



FULL TIME

Monday, March 27, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Katie Walsh | The Wrap | Not Rated | 87 Mins.

Julie (Laure Calamy) is on the move. From the moment her alarm clock disturbs her sleeping breath, she's in constant state of harried, frantic motion—making breakfast, tinkering with the boiler, dropping her kids off at an elderly neighbor's house while it's still dark out, running to catch a train, changing into her hotel maid uniform, smoothing sheets, hosing excrement from the walls, and battling her way back home to do it all over again, all too soon.

"Full Time," written and directed by Eric Gravel, depicts the never-ending sprint that is Julie's life as a struggling single mom, rendering this social-realist drama as a gritty, heart-pounding thriller, with breathless, naturalistic handheld cinematography by Victor Seguin and an adrenaline-pounding electronic score by Irène Drésel.

There's something radical about turning a very bad week in the life of a single mom into an action thriller, and with it Gravel makes a bold socio-political statement simply by letting us watch Julie's life unfold, or unravel, over the course of about a week during a transit strike that renders Julie's already challenging life nearly impossible. Living in a small village outside of Paris, Julie takes trains, buses, and the Métro to get into work every day at a 5 star hotel. But when the system grinds to a halt, Julie never stops moving, jumping onto replacement buses, hitchhiking, and taking off-license cabs wherever she can just to clock in at work in the morning and return home to relieve her babysitter, an increasingly exasperated Mme. Lusigny (Geneviève Mnich).

Her ex-husband's number goes straight to voicemail, and with the transit strike her childcare issues, and problems with her manager at the hotel, Julie is a study in desperation, summoning the last dregs of her charm to ask, then beg for favors — just a little help to get by, just until tomorrow — until the next crisis rears its head. She has a light at the end of the tunnel—a job interview at a market research company—and that is the only thing keeping Julie moving forward constantly, like a shark.

"Full Time" is a portrait in precarity, showing us how challenging it is to escape poverty, and how easy it is to slip into. Julie has experience in corporate market research, but her company shut down, she got divorced, she has two kids. Everything she does is for survival, and her life is held together with her sheer effort and the begrudging goodwill of those around her. The thing about getting ahead is that it requires two things Julie lacks: time, and money for last minute interviews, lunches, and new business suits.

It's fascinating that Gravel sets this drama against a transit strike—it escalates the obstacles Julie has to overcome, but it's also relevant that we see her as a worker who can't just "work from home" due to

transit workers striking in opposition to an increase in hours to support the welfare program. Despite any solidarity she might feel, she has no choice but to battle through to continue earning her paycheck, to continue striving for more. The only solidarity Julie has is to keeping her family afloat, sparing her only ragged scraps of energy for herself and her kids.

At the center of this hurricane is the astounding Calamy, who is best known for her role on the comedy "Call My Agent" and her Cesar-award winning performance in the light romance "My Donkey, My Lover, and I." This darker role and performance, for which she won the 2021 Best Actress prize at the Venice Film Festival, is a departure for the actress, but her natural charm is a crucial element as Julie pastes on a smile and cajoles favors out of the hotel footmen and inquires about childcare to another parent on the train platform.

At a certain point, hunched in her ubiquitous corduroy bomber jacket and scarf, hanging out a thumb into traffic hoping for a ride, Julie suddenly calls to mind another woman on the run: Sandrine Bonnaire in Agnès Varda's "Vagabond." But where Varda embraced the bleakness in her film, Gravel flinches. There's a moment where you think things might turn even darker, but he swerves, and ultimately, over-corrects. For a film that teems with such desperation, it's a bit startling how quickly a resolution is delivered, though it's not like Julie hasn't earned it through sweat, tears, and the unmatched determination of a mother in need.

Julie is required to constantly shape-shift, running from role to role: mother to maid to marketing exec, and Calamy delivers a performance that is utterly present, physically and emotionally, in the adrenaline-fueled panic in which Julie exists. We watch her fight and claw and struggle against the rip tides that attempt to pull her under, but it's when she surrenders that a glimpse of salvation surfaces, a shimmer of hope that keeps her going, and going, and going.

In French with English subtitles.



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LIVING

Monday, April 3, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Matthew Huff | AV Club | Not Rated | 102 Mins.

The Kazuo Ishiguro-penned adaptation of Akira Kurosawa's Ikiru is a gentle, expertly crafted meditation on dying and, of course, living.

Rarely does a film arrive in theaters with a lineage of creators as highly pedigreed (and as long) as that of Living. The story, that of a successful bureaucrat looking back over his life in light of a fatal diagnosis, was originally penned by Leo Tolstoy in the form of his 1886 novella The Death of Ivan Ilyich. Tolstoy is of course the highly lauded author of Russian masterpieces War and Peace and Anna Karenina as well. Ivan Ilyich was then adapted by legendary Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa into Ikiru, which some claim to be the best film in his impressive roster of films that includes Seven Samurai and Ran. Ikiru was in turn adapted into English as Living by Nobel and Booker Prize winner Sir Kazuo Ishiguro. Two of his acclaimed novels, Never Let Me Go and The Remains Of The Day, have been adapted into award-winning films, with the latter receiving eight Oscar nominations. And thus, Living arrived at Sundance last winter boasting a list of ancestors more illustrious than Prince Harry's.



This latest iteration of Ivan Ilyich stars Bill Nighy in a uniquely British version of the story. The film opens with Mr. Wakeling (Alex Sharp of The Trial of The Chicago 7) as a bright-eyed, eager-to-please fledgling bureaucrat starting a new job in the Public Works department of 1953 London. Taking the (very British) steam engine to work each morning, he watches as the bespoke bowler-cap-

wearing, prim-and-proper (and very British) Mr. Williams (Nighy) boards the train. In the office, they are joined by several other dapper gentlemen and the charming secretary Miss Harris (Sex Education's Aimee Lou Wood) as they sort through immense files of paper. With little emotion and much decorum, they pass forms around, scribbling down notes (very Britishly), before either sending them off through the maze of city hall departments or burying them in immense stacks to be revisited and circulated at a later date (much to the chagrin of the civilians trying to clear up matters).

After a lifetime of following the same routine, however, Mr. Williams all at once begins to act erratically, to the confusion of his subordinates. Skipping work for days on end, he eventually runs into Miss Harris outside of the office, and in several awkward but charming encounters, he confesses that he is dying of stomach cancer and grappling with a life filled largely with humdrum paper shuffling. Through his boozy encounters with a writer (Tom Burke), his grandfatherly friendship with Miss Harris, and some soul-searching of his own, he decides to return to work and actually get things done (much to the shock and horror of his colleagues). The result is a splendidly crafted and finely calibrated examination of birth, death, and the careers we use to fill the time in between.

With the magnitude of its creators, Living could have easily buckled under the pressure of its predecessors. The Ishiguro script, however, is deftly handled by director Oliver Hermanus, who tells what is ultimately a very simple, intimate tale with measured grace. The shots of London's County Hall from cinematographer Jamie D. Ramsay, the well-tailored suits from costume designer (and 15-time Oscar nominee) Sandy Powell, and the delicate, string-infused score from Emilie Levienaise-Farrouch all contribute to the finely tuned perfection of the film. While its quaint, well-mannered, uplifting if melancholy tone may be reminiscent of other pleasing British fare like Downton Abbey, The King's Speech, and Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris, Living offers more gravitas without ever feeling weighty.

Perhaps the best part of the film, and why it works so effortlessly—even though making something look effortless usually takes a wild amount of effort—is its performances. The Golden Globe- and Critics Choice Award-nominated Nighy has delivered one of the year's most memorable turns. The way he manages to convey so much while playing a man whose chief character trait is emotional restraint is nothing short of miraculous, a testament to his decades as an actor on stage and screen (and worthy of a first, long overdue Oscar nomination). Nighy's scenes with the consistently wonderful Wood are especially electric as her charming effervescence and infectious grin are the perfect foil to his stoic facade. Sharp, who plays what is basically a young version of Nighy, also proves to be an able scene partner.

Living is not a big movie, despite the pedigree of its creators. But it is an artistically masterful one—a film that, while deceptively simple, may linger in your mind for years to come. .

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The Quiet Girl

An Cailín Ciúin

Monday, April 24, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by David Fear | Rolling Stone | Not Rated | 94 Mins.

Ireland's nominee for Best International Feature should, in a just world, be up for Best Picture. Do yourself a favor and see it as soon as you can!

The girl is named Cáit. She's 12 years old, doesn't like attention, stays hidden and silent when she can. Living in the rural Irish countryside in the early 1980s, she's the youngest of a brood belonging to parents that seem one perpetually short fuse away from exploding. Or rather, she was the youngest — her Ma is six months pregnant. As for her Da, he's a largely absent, mostly glowering presence capable of inspiring a dread-inducing hush into the household upon entering. Even when he brings Cáit with him to a pub, he's still just an ominous figure to her, yet another adult downing pints and yet another incentive to be neither seen nor heard.

You get to know this muted youngster over the course of *The Quiet Girl*, the debut fiction feature from writer-director Colm Bairéad and Ireland's nominee for Best International Feature at this year's Oscars. (Most of the dialogue is in Gaeilge, hence the "international feature" nod. In a just world, it would be up for a dozen other categories as well, but why look an award-season gift horse in the mouth?) But for the movie's first third or so, Cáit is a cypher, someone who keeps her emotions locked away and would disappear entirely if she could. Home is a nightmare. School is worse. Precious few expositional details are given, but there's enough telltale signs that life is rough for this kid.

Silence often speaks volumes, of course, and as played by Catherine Clinch, Cáit barely needs to say anything to communicate that she's a walking, if barely talking, cry for help. This is one of those performances where every tiny shift, every movement of her eyes, every tensing up of her posture and wary glance tells you everything you need to know. Even when Bairéad purposefully keeps us from seeing his heroine's face for most of *The Quiet Girl*'s opening prologue, you get the sense that the youngster is wounded beyond her years. "She says as much as she needs to say," another character notes in defense of Cáit, and it's to Clinch's credit that the statement doubles as a description of her portrayal as well. The show-don't-tell approach may be a necessity (see title) and is completely in line with the source material, Claire Keegan's 2010 novella *Foster*, but what she's doing complements the filmmaking and the storytelling perfectly. It's a transparent take on someone trying to stay alert and shield themselves simultaneously. (Between Clinch's work here and what Park Ji-min accomplishes in *Return to Seoul*, another 2022 holdover that's just now getting a belated theatrical run, it's already a great year for first-time actors running laps around veteran thespians.)

The whiff of economic hardship, institutional despair and free-floating misery, the kind so often associated with a certain strain of Irish literature and memoirs, hovers over the proceedings before the movie slightly pivots. Because Cáit's parents can't be bothered with her, they decide to send her away for the summer. Her seasonal

guardians will be an older couple, Eibhlín (Carrie Crawley) and Seán (Andrew Bennett), who live on a farm; the fact that the woman may be kin is casually mentioned, though it's hard to tell whether that's a white lie or not. She's unceremoniously dropped off, and you start to wonder whether this vulnerable child has officially exited the frying pan and entered a raging, four-alarm fire. The woman seems a little too present and available at first. The man couldn't be more distant or aloof.

Then the movie begins to gently guide us through their situation as well. "There are no secrets in this house," Eibhlín tells their young ward. But there has been tragedy, and a lot of emotional rawness and grief have passed through those halls. Bairéad doesn't switch up his stylistic tics — this is a movie that loves framing characters between tight doorways and through windows; the fact that he's shooting in a square, Academy aspect ratio only heightens the feeling that everything is a trap — yet he does relax the tone of the film. And slowly, what had felt like a new environment filled with uncertainty and instability begins to give way to something else. Cáit and Seán bond as she helps with chores, and he begins timing her sprints to and from the mailbox down the path. Eibhlín takes her dress shopping. The girl begins to bloom in an environment characterized by nurturing instead of toxic neglect. She even speaks more.

There is a sense that a clock is ticking somewhere, and this feeling of familial love is regrettably finite. *The Quiet Girl* knows this, and it knows that you know this. How it gets to where this story needs to end, however, is what separates it from every other melodrama that's used the whole notion of angelic surrogate parents as a way of wringing your tear ducts dry. By the time we get to the climax, we can see that these three have changed, even if the notion of a permanent reset becomes a pipe dream. It's also not giving anything away to say that it ends on a display of total and utter grace that's also devastating, and may require theaters to thoroughly waterproof their floors before showings.



Having already swept Ireland's equivalent of the Academy Awards and won festival accolades, not to mention setting both its young star and its director up for stellar careers should they want them, the film's appearance among this year's Oscar contenders feels more like a victory lap than an endgame. One more statue would up its profile, but that's almost irrelevant. What matters is that *The Quiet Girl* is, quite simply, a genuine work of art by a genuinely empathetic artist, and one of the single most moving, heartfelt, and heartbreaking movies from any country in the last decade. That only sounds like hyperbole until you see it. After that, the sentence reads as a huge understatement.

In Irish Gaelic with English Subtitles

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"Director Gravel draws the audience in with a tense, sympathetic, well-told Everyman tale."

—Monica Reid, *Far Out Magazine*

Monday, March 27 at 7:30 pm

"An absolutely gorgeous heartbreaking piece of work."

—David Fear, *Rolling Stone*

Monday, April 3 at 7:30 pm



"A jewel...Deeply moving take of rural Ireland. Already feels like a classic."

The Guardian

Monday, April 24 at 7:30 pm

