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THELMA
MAGAZINE

THE LIVING MEMORY ASSOCIATION

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Going to the pictures

by JOYCE MILLER

The flicks, the movies, fleapits, Saturday kids' matinees, B-movies, jeely jars, cuddling up on a chummy seat, Kia-Ora, candy lollipops or sherbet dab. Welcome to Thelma magazine summer issue 2018. This edition of Thelma is devoted to memories of cinemas and films.

The development and screening of moving pictures was a major influence on entertainment but also a major industry and employer. Some indication of the numerous local picture houses, which opened after the First World War, is shown in the selected list of Edinburgh cinemas. Evelyn Whitfield interviewed her husband about his father who played the piano for silent films; her son Steven Whitfield also described some of his experiences working at the Dominion in the 1980s.

Miles Tubb shares his personal selection of iconic British films, and John McCaughie reminisces about his childhood experiences going to the pictures. Two of our volunteers, Maureen Sweeney and Stan Eadie, chatted about Stan's career working as both projectionist and sound engineer in Edinburgh. The Care for Carers Group, which meets here monthly, as well as some of our other visitors to the unit and others who posted on our Facebook page, have also shared their memories and experiences of going to cinemas to give us a lively and evocative range of stories.

From Ron and Rose's courting at the Embassy to Betty Smith eating pickled onions at the Playhouse—going to the pictures was clearly a very important part of people's lives.

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Edited by Joyce Miller

Designed by Delphine Tirole

To contact the Living Memory Association

Visit **The Little Shop of Memory** at Ocean Terminal, first floor (next to Debenhams), Leith, EH6 6JJ;

E-mail: comhist@gmail.com; Phone: 07714 783726.

Follow us on Facebook – www.facebook.com/livingmemoryassociation and Twitter – @ThelmaScotland



GOING TO THE PICTURES!

The first 'moving' pictures

The miraculous new invention of moving picture projection developed in the later nineteenth century, with early film reel footage showing news stories, but it was in the twentieth century that cinema—or going to the pictures/movies—became an important part of people's lives. Living in either towns or countryside people could experience the extraordinary delights of watching moving images.

In halls, churches and other gathering places, entrepreneurial travelling projectionists would set up their screens and equipment to entertain and amaze audiences with early silent films such

as *The Departure of the Columbia from Rothesay Pier*. Many of the promoters had been involved in travelling shows and other entertainments.

Cinemas were opening all over Scotland

By 1915 there were 119 cinemas listed in Scotland; one of the earliest was the Cameo in Tollcross, Edinburgh which opened in 1914. It was rented by the Edinburgh and District Cinematograph Theatres Ltd. from the owner, Charles Cooper. It has been estimated that by 1927 there were up to 600 locations throughout the country where films were shown on a regular basis. From the Alhambra in Aberdeen, which

Screenshot from *Roundhay Garden Scene* (1888)

Recorded by French inventor Louis Le Prince, this is believed to be the oldest surviving film.

opened in 1908, and the Airdrie Pavilion/Classic in 1911 to the Central Picture House in Portobello and the Central Hall in Wishaw, which both opened in 1914, cinema was replacing music halls as a main form of entertainment.

The Campbeltown Courier reported on the opening of the New Picture House in May 1913 which was attended by the town council, parish council and the School Board. The reporter noted: 'An interesting and important feature of the venture here is that it is entirely due to local enterprise, the shareholders being principally gentlemen resident in town and district.'

The attendance of such important local worthies, and that the picture house itself was funded by the town, is testament to how the local community valued having a public venue such as this. The Campbeltown Picture House, designed by Albert V Gardner of Glasgow in Glasgow School Art Nouveau style, is a Category A Listed building and one of the earliest surviving purpose-built cinemas in the UK. A restoration project to conserve and celebrate the centenary of the Picture House was completed in 2017 and the cinema now offers two screens, exhibition space and education facilities and is once more administered and managed by the local community.

Employment opportunities

The development from travelling shows to purpose-built theatres meant that cinemas also provided increased employment. Projectionists—or cinematographers—worked the main machinery but, as these early films were silent, pianists and even orchestras were employed to provide musical

support to the drama, romance and comedy that was being portrayed on the screen.

The cinemas were run by managers, uniformed doormen greeted the customers, cashiers sold tickets, ushers guided people to their seats and sold cigarettes and ice creams. Many of these jobs were done by women, but in particular ticket office and ushering. The 1920s saw the introduction of experimental sound: pre-recorded music and then the talkies. This meant that by the 1930s many musicians had lost their jobs and some of the smaller cinemas were unable to invest in the new equipment required for sound and had to close, however some family-run businesses were able to expand and take over other less successful venues. Families or larger businesses such as Greens in Glasgow, Maxwell's Scottish Cine and Variety Theatres, Poole's and Caledonian Associated Cinemas operated in different areas of the country.

From Saturday serials to the chummy seats

People of all ages enjoyed going to the pictures: from audiences packed with noisy and excited children eager to watch the next instalment of the Saturday serial at a matinee showing, to young courting couples snuggling together on the *chummy* seats whose minds were probably not always focused solely on the film.

Many visitors share their childhood reminiscences about collecting jeelie jars for money which could then be used to get into the cinema, especially during the Depression years, when money was tight and treats were a luxury. Other fond memories are evoked when describing early dates with boyfriends/girlfriends and are

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GOING TO THE PICTURES!

— CONTINUED

often told with a smile or a twinkle in the eye! For more serious adult audiences keen to catch up on the news stories, Pathé newsreels, particularly during the war years and before families had their own televisions, were an important source of information.

Avid film fans were excited to see the latest western with the hero in a white hat portrayed by Gary Cooper or Alan Ladd, detective or gangster film with Humphrey Bogart or Jimmy Cagney as the difficult anti-hero, slapstick or screwball comedy starring Laurel and Hardy or Cary Grant, or Bette Davis, Barbara Stanwyck or Joan Crawford starring in *women-centred* melodramas. There were films to suit all ages and all tastes.

The main feature

The programme usually included a number of 'shorts' before the main film: a newsreel, a serial instalment, a cartoon and the main feature. Often the main feature was a double bill with A and B movies. The B film was frequently a low budget movie which may have been part of a series and would be shown before the main A film. The Western was the most common B genre in the 1930s and 1940s, but other categories included Charlie Chan mysteries and horror or science fiction films.

The serial or series was very popular with children, who enjoyed thrillers such as *The Saint* or *The Falcon* and *Tarzan* with Johnny Weissmuller. However, in the UK, the parliament passed the Cinematographic Films Act of 1927 which was designed to support the fledgling British film industry. It meant that cinemas in the UK had to show a quota of British-made films which were

filmed in a film studio based in the British Empire. The writer and 75 percent of those involved also had to be British.

The films—known as quota quickies—were not always popular. It was recorded that audiences used to shout and boo during these short films but at the same time, these films developed the early careers of some key British film makers and stars such as John Mills, David Lean, James Mason, Jack Hawkins, Vivien Leigh and Michael Powell, many of whom went on to illustrious careers in either British or Hollywood films. The act was modified in 1938 and repealed in 1960.

The 1930s: Musicals

The Jazz Singer to Oklahoma!

Most popular movie genres reached their peak of popularity in the 1940s and 1950s, but it had been musicals that had led the way when recorded sound systems were first developed. *The Jazz Singer*, released in 1927 by Warner Brothers, was the first to include a sound track with some dialogue but mostly featured songs such as 'Blue Skies' and 'Mammy'. *The Broadway Melody* was released in 1929 by MGM with the tagline: 'the first all-talking, all-singing, all-dancing feature film'.

The 1930s was the peak decade when the director Busby Berkeley introduced tightly-choreographed sequences featuring dancers creating kaleidoscope patterns viewed through the prism of the camera lens. These black and white films showcased the talents of dancing stars such as Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers and even gangster-famous Jimmy Cagney who was able to demonstrate his music

WARNER BROS. SUPREME TRIUMPH

AL JOLSON

"THE JAZZ SINGER"



Theatrical release poster for *The Jazz Singer* (1927)

hall background singing and dancing in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* released in 1942.

The introduction of Technicolor enabled MGM to introduce fresh energy and colour to musicals starring Gene Kelly, Judy Garland, Cyd Charisse, Howard Keel or Donald O'Connor. Popular films of this period include: *The Wizard of Oz*, *Easter Parade*, *Meet Me In St Louis*, *Singin' In The Rain*, *Carousel* and *Oklahoma!*

The 1950s: 'I am Spartacus'

Cinemascope and 3D films

Cinemas, and going to the pictures on a regular basis continued to boom during the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1940s many films were produced as propaganda during World War Two, particularly in UK but also in the US. Cinemascope was introduced in the 1950s to widen the size and ratio of the

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GOING TO THE PICTURES!

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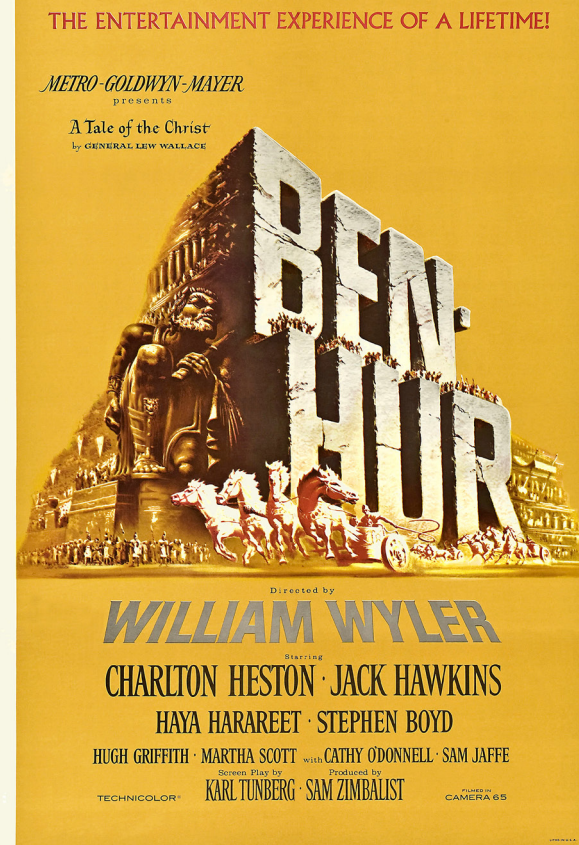
screen projection and encourage attendance with the new gimmick. Many of the films that were shot and shown using the new wide screen format included epic films such as *The Robe*, *The Vikings*, *Spartacus* and *Ben-Hur*. These films featured stars such as Kirk Douglas, Charlton Heston, Elizabeth Taylor, Jean Simmons and Lawrence Olivier.

Another visual gimmick was a short-lived 3-D experiment in 1952-4 when viewers had to wear cardboard *specs* in order to see the effects properly. Vincent Price gained the reputation as the 'King of 3D' because he starred in four 3D films; *House of Wax*, produced by Columbia, was one of his most famous films. Another well-known 3D film was Universal International's *It Came From Outer Space*. Howard Hughes and Alfred Hitchcock produced and directed 3D films including *Son of Sinbad*—with Vincent Price—and *Dial M For Murder*, with Ray Milland and Grace Kelly.

1960s/70s: 'Housey, housey!'

Disappearing cinemas and the rise of Bingo halls

The introduction of television and television dramas, both British and American, in the 1960s and 1970s, led to declining cinema attendance. More and more homes had their own TV and preferred to watch the *box* at home. The fall in income led to another cull or change of use of cinema buildings. A lot of small, local picture houses were transformed into Bingo halls which offered a different kind of social outing for both men and women. Even these have closed now and replaced with either purpose-built Bingo centres or on-line versions.



21st-century cinema: the multiscreen experience

During the 1980s more ornate—often beautifully designed Art Nouveau or Art Deco style—picture houses closed. Some were leased by organisations or councils to be used occasionally for particular events such as concerts, but many fell into disrepair. A few larger buildings did manage to survive particularly those which could be redesigned and converted to multi-screen centres, such as The Cameo and The Dominion.

With more than one screen, they are able to show more than one film at a time in order to attract larger audiences and generate more income and continue to compete against the purpose-built multi-screen complexes owned by large cinema chains. The smaller picture houses can also adapt the focus of their selections: some might specialise in showing 'art-house' or non-Hollywood films which often have limited length runs. Not all new releases suit older audiences: the music and sound

Theatrical release poster for *Ben-Hur* (1959)

track can be very loud and the CGI effects are often extremely bright with flashing colours. Recently some cinemas, such as The Cameo, have started special dementia-friendly screenings of older, popular films, often musicals, to suit the needs of people living with dementia and their carers. The lights are left on low, there are no adverts or trailers and the audience is allowed to move around—or sing along to any musical numbers!—should they wish to. Free tea, coffee and biscuits are served before the film to give people the chance to meet and socialise with others, and to familiarise themselves with the cinema space. This innovative scheme runs in several cinemas throughout the country.

Going to the pictures today

Going to the pictures continues to be popular; it has survived the impact of television, films on video/DVD and now streaming services such as

Netflix, and it continues to offer a very special communal audience experience. Enveloped in the darkness, the audience can share a sudden intake of breath or exclamation of shock at an unexpected horror—the first sight of the shark in *Jaws* for instance—or sniffing and blowing of noses in response to the emotion of the story—maybe Ali MacGraw dying in *Love Story*—which are not just the same sitting in your own front room.

Even the annoyance of the bobbing head in the seat in front, the over-enthusiastic fizzy-juice drinker shaking their cup of ice or the constant snack-muncher working their way through enormous buckets of popcorn, are all part of the joy of going to the pictures. Long may it continue...

3D screening (1951)

Audience wearing special glasses watch a 3D stereoscopic film at the Telekinema on the South Bank in London during the Festival of Britain 1951.



Bring on the music

by EVELYN WHITFIELD

Don Whitfield remembers his dad Raymond Skilbeck Whitfield providing musical accompaniment to silent films. Born in 1898 in Crook, county Durham, Raymond developed tuberculosis of the hip in his youth so he was classified as disabled and was not called up to serve in the First World War. Instead he finished his apprenticeship as an electrical engineer and went on to become switchboard attendant at several of the local power stations.

He was adept at electrical jobs round the house but was also a talented piano player and there was always a piano in the family front room. When Don was a small boy in the 1930s he remembers his dad's friend Mr Turnbull, who was manager of the furnishing department at the Coop, coming round to their house in the evenings. Mr Turnbull



would bring his violin, as well as his wife and little daughter Freda, and the two families would have musical soirées. The two dads would play the songs of the day from sheet music that cost about 2d a sheet and everyone would sing along.

Raymond also took a turn to play the piano at the various local cinemas in Durham to add atmosphere as the silent black and white films played out on the screen. The player had to watch the action carefully and adjust his music to the mood of the film as it progressed, often changing scenes and emotions very quickly—an exciting chase scene could be followed by a scary threatening encounter, a romantic moment with the leading lady or sweeping horizons as the hero rode off into the sunset.

Console of the Christie Organ of the Pavillon Baltard



Raymond and Lillian Whitfield (late 1950s)

In 1934 the Regal Cinema was built on North Road Durham on land next to the Miners' Hall, and opened on 27 March. It had many Art Deco features and had 1090 seats and one screen. The building also included a ballroom and a billiard room. The cinema was equipped with a Christie organ which was opened by Herbert Maxwell. The opening film was a 1933 comedy – *Her First Mate* – starring Slim Summerville and Zasu Pitts. Raymond Whitfield had a pal who often played the organ in the Regal to accompany the silent films and very occasionally he had the great thrill of standing in for him. The Regal later changed its name to the Essoldo, then the Classic and finally the Cannon before closing in 1960.

A Christie organ was also built for the Regal Marble Arch cinema in London in 1928, and the Gaumont Palace in Paris in 1930. With 6000 seats the latter was Europe's largest cinema. Its Christie organ was later moved to the Pavillon Baltard in Paris where it was classified as a historic monument in 1977.

Cinema on the Move

Don Whitfield's Grandpa McCarthy lived in the mine manager's house at a colliery just outside Durham in the 1930s. In 1939 he left the mine and started promoting National Bonds. He had stood twice for election as an MP in his local constituency, unsuccessfully, as he stood as the Tory candidate and this mining area was a Labour

stronghold. However, he had contacts in local government, was accustomed to public speaking and had a forceful personality.

He used to travel in a large van with a driver all around several counties in the north of England. At each stop he would set up in the marketplace or on the village green and open the rear doors of the van where there was a screen with back projection. He would show films, black and white, of course, about Spitfires, army manoeuvres, ships and the war effort, including bits of war-related news reels. He would then give a rousing speech to persuade people to buy National Bonds. He continued doing this till the end of the war when he retired and was awarded the OBE.



United Kingdom national war bond advertisement
(1918)

Working at the Dominion Cinema

1983-84

by **STEVEN WHITFIELD**

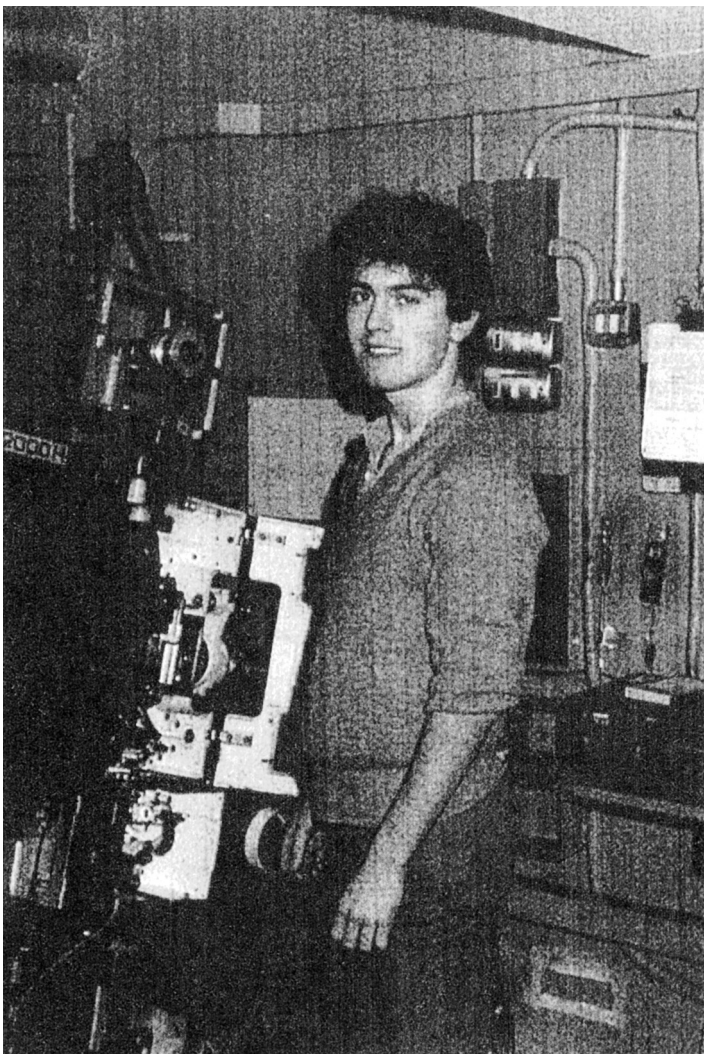
I spent my first year after leaving school in a YTS position (Youth Training Scheme) as a cinema projectionist at the Dominion Cinema in Morningside. Films used to arrive in cans

containing five to six films and had to be hand spun on to one large reel for presentation. Reels were spliced together with tape. While spinning the two reels, you had to keep the tension on the film to prevent slacking. This involved holding the film between two fingers—very sharp! When the film finished its cinema run, you had to hand-spin the films back into their smaller reels for transporting back to the film company.

I think I had been hoping to watch lots of films from my vantage point in the projection room but there was just a small porthole for checking that the film was running. If it had been any bigger, it would have let too much light through. The noise of the equipment operating also made it difficult to catch the soundtrack.

There were three screens within the building and Cinema 3 used to use industrial-sized videocassettes. It later changed to a film projection system but still invoked cries of 'My telly's bigger than that screen!' from some moviegoers. At the time, this screen had been showing *Gregory's Girl* for over a year!

The Dominion's ushers were always known for adding the personal touch. There was always an



Steven Whitfield in the Dominion's projection room (1983)



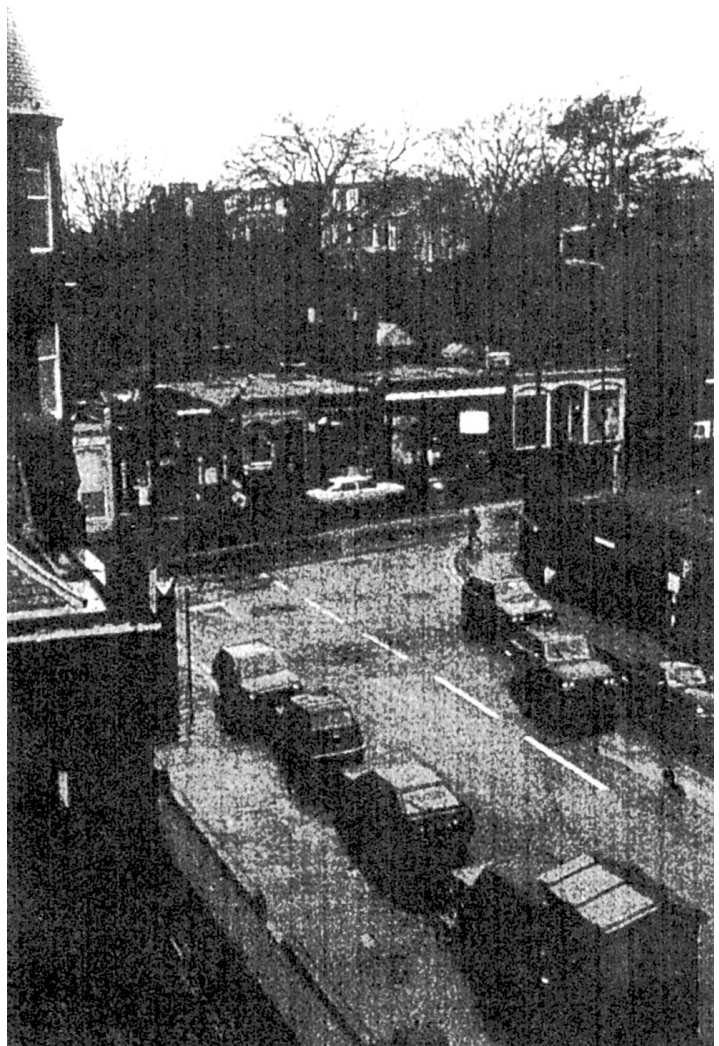
The Dominion Cinema, Newbattle Terrace, 2007

offer to carry the patrons' juice and snacks to their seats for them and afterwards they were always asked if they had enjoyed the film.

The Dominion was very traditional, with classic red velvet pull-down/pop-up seats. Mr Cameron, the owner/manager, took great pride in his family-owned independent cinema and was always very much in evidence. He would be at the front-of-house wearing his black tie and tuxedo or sometimes his kilt outfit, greeting the patrons on arrival. I remember the chief projectionist was called Iain and his assistants were Bernie and Kenny. I was 'the lad.' On one occasion Peter Ustinov came and he gave a talk.

I remember the Pearl and Dean adverts very well, especially the Kia-Ora ones with the animated crows. The Pearl and Dean intro music was called *Asteroid: Papapapapapa!* You can still listen to it on YouTube.

The Dominion Cinema in Morningside is one of a few surviving independent cinemas. It opened in 1938 using Streamline Moderne design, a style of Art Deco; it is now a listed building. The cinema has undergone a number of renovations over the years and now has four screens.



Street view from the projection room (1983)

TALKING ABOUT PICTURES

RECALLING TWO FAVOURITE FILMS

by **MILES TUBB**

It may be hopeless nostalgia but I seem to remember that there was a better selection of old films on the TV when I was growing up and that was with just three, latterly four, channels to choose from. On Saturday night BBC2 would often run a season of themed films—a whole series of horror pictures from Lugosi and Karloff, to garish Hammer Horror. There were seasons of François Truffaut and French new wave films, great Hollywood melodramas with Bette Davis, Film Noir from the 1940s and even silent classics. It was an excellent education in classic cinema. In the early days of Channel Four, afternoons were often programmed with old black and white movies often more obscure British and US films—probably cheaper to *buy in* but none the less an interesting mix.

Then there was Alex Cox. The great Alex Cox, who always reminded me of one of the ‘Bash Street Kids’. His BBC2 Moviedrome programme brought us a bill of the weird, wonderful and obscure. Introduced with an insightful aplomb, they ranged from *Friend Without a Face* to *The Wicker Man*.

In recent years we’ve had a proliferation of TV channels but finding interesting old films has not been easy. Then in 2015 a new channel began to broadcast, *Talking Pictures*. Its remit has been to broadcast more obscure, largely British films. It is

an eclectic mix of feature films, ‘B’ movies, short films, TV series (such as *Family at War*), even old family cine film and information films. Content can be hit and miss but it is refreshingly eclectic.

I’ve picked out two films that have been shown in the last month that were certainly worth watching. First up is a film I first saw as a Channel Four afternoon matinee, *Hell Drivers*. A 1957 production that revolves around a group of lorry drivers hauling material from a quarry. It’s ‘B movie’ material but done with style. It is a heavy haulage western and has a great cast: Patrick McGoohan, William Hartnell, Herbert Lom, Sid James, Gordon Jackson and a very young Jill Ireland and David McCallum. It was the first starring role for Stanley Baker. He was a charismatic Welsh actor, popular throughout the 1960s and now undeservedly forgotten.

The director was Cy Endfield, a blacklisted Hollywood director who had moved to Britain to be able to work. This was his first director’s credit in around five years. He went on to have a big hit with Stanley Baker’s most famous film *Zulu*. The female lead is Peggy Cummings, star of the 1950 cult classic *Gun Crazy*. I missed one significant member of the cast—well later on he was significant. In this film he is all eyebrows and background menace—Sean Connery.

(CONTINUE OVERLEAF)



HELL DRIVERS

VISTAVISION

starring STANLEY BAKER · HERBERT LOM · PEGGY CUMMINS

also starring PATRICK McGOOHAN

Screenplay by JOHN KRUSE and C. RAKER ENFIELD · Produced by S. BENJAMIN

Directed by C. RAKER ENFIELD

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TALKING ABOUT PICTURES

– CONTINUED

Screenshot from *The Innocents* (1961)

Deborah Kerr. Cinematographer Freddie Francis contributed much to the atmosphere of *The Innocents*.



Now acknowledged as one of the best Gothic horror films ever made, another favourite was *The Innocents*. Made in 1961 it was based on *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James. Jack Clayton was in the director's chair. Two years before he had made *Room at the Top*, *The Innocents* is a very different film. The credit as primary script writer was William Archibald, who had adapted James's story for the stage. The story has the prime ingredients for a good, Victorian horror. A nanny takes charge of two orphaned children, Miles and Flora, in a large, sparsely-staffed house in Sussex. Her predecessor committed suicide, driven to it by the death of her abusive lover. The children are possessed and the house is haunted.

However, Clayton had a clear vision for his film version of the story and he brought in Truman Capote to write the script. Capote was taking a break from writing his seminal crime book *In Cold Blood* and maybe the disturbing nature of that book contributed to the tone of his script. It was certainly no longer just a story of a haunting, but an unsettling study in paranoia and sexual suppression. Deborah Kerr plays the nanny, Miss Giddens. A refined and thoroughly English performance, which makes her character's eventual psychological break down all the more disturbing.

We see chilling apparitions, the former nanny staring from the other side of the lake, her dead

lover—played by the late Peter Wyngarde—leering through a window, distorted noises and voices from other rooms. The most disconcerting element to the film though, is the relationship between the nanny and her male charge—the young boy Miles. A comforting kiss between them which goes on far too long is shocking and uncomfortable to watch.

It is a film laden with Freudian meaning and also highly entertaining, in an unnerving way. Deborah Kerr considered it her best screen performance. At the time Francois Truffaut said it was the best British film since Hitchcock had left Britain for Hollywood in 1938. Clayton's goal to make a film full of ambiguity—is this really a haunting or is it all in the mind of Miss Giddens—is certainly fully realised. It is certainly a film that has gained in stature over the years.

Some trivia to do with the film. For all the Englishness in Deborah Kerr's acting persona, she was actually born near Glasgow. Martin Stephens, who portrayed the young Miles, had previously been in the film version of John Wyndam's *The Midwich Cuckoos—The Village of The Damned*. Pamela Franklyn (Flora) finished off the decade starring in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. *Rumpole* creator John Mortimer, was brought in to make the dialogue sound more Victorian.

Talking Pictures is available on Virgin 445, Freesat 306, Freeview 81 and Sky 343.

The Archivist's pick

by DAVID DONALDSON

Since 1999 the LMA has been building a collection of old family and personal photographs donated through members of the public. Most of the photographs are from the 20th century although the earliest date from the 1850s. The majority are of Edinburgh and Scotland, but the collection also includes snapshots from people's travels around the globe. The collection offers a great resource to view the changing social and cultural life of the people of Edinburgh.

The photograph below shows the staff of the Leith Capitol Cinema in Manderston Street about to set off on a—perhaps annual—staff outing, on this occasion to Inverary in Argyll. The Capitol Cinema was situated under one of the arches of

the rail bridge that once spanned the bottom end of Leith Walk. As far as I know, the building is still in use today as a bingo hall although the Capitol closed its doors sometime in the 1960s.

I like the fact that the staff, who presumably spent much of their time working in the dark of the cinema, are getting the opportunity to get out into the fresh air. Being the 1st of June in Inverary the air could well be fresh—they certainly seem to be well wrapped up for the occasion!

Christine Hellewell is sitting in the front row, third from the left. Does anyone recognise, and can anyone put a name to, any of the other members of staff?



Capitol staff outing to Inverary, 1952

Edinburgh's picture houses directory

Some of the many picture houses in Edinburgh (including Leith and Portobello) which were open in the early twentieth century...

Alhambra

On Leith Walk, it opened December 1914 and was used as a full-time cinema from 1915. It closed in 1958.

Blue Halls / Beverley

On Lauriston Street, it opened in 1930. Original seating was for 1,760. Renamed in 1954 and altered for CinemaScope. Closed in 1959.

Bungalow / Victory

Located on Bath Street, Portobello, the Bungalow opened as a cinema in 1914. It was renamed the Victory in 1942 but closed in 1956.

Caley

Opened in 1923 with 900 seats. It was later enlarged to seat 1,800 and a sound system was fitted to screen talkies in 1928. It stopped showing films in 1984.

Cameo

The Cameo is one of the oldest surviving cinemas in Scotland, and probably one of the few still with its original interior decoration. It opened in 1914 as the King's Cinema with seating for 673. The building was fitted for sound in 1930. The Poole family refurbished the building, re-opening it as the Cameo in 1949.

Capitol

Located on Manderston Street, Leith, the Capitol opened 1928 with 2,300 seats. It closed 1961.

Coliseum

Located at 125 West Fountainbridge, it opened 1911 with 1,800 seats. Later it was part of a cine-ballroom complex which also incorporated the Palais de Dance. The cinema closed 1942.

County / George

In George Street, Portobello, the County opened 1939. Designed by T. Bowhill Gibson, it was renamed the George in 1954. It was the first cinema in east Scotland to have CinemaScope and a four track Stereoscope sound system. Closed 1974.



Dominion

Opened in 1938, much of the original decoration survives. It now has four screens and a restaurant.

The Embassy

On Boswell Parkway, the Embassy opened in 1937. Closed after fire in 1964.

Gaumont / Rutland

On Canning Street, the Gaumont was opened in 1930 by the General Theatre Corporation/Gaumont. It had seating for 2,187. Renamed in 1950 but closed after a fire in 1963.

Grand

In St Stephen's Street, the Grand opened in 1920. There was seating for 1,633. The cinema closed in 1960.

Haymarket / Scotia

On Dalry Road, it opened in 1912 seating around 615. Renamed the Scotia in 1946, it closed in 1964.

La Scala

Opened as La Scala Electric Theatre on Nicolson Street, in 1912. Renamed as the Classic in 1974.

Monseigneur News Theatre

Opened as the Princes Cinema, in 1912, on Princes Street with seating for 500, it also had tea room and smoking room.

New Picture House

On Princes Street, it opened in 1913. Hope Jones Unit organ, supplied by Wurlitzer, was installed in 1925. The New Picture House was the first cinema in Edinburgh to



The ABC Regal (Odeon) on Lothian Road (1956)

Playhouse

Opened in 1929, the Playhouse originally seated 3,040. This was made up of 1,500 seats in the stalls (coloured crimson, costing 1/3), 680 in the circle (coloured purple, costing 2/4), and 860 in the balcony (coloured old gold, costing 1/- in the front, 9d in the back).

Tivoli Picture House / New Tivoli

On Gorgie Road, the original Tivoli opened in 1913. It incorporated a stage, which was used by touring variety artists, and sat around 580; sound equipment was installed in 1929. The replacement building, the New Tivoli opened in 1934. This closed as a cinema in 1973.

Poole's Roxy

On Gorgie Road, opened in 1937, closed in 1963.

Poole's Synod Hall

Opened in 1875 as theatre, then used as the United Presbyterian Synod Hall from 1877 and for Poole's Diorama shows from around 1906. Converted to a full-time cinema from 1928. Closed in 1965.

Regent

The Regent was opened in 1927 in the old Palace Brewery, Abbeymount, seating 1,700. It closed in 1970.

Ritz

On Rodney Street, the Ritz opened in 1929. Closed in 1981.

Salon

The Salon opened in 1913 on Baxter's Place, and seated around 800. Closed in 1974.

State

On Great Junction Street, Leith, the State opened in 1938, as part of a multi-use leisure development which had several shops, two billiard halls and a skittle alley. The billiards and skittles were on the two floors above the entrance foyer, with the main cinema located to the rear. The State stopped screening films in 1972.

Tudor

Also known as St Bernard's Picture Palace or Savoy, the St Bernard's Picture House opened in 1911. 1921 it was known as the Savoy and seated 906. It was named the Tudor in 1960 but closed in 1966.

This is only a selected list; there were many other cinemas located around the city, some of which were only open for a few years. Apologies if your favourite local cinema has not been included.

More information about cinemas and picture houses in Scotland can be found at: www.scottishcinemas.org.uk including a downloadable version **Places of Entertainment in Edinburgh** compiled by George Baird.

have a synchronised sound installation. It closed in 1951.

New Picture House / Central/George

High Street, Portobello, the New Picture House opened in 1915. It was renamed the Central, then the George from 1942-1954, then the Central again until it closed in 1961.

New Victoria / Odeon

On Clerk Street, the New Victoria opened in 1930. It was designed for the Gaumont company with seating for 2,058. CinemaScope was installed in 1954 and the stage was widened for the screening of *South Pacific* in 70mm. In 1964 the building was renamed the Odeon and the cinema closed in 2003.

Odeon

ABC picture house opened in 1938 as the Regal. The Regal increased to three screens and was renamed the ABC Film Centre in 1969. It closed in 2000.

Palace

Situated on Constitution Street at the foot of Leith walk, the Palace opened in 1928 with 2,300 seats. It closed in 1961.

Picturedrome / Eastway

Located on Easter Road the Picturedrome opened 1912 with 600 seats. Renamed the Eastway in 1943, it was enlarged to seat 875. It closed in 1961.

Picture House / Star

High Street, Portobello, the Picture House opened in 1913. It was altered to seat around 400 and was later used as a hall and church.

'One of the nicest was the Alhambra'

Maureen Sweeney recorded Stan Eadie talking about his years working in cinemas in Edinburgh and Leith, from his apprenticeship at fifteen to helping Willie Merrilees run film shows for pensioners.

Poole's Synod Hall

Stan's first attempt at an apprenticeship was not in cinemas but with the electrical engineering company, Parsons' Peebles. However, he didn't last very long: 'I went to Parsons' Peebles to start with and I stuck it for a month, but that wisnae the kind of electrician I wanted to be.' Instead he was lucky enough to be taken on by a well-kent name in the Edinburgh cinema scene: Jim Poole. 'I was indentured by Jim Poole in Poole's Synod Hall in Edinburgh. He also owned the Cameo.' Poole's Synod Hall was on Castle Terrace. The hall itself was opened in 1875, as the new West End Theatre. The United Presbyterian Church then purchased the hall as the original plan to develop a bigger entertainment area failed to materialise.

The Poole family then started renting the hall at the beginning of the twentieth century to show myrioramas, which were moving panoramas of dramatic scenery or important events, such as the sinking of the Titanic. These were an annual

Christmas event until 1928, when the venue was turned into a full-time cinema. It has been credited as being the first venue in Edinburgh to show talkies. The Pooles invested in state-of-the-art equipment and they also ran the Roxy in Gorgie and Cameo at Tollcross. In the 1950s and 1960s it was a favourite location for kids playing truant. Despite being popular for showing horror films, the Synod Hall shut in 1965.

Working for Jim Poole, Stan got to know many people working in both cinemas and theatres in Edinburgh. He remembered: 'Macgregor... The chief projectionist in the Caley... He had about four people working underneath him. Nobody worked unless you passed by him.' The Caley Picture House opened in 1923. It seated 900 originally, but in 1928 that was increased to 1,900. The cinema closed in 1984 but from 1986 it was used as a discothèque and live music venue.

The Caley to the Kings... Westrex was the best!

From the Caley, Stan moved to the Kings: 'It was the chap who used to work in the Gaiety Theatre, he was the first person I met when I went to the Kings. And he shouted on the chief electrician: "There's a lad here come up frae the

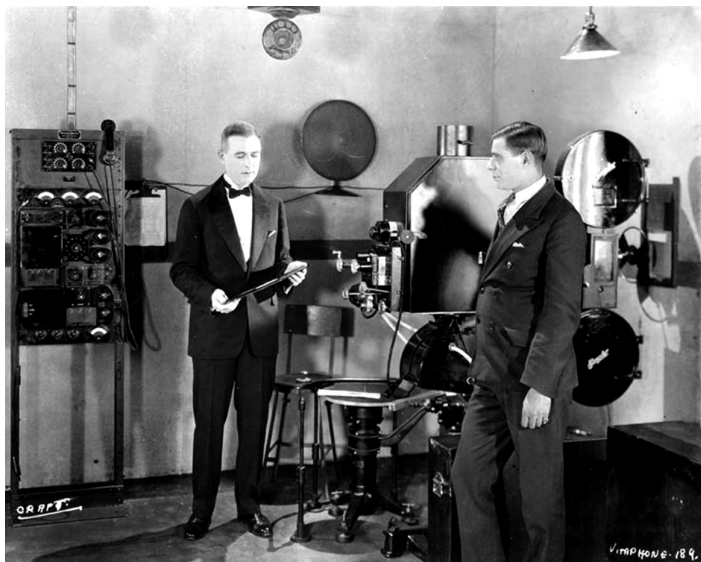
Demonstration of a Vitaphone projection (1926)

The engineer is holding a disc, which will be played on a turntable coupled to the projector motor.

Caley about the job". Stan's real interest was in sound engineering and, after working at the Kings for a bit, he was recruited to help with the sound systems in various cinemas in Edinburgh: 'I got really involved in cinemas through the engineer. He came to the Kings Theatre, he was the sound engineer for Westrex and the Kings had a Westrex system. We worked from 10.00 in the morning to 12.00 then we got away and you went back in time for the show at night, so we had a lot of spare time. He said: "Do you want to come with me when I go round all the different cinemas?" So that is how I ended up going round them all.'

1929 Westrex, Western Electric, developed one of the first cinema sound systems. The Western Electric Universal Base enabled silent cinema projectors to be adapted to screen sound films. It designed a system that used a wide-audio-range horn loudspeaker powered by a 3-watt amplifier. The Vitaphone system was developed and used by Warner Brother films, between 1926 and 1931. Later Westrex developed variable density and magnetic sound systems.

Stan's favourite cinema which used Westrex was the Alhambra: 'One of the nicest ones for the sound system was the old Alhambra, in Leith Walk, which had a Western Electric sound system. It was a tiny wee box.' The Alhambra opened in December 1914 for both cinema and variety, but became a full-time cinema within a year. It closed in March 1958 and the building was demolished in February 1974. Stan tells a story about the manager at the Alhambra who owned a record shop just beside the cinema: 'The manager... had the record shop just outside the theatre and he played the records from his shop [in the cinema] and he used to be a right Jimmy Shand fan and when it was



time to put a record on, he'd put Jimmy Shand on, and when the projectionist stuck the film on, he wouldnae turn the sound over to the projector, not until Jimmy Shand had finished his tune and then he turned it back.' Hopefully the patrons of the Alhambra were also Jimmy Shand fans!

The RCA system sounded tinny

There were other sound systems that were used by the different cinemas, although according to Stan they were not always as good: 'The Salon, they were the same, they had Western Electric, they were good' but 'the State Cinema was RCA, that's the Radio Company of America, not as good because it sounded tinny.' RCA—Radio Company of America—was founded in 1919 and the company later made investments in the movie industry. RCA Photophone, was a movie sound-on-film system, but was clearly not Stan's favourite.

The Caley, the State and the Playhouse had the biggest projection rooms; the Cameo and the Alhambra were the smallest ones. Maureen wondered if the smaller cinemas wouldn't need

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'ONE OF THE NICEST WAS THE ALHAMBRA'

— CONTINUED

as big a system, but it seemed size didn't matter. She also asked if Stan could work the projector as well as the sound side, as the job seemed to need someone who could work both systems. Stan's technical description was: 'Aye, because that was where your main problem was with valve sets and sprockets and if you got sprocket, and sound track on a film is like a squiggly line, and if somebody hadn't put that in properly, you'd get a scratch and you could hear that on the sound, coming through.' Clearly that would not have pleased the audiences!

No cinemas were open on Sundays

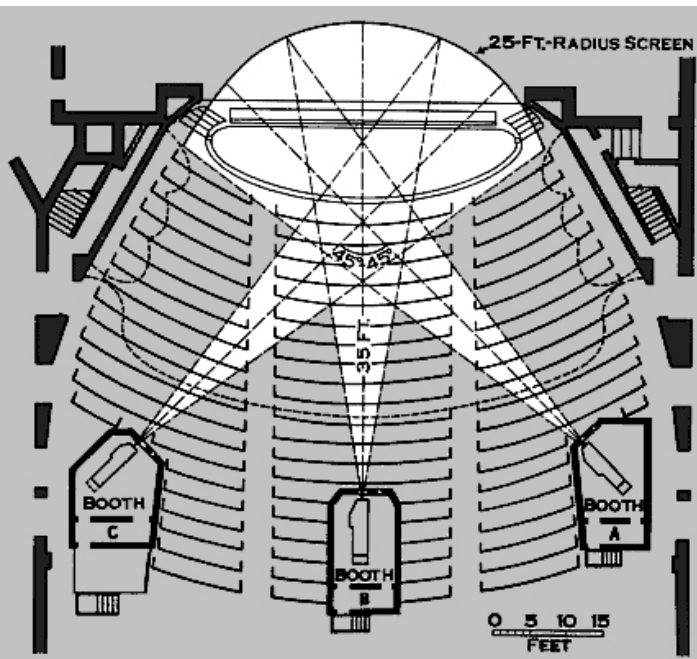
Cinemas had set rules about which films could be shown, as well as their rotation or changeover: 'Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday was one film; Thursday, Friday, Saturday was the other and you had the children's matinee, that was separate.' Stan's work hours were also not the usual 9.00 to 5.00: 'You started maybe at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and it was continuous and you always finished by 10.00... No cinemas [were] open on a

Sunday; the only time you could open on a Sunday was once a year and that was for charity and everybody worked for nothing and the film, the renters gave it for nothing so they didn't have to pay for the film.'

Movietone Newsreels

As well having to fulfil the 'British Quota', in the days before television cinemas showed short newsreels reporting on current affairs. The British Quota meant a set percentage of the material shown had to comply with The Cinematograph Film Act of 1927. Stan described how Poole interpreted the requirements a little loosely. The cinema programme included: 'The big picture and what you would call the wee picture. Sometimes they had a cartoon. You had to get the British Quota, you had to take British films. Jim Poole found a way round that one, he classed British Movietone News as a British film, so he didn't need to take a second feature.' Because Poole owned more than one cinema, he also arranged the timing of the shows so he could use the same film reel. 'Everybody had a newsreel so he [Jim Poole]





Cinerama projection setup, using three projectors and a wide, deeply curved screen

had it timed so that the Poole Synod Hall would show it first and then once he had finished with it, he ran up to the Cameo and gave it to them. And when they had showed it, it went back to Poole's.'

Cinerama, it was only in London. It was a fantastic system, the screen was all round the theatre... there is one scene in *How the West Was Won* that everybody ducked as the buffalo stampeded, because they thought they were going to come right into you... That was in the Coliseum but Edinburgh could never show that. The biggest increase was at the Caley, where they changed to 70mm, and the first film they got was *The Robe* with Richard Burton and they had it for over a year.' Introduced in the 1950s, Cinerama was a widescreen process that projected images simultaneously from three synchronized 35 mm projectors onto a huge, curved screen. The three cameras used a single shutter, but this was later replaced by a system using a single camera and 70mm prints. To Stan's delight the system was one of the first to use multitrack magnetic sound.

Cinerama and 70mm film

Stan's experience working with sound and projection meant he saw some interesting experiments and developments in cinema technology: 'The biggest change was Cinerama, but Edinburgh never had the chance of seeing

(CONTINUE OVERLEAF)

Screenshots from *How The West Was Won* (1962)

One of the only two feature films made using the three-strip Cinerama process, giving it a very wide and immersive format.



Censorship and classifications

Stan and Maureen also discussed censorship and children's films. Poole owned the La Scala on Nicolson Street, but according to Stan 'he would never show a sixteen film.' In the UK films had been classified since 1912 into two: Universal—for all audiences or Adult—which meant in some areas children needed to be accompanied by an adult. In 1932 another category was introduced—Horror—which meant councils could rule that only people over age sixteen would be allowed admittance. This was changed again in 1950 when category X replaced Horror: only people over sixteen were allowed admittance. This was a compulsory order and all councils had to enforce it. In the 1960s the A rating was split into A for five to fourteen-year olds and AA—age fourteen and over. The age limit for X films was raised to eighteen. The rating system has been changed several times since then and now rates films as: Universal, Parental Guidance, 15, 18 and Restricted 18.

Stan talked about how manager at the State managed any problems of censorship of scenes that he thought unsuitable for a young audience: 'Sixteen was the limit then. They were strict with the certificate because I know the chap at the State, the manager, you had to buy a special film in for a Saturday for the kids but if you had a Western on, and kids shouldnae have been there, the bit that they didn't want them to see, the projectionist used to lift the douser and blank it off. It was maybe somebody kissing... They wanted to bar *The Outlaw* because it showed too much cleavage...' The douser, or dowser, is a metal or asbestos blade that cuts off the light and protects the film when

it is not moving, preventing it from melting. In this case the projectionist would black out the offending clip with the douser and lift it once the scene was over.

London and back to Edinburgh

Stan then moved to London and worked for a film distribution company: 'I had got a contact through working in the theatre, a chap called Brian Rix who gave me the address of Contemporary Films... I did mostly cinemas in London, we rented films to different cinemas.'

However, Stan and his wife, who also worked for Contemporary Films, eventually returned to Edinburgh and he continued working in theatres and cinemas and was able to apply his years of experience working with different systems: 'When I came back from London, I had to go down to the George in Portobello one day and I had never been in there in my life before but it was an emergency. And the chap who was the projectionist wanted to go to a wedding, and he was being relieved by the chap who used to work in the Regal cinema, but when the chap from the Regal got down there it was a Carbon Arc machine and he had never worked on one before. Didn't know how to work it, he was used to a Xenon Lamp, so I had to get a taxi, go down there and run *Paint Your Wagon* for him...' The George, in Bath Street, opened as the County Cinema in 1939 with Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. In 1954 the County Cinema was taken over by George Palmer, redesigned, and was intended to be used for the Annual Edinburgh Film Festival. It closed in 1974.

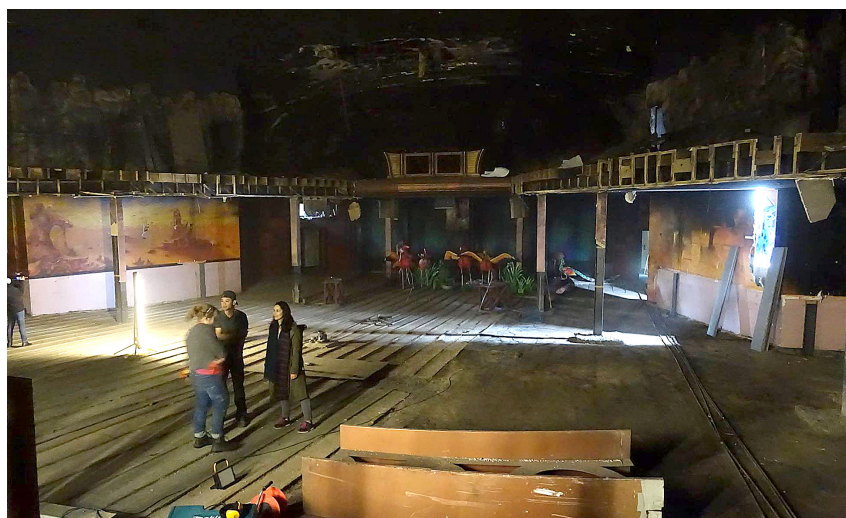
The last film at the State

During the 1970s and 1980s Stan witnessed the closure of many of the local cinemas, some of which were converted to bingo halls. He changed jobs and worked at the courts for many years but some of the cinema staff stayed on and managed the bingo halls. A few of the cinemas kept the projection and sound equipment in place for some years which meant that they could still be used to screen films on special occasions, such as the Old Age Pensioners' film shows organised by Willie Merrilees, chief constable of Lothians and Peebles Constabulary in the 1960s.

Stan helped with the screening of the film shows: 'The last film to be shown at the State when it was a Johnny's Prize Bingo...I did a job for Willie Merrilees, an Old Age Pensioners' Party. [The manager] was working for Johnny's Prize Bingo... And he phoned the film companies to scam a film, because Willie would never put his hand in his pocket. They sent us two films, one was *The Golden Age of Comedy* (released in 1957) and the other one was *The Day They Gave Babies Away* (also released in 1957)... I went for *The Day They Gave Babies Away*. The audience loved the picture. That was the last film that was ever shown with the projectors at the State.'

This film—released as *All Mine to Give* in America—was about six orphaned children surviving in the American West in the late nineteenth century. Based on a true-life experience, the film was a real weepy and starred Glynis Johns and Cameron Mitchell. The selection of an emotional movie about the troubles of a group of immigrant children in America as the

final film to be shown at this Leith cinema, rather than a compilation of slap stick clips from the age of silent movies, is quite telling. It was the end of the road for most of the small, independent cinemas not just in Edinburgh and Leith, but also throughout the country as a whole.



The State Cinema, Leith, 2018

Clearing out the empty cinema for Hidden Door festival.

Remembering The Embassy

SATURDAY SERIALS TO CHUMMY SEATS

The Little Shop of Memory provides an ideal space for groups to meet and reminisce over tea and cake, and one of our regular groups is coordinated by Alzheimer's Scotland and Care for Carers. The group meets monthly and our chats cover a range of topics, some current—buses and trams—and others about the past—buses and trams! Some are prompted by the members or stimulated by a recent donation—bowls, Meccano, Toni home perms for example—or by the latest photo display in the unit—dancing and schooldays spring to mind.

A passing reference to picture houses and cinemas when we were discussing dance halls and dancing prompted keen memories of the various

cinemas visited by locals in different parts of Edinburgh. The following month, one of the group, Ron, brought along a list of 35 picture houses that he and his wife had remembered — they loved going to the cinema in their courting days and had a wide knowledge of them.

At a later meeting we had another reminiscence about experiences and memories of going to the pictures from childhood through to adulthood. Although brought up in separate areas of Edinburgh, not just Leith, through to the west—Glasgow—and even England, many of the recollections were similar, showing that things were pretty much the same, wherever people grew up.



‘We’d go round the doors asking for jeelie jars’

Peter remembered *jeelie jars*: ‘You used to return jars and bottles to get in to the pictures but that was a long time ago.’ A lot of people remember doing this, going round the doors asking family and neighbours for any empty jars and bottles. It must have been quite competitive as presumably lots of the other local children were doing the same, trying to gather enough to pay for their entrance ticket. How come there were so many empty jars and bottles? What had been in them? Jam and jeelie, Bovril or beef extract, aerated water, fizzy juice – that would have been a rare treat.

Another way was to sneak in without paying – presumably something the picture house staff expected and for which they were ready, torch in hand! Rose remembered trying to persuade sympathetic adults to take them in – perhaps even pay for them. ‘When we were children we used to stand outside on the step and say, “Could you take me in?” because you weren’t allowed in on your own, you had to have an adult. But we knew everybody, so we would go to The Embassy and say, “Could you please take us in” and they would take us in and then we would leave them. It was great.’ Changed days now, but a great insight into a time when adults and children knew and trusted each other.

‘We went to the Saturday morning club’

The Saturday programme was the special one for children and the one they all waited for with great excitement. Whole auditoria crammed with

children, noisy children, chattering and jumping up and down, throwing sweeties, pushing and shoving, helping hide mates who hadn’t paid and squeezing on to the seats and benches. The screening of the next instalment of the current serial or favourite genre of film was what they all wanted.

Margaret mentioned going ‘on a Saturday morning; there was a Saturday club so that’s what we went to’ and Rose recalled that ‘we used to get serials... Tarzan. You used to get it every week.’ She also pointed out that they didn’t sit on seats, instead it was uncomfortable wooden benches: ‘wooden seats, benches, they were horrible.’ But everyone came to attention once the programme started: ‘There was a circle [on the screen] so you knew the picture was going to start.’

‘The usherettes looked so proud’

The staff at the local cinemas knew all the children from doorman to cashier but particularly the uniformed ushers or usherettes, who manned the entrances and aisles, guiding people to their seats, selling sweets and cigarettes—although presumably not to the children. Margaret remembered the usherettes taking them to their seats and Sheena had a very vivid memory of what they wore: ‘They had a cotton top—a bit like the Girl Guides I used to think and they looked so proud standing there holding their tray. Ice creams, ice lollies... You used to get two!’ Sheena must have been very lucky to be able to get two ice lollies. Some of our other visitors have told us that they used to take their snacks in with them to save money. Rose described something similar: ‘There was a bakers in the Kirkgate that

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used to sell broken biscuits and you used to get a bag and you could take it to the pictures...' but, as she went on to remember, the biscuits were not always eaten, and instead were used as missiles to fire at the other children: 'they enjoyed throwing them about.'

'The gorier, the better'

We all shared memories of the different kind of films we enjoyed: comedies, war films, love stories and detective movies but Westerns seemed to resonate most with the group. Peter summed it up succinctly: 'I liked Westerns... Roy Rogers, Audie Murphy...' and Norman agreed, although he mentioned John Wayne as well. Surprisingly, Norman and Sheena's favourite movie genre also proved quite popular with some of the others: '... horror films! The gorier the better! Not Hammer Horror—they're mild. Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi...'

'I had shoes and coat to match'

What was also an important and loving reminiscence was going to the pictures in the early days of courtship. This may have involved new clothes and most certainly sitting in the chummy seats, although Margaret claimed that she and Peter 'didn't go to the chummy seats... because we behaved ourselves...' They went to the Ritz in Rodney Street, which, as it turned out, was where Rose and Ron had their first date. Rose had a very fond memory of this event. 'Our first date was at the Ritz and we saw the *Sierra Madre* with Humphrey Bogart and I remember what I had on. I had shoes and coat to match; a special outfit.' She clearly had high hopes that the relationship was going to last although it was the Embassy, which was her local picture house and nearer her family home, rather than the Ritz, that became their cinema of choice. Ron, who had come to Edinburgh with the army,



recalled that he and Rose went to the Embassy but generally never watched the films because, as Rose added: 'The Embassy, that was our courting cinema, the back seats... We saw anything... [but] we couldnae see the films very much... We were too much in love.' What the film was, and who was in it, was less important than spending time as a couple, somewhere warm, comfortable, and away from the scrutiny of family. The chummy seats were for cuddling and kissing and goodness knows what else—at least until the usherette appeared with her torch to shine a light on couples who were maybe getting a little too chummy...

The couples have continued to enjoy lots of different films throughout their married lives, even with the development of videos and DVDs, matinee sessions at some of the larger multiscreen cinemas are still a draw but talking about the old classic films and cinemas still evoked particularly special memories illustrating just how important 'going to the pictures' was to people.

Thanks to Rose and Ron, Margaret and Peter, Sheena and Norman, Ann and Jane.



David Langridge drawings
Cinema audience.





Staff of the Capitol Cinema, Manderston Street (1948)

'I'll see you inside'

MEMORIES OF GOING TO THE CINEMA

GUS DAVIDSON

'When [the State] was a cinema, in the 1950s, they had the most beautiful satin draped curtains with lights shining under them, changing from pale pink to purple then blue and then green. Stunning and magical to a child. Wouldn't have been at all surprised if Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers had danced their way across the stage.'

MADGE ALLAN

'I used to go there with my mum and sister, and saw the film *The Ten Commandments* there... So many memories.'

TINA THOMPSON

'I loved the State, the Saturday morning club was always good. I remember winning the golden ticket, which meant a free entry next time, only problem was walking down to collect the prize, as everyone threw ice-lolly sticks and wrappers at you. What memories!'

PATRICIA McDONALD

'My mum loved musicals as well and the State was closest to Bangor Road where we lived.'

JESSIE POTTER

'I went to the State picture house regularly; and also the Palace and the Capitol, with my sister, just on Saturdays.'

BETTY SMITH

'I remember going to La Scala on a Saturday afternoon... It was all kids at the matinees and it was thrupence.'

'When I was a teenager the boys and girls went to the Embassy on Boswell Parkway... It was nothing as romantic as somebody paying you in. They used to say: "I'll see you inside!"... And whoever you fancied took you home!'

'When we were courting we used to go the Playhouse or the ABC at Tollcross. There were

always queues for the pictures, every weekend we went and there was always queues. We used to go and have a fish tea and then go back and stand in the queue and wait to get two seats together’.

‘Once when we were married we went to the Playhouse and the queues were away up the road and I was pregnant and Norman says: "Why don't you have a wee wander about and I'll stay here, go and get some sweets". My favourite was pickled onions, so I got a jar of them, I went to the ladies, poured all the vinegar off them, opened a kirby grip, and when we were sitting down I took the lid off... The boy next to me, he got up and walked away and got another seat. There were two onions left in it when we got out. That was one of my treats... I can't remember what the film was.’

HELEN

‘We used to go round to the O.P. [Operetta House] quite a lot, and you used to get in for a jeely jar. Maybe two of them, tuppence. The O.P. was on Chambers Street, the foot of the street, leading on to the Bridges. It was one of the cheapest.’

‘I went to the La Scala on Nicolson Street, and the Blue Halls as well... The Victoria was much dearer. And the Salon, just down from the Playhouse... But the Empire was much nearer. I used to work at the milk bar opposite the Empire.’

ROSE

‘When I was a kid I used to go to the Blue Halls, on a Saturday, it was great. There was a wee sweetie shop on the corner... And I used to get thrupence to buy a sweetie, so it was either a Candy lollipop, hard toffee in coloured foil paper or the other sweet was a sherbet dab... It was quite a choice.’

‘I remember Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin and at the Blue Halls you could sit on, when the film came on again you could sit through and watch it again. Sometimes the usherette would come down with her wee torch and put you out.’

‘My younger sister would go to the Saturday morning cinema at the Gaumont; I never was in the Gaumont as I was working by that time.’

‘When I was courting I went to the Poole's Synod Hall and it was usually the horror movies... You'd be scared so you'd cuddle up. If it was scary you could coorie in and get a cuddle. The boy usually paid.’

‘The Ritz on Rodney Street was a courting cinema. You would go on a Wednesday night. The walk home was the courting walk, time for a couple of kisses and cuddles.’

New Projector, Capitol Cinema, Manderston Street (1948)



PEARL & DEAN PRESENTS...

by JOHN MCCAUGHIE



Screenshot from *The Jungle Book* (1967)

dispersed around the cinema on a final warning. They showed a mix of cartoons, a western, a Children's Film Foundation story about kids outwitting adults and a serial with a catchy tune like *Champion the Wonder Horse*.

The first film I ever saw was *The Jungle Book*. I remember liking Mowgli and Baloo and the songs. My mum took me to see it at Auchinleck Picture House. I've no idea why we went there because everyone in Cumnock hated everything in Auchinleck. Small town rivalry. I suppose it shows the power of cinema to break down barriers and appeal across the divide.

One of the funniest films we saw was *Carry on Screaming*, with Kenneth Williams shouting, 'Frying tonight!' as he dipped a victim into boiling wax. *Jason and the Argonauts* was definitely the scariest one; a giant Cyclops and then the skeletons fighting with swords. And I remember a queue all the way down the street for *A Million Years BC*. In the film there were lots of bones and grunting and hair and fur. And Raquel Welsh.

It was usually Cumnock Picture House we went to. On a Saturday morning, a gang of us would go to the matinee show. A shilling to get in, then a woman with a torch and a frown showed us to our seats and warned us to behave or else we'd be out. A sugar rush from our sweets and Kiaora and it was only a matter of time before we were



Screenshot from *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963)



Screenshot from *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)

At 16 we saw *A Clockwork Orange*. It was mental. Like nothing we'd ever seen before. Its effect was heightened by the fact that it was an 18 certificate and we'd got in under age. The film had a huge impact on the style and fashion of the times; Crombie coats, braces and Doc Martens became really popular. Gordon, one of my pals, even wore a bowler and one false eyelash. And its words lingered on the tongue and in the imagination: ultraviolence, droog, bezoomy, malenky.

Cumnock Picture House was eventually taken over by Mecca Bingo, as many cinemas were in the 1980s and something special was lost. It was the communal experience of watching the silver screen and the magic of cinema transporting us to another world that was gone.

In an era before television the cinema played a huge part in people's social lives. It always proves a popular topic for discussion in reminiscence sessions. Some favourite memories from the golden age of cinema going are:

'I'd tell the lassie I'd meet her inside so I didnae have to pay her in.'

'One of us paid to get in, then opened the exit door for our mates.'

'You could get into some cinemas with a jeely jar.'

Screenshot from *The African Queen* (1951)

My dad told me when he was wee he'd a part-time job at the picture house selling ice cream and sweeties at the interval and he'd eaten that much he'd sickened himself. He never ate chocolate again in his entire life.

He said one night all of Cumnock Picture House erupted with laughter during a screening of *The African Queen*. It was the scene where Bogart drags the boat through the river and finds leeches sticking to him and tries to pull them off. When he curses, 'These damn leeches!' someone in the picture house shouted out, 'Aye, the Leitchs of Auchinleck.' The Leitchs were a well-known dodgy family. And it seemed Bogart knew about them too. It was uproar.

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PEARL & DEAN PRESENTS...

— CONTINUED



Using photos of movie idols like Bogart, or Gable, or Bette Davis can help stimulate people's memories. Songs from the movies can also trigger memories and take you back to that time in the dark watching the films. Lots of people will remember Doris Day, as *Calamity Jane*, singing, 'A Secret Love', 'The Deadwood Stage' and 'Just Blew in from the Windy City'. It's easy to get these movie clips on Youtube on a laptop or tablet. Or watch a DVD like *That's Entertainment*, which has short scenes from all the famous musicals. It could be shown on a big TV screen in the care home lounge with tubs of ice cream served at the intermission.

Reminiscing about the cinema is great fun. People love to talk about the matinee shows, film stars, the gossip, the films, their local fleapit, the chummy seats and famous quotes from the movies.

Can you name who said these and from which film?

'Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine.'

'Oh, Jerry, don't let's ask for the moon. We have the stars.'

'One morning I shot an elephant in my pyjamas. How he got in my pyjamas, I don't know.'

Answers on a postcard please to The Little Shop of Memory. First Prize: a tub of ice cream with a wee wooden spoon.



That's All Folks

[from top to bottom]

Bette Davis in *Beyond the Forest* (1949)

Sydney Greenstreet and Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca* (1942)

Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable in *The Misfits* (1961)



SPECIAL THANKS

Ann • David Donaldson • Evelyn Whitfield • Jane • John McCaughie • Margaret • Maureen Sweeney • Miles Tubb • Norman • Peter • Ron • Rose • Sheena • Stan Eadie • Steven Whitfield

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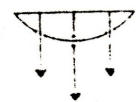


THE
PALACE
PICTURE
HOUSE
Princes Street,
EDINBURGH

Opposite the
Waverley Steps.

Programme

ONE
PENNY



CONTINUOUS
• 1 TO 10:30 •
PERFORMANCE