

Glasgow Film Fest – A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence (Roy Andersson, 2014)



When you look in the mirror, what is it that you see? Disappointment in physical aspects of yourself and perhaps a little regret? Maybe you begin to realise that you're not the person you thought you really were. If you're looking for clarity, seek Roy Andersson's conclusion to his trilogy on the human condition. With deep rooted disappointment in its filmic soul, 'A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence' has the remarkable ability to represent the darkest of flaws of existence.

A pair of novelty item salesmen stand at the centre of an anthological story of the damned human condition.

It's deft and observational. A series of vignettes that delve deeply into the core of human emotion. The overarching theme of dissatisfaction splits into different forms. Unrequited love is illustrated between a salsa instructor and her student in a gratifyingly choreographed scene that segways into another. A cleaner tirelessly scrubs the dance studio floor. She looks worn out as she sighs, "I'm happy to hear you're doing fine." The phone call doesn't have a receiving end, but the line is repeated in situations equally unfulfilling later on. It's the typical act of putting the value of your happiness beneath others; one that Andersson manages to recreate like a mocking mirror.

A scene in which Charles XII of Sweden marches into a bar in the modern day, on his way to the Battle of Poltava is a

lyrical analogy for human greed and insensitivity, and the way in which it is rewarded (King Charles lost the Battle of Poltava). This off the wall attitude runs through the film from start to finish. A suitably drab colour scheme and meticulous set design add to create a rather mundane surface to a film with gorgeous tonal complexity.

Andersson's parable of the human condition has moments of both ingenious humour and grueling honesty. But a dysthymic backbone acts as proof that 'A Pigeon Sat on a Branch' is more than just a dreary vision of the monotony of life.



A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence played at Glasgow Film Festival 2015. More information [here.](#)