

EIFF 2015: 45 Years (Andrew Haigh, 2015)



In the rolling English countryside, an aging woman smokes her first cigarette in years. Things have changed since she smoked last. Her life relying on one man, with whom she had no children, has had the ties that held them together loosened ever so slightly. The world she was so comfortable in is swiftly unraveling before her very eyes.

When Andrew Haigh last dealt with relationships, he was observing the conversations between two gay men in *Weekend*, the 2011 critical darling that propelled him into the British line of cinematic vision. Since then, lovers of his work have waited patiently to see what would come next.

It is the weekend before their 45th wedding anniversary, and Kate and Geoff are busy preparing the party they're already almost regretting. In the midst of it all, a letter has arrived. It's addressed to Geoff, letting him know that the body of his ex-lover has been discovered in the Swiss Alps, encased in ice almost 50 years after she went missing. Now, Kate can't help but feel her marriage is being threatened by a dead woman she never knew.

Haigh has made it clear that his fondness lies in love and the complex, aching twine that wraps itself around it. Moving from one end of the spectrum to the other, *45 Years* places the viewer in the midst of a slowly disintegrating marriage between Kate and Geoff Mercer. The gentile intimacy of the camerawork making you feel as though you are sitting in an armchair in the corner of their living room, witnessing the two have the conversations you never hear in person, but must often occur.

His scriptural adaptation of David Constantine's short story *In Another Country* barely brings it to life. Liveliness isn't in the fibre of *45 Years*. Instead, Haigh's words add a solemn lyricism to his source material. The characters feel no different to those written by Constantine either. That's no complaint; the slight conflict between the pair makes for sombre, enchanting viewing. And that is a compliment best paid to those behind them.

In particular, Charlotte Rambling's striking lead performance is certainly BAFTA worthy. Her affecting efforts here add a deep burning, effervescent fire to the turbulent situation; even though she remains astute and level headed throughout. Hystericism is nowhere to be seen here. There are no explosive arguments; rather passion filled conversations between Rambling and the equally exquisite Tom Courtenay about what their marriage has, and could of been.

45 Years comes impossibly close to perfection. A subtly rich, at times warming and still, often devastating relationship drama, Haigh proves his worth as an exemplary British filmmaker with two outstanding performances to boot.

★★★★★

***45 Years* plays at the Edinburgh International Film Festival 2015. For ticketing information, head to the [EIFF website](#).**