

FALLEN LEAVES

Finland (2023) 81 minutes

Director: Aki Kaurismäki

Cast: Alma Pöysti (Ansa)

Jussi Vatanen (Holappa)

Janne Hyytiäinen (Hannes)



Screening 9th October 2024 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

In modern-day Helsinki, two lonely souls in search of love meet by chance in a karaoke bar. However, their path to happiness is beset by obstacles - from lost phone numbers to mistaken addresses, alcoholism, and a charming stray dog.

Reviews



Some might accuse Kaurismäki of coasting on style and repeating himself in this, his 20th feature, especially since elements of *Fallen Leaves* recall much of his earlier work, notably *The Match Factory Girl* and *Drifting Clouds* (1996), but the kind of casual mastery that he exhibits in his direction is very easy to take for granted. *Fallen Leaves* is shot and edited with flawless precision, with anything extraneous jettisoned, and Kaurismäki makes every moment of its 81 minutes count.

The opposites-attract romance between Ansa and Holappa begins wordlessly – when they lock eyes across a karaoke bar while their friends flirt – and they haven't even exchanged names when Ansa writes her phone number on a piece of paper after their first date, but it's hard not to gasp when Holappa lets that piece of paper slip out of his pocket and blow down the street. By that point, you're already so invested in this relationship because Kaurismäki makes us understand how important such a bond is for people who have very little else to keep them buoyed in their lives.

Philip Concannon, BFI

Aki Kaurismäki is the Finnish director who is notable for being not simply one of the directors who is always welcome in the Cannes competition, but also is one of the rarer sub-set who actually makes funny films; that is, actually-funny and not just arthouse-funny. *Fallen Leaves* is another of Kaurismäki's beguiling and delightful cinephile comedies, featuring foot-tapping rock'n'roll. It's romantic and sweet-natured, in a deadpan style that in no way undermines or ironises the emotions involved and with some sharp things to say about contemporary politics.

I found myself rooting for the hero and heroine here in an uncomplicated way that I hadn't for any other film at Cannes. It's something which should be adored by Finnish film fanciers – who will incidentally savour the silent cameo from Finnish director and Cannes competition veteran Juho Kuosmanen – but it's really for everyone and despite the title, this is a movie with springtime in its heart.

Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian

Film Facts

- The film won the Jury Prize at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival.
- The canine star belongs to the movie's director Aki Kaurismäki.
- The band playing in the karaoke bar are called Maustetytöt, which translates as 'Spice Girls'.
- The Director, Aki Kaurismäki is famous for saying in interviews that he has directed half of his films while sober and half when drunk, and yet nobody can tell them apart.