

## u3a Film Discussion Group.

Now that the nights are drawing in and the weather is worse there's nothing nicer than curling up on the settee to watch a good film. After all, the BBC iPlayer has a multitude of films all free to watch. But what to choose?

That's where the Film Discussion Group comes in to its own. The group of around 16 people take turns to choose a film for everyone to watch, then two weeks later we all meet up on Zoom to discuss it.

The group – like the rest of u3a – is a mix of people from very different backgrounds. Some have knowledge of film, others just enjoy a good movie. Some love action films or sci-fi and other prefer a gentle comedy or a romance.

And that's the secret of the group's success because the choices cover a huge range of films. Not a Zoom meeting goes by without several people saying: 'I'd never have watched this film if it wasn't for the film group – and I'm so glad that I did!'



To date the group's covered films from classics like *Citizen Kane* (1941), to the documentary *Minding the Gap* (2018), with stops along the way to take in sci-fi drama *Twelve Monkeys* (1995), family comedy *What we did on our Holiday* (2014) and crime drama *A Simple Plan* (1999).

Not all the films are a hit with all the members, and the discussion can be quite brutal at times. At the end of our chat, convener Joe Colls asks everyone for a score out of ten, and the results are often surprising.



For example, most of us were a little reluctant to watch *Minding the Gap* given it was described as a documentary about three friends and their love of skateboarding, despite being told this is Barack Obama's favourite film. But overall most people were drawn into this exploration of blue collar life in America's rustbelt, which was filmed over 12 years and charted the lives of three different young men and the challenges they faced. The final scores were very high.



At the other end of the scale the sci-fi time travelling movie *Twelve Monkeys* was a real Marmite film. Some people loved its story of a futuristic world facing a plague that could wipe out most of the population (sound familiar?), while others felt it was confusing and violent, and struggled to watch it to the end.

One surprise was the reaction to film classic *Citizen Kane*. Filmed in black and white in 1941, this was the first film from director and star Orson Welles, and it's regularly named in the top ten best films of all time. But our group gave it quite a negative review overall – perhaps showing we're all now used to much slicker production values.

But that's the joy of the group – it takes you out of your comfort zone and opens you to different types of films, and a diverse range of views on all of them. Everyone's views are valid, and as the weeks have gone by our Zoom meetings are something to look forward to.

So bring on the dark nights and rain-filled days – we'll all be snuggled on the sofa with a good (or at least different) film to watch.

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