

# Peterborough Arts Cinema

Films that make you think

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April at 7:30pm

**Paterson** (2016)

US | 1h 58min, cert R

**Director:** Jim Jarmusch,  
**Stars:** Adam Driver, Golshifteh Farahani & Nellie

Paterson is a bus driver in the city of Paterson, New Jersey - they share the name. Every day, Paterson adheres to a simple routine: he drives his daily route, he writes poetry into a notebook; he stops in a bar and drinks exactly one beer; he goes home to his wife, Laura. By contrast, Laura's world is ever changing. New dreams come to her almost daily.



**After almost 40 years in cinema, the director remains the quintessential left-field auteur. He discusses how his gentle new film Paterson offers a Zen alternative to blockbuster chaos.**

There's a line in [Jim Jarmusch's 1986 film Down By Law](#) that seems apposite in November 2016. It goes: "My mama used to say that America's the big melting pot. You bring it to a boil and all the scum rises to the top." Jarmusch considers whether he'd agree. "Kind of appropriate, but also kind of cynical," he says finally. "But it's a scary and sad time with these creeps coming to the top. I think we all have to be vigilant around the world now with Brexit, and [Marine Le Pen in France](#). There's a lot of scary shit, you know?"

He made his first film, 1980's Permanent Vacation, with a grant he was supposed to use to pay his tuition fees. Ever since, his meditative stories about society's waifs and strays have blurred the line between mainstream movies and arthouse cinema. Films such as 1995's "psychedelic western" Dead Man and [1999's Ghost Dog](#), about a mafia hitman who follows the code of the samurai, established him as a singular voice in US film with a taste for subverting genre. He remains fiercely independent and has never made a film for a major studio. The only thing that's changed over the years are his vices. The director of Coffee And Cigarettes no longer touches either. He quit coffee in 1986, and cigarettes followed a few years ago. "I have caffeine in tea - and sugar, that's a vice," he says. "I drink only dry white wine and very dry champagne, but not daily. I don't drink hard alcohol and I don't drink any other stuff. I love weed, but I don't smoke now. Maybe I will again. I'm just trying to be, you know, clear."

"Paterson"; There have been so many high-stakes blockbusters where the destruction of the Earth is threatened that it's become banal, but Jarmusch says he wasn't consciously responding to that. "This is just a quiet story," he says. "Life isn't dramatic, always. This is about the day-to-day. It was less intentionally an antidote to all this action, violence, abuse of women, conflict between people, but I'm sure that's part of it. We need other kinds of films. With my films, my hope is that you don't care too much about the plot. I'm trying to find a Zen way where you are just there each moment and you're not thinking too much about what's going to happen next."

Jarmusch has alluded to poets such as [Walt Whitman](#) and Robert Frost in his films before, but here he places the act of writing at the heart of the story. It's not easy to do that without smacking of pretension, yet Paterson's poems - in fact written by the New York School poet Ron Padgett - all seem to rise naturally from the routine of the bus driver's life. Jarmusch, who studied poetry under Kenneth Koch and David Shapiro at Columbia University, may have turned to film-making early on, but he still delights in incorporating other media into his work. "What I love about film is it has all the other forms inside of it. It has composition, music, time, language, everything," he says. "It's the closest thing humans make to dreaming." He calls the New York School poets his "aesthetic godfathers" and is full of praise for [Frank O'Hara's Personism manifesto](#). "They said: 'Make a poem to one other person, don't make a poem to the world. Don't take yourself too seriously. Allow humour,'" he explains. "Their poems are very funny and have so much exuberance. Why shouldn't poetry be that way?"

A perfect example of such a poem is [William Carlos Williams's This Is Just To Say](#), read aloud in the film and undoubtedly the loveliest lines ever written about nicking your wife's plums. Williams was a Paterson native, and Jarmusch first conceived the film when he visited the town in the early 90s on a pilgrimage to understand the poet's home. Much as Down By Law was a prison-break movie where you didn't see its leads break out of prison, Paterson is a love film where you don't see its leads fall in love. Jarmusch has been with his own partner, the film-maker Sara Driver, since they worked together on his first movies almost 40 years ago, and says he wanted to make a film about the mutual understanding needed to make a relationship last.

Edited by Alex O'Reilly



