

## Starred Up

UK 2013

**Directed by**  
David Mackenzie

**Writing credits**  
Jonathan Asser

**Cinematography**  
Michael McDonough

106 mins

### Cast

Jack O'Connell  
*Eric Love*

Ben Mendelsohn  
*Neville Love*

Rupert Friend  
*Oliver Baumer*

**Our second of three UK films this season, and the second time we've screened a film by David Mackenzie – some members may recall *Hallam Foe* several seasons ago.**

This British prison drama is tough, remorseless, skilfully and plurally targeted, and often genuinely powerful. For director David Mackenzie (*Young Adam*) and screenwriter Jonathan Asser, a former prison therapist, a jail is not only a microcosm of society. It's a kind of multiple parody – barbarous, mocking, grimly educative – of individual social institutions. *Starred Up* at best is a British answer – very British – to French cinema's 2009 masterwork about banged-up lives, *A Prophet*. It's British because the feline grace and logic of Jacques Audiard's film are replaced by a thick-necked nihilist wit no less lethal, no less perceptive and – if we stand back for an appraising moment in a film that to its fast-paced credit hardly gives us time – no less truthful.

*Nigel Andrews, Financial Times*

Whenever he is on screen, though, it is impossible to take your eyes off O'Connell as Eric, so convincingly psychotic that there are times when you have to remind yourself this isn't a fly-on-the-prison-wall documentary.

*Brian Viner, Daily Mail*

If O'Connell is like a caged wild animal, Mendelsohn is the ineffectual circus trainer whose strict commands and stern lashes don't so much tame the beast as enrage it further. While the film boasts strong performances all round, it's this volatile central dynamic that proves the most potent. Mendelsohn is in menacing form here, but the largely unreciprocated affection he displays towards his son gives him a vulnerability that is duly exploited. O'Connell's electrifying physicality makes this an exciting and unpredictable portrait of prison life. But there can be no argument that incarceration is in any way glorified here. *Starred Up* is a bruising, unsentimental work that brilliantly contextualises the grim reality facing scores of young criminals entering prison today. Unlike the suffocating prison walls in which the drama unfolds, however, this is a film you'll want to revisit.

*Adam Woodward, Little White Lies*

It is an incendiary, visceral, riveting drama with a fascinating Oedipal twist; a brutal-realist depiction of male behaviour and prison culture, with the bitter tang of authenticity. And O'Connell, who has made notable screen appearances since *This Is England*, announces himself as not just a fearless and fearsome screen actor but a star.

*Laurence Phelan, The Independent*

*Our next screening...*

### Gloria

Tue 28 April 2015 8pm

Dir: Sebastián Lelio

A free-spirited older woman embarks on a whirlwind romance with a Naval Officer.



Voting for *Wrinkles*: A-25 B-34 C-8 D-1 E-0 Attendance: 70 Rating: 80.5%