	2	4	7	7	5	0

Excellent start to the new season

Original, raw and overwhelming

Excellent performances from all players – seemingly relaxed in an era of great strife!

Rural vs Town life. Enjoyed tremendously and though-provoking on grief

Powerful story and an interesting take on Shakespeare's life

Jessie Buckley deserves very much of her Oscar. What a lovely film. We should see more of Paul Mescal. Much better than the book which jumped about

Despite the performance by Jessie Buckley, I prefer the book

The end was excellent, with the play at the Globe theatre

The soundtrack was a bit heavy on the bass notes, maybe a sound equaliser would be useful for improved enjoyment

John replies - Feedback is always welcomed. We always play back the sound with no equalisation, so we hear the Sound Designer's original mix in its full glory. Many films in recent years add a subsonic musical element to enhance the tension of some scenes and cinemas these days would be fully capable of reproducing this. Our sound equipment is of professional cinema standard and includes a large subwoofer speaker under the stage to correctly reproduce the low notes. The speakers are fully capable of reproducing this wider frequency range - a wider dynamic range than would be heard on a home system. Also, we now have a new, higher quality Blu Ray player that we used for the first time on this film so a wider sound response would be unsurprising. If this type of problem gives anyone a concern, please tell me as soon as possible, typically in the interval, or if necessary, during the film and if the problem is generic, we will fix it right then. **Thank you for taking the trouble to comment on the presentation, it's a lonely life up at the front...!**

Well-acted, great settings, all leading to a fantastic ending

I wasn't sure about the beginning of the film. The setting and photography were impressive. The ending explained a great deal but was extremely emotional

A film of two halves. The last 45 minutes were outstanding

I really enjoyed the second part of the film. Very moving!

Film about Agnes – her performance is stunning, excellent and recognises the “influence” of witches

Very well-acted, very moving but a little bit too long

A real blockbuster: Great acting, beautiful pictures, a bit grim in parts but strangely uplifting.

For a different slant on the Shakespeare family, see the excellent Upstart Crow series available on BBC iPlayer

Our Next Film – Thursday 8th October – The Marching Band (En Fanfare)



A huge hit in its native France, this uplifting, moving and subtly funny affair has been making friends right around the world – **The Telegraph (Australia)**

It's a real charmer – **Daily Mail**

A beautiful and worthy film. Also predictable at times but never using cheap formulae – **El Pais (Spain)**

The film may not surprise but it's a sincere and uplifting tale – **The Sun**