

Film Group

April – May 2024 Newsletter

This month the Film Group met to watch the new version of the Colour Purple. As usual we met in the Savoy cinema's foyer at 11.00 a.m. on the first Wednesday of the month to make the most of the Silver Screen offer of a film, tea, coffee and biscuits for a reduced price of £4.50. At 11.20 a.m. we all started to take our seats ready for the film to start at 11.30 a.m. However, instead of the normal adverts followed by the feature film nothing happened. We all sat there patiently waiting but by 11.50 a.m. people started to become restless and then the manager appeared to inform the waiting audience that the projector would not work. I must admit I thought oh no we are now going to have to wait in a very long queue for refunds to be given out. However, we all formed an orderly line and like school children on an outing were led from one screen to another, complete with complimentary chocolates being handed out!! Finally, at 12.15 p.m. the film started and we all settled down to watch it, eating our free chocolate.

The Colour Purple is a 1982 book by Alice Walker detailing the life and hardships of Celie, a poor African-American girl living in rural Georgia. When it was published the novel won a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and features on the BBC's Best Loved Books Poll. In the story the colour purple represents the full spectrum of human experience and emotions from suffering and pain to joy and happiness. The book was previously made into a film in 1985 starring Whoopi Goldberg as the older Celie. In 2005 a musical adaptation of the film opened on Broadway and this new film version is based on that stage musical. It stars Fantasia Barrino in the role of the older Celie with Whoopi Goldberg making a cameo appearance as the midwife who delivers Celie's second baby. The film lasted just over two hours and although it had lots of lavish musical numbers it still stuck to its hard-hitting storyline, which at times made some of the audience gasp. The film has had mixed critical reviews but has received a solid 7/10 from user reviews on the International Movie Database (IMDb).



After the film finished some of the u3a members went to view the frieze that was once located above the entrance of the Gaumont Cinema and is now in Sir Nigel Gresley Square. This frieze created by sculptor Newbury Abbot Trent in 1934 shows the making of a film from the writing of the story, to the building of the sets, and lastly the shooting of the film. When the Gaumont was modernised in 1968 the frieze was hidden with aluminium cladding

and was not revealed again until the building was demolished in 2008. Coincidentally this frieze had also been discussed this month by the Local History Group who were reminiscing about cinemas in and around Doncaster. The group were discussing which cinemas they had been to as a child, films they had watched and even gave renditions of the individual song that each cinema chain used at their Saturday children's clubs. Some of the members also regaled us with some of the bands and singers that had performed at these cinemas including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Cliff Richard to name but a few.

If anyone is interested in joining the Film Group then please feel free to come along on the first Wednesday of the month with a mug, as the cinema are happy to provide drinks but do not have cups!!

Andrea Charlesworth

December 2023 – January 2024 Newsletter

The film group has now relocated to the Savoy cinema in Sir Nigel Gresley Square, Waterdale. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month for the Silverscreen performance. The films usually start around 11.30 a.m.

Our last meeting was on Wednesday 4th October. Unfortunately, we have no choice in the selection of films. The Silverscreen film on offer at £4.50 including a cuppa was called 'Expend4bles.' It was billed as an 'action packed adventure with a team of elite mercenaries'.

Perhaps not to everyone's taste but at least we had the choice of another film 'A Little Life' starring James Norton. This was a live streamed play filmed at the Savoy Theatre in London and now brought to the big screen. Although it received some very good reviews it came with a health warning - 'harrowing and not for the faint hearted.'

So, some went to the first film and the more intrepid (two of us) went to see the James Norton film which although memorable was incredibly heart wrenching. Brilliant acting but a truly horrible story about abuse in all its forms.

Sue Levan was the Film Group leader for many years and has recently relinquished the position. She always brought a lot of critical analysis to the group and her knowledge of film is impressive. We are pleased to report that she is happy to continue to be a member of the group so can carry on sharing her thoughts and expertise with us.

It's a great opportunity to meet new people and of course to extend your knowledge and understanding of films (thanks to Sue). We do hope that more members will join us at the next meeting on 6th December, you will be most welcome.

Cath Lawson & Gill Weston

Having been a member of the Doncaster u3a Writers' Group for several years, I decided I should like to start a Film Appreciation Group, not as an alternative to Writers, but an addition. The new group sprang into life almost overnight, it now seems, as seven or eight of us took to sprawling about my sitting room watching one of my DVDs and chatting about it over coffee.

Film Studies had been my subject when I taught at the old Doncaster College on Waterdale. I loved it. Having started as a general English teacher, I had always felt hampered by being a very slow reader. Now I could 'read' set texts at exactly and literally the same time as my students! I did an MA Film Studies course and was lucky enough at that time to be able to teach only Film GCSE and A Level.

The u3a Film Group in its early stages and its original state survived several enjoyable years and it was not until Covid interrupted us, that we were forced to break off, take stock and think again. No! I did not run out of DVDs, but we had to admit when picking up the reins again, that a different venue would allow for a bigger group. More to the point, a bigger venue might mean literally a bigger picture.

And so here we are, the New Film Group, meeting once a month on the first Wednesday in the month, at a real cinema to watch real film. We have new leaders, Gill and Cath, and I can belong as just part of the group, exactly as I always wanted to be. If you can answer any of the following 3 questions, perhaps the Film Group is for you.

Who waited for the mid-day train wearing a big hat and carrying a gun?

Who, in what film, makes the 'tears in rain speech'?

Who runs a tobacconist shop in the film 'Smoke'?

(Actor or character names acceptable)

Sue Levan