

Council Chamber of the Town Hall, 104 Ferguson St, Williamstown, 7.30pm, Wednesday 25th September, 2024.

SHOPLIFTERS

Ah, sweet: a smiling father and son bond ever so beautifully while shopping for groceries. Wait a second, they're not shopping — they're shoplifting.

Veteran Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda — who also wrote and edited the film — immediately gets down to brass tacks in *Shoplifters*, a deliberately understated tale that effectively underscores the poignancy of a crafty family going to larcenous means simply to survive. That mostly entails food, but if need be they will heist brass tacks, too, to keep afloat.

Winner of the Cannes fest's Palme d'Or, a Golden Globe nominee, and doubtless an Oscar nominee for best foreign-language film come January, *Shoplifters* will likely leave many morally conflicted. Really, how is it possible that audiences will find themselves rooting for such an apparently immoral and dysfunctional family?

Simple: this is actually a warm and loving family, and Kore-eda is as crafty as his principals in weaving together such an intriguing tale. Family is familiar turf for Kore-eda, who has focused on that theme in such films as *Our Little Sister* and *Like Father, Like Son*.

He has assembled a magnificent cast, from a five-year-old girl to an octogenarian grandmother, that meshes seamlessly.

This is also a family with heart. After Osamu (Lily Franky) and his son Shota (Kairi Jyo) complete their pilfering at the local supermarket, they run into a weeping little girl, Yuri (Miyu Sasaki), clearly abused, abandoned and famished. Though they can barely feed the other mouths in the family — Osamu's wife, their teen daughter, an aunt and a grandmother — they bring Yuri back to their cramped and ramshackle home in a rundown part of Tokyo, for fear she will otherwise meet a tragic demise.

Although Osamu and his wife have jobs, they can't get by on their meagre wages. Hence the shoplifting. And that they do with panache. Even little Yuri — whose parents never even bothered to file a missing-persons report with the police — proves to be a quick study in the family business.

The family philosophy, as espoused by young Shota, rationalizes their actions: "What's ever in a store doesn't belong to anyone yet."

Shota, wise beyond his preteen years, also serves up an allegory about a swarm of hungry little fish who join forces to attack and feast on a big tuna. There is definitely a message there.

Through much of the first part of *Shoplifters*, the pacing is unhurried as viewers become familiar with the various family members, each with their own quirks and personalities. But the tone changes dramatically in the second half, and the film wraps with not so much an emotional wallop as with a measured and frank dose of reality.

Bill Brownstein , Montreal Gazette, December 20 2018 ★★★★★

Starbox Results

	5	4	3	2	1	Average
It Happened One Night	22	8	3	2	0	4.4

To watch a trailer (& read more) head to the 2024 program on our website

[https://: www.williamstown-film-society.org](https://www.williamstown-film-society.org)