# Daniel Day-Lewis ends retirement with family drama Anemone after Phantom Thread farewell



One day, God willing, they might make a film about the filming of Paul Thomas Anderson’s *Phantom Thread* (2017). Whether it would be a documentary or a drama, a Shakespearean tragedy or a frantic farce, the story would reveal how a towering actor finally lost the will to continue. After completing his role as the enigmatic society dressmaker Reynolds Woodcock, Daniel Day-Lewis announced that he was retiring from acting. “I need to believe in the value of what I’m doing,” the then 60-year-old said, reflecting on the toll the long and stressful shoot had taken on him and the diminishing thrill he felt for performance. This major turning point came after a career defined by rare but intensely committed appearances on screen.

Day-Lewis’s retirement was somewhat enigmatic given his infrequent appearances in the years leading up to his announcement. Since 2000, he had made just seven films, famously considering his future after each one. This selective approach only added to his mystique, as he was known less as a traditional star and more as a mysterious, fragile figure deeply committed to his craft. His breakthrough came decades earlier, notably in *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), a film about immigrant dreams in Thatcher-era London in which he played a neofascist punk named Johnny. Unlike his later iconic leading roles, here Day-Lewis was a component of a larger ensemble, blending into the backdrop of a vivid social landscape. Today, the film serves both as a reminder of a different Britain and the early days of a unique talent.

Known for his extreme method acting, Day-Lewis has earned a reputation as a "mad bastard," as he once described himself, due to his intense immersion in character. He famously remained in a wheelchair during *My Left Foot* (1989), lived on prison rations while filming *In the Name of the Father* (1993), and skinned animals for *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992). This dedication has won him three Best Actor Oscars, but it has also made him difficult company on set, burdening both family and crew with his demanding process. Despite this, Day-Lewis explained in conversation that staying in character helped him maintain focus amid the disruptive rhythms of filmmaking — a self-delusion, perhaps, but one that worked for him.

*Phantom Thread* may have been the breaking point. The film, a tense 1950s-set story of a controlling designer and his complex relationship with a waitress, required a claustrophobic, intense shoot at a London townhouse used as a stage set. Unlike previous projects where Day-Lewis kept some distance, here he was immersed both on and off screen with little respite. The production was fraught with logistical nightmares and interpersonal tensions, including friction with crew members. Despite the film’s success and an Oscar nomination, Day-Lewis confessed to losing belief in the role and the process. The ideal flow state of uninterrupted creativity gave way to frustration with the tangible realities of filmmaking.

Retirement itself, especially for an actor as iconic as Day-Lewis, can seem like another performance — a deliberate act with its own theatricality. Notably, Day-Lewis had retired once before between 1997 and 2001. More recently, he broke this vow by agreeing to appear in *Anemone*, a film directed by his 26-year-old son, Ronan Day-Lewis. This film, co-written by father and son, centres on familial relationships, exploring bonds between fathers, sons, and brothers. The cast also includes notable actors Sean Bean and Samantha Morton. This project marks Day-Lewis’s first acting role since *Phantom Thread* and signifies a remarkable end to his long hiatus.

This return marks a rare glimpse of Day-Lewis back in public focus. Earlier in 2024, he made a few unusual public appearances, including presenting an award to director Martin Scorsese at the National Board of Review Awards, stirring speculation about a potential acting comeback. While his future beyond *Anemone* remains uncertain, it is likely this film will serve as a quiet final statement rather than the start of another prolific chapter. As the actor himself and those around him have indicated, the deep immersion that once defined his work may no longer hold the same appeal.

In many ways, *Phantom Thread* stands as Day-Lewis's ultimate screen role—capturing not only a triumphant performance but also symbolising his artistic limits and final bow. The character Reynolds Woodcock ends as a figure trapped and vulnerable, confined within his own world. Fortunately for Day-Lewis, the real-life actor was able to step away and return to the world outside the camera’s unyielding gaze. With *Anemone* on the horizon, audiences will soon witness a rare return by one of cinema’s most dedicated and enigmatic talents.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/films/features/daniel-day-lewis-retirement-phantom-thread-b2791551.html), [[7]](https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a13142604/daniel-day-lewis-paul-thomas-anderson-retirement-phantom-thread/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/films/features/daniel-day-lewis-retirement-phantom-thread-b2791551.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/films/features/daniel-day-lewis-retirement-phantom-thread-b2791551.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/films/features/daniel-day-lewis-retirement-phantom-thread-b2791551.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/films/features/daniel-day-lewis-retirement-phantom-thread-b2791551.html), [[7]](https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a13142604/daniel-day-lewis-paul-thomas-anderson-retirement-phantom-thread/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/oct/02/anemone-daniel-day-lewis-ends-retirement-from-acting-son-ronan-movie), [[3]](https://www.npr.org/2024/10/02/nx-s1-5136614/daniel-day-lewis-ends-retirement-acting), [[4]](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/2024/10/01/daniel-daylewis-comeback-anemone/52e8ab04-803f-11ef-90f2-d1fc6303655d_story.html), [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/daniel-day-lewis-come-out-acting-retirement-sons-film-anemone-2024-10-02/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[6]](https://www.wsls.com/entertainment/2024/01/12/daniel-day-lewis-breaks-from-retirement-to-fete-martin-scorsese-at-national-board-of-review-awards/), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/oct/02/anemone-daniel-day-lewis-ends-retirement-from-acting-son-ronan-movie), [[3]](https://www.npr.org/2024/10/02/nx-s1-5136614/daniel-day-lewis-ends-retirement-acting), [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/daniel-day-lewis-come-out-acting-retirement-sons-film-anemone-2024-10-02/)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/films/features/daniel-day-lewis-retirement-phantom-thread-b2791551.html), [[7]](https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a13142604/daniel-day-lewis-paul-thomas-anderson-retirement-phantom-thread/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/films/features/daniel-day-lewis-retirement-phantom-thread-b2791551.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/oct/02/anemone-daniel-day-lewis-ends-retirement-from-acting-son-ronan-movie> - Daniel Day-Lewis, the acclaimed actor known for his method acting, is returning to the screen after a seven-year hiatus. He will star in 'Anemone,' a film directed by his son, Ronan Day-Lewis, marking his first acting role since 2017's 'Phantom Thread.' The film, co-written by father and son, explores familial relationships and dynamics. The cast includes Sean Bean and Samantha Morton. This marks a significant return for Day-Lewis, who had previously announced his retirement from acting in 2017.
3. <https://www.npr.org/2024/10/02/nx-s1-5136614/daniel-day-lewis-ends-retirement-acting> - Daniel Day-Lewis is ending his retirement from acting to star in 'Anemone,' a film directed by his son, Ronan Day-Lewis. The film, co-written by the father-son duo, focuses on intergenerational family bonds, particularly the dynamics between fathers, sons, and brothers. Day-Lewis, 67, will star alongside Sean Bean and Samantha Morton. This marks his first acting role since 2017's 'Phantom Thread,' after which he announced his retirement from acting.
4. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/2024/10/01/daniel-daylewis-comeback-anemone/52e8ab04-803f-11ef-90f2-d1fc6303655d_story.html> - Daniel Day-Lewis is returning to acting after a seven-year hiatus to star in 'Anemone,' a film directed by his son, Ronan Day-Lewis. The film, co-written by father and son, explores familial relationships and dynamics. The cast includes Sean Bean and Samantha Morton. This marks Day-Lewis's first acting role since 2017's 'Phantom Thread,' after which he announced his retirement from acting.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/daniel-day-lewis-come-out-acting-retirement-sons-film-anemone-2024-10-02/> - Daniel Day-Lewis is ending his retirement from acting to star in 'Anemone,' the directorial debut of his son, Ronan Day-Lewis. The film, co-written by father and son, explores familial relationships and dynamics. The cast includes Sean Bean and Samantha Morton. This marks Day-Lewis's first acting role since 2017's 'Phantom Thread,' after which he announced his retirement from acting.
6. <https://www.wsls.com/entertainment/2024/01/12/daniel-day-lewis-breaks-from-retirement-to-fete-martin-scorsese-at-national-board-of-review-awards/> - Daniel Day-Lewis made a rare public appearance at the National Board of Review Awards in January 2024 to present an award to director Martin Scorsese. This marked his first public appearance since announcing his retirement from acting in 2017. Day-Lewis's appearance at the awards ceremony sparked speculation about a potential return to acting, which was later confirmed with his role in 'Anemone,' directed by his son, Ronan Day-Lewis.
7. <https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a13142604/daniel-day-lewis-paul-thomas-anderson-retirement-phantom-thread/> - Daniel Day-Lewis announced his retirement from acting after completing 'Phantom Thread' in 2017. Director Paul Thomas Anderson, who collaborated with Day-Lewis on the film, was unaware of his retirement plans during production. Anderson expressed hope that Day-Lewis would reconsider his decision, highlighting the actor's dedication and the quality of his performance in the film. This marked the end of a significant era in Day-Lewis's acting career.