

## CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

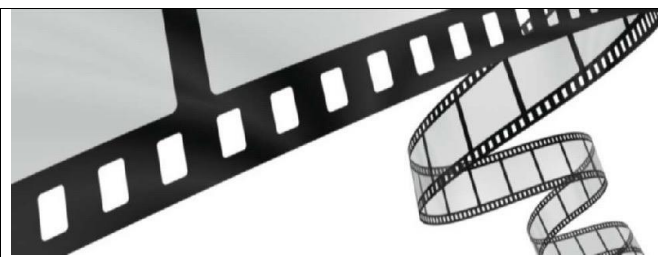
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**La Chimera** Thursday 23 January 2025 Italy/France/Switzerland 133 mins.

Cast: Josh O'Connor (Arthur); Carol Duarte (Italia); Vincenzo Nemolato (Pirro); Alba Rohrwacher (Spartaca); Isabella Rossellini (Flora).

*La Chimera*, loosely translated in this context as 'The Impossible Dream', greatly impressed the Guardian's film critic, Wendy Ide, as well as many others. Ide wrote glowingly about Alice Rohrwacher's latest film, and especially the acting performance of Josh O'Connor. He is a renegade British archaeologist in 1980s Tuscany. In his "ghostly, off-white suit, its grubby linen the colour of a recently disinterred shroud, [Arthur] looks like a fallen angel from a Caravaggio painting." Although the part was originally written for a man in his 40s or 50s, O'Connor's early 30s makes the part work, convincing as the de facto leader of a rowdy and disreputable band of grave robbers, or 'tombaroli'.

Rohrwacher's last film was 'Happy As Lazarro' (2018) which we narrowly failed to have in the CFC programme. Just as Lazarro was "an ageless innocent, blithely wandering across decades in a matter of moments", so these qualities of playing with time characterise Arthur and his emergence from a mysterious past (has he been in prison?) and his hold over the gang. "The story itself is a slippery, sinuous thing, as elusive as the chimera of the title" argues Wendy Ide.

The film's riches come from Rohrwacher's seemingly inexhaustible wealth of ideas: the tactile, textual quality that results from dipping into different film stocks (cinematographer Helene Louvant shoots on 35mm, Super 16mm and 16mm); the sped-up footage that defuses the intensity of Arthur's anger towards his friends; the use of an itinerant balladeer to narrate chunks of the story. Then there is the dishevelled, impromptu quality of some of the music - a village band, honking its carnival anthems on battered brass instruments, contrasting with a fantastic tomb-raiding montage set to Kraftwerk's electro-pop classic 'Spacelab'.

The audience at the 76th Cannes Film Festival in 2023, where it premiered and competed for the Palme d'Or, clearly was also impressed with *La Chimera*, giving it a nine minute standing ovation. CFC hopes you also enjoy it.

Our next screening: **BLACKBERRY, BLACKBERRY BLACKBIRD** on Wednesday 5 February

Do try to bring a guest. Remember Malcolm's formula; if every member of the club brought just one guest, to just one film, the club's financial security for next season would be assured!

