FILMBOX

Wednesday, 28th January 2026
Studio 609, 7.30 pm



The Ballad of Wallis Island

UK, 2025, 12A, 1 hr 40 mins
Director: James Griffiths
Writers: Tom Basden and Tim Key
Producer: Rupert Majendie
Romance, Comedy. Drama

An eccentric lottery winner who lives alone on a remote island tries to make his fantasies come true by getting his favourite musicians to perform at his home.

Cast includes (selected)

Tim Key	Charles Heath
Tom Basden	Herb McGwyer
Carrie Mulligan	Nell Mortimer
Sian Clifford	Amanda
Akemnji Ndifornyen	Michael

Film Notes by Mike Darbon

The Ballad of Wallis Island is a testament to the power of long-term friendship and creative collaboration. The story follows Charles (Tim Key), a lonely double lottery winner who uses his wealth to force a reunion of his favourite folk band, "McGwyer & Mortimer," played by Tom Basden and Carey Mulligan. What ensues is a "private gig" on a windswept Welsh island that is as excruciatingly awkward as it is deeply moving. While it is undeniably a comedy, there is a profound sadness running through the script, touching on themes of grief, the loss of dreams, and the quiet tragedy of loneliness.

The script was developed by long-time collaborators, Tim Key and Tom Basden, and produced by Steve Coogan's company, Baby Cow Productions. The pair famously met at the Cambridge Footlights. However, in a detail that sounds like a plot from one of their sketches, while Basden was a student at Pembroke College and the Vice President of the Cambridge Footlights, although Key was born and lived in Cambridge he wasn't actually a Cambridge student; he was studying Russian at Sheffield University and pretended to be a PhD student to infiltrate the prestigious comedy troupe. Because he was so funny, they let him stay, and the rest is history.

Tom Basden is now one of the UK's most successful comedy writers, best known for creating and starring in the hit BBC sitcom **Here We Go** and writing **Plebs** for ITV2, which along with **Up Pompeii**, is one of the few sitcoms set in the time of the Romans! Tim Key, meanwhile, has become a cult comedy hero; perhaps most widely recognised as Sidekick Simon in the **Alan Partridge** franchise—a connection that naturally led them to Steve Coogan's production company to produce this film.

A major coup for the production was casting Oscar-nominee Carey Mulligan. The connection came from an unlikely source: her husband, Marcus Mumford (of Mumford & Sons). Marcus was a "superfan" of Key and Basden's earlier work and reportedly told Mulligan she "had to do it" before she'd even finished the script. The film's music is central to its charm. Tom Basden, a talented musician in his own right, wrote all the original songs. He and Mulligan recorded a full folk album as their characters, which has been surprisingly successful. Marcus Mumford was a huge support, allowing the cast to rehearse and record in his home studio and helping Mulligan with her harmonies. You might be interested to know that in the original 2007 short film, **The One and Only Herb McGwyer Plays Wallis Island**, on which this film is based, there was no "Nell" character at all. It was just two men on an island. The character of Nell was created specifically for the feature film to add that emotional third dimension—and because they needed someone who could actually sing harmonies better than Tim Key!

The 2007 short film, also directed by James Griffiths, won several awards on the Festival circuit. There's now a serious buzz that **The Ballad of Wallis Island** will be a major contender at the upcoming BAFTAs this year.

FILMBOX

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Our Next Presentations



Friday, 13th February 2026
In Studio 609 at 7.30pm
Member's Choice
The Forgiven
UK/US, 18, 1 hr 57 mins
Dir: John Michael McDonagh
Drama

A fatal accident disrupts the lives of Western visitors to a lavish party in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco and will ultimately lead to a reckoning in the desert.

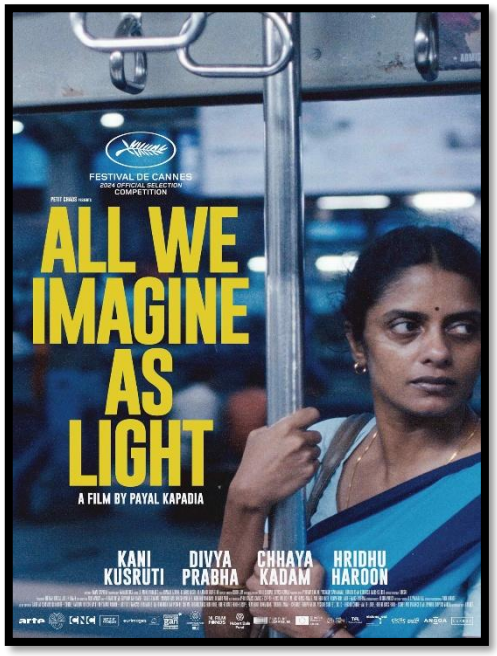
Wednesday, 25th February 2026

In Studio 609 at 7.30pm

All We Imagine as Light

France/India/Netherlands/Luxembourg/Italy
2024, 15, 1 hr 58 mins
Dir: Payal Kapadia
Romance, Drama
In Hindi with English subtitles

Three women in Mumbai, nurses Prabha and Anu, and Parvaty, the hospital cook, find a common bond in their daily struggles.



Latest Audience Film Ratings

