

## The Selfish Giant

UK 2013

**Directed by**  
 Clio Barnard

**Written by**  
 Clio Barnard  
 Inspired by 'The Selfish  
 Giant' by Oscar Wilde

**Director of Photography**  
 Mike Eley

**Music**  
 Harry Escott

91 mins

**Cast**  
 Connor Chapman  
*Arbor*

 Shaun Thomas  
*Swiftly*

 Ralph Ineson  
*Johnny Jones*

 Ian Burfield  
*Mick Brazil*

### Final Film Notes!

After 6 seasons and 90 sets of film notes, this is the last one I'll be designing! I hope you've enjoyed them over the years, and more importantly some stunning films. A special thank you to Mike who has helped with every single one!

*Dawn Bowen*

We close our season flying the flag for independent British film-making. Many thanks for all your support over our fantastic 2014-15 season, and to our superb hosts at Winchester Science Centre. Work begins in earnest in June to draw up next season's programme – do let us know if you have any requests! Enjoy the summer.

It's a long way from the Victorian England of Oscar Wilde to the Buttershaw Estate in Bradford, the setting of Clio Barnard's updated version of Wilde's fairy tale. The wonder of Barnard's very moving film is that, although shot in gritty realist fashion against a backcloth of extreme deprivation, it is true to the spirit of Wilde's story. Barnard is always looking for the humour and lyricism. The two boys are an odd couple – one small and scrawny, the other very big – who rekindle memories of the friends adrift in Depression-era America in *Of Mice and Men*. They always stick up for one another. The scrap merchant's horse serves a similar purpose to the kestrel in Ken Loach's *Kes* (1969). That's to say, it gives the characters a perspective beyond that of their brutal everyday world and a connection to the natural world. At times, cinematographer Mike Eley, who also worked on Ken Loach's *The Navigators*, shoots the film as if it's a kids' adventure story, not just a grim

parable about excluded children. He has an eye for landscape and for poetic and jarring juxtapositions. We see the horse and cart turn up at the school or trundling down the Bradford roads, leaving a huge traffic jam in its wake. There are spectacular shots of crepuscular Yorkshire skies that make even huge pylons and factory chimneys seem poetic. Barnard was partly inspired to make *A Selfish Giant* after reading Wilde's story to her own children. The other main spark was her experience shooting her previous feature *The Arbor* (2010), her documentary/performance piece about the Bradford playwright Andrea Dunbar, who wrote the screenplay for Alan Clarke's *Rita, Sue and Bob Too!* It's an unlikely but rewarding collision of influences. *The Selfish Giant* isn't exactly a film pitched at kids. One irony is that its 15 certificate will stop cinemagoers the same age as *Arbor* and *Swiftly* from watching it. Meanwhile, adults may be put off by the fact that it is inspired by a children's fairy story. It would be a grave misfortune if Barnard doesn't find the audience she deserves. Then again, regardless of its initial box-office performance, *The Selfish Giant* will have a very long shelf life and will be watched for years to come. Barnard's updating of Wilde is certainly one of the strongest films in what is shaping up as a vintage year for British cinema.

*Geoffrey Macnab, The Independent*



Voting for Gloria: A-16 B-31 C-18 D-4 E-2 Attendance:76 Rating: 69.4%