

**PAGEANT**  
THEATER  
JANUARY 18 - 24

**SHOPLIFTERS**  
A FILM BY KORE-EDA HIROKAZU



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## REEL WORLD



### Thick as thieves

**The familial bonds of a band of petty criminals**

**K**ore-eda Hirokazu's *Shoplifters*, the prize-winning film from Japan and an early frontrunner in the race for this year's Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, is a richly humane social drama that seems simple and direct at first, but grows—gradually and irresistibly—into something far more complex, surprising, grimly honest, and mysteriously moving.

by  
**Juan-Carlos Selznick**



**Shoplifters**  
Starring Lily Franky, Ando Sakura, Matsuoka Mayu and Sasaki Miyu. Directed by Kore-eda Hirokazu. Pageant Theatre. Rated R.

The chief characters are, in spirit if not in fact, a family—two adult parent figures, a young adult daughter, and a couple of pre-adolescent kids. The adults have jobs of one sort or another, but they live in very meager circumstances.

As such, they might be taken as mere textbook examples of “the working poor.” But they are also, quite distinctively, a family of shoplifters, and the teamwork and carefully orchestrated maneuvers of their thievery gives them a zesty connectedness—a strong but unconventional kind of family bond, in other words.

A major element of the story has to do with the daily lives of individual members of this joyously mischievous little “family.” The scrappily paternal Osamu

(Lily Franky) labors in construction. Maternal Nobuyo (Ando Sakura) presses pants in a laundry. The adult daughter, Aki (Matsuoka Mayu), works in a mirrored sex parlor.

Grandma Hatsue (Kiki Kilin) cashes her pension checks and splurges on pachinko. Shota (Jyo Kairi), the couple's dour little boy, doesn't attend school (which, he's told, is required only for kids who can't study at home). Little Juri (Sasaki Miyu), utterly neglected by her abusive parents, is welcomed into the shoplifters' family and stays on with them even after her actual parents belatedly go public with a claim that she's been kidnapped.

The first half of *Shoplifters* has an almost picaresque flair to it, rather as if the family of shoplifters were immersed in a semi-comic adventure and winning small victories of rebellion against an unjust social system. But in the second half, harsher realities and moral pungencies start coming home to roost. And the two youngest characters, Shota and Juri, become key protagonists in quietly accelerated dramas of moral and personal awareness. □



Poor



Fair



Good



Very Good



Excellent