



Stockbridge Community Cinema

Programme Notes 19 January 2018

The Red Turtle (PG)

2016 1hr 20mins

Director Michael Dudok de Wit



Animated adventure and debut feature from co-writer and director Michael Dudok de Wit. Caught in a powerful storm, a man is thrown from his vessel and left shipwrecked on a deserted island. Realising he is alone, he decides to gather supplies and take his chances back out at sea. Using bamboo from the nearby forest, he begins building a raft before setting off into the ocean. However, when a number of his escape attempts are thwarted by a giant red turtle, he admits defeat and is forced to return to the shore. With no choice but to accept his fate, the man is left shocked when a mysterious red haired woman suddenly appears on the beach. After spending time getting to know each other, the pair begin a relationship and decide to start a family together in their peaceful island paradise.

The Red Turtle, directed by Michael Dudok de Wit is the first non-Japanese film made by the Studio Ghibli film studio. Studio Ghibli is possibly the world's most revered animation house founded by Hayao Miyazaki. The studio is respected the world over for its lush animation, attention to detail, and the way its movies can soak its audiences in a mood without any effort at all – a trait many find lacking in most American cartoons. Ghibli's stories take viewers of all ages seriously, never let commercial concerns get in the way of imagination, and more often than not incorporate female characters in a way that puts the rest of the film industry to shame, animated or live action.

The Red Turtle's writer and director Michael Dudok de Wit was born in the Netherlands in 1953 and for his further education travelled abroad where he graduated from the West Surrey College of Art & Design in 1978. After working for a year in Barcelona, he settled in London where he directed and animated a number of award-winning commercials for television and cinema. In 1994 he created The Monk and the Fish which was nominated for an Oscar and he won an Oscar for Father and Daughter in 2000. In 2006, he made the short film The Aroma of Tea, which was drawn entirely with tea.

After Hayao Miyazaki, the co-founder of Japan's Studio Ghibli and writer/director of our 2014 season premiere film The Wind Rises, saw Father and Daughter he asked a producer friend to find its director with the prospect of working with him. De Wit said that, 'It was unbelievable,' and 'it took me months to come down' after a letter from Studio Ghibli arrived in 2006 to ask him to work on a project.

The Red Turtle began its life in Michael Dudok de Witt's shed in north London but after four years of development and numerous visits to Tokyo he moved the project to a proper studio in Paris and 9 years after starting the film it was released to much acclaim last year. De Wit said he felt no pressure from Studio Ghibli, 'On the contrary the producers asked me to propose a story and a visual style.' And true to the Ghibli approach they let the director have the final say artistically. There is plenty of room for interpretation of this film and De Wit said recently, 'All films are open to interpretation to a degree, whether we realise it or not. I have indeed heard a few different interpretations and I enjoyed hearing them, because they confirmed to me that our intentions with this film were working for the spectators.'