

Rental Family

2025 | 110mins

Director: Mitsuyo Miyazaki (Hikari)

Starring: Brendan Fraser, Takehiro Hira, Mari Yamamoto



Career-defining roles are often associated with the early years of an actor's journey, setting the tone for their trajectory. Yet every so often, a part comes later in life that reinvents an actor's reputation and reopens doors that once seemed all but shut. This has happened most famously for John Travolta (*Pulp Fiction*), Mickey Rourke (*The Wrestler*) and Matthew McConaughey (*Dallas Buyers Club*), each propelled onto a strikingly new career path.

For Brendan Fraser, that turning point arrived in 2022 with Darren Aronofsky's *The Whale*. Long known for his charm in late-1990s comedies and family adventure films, Fraser stepped into the role of Charlie, a reclusive, morbidly obese English teacher striving to reconnect with his estranged daughter. The performance won rapturous acclaim on the festival circuit and ultimately earned him the Academy Award for Best Actor. With *The Whale*, Fraser's long-awaited comeback was sealed, ushering in what fans and critics affectionately call the 'Brenaissance'.

That resurgence quickly carried him into Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon*, and now *Rental Family* continues this more discerning, drama-focused chapter. The film underscores Fraser's determination to push far beyond the comic persona that once defined him, proving that his renaissance is not a fleeting moment but a rich and ongoing evolution.

In this tenderly observed, beautifully shot dramedy, Fraser plays Phillip - a lonely American actor in Japan, whose main claim to fame is a tacky toothpaste commercial. Searching for purpose, he stumbles into an unusual line of work: performing as a hired relative for a Japanese "rental family" agency. As he slips into strangers' lives, he begins to forge genuine connections, blurring the lines between performance and reality. Fraser infuses Phillip with warmth and humanity, a nuanced performance filled with soul and sensitivity.

Following her work on Netflix hit *Beef*, director Mitsuyo Miyazaki (better known as Hikari) brings a deft mix of humour and heart to the themes of family, belonging, and cross-cultural connection. The result is a crowd-pleaser with a huge heart, a film that will likely leave you reaching for the phone to call your nearest and dearest as the credits roll.

'I believe that cinema can make the world a better place. It allows us to view others with empathy, creates space for conversation, and see parts of ourselves we did not know existed. If we embrace it, walls fade, and humanity comes through'

– Hikari

Excellent

Fair

Poor



What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

Please detach this from your Film Note and drop it into the box or hand it in at the end of the screening. Thank you!

Did You Know?

- The film is based on actual agencies in Japan where people can hire actors to temporarily fulfil family roles, such as a parent, spouse, or friend. These services help clients cope with loneliness, social obligations, or life events, and the filmmakers worked with real agencies to capture the emotional depth, etiquette, and nuances of these unique arrangements.
- Thanks to his Canadian father and growing up partly in Switzerland, Fraser spoke English and French from a young age. This foundation helped him learn Japanese for his role, though he admits he’s ‘not a very good student, but an excellent mimic’.



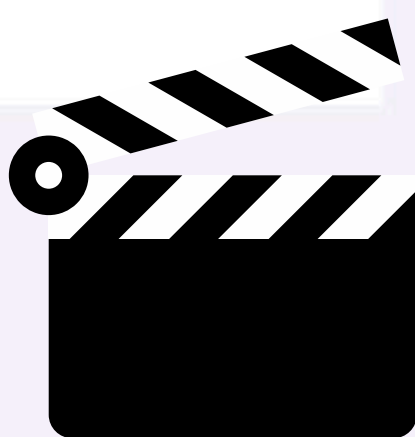
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Family Romance, LLC (2019)

Directed by Werner Herzog, this film portrays a man who hires himself out as a stand-in for missing family members.



The Farewell (2019)

Directed by Lulu Wang, this film centers on a Chinese-American woman who returns to China under the guise of a fake wedding to stealthily say goodbye to their matriarch, who only has a short time left to live.



Excellent

Fair

Poor

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

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