



ENGLISH FILM CLUB

2018/19

39th SEASON

Chiasso, Cinema EXCELSIOR

18.15

Friday, 14th December 2018

I, DANIEL BLAKE

2017

100 minutes

Directed by **Ken Loach**

Starring: Brianna Shann, Dave Johns,

Widower Daniel Blake, a 59-year-old wood maker living in Newcastle, has had a heart attack at work. Although his cardiologist has not allowed him to return to work, Daniel believes he is fit to do so after a work capability assessment and refuses employment and support allowance. He is frustrated to learn that his doctor was not contacted about the decision, and he applies for an appeal, a process he finds difficult because he must complete forms online, but he is not able to do it because isn't computer literate..

Daniel meets single mother Katie after she is sanctioned for arriving late for a jobcentre appointment. Katie and her children have just moved to Newcastle from a London homeless persons' hostel, as there is no cheap accommodation available in London. Daniel helps the family by repairing objects, teaching them how to heat rooms without electricity and making wooden toys for the children.

During a visit to a food bank, Katie is overcome by hunger and breaks down. After she is caught shoplifting at a supermarket, a security guard offers her work as a prostitute. Daniel surprises her at the brothel, where he begs her to give up the job, but she tearfully insists she has no other choice to feed her children.

As a condition for receiving jobseeker's allowance, Daniel must keep looking for work. He refuses a job at a scrapyard because his doctor will not allow him to work yet. When Daniel's work coach tells him he must work harder to find a job or be sanctioned, Daniel writes "I, Daniel Blake, demand my appeal date before I starve" on the building. He earns the support of passers-by, including other benefits claimants; but he is arrested and warned by the police. Daniel sells most of his belongings and becomes withdrawn.

On the day of Daniel's appeal

Critics' comments:

It's been two years since Ken Loach took *Jimmy's Hall*, a rather muted film by his standards, rumored at the time to be his swansong. But in fact it is a fine piece of work, although somehow quite nostalgic and uncharacteristically resigned.

I, Daniel Blake is his most urgent and perhaps finest film in years. It follows a man of a certain age as he attempts to scale a mountain of welfare bureaucracy in order to obtain the necessary benefits to get by. It's often warm and quite funny, but it is, at heart, a damning critique of the Tory government in Britain and their belt-tightening austerity measures, as well as a rallying cry for those who fall through the cracks. (*Cannes Film Festival - 2016*)