

# The Selfish Giant

Cert 15 UK 2013 91 mins

## Crew

Director/  
Screenplay Clio Barnard  
Cinematography Mike Eley  
Film Editing Nick Fenton  
Original music Harry Escott

## Cast

Conner Chapman Arbor  
Shaun Thomas Swifty  
Sean Gilder Kitten  
Ian Burfield Mick Brazil  
Steve Evets Price Drop Swift  
Siobhan Finneran Mrs. Swift

## Synopsis

*Bradford, the present. 13-year-old Arbor, a hyperactive scrapper from a sink estate, and his best friend, a gentle giant called Swifty, are suspended from school after standing up for themselves against a gang of bullies.*

*The pair stumble into the scrap metal business, after Arbor steals some copper and sells it to Kitten, a dodgy scrapyard owner. Kitten loans the pair his horse and cart, and they roam out to the countryside in search of their fortune.*

*But Arbor becomes jealous of the friendship developing between Kitten and Swifty, who shows an unexpected affinity for horses - leading Arbor to come up with increasingly dangerous plans to make money.*



## Booking Information

**Distributor:** Artificial Eye

**DVD bookings:** via BFI Bookings Unit

0207 957 8935

bookings.films@bfi.org.uk

www.bfi.org.uk/distribution

**Available:** now

## Programme notes



## Reviews

*The Selfish Giant* shares its title with an Oscar Wilde children's tale, but this unflinching, moving story of two Bradford boys who steal copper, illegally race ponies and flirt worryingly with danger all day long is rooted in a very real, modern Britain. It unfolds in a world of rundown housing estates backing on to open fields punctuated by cooling towers and electricity pylons. But for all its stark realism, it has a touch of myth to it too, and it's lyrically shot.

...The Loach nod is obvious; this is *Kes* revisited in a post-Thatcher northern England. That film looked at a boy and a bird; here it's two boys and a pony. There's a similar contrasting of rural beauty and man-made ugliness.

Loach, too, has always been great with young actors, and Chapman and Thomas are both revelations, raw and compelling. It's not a pretty story, but its warmth lies in its fondness – love, even – for the two boys at its heart.

**Dave Calhoun, *Time Out*, October 2013**

...Amid the many triumphs of this clearly collaborative venture, special mention must go to the two first-time stars for their extraordinarily natural and unaffected performances. Holding their own against such stalwarts as Steve Evets and Sean Gilder, the boys are rarely off screen and never off-beat, their mannerisms captured with a clear-eyed tenderness that recalls the intuitive humanism of the Dardenne brothers.

Cinematographer Mike Eley, whose credits include Loach's *The Navigators* and Kevin Macdonald's *Touching the Void*, maintains a balance between the intimacy of their faces and the more imposing aspects of the landscape, drifting between the dour and the dreamlike with ease.

It all adds up to an affectingly truthful movie that touches the heart as it holds a fabulist mirror up to reality, enriching the traditions of homegrown drama, and confirming Barnard as a major voice of modern British cinema.

**Mark Kermode, *The Observer*, October 2013**

## Awards, commendations, accolades

British Independent Film Awards 2013: **Best British Film**

London Film Festival 2013: **Best British Newcomer**

Cannes 2013: **Clio Barnard winner, Label Europa Cinema**

BAFTA 2014: (Nominated) **Best British Film**