

2017

BRITISH SILENT FILM FESTIVAL SYMPOSIUM 2017



THURSDAY 6th April

09.00-11.00 – SESSION ONE: NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Welcome & Housekeeping (10 mins)

09.10: Tony Fletcher – Screening and Talk: The Transition to Sound 1925-7 (60 mins)

10.10: Rebecca Harrison – Class and the Train's Effect: Reinvestigating the 'Panicking Audience'

10.30: Bryony Dixon & Steve Foxon – Trainspotting Too: Reporting from the BFI's Victorian Project

10.50: Questions

11.00-11.30 TEA BREAK

11.30-1.00 – SESSION TWO: EARLY EXCITEMENTS

11.30: Stephen Morgan – Seismic Stumutations: *That Fatal Sneeze* (1907) as Earthquake Film

11.50: Andrew Shail – The Series Character on UK Screens before the First World War

12.10: Stephen Bottomore – Caravans and Kinematographs: the origins of the public health film

12.30: SCREENING – *The Fly Pest* (1909) 35mm 6 mins

12.40: Questions

13.00-14.00 LUNCH BREAK

14.00-15.30 – SESSION THREE: OLD AND NEW FRIENDS

14.00: Gerry Turvey – 'A New Palace of Pleasure': The Bohemia Cinema Pleasure Garden at Finchley, North London, 1912-18

14.20: Lucie Dutton MA – Maurice Elvey and *Hindle Wakes*: "It's really about something – it's about people"

14.40: Jo Botting – Adrian Brunel and the 'missing' film *A Light Woman*

15.00: SCREENING – *A Light Woman* (1928) DVD 25 mins [9.5mm cut-down version]

15.30-16.00 TEA BREAK

16.00-18.00 – SESSION FOUR: SCOTLAND ON THE SOUTH COAST

16.00: Ellen Cheshire – Making progress in re-assessing Progress Films

16.20: SCREENING – *A Lowland Cinderella* (1921) 35mm

20/7

FRIDAY 7th April

09.20 – 10.30 – SESSION FIVE: SOUND, MUSIC AND SCOTLAND

09.20: Jude Cowan Montague – The many voices of Gracie Fields: *Sally in Our Alley* (1931)

09.40: *John Ritchie – Silent Hollywood Scotland: Seeing Ourselves As Others See Us

10.00: *Sarah Neely – Tantalizing fragments: Scots language, dialect and song in the early talkies

10.20: Questions

10.30-11.00 TEA BREAK

11.00 – 12.30 – SESSION SIX: SCOTLAND AND EMPIRE

11.00: Caroline Merz – Scotland and Empire: The Seven Seas Screen Productions

11.20: SCREENING – *The Unsleeping Eye* (MacDonald, 1928) 35mm 68 mins

12.30-14.00 LUNCH BREAK

14.00-15.30 – SESSION SEVEN: SOUND AND THE BRITISH EXHIBITOR

14.00: *Nyasha Sibanda – “Almost, If Not Quite, As Good as the W.E.”: On Sound Apparatus 1929-1930

14.20: *Geoff Brown – How To Lose Money In British Films: A SHAREHOLDER’S GUIDE

14.40: *Laraine Porter – ‘Avoiding a disaster attaching to a stampede’; the CEA and the reluctance of British cinemas to wire for sound

15.00: *John Izod – The Empowering of British Cinema Operators, 1927-33

15.20: Questions

15.30-16.00 TEA BREAK

16.00-18.00 – SESSION EIGHT: TALES FROM THE THE 1920s

16.00: Christina Hink – “You know very well I owe it to you old men.” – Anxieties of the Middle Generation in *The Flag Lieutenant* (1927)

16.20: Pamela Hutchinson – *Pandora’s Box* (1929) Lulu’s ‘misadventures’ in London

16.40: Chris O’ Rourke: ‘The Worst Kind of American Sensationalism’: Selling Stardom in the 1922 *Daily Sketch* Contest

17.00: Bryony Dixon, Laraine Porter – plenary and final discussion

*indicates that speakers are part of the ‘British Silent Cinema and the Transition to Sound 1927-1932’ research project co-ordinated at De Montfort University, Leicester and the University of Stirling, and funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council.

BRITISH SILENT FILM FESTIVAL SYMPOSIUM 2017
THURSDAY 6th APRIL 2017

Abstracts

09.00-11.00 – SESSION ONE: NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Tony Fletcher – Screening and Talk: Four Phonofilms 1925-'27 (60mins)

This brief selection of early sound films – is presented as a 'part two' of Tony's popular 'Sound Before Blackmail' programme from previous years. The films comprise:

The Gentleman (1925) dir. W.J. Elliott

Cast: George – R.B. Salisbury

Paul – Reginald Fox

Lorna – Daye Dawne

A Little Theatre production, courtesy of Morris Harvey and Harold Simpson. This is probably the earliest surviving British sound-on-film production. The end of the film may be missing. The film was shown during the 1925 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley.

Pig-Tail Alley (Dec 1926) dir. Charles Calvert

Cast: Betty Chester

A song-scena written by Roger Eckersley, published by Francis Day & Hunter.

Betty Chester was a member of the Co-Optimists Concert Party. The music was recorded on disc in April 1926 by the Savoy Orpheans.

Once A Year, A Xmas Fantasy (Dec 1926) dir. George Cooper

Cast: Basil Gill (as Santa Claus)

The Children: Nona and Sheila (Van Damm)

Basil Gill made two Phonofilms in 1926, the other one being "The Quarrel Scene" (from 'Julius Caesar'), which is missing.

The Antidote (Feb 1927) dir. Thomas Bentley

Cast: Proff. Gilbert Oliver – Jameson Thomas

Marion (his wife) – Primrose Morgan (Louise Maurel/Morrell)

Richard Manning – Walter Sanders (Sondes)

This is an original sketch by Ben Landeck. (the first few minutes of the film are missing)

Rebecca Harrison – Class and the Train's Effect: Reinvestigating the 'Panicking Audience'

One of the enduring stories about early cinema is that of the 'panicking audience,' who, on seeing a locomotive moving forward onscreen, would jump from their seats fearing that the vehicle would enter the auditorium. Scholars including Tom Gunning and Stephen Bottomore suggest that while contemporary reports exaggerated the 'train effect', audiences did, on occasion, physically react to filmic trains rushing toward them. However, scholarship tends to reinforce, rather than dismantle, assumptions about class that underpin narratives about early film spectators. Consequently, this paper challenges literature about the panicking audience to reveal how social status was implicated in narratives about cinemagoing at the turn of the nineteenth century.

The paper examines the so-called 'train effect' in three ways. First, I draw on existing scholarship about the panicking audience to uncover how myths about film viewing have persisted in academic writing. Second, I use archival sources to compare middle and working-class cinema going, such as in urban theatres and at rural fairgrounds. Third, I situate discourses about the panicking audience in a broader history of industrialisation and the perceived collapse of class distinctions brought about by mass consumption. Thus I argue that working-class spectators—the punchline of the panicking audience joke—were maligned by middle-class writers anxious about the transformations of modernity.

Bryony Dixon & Steve Foxon – Trainspotting Too: Reporting from the BFI Victorian Project

11.30-1.00 – SESSION TWO: EARLY EXCITEMENTS

Stephen Morgan – Seismic Sturnutations: *That Fatal Sneeze* as Earthquake Film

A perennial favourite of early British cinema, *That Fatal Sneeze* (d. Lewin Fitzhamon, 1907) was among the most popular films produced by the Hepworth Manufacturing Company. Renowned for its comic depiction of a man afflicted by an increasingly catastrophic sneezing fit, it concludes with a shot entirely in keeping with early cinema's fascination with humorous bodily disintegration. The penultimate image, however, viciously interrupts the film's otherwise static gaze, as the camera rocks violently from side to side, drawing the audience into the spatial disruptions wrought by each successive sneeze.

In this paper, I make a case for the embodied visions of *That Fatal Sneeze*, where early cinema's destruction and reconstruction of bodies clashes with a furtive depiction of a seismic event. In April 1906, the earthquake and fire that devastated San Francisco was documented - in witness testimonies, in photographs, and on film - to unprecedented levels. Vivid descriptions and visions of the aftermath were undoubtedly still clear in the western imaginary when *That Fatal Sneeze* was released just over a year later. This paper assesses the extent of the British coverage of the 1906 earthquake and fire, and contends that the penultimate shot offers a masked depiction of the seismic experience, its rocking camera forcing a wary audience to confront the disorientating sensations of earthly disruption.

Andrew Shail – The Series Character on UK Screens before the First World War

A long view of the nearly 18,000 films placed on the UK film market from 1907 to 1912 reveals an industry collectively discovering and then devoting itself to making character-based series films, a phenomenon that has since been routinely devolved to a footnote in the history of the period. When the French Éclair company issued a roughly fortnightly series of six films featuring a Gallic version of the fictional US detective Nick Carter in late 1908, they initiated a craze for making series films (i.e. discrete narratives, as distinct from the serial films – where each film is an episode in a larger narrative – that would only emerge in 1912) featuring titular characters that spread across the European film industry in a matter of months. So far I have identified 87 recurring characters who appeared, between them, in 1,167 films from September 1908 to the end of 1912, an output that represents roughly 6% of the total negative footage issued/released in the UK during this period. This paper will look at production and marketing aspects of this widespread franchising phenomenon, arguing that one of its unintended consequences was to haphazardly bring about the star system in Europe.

Stephen Bottomore – Caravans and Kinematographs: the origins of the public health film

According to most sources, the first films for public health education were made and shown in the United States in 1910. But my research suggests that the UK too has some claim to priority. In this brief talk I will present details of pioneering work in health education cinema by a now-forgotten British organisation called the Women's Imperial Health Association.

Founded early in the 20th century, the WIHA advocated a 'crusade' against infectious diseases such as TB by using popular media including films and lantern slides. From 1909 lecturers and projectionists travelled across England in horse-drawn caravans, presenting health advice lectures in village halls and in the open air. I will describe these efforts and will show photographs of the caravan-based film shows operating, quite literally, 'in the field'.

While the films commissioned by the WIHA do not seem to survive, the first health education film ever made – also British – does exist in the NFTVA. *The Fly Pest* (c.1909) was produced by science filmmaker Percy Smith: it was a sensation when imported into America, and may also have been exhibited by the WIHA.

14.00-15.30 – SESSION THREE: OLD AND NEW FRIENDS

Gerry Turvey, 'A New Palace of Pleasure': The Bohemia Cinema Pleasure Garden at Finchley, North London, 1912-18

Around the time of the First World War, entrepreneurs in Finchley were promoting a novel form of exhibition culture that brought together aspects of both the old and the new – the pleasure garden, with its roots in earlier centuries, combined with the latest amusement novelty, a purpose-built cinema. A large country house, its gardens and paddock were taken over, first by a public company that made itself bankrupt and then by a private company that proved more successful. Between them they constructed a local leisure-entertainment complex entered through an exotically-designed, brilliantly-lit Moorish façade that gave access to an outdoor Summer Garden with flowers, lawns and walks lit by Chinese lanterns, and on to a glass-roofed Winter Garden, with a spacious interior given over to musical performances, variety and dancing, to seating and light refreshments. Beyond this was a substantial plushly-furnished, richly-decorated Picture House. The presentation will examine the layout of the site, the programming of the cinema, which favoured exhibition of the more expensive 'exclusive' films, and (briefly) the Winter Garden's decline from ambitious classical concerts to inexpensive dance evenings and whist drives.

Lucie Dutton – Maurice Elvey and *Hindle Wakes* (1927): "It's really about something – it's about people"

In 1949, Maurice Elvey was asked by the British Film Institute which of his films he thought would be worthy of preservation. Elvey named a handful of films made in the late 1920s, including *Hindle Wakes*. His 1927 film adaptation of this play by Stanley Houghton, starring Estelle Brody and John Stuart, was indeed preserved. But this wasn't Elvey's only attempt at filming what he thought of as 'the greatest English play ever written'. In 1918, Elvey's released his first version of *Hindle Wakes* starring Colette O'Niel and Hayford Hobbs.

Drawing on interviews with Elvey, Estelle Brody, and camera operator Jack Cox, this paper will consider the production of the 1927 film. It will also use newspaper reports, reviews and trade press comment to put together an impression of the 1918 version – which is now lost. The paper will also consider the ways in which Elvey's early adventures in socialist and radical theatre are likely to have brought *Hindle Wakes* to his attention when it was first staged in 1912, and why he praised it so highly.

Jo Botting – Adrian Brunel and the 'missing' film *A Light Woman* (Brunel, 1928)

Followed by a screening of the surviving material from *A Light Woman* (renamed *Delores* for the home cinema market)

A Light Woman (1928)

Dir. Adrian Brunel for Gainsborough Pictures

Written by Adrian Brunel & Angus MacPhail

Produced by Michael Balcon

Starring:

Benita Hume	-	Dolores de Vargas
C.M. Hallard	-	Marqui de Vargis
Gerald Ames	-	Don Andrea
Betty Carter	-	Pauline

Ramiro, an explorer, is in love with Delores. He proposes to her but she tells him to ask her again when he returns from his trip to Africa. While he's away, she flirts with other men. When Ramiro returns, Dolores falls in love with Andres, his fellow explorer and she wants to marry him. But Andres rejects her, saying he can't marry a 'light woman'. Meanwhile, Ramiro goes to undertake a suicidal mountain climb and Andres goes after him. Andres falls and injures himself; Dolores decides to marry Ramiro after all. (Synopsis from BFI Collections Search)

16.00-18.00 – SESSION FOUR: SCOTLAND ON THE SOUTH COAST

Ellen Cheshire – Making progress in re-assessing Progress Films

In 1919 the Manchester based film company, Progress, moved their filmmaking operation to Shoreham on the South Coast of England. Taking over a studio built at the beginning of the First World War, they established what is believed to be Britain's first studio complex where people lived and worked. Between 1919 and 1922 Progress made 17 feature films from their Shoreham base. Until recently it was thought that only one of these films existed in full (*A Lowland Cinderella* (Sidney Morgan, 1921) and two in part (*Little Dorrit* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*), but a second film exists in full and as part a Heritage Lottery Fund funded project on celebrating 120 years of film in Sussex, Ellen has uncovered new research on Progress and some of its key players including their leading lady, Joan Morgan.

In this Ellen will offer an overview of Progress and its unique place within British silent film history, revealing new materials on their films and expose an area of Morgan's past that she kept hidden when her career was being re-assessed and celebrated as part of the Cinema 100 celebrations in 1996.

The paper will draw on original research Ellen conducted for the 2016 HLF funded project for Worthing WOW celebrating 120 years of filmmaking and cinemagoing in Worthing and Shoreham. The accompanying book *Electric Pictures: A Guide to the films, Filmmakers and Cinemas of Worthing and Shoreham* by Ellen Cheshire and James Clarke will be published by The History Press in May 2017.

Followed by a SCREENING:

A Lowland Cinderella (1921)

Dir. Sidney Morgan for the Progress Film Company

Written by Allyn B. Carrick from the novel by S.R. Crockett

Produced by Frank E. Spring

Photographed by Stanley Mumford

Starring

Joan Morgan	-	Hester Stirling
George Foley	-	David Stirling
Ralph Forbes	-	Master of Darrock
Kate Phillips	-	Grandmother Stirling

A young Scots girl is cheated of her inheritance of rubies by her uncle, but justice prevails when her father returns.



BRITISH SILENT FILM FESTIVAL SYMPOSIUM 2017
FRIDAY 7th APRIL 2017

Abstracts

09.20-10.30 – SESSION FIVE: SOUND, MUSIC AND SCOTLAND

Jude Cowan Montagu – The Many voices of Gracie Fields: *Sally in our Alley* (1931)

Gracie Fields became one of the first film stars of British sound movies when *Sally in Our Alley* rocketed to success in 1931. She has been remembered for her high singing style which led her work to be described as 'Mozart for the people' but she also put multiple voices and physical comedy to work for cinematic expression. Her varied performance style emerged from the lively culture of music hall and stage performance that had been less visible on the screen during the 1920s. Gracie was influenced by silent film stars (particularly Chaplin) and her cinema appearances satirised and pilfered key scenes, embedding aspects of the silents in the talkie.

John Ritchie - Silent Hollywood Scotland: Seeing Ourselves As Others See Us

How did one of the global forces of cinema show other nationalities in their films? This presentation will interrogate the 1927 US film *Annie Laurie* (dir. J. S. Robertson) in terms of its representations and performances of Scottishness. What happened when Hollywood took historical fact and merged it with folk-song? In what manners were the national identity of Scotland performed and represented? In addition to questioning performance styles of the actors and other elements of the film this paper utilises contemporary archive data to track the success, or otherwise, of the film and examine the text as one of the first examples of Hollywood's "Scottish Fictions."

Sarah Neely – Tantalizing fragments: Scots language, dialect and song in the early talkies

As with the rest of Britain, early audiences at the talkies in Scotland often responded negatively to the seemingly harsh and foreign speech of the American actors on screen. In Scotland, however, even the arrival of the British talkies did little to address the absence of the Scottish voice in early sound films. Still, the popularity of the Scottish music hall genre and Scottish literature meant that many familiar Scottish cultural texts were incorporated into early talkies. This article will consider the tantalizing fragments of the Scottish voice on screen, while also exploring fragments of various paper archives in an attempt to reflect on what a Scottish voice on screen at the time could have been. While some local and indigenous filmmakers, such as Jenny Gilbertson, were drawn to dialect as a way of expressing the particularities of place, others, such as the Aberdonian-born novelist and Hollywood screenwriter, Lorna Moon, were resistant to the specificities of local speech featuring on screen. The time of the talkies' introduction to Britain was notable as a period of cultural renaissance in Scotland. Debates around language – the Scots tongue and the dying Gaelic language were central. While the significant role the talkies could play in the development of language across the wider culture was often brought into the fold of these debates, very little has yet been written about the responses to the talkies within this context.

11.00-12.30 – SESSION SIX: SCOTLAND AND EMPIRE

Caroline Merz – Scotland and Empire: The Seven Seas Screen Productions

Throughout the silent period, Scottish producers employed an ingenious range of strategies in their attempts to create the foundations of a commercial film industry. They may not have succeeded, but their various endeavours showed a close engagement with worldwide trends and developments. The London-centric British film industry could, and did, manage quite well without direct Scottish input, making it all the more important for those under-resourced companies that did emerge in Scotland to seek overseas, and particularly Empire and Dominions, markets for their productions. Usually this took the form of seeking out overseas Scottish audiences, but in one case - that of a Glasgow production company formed in 1927 by the Scottish-Australian adventurer Alexander Macdonald - the connection with trade and Empire was more explicit.

This paper looks at the forgotten output of the Seven Seas Screen Productions, whose two completed feature films, *The Unsleeping Eye* (1928) and *The Kingdom of Twilight* (1929) are unique in the story of Scottish silent film production: in no sense 'Scottish stories', and filmed thousands of miles from its Glasgow headquarters. These colonial curiosities, based on Macdonald's own adventure stories, have never before been included in any account of early Scottish film.

Followed by a SCREENING

***The Unsleeping Eye* (1928)**

Dir. Walter H.B. Sully and Alexander Macdonald for the Seven Seas Film Company

Written by Alexander Macdonald

Produced by Alexander Macdonald

Photographed by Walter H.B. Sully

Edited by Adrian Brunel/Ivor Montagu

Starring

Len/Charles (?) Norman	-	John 'Mad' Challoner
David Wallace	-	Dick Holloway
Wendy Osborne	-	Marjorie Challoner
Baby Laurel	-	'Baby' Challoner

In New Guinea, a drunken gold miner saves his wife and partner by fighting natives and feigning death. (synopsis IMDB)

****SPOILERS****

John "Mad" Challoner strikes gold while mining in the remote and dangerous Basilisk Gully, New Guinea. Word spreads of the find, and mining engineer Dick Holloway tracks Challoner down and proposes they work together. Years of living rough amongst the headhunting indigenous tribes of New Guinea has driven Challoner to drink, and Holloway is a first world war veteran with one wooden hand. Despite these challenges, their partnership is successful and they make their fortune. When Challoner departs for a holiday in Sydney, Australia, he leaves Holloway in charge of his group of workers. Totems painted with the "unsleeping eye" and Challoner's threats of vengeful spirits keep neighbouring tribes from attacking his settlement. While he is away, several white men looking for gold try to mine in the Gully and are murdered by Papangi warriors. Challoner returns with his new wife, Marjorie, to find that his workers have fled and his home is threatened. Believing the "unsleeping eye" to be a false threat, the Papangi attack and Challoner and Holloway are vastly outnumbered. Challoner orders his wife and Holloway to run, and distracts the warriors by challenging their chief to a duel. Assuming Challoner has been killed, Marjorie and Holloway flee New Guinea. They return years later, on the eve of their own marriage, to the scene of the tragedy. They encounter the Papangi tribe once more, but their Chief gifts them Challoner's belongings and the gold, and guarantees them safe passage back to Port Moresby. Before they depart, a rival tribe shoots the Chief with a poisoned arrow. As he lay dying, the Chief reveals himself to be "Mad" Challoner, and the trio get the chance to say a proper goodbye. (synopsis from BFI Collections Search)

14.00-15.30 – SESSION SEVEN: SOUND AND THE BRITISH EXHIBITOR

Nyasha Sibanda – “Almost, If Not Quite, As Good as the W.E.”: On Sound Apparatus, 1929-1930

1929 and 1930 were years of concentrated change within the British film exhibition industry. Sound cinema had quickly established itself as the essential attraction of the time, and cinemas throughout the country swiftly mobilised to equip for sound, lest they fall behind the tide. During these years, numerous companies – both domestic and international – vied for control of the nation’s sound apparatus market, with the large resources behind companies such as Western Electric and R.C.A. competing with smaller British concerns, as well as established domestic manufacturers such as British Thomson-Houston and British Talking Pictures.

Taking the apparatus choices of Birmingham as an example, this paper looks at the various methods by which different manufacturers attempted to distinguish themselves on the sound equipment market, including pricing and advertising strategies. Beyond these aspects, this paper will discuss the potential effects of national and local pride in the choices made by both exhibitors and apparatus vendors, including various “Buy British” or “Buy Local” strategies employed; it also discusses the efforts made by the market leader Western Electric to justify their high prices through the attempted creation of community amongst its customers. Through these lenses, this paper hopes to shed some light on how and why exhibitors installed the apparatus they did, and some oft-overlooked the idiosyncrasies of the British transition to sound.

Geoff Brown – HOW TO LOSE MONEY IN BRITISH FILMS: A SHAREHOLDER’S GUIDE

The arrival of the Cinematograph Films Act late in 1927 prompted a spurt of new British film companies seeking public shareholders, hoping to ride to success on the back of the production boom implied by the Act’s Quota legislation. First in the field in November 1927 was Whitehall Films, floated on clouds of over-optimism and the wayward talents of actor/director Adelqui Millar. A few weeks later, George Banfield, armed with Walthamstow Studios, offered shares in British Filmcraft Productions. Both outfits proved prominent casualties among the wave of small companies that launched themselves only to sputter out by 1930 with minimal output and heavy debts – the result of a toxic mix of bad management, incautious plans, and the misfortune of generating silent product just as the talkie revolution hit Britain. Drawing extensively on trade paper sources, this presentation will conjure up the feverish period at the end of the 1920s when financial speculation ran rife, punters and exhibitors despaired, the British film industry’s honour seemed at stake, and Whitehall Films was described in *Variety* as “one of those companies about which the least said the better”.

Laraine Porter – ‘Avoiding a disaster attaching to a stampede’; the CEA and the reluctance of British cinemas to wire for sound

Cinemas and exhibitors were at the front line in the transition between silent and sound cinema in Britain. It was they who delivered the talkies to the public and took financial risks on the new technology. But at the end of 1928, when arguably sound was imminent, cinemas in Britain were advised by the Cinematograph Exhibitors’ Association (CEA) not to wire for sound. By the following year however, the picture was very different and over 5000 British cinemas had to rush to convert in order to satisfy public demand for talkie blockbusters like *The Singing Fool* (1928). Not only did complex new sound systems and projectors need installation but cinema auditoria and projection boxes needed adapting, often literally overnight, to accommodate the alien new sound technology. The role of the projectionist changed dramatically and cinema acoustics became a major concern with entire industries springing up to solve problems of ‘talkie’ reverberation. Using case studies, technical manuals and trade information, this presentation will look at the physical, practical and financial challenges faced by British cinemas as they were forced to meet the challenges of the new technology.

John Izod – The Empowering of British Cinema Operators, 1927-33

Insofar as contemporary reports concerning labour relations in the UK cinema business were concerned, the focus during the period 1928 to 1930 fell principally on the fate of musicians, and with good cause. While the wiring of cinemas proceeded, specifications of sound recording and reproduction equipment were improving rapidly, and soon attained a quality that satisfied most cinema audiences. During approximately the same time frame, the number of sound films produced increased to a point where film renters could fill cinemas’ entire programmes without exhibitors needing recourse to live music. Most cinema owners dismissed their orchestras as soon as they thought it safe to do so... As a consequence, and in addition to the economic, technical and aesthetic alterations that the cinema business was undergoing, there arose in 1928-29 a significant change in relations between exhibitors

and a key group of employees. Generally known as 'operators' both in Britain and the USA, these were the workers charged with screening the films. This paper focuses on the changes that the introduction of recorded sound together with alterations in the business and political environments brought to both the workplace duties and conditions of employment of British operators.

16.00-18.00 – SESSION EIGHT: TALES FROM THE 1920s

Christina Hink – “You know very well I owe it to you old men.” – Anxieties of the Middle Generation in *The Flag Lieutenant* (1927)

There have been many lucrative studies investigating the impact of the First World War on the generation that experienced it – their lives before, during and after the conflict. Largely overlooked, however, is the generation born between 1903 and 1905, a group whose age had rendered them incapable of directly contributing to the war effort. As Kerri Holloway has argued, the Armistice “created an impenetrable boundary between the war generation and the middle generation” rendering the middle generation forever stuck in the “paradox of remembering the war but not having participated in it.” What surfaces in the wake of the Great War is a palpable tension between an older generation and the younger one. A particularly perceptible example can be found in Maurice Elvey’s *The Flag Lieutenant* (1927). This paper will explore the anxieties of the ‘middle generation’ as expressed in the narrative, formal elements and contemporary reviews of *The Flag Lieutenant*. I will argue that in the wake of the Great War, the middle generation sought to adjust to their world through energetic endeavours that garnered recognition in light of the sacrifices of the generation that came before.

Pamela Hutchinson – *Pandora’s Box* (1929): Lulu’s ‘misadventures’ in London

While *Pandora’s Box* (*Die Buchse der Pandora*, 1929) is celebrated as a product of Weimar Berlin, London is the film’s only established location. It is also the city where the heroine meets her end at the hands of its most notorious serial killer; the place where the fictional narrative meets historical circumstance. It’s a city that Frank Wedekind (who wrote the plays the film was based on) and the film’s star Louise Brooks had spent time in (it’s claimed that she was the first to dance the Charleston there), and the director G.W. Pabst would famously revisit in *The Threepenny Opera* (*Die 3 Groschen-Oper*, 1931). Yet the London of *Pandora’s Box* is an anachronistic fiction, as is its portrayal of Jack the Ripper. Sadly, despite early support from critics including the editors of *Close-Up*, the film reached London mangled by censorship cuts, which included removing the Ripper. Subsequently, *Pandora’s Box* received poor notices and a very limited release. This paper will assert London as a crucial location for understanding *Pandora’s Box*, and trace the film’s reception and release in the city.

Chris O’ Rourke: ‘The Worst Kind of American Sensationalism’: Selling Stardom in the 1922 *Daily Sketch* Contest

This paper explores the 1922 contest launched by the *Daily Sketch* newspaper and the newsreel *Topical Budget* to find a new British film star. The contest was one of a number of ‘star search’ contests organised in Britain by fan magazines, newspapers, newsreels and cinemagazines during the silent era. What distinguished this one was the involvement of a powerful American company, First National, and the company’s leading female star, Norma Talmadge, who offered the winner a role in her next film. The scheme attracted up to 80,000 entrants, and resulted in 20-year-old Margaret Leahy travelling to America to claim her prize.

By examining the British and American trade press, it becomes clear what motivated First National to become involved in this transatlantic scheme, and also why its reception among British commentators was so hostile. In particular, I will show how the contest coincided with a controversial new distribution policy from First National, designed to cement their position in the European market. I will also argue that the contest represented an important moment in the relationship between the British cinema and the burgeoning field of advertising, which suggested new ways of using popular film culture to tap into the mass market.

Bryony Dixon & Laraine Porter – Closing Plenary

STORY OF A MODERN CINDERELLA THAT MAKES CONSIDERABLE APPEAL.

British Production that Demonstrates Conclusively an Author's "Atmosphere" can be Successfully Transferred to the Screen.

Progress British Photoplay version of S. R. Crockett's well-known novel "A Lowland Cinderella" should prove an excellent Box-Office Proposition, thanks to some delightful acting by Joan Morgan.



JOAN MORGAN.

author managed to get into his story has been in large measure preserved.

IT has been a matter for complaint for some time past that most modern novels do not stand transference to the screen owing to the loss of the author's "atmosphere" that occurs. This is a charge, however, that cannot be brought against the Progress version of the late S. R. Crockett's well-known novel, "A Lowland Cinderella," shown to the trade by Butcher's at the New Gallery last week. Here the text of the story has been most faithfully adhered to, and the "local colour" that the

as well as looks to commend her, and who is likely to go very far indeed in her profession as she gains in age and experience. She makes a most charming figure as the "Cinderella" who gives her name to the story, and makes instant appeal to all hearts so soon as she first appears. She has that gift of winsomeness that is but rarely seen on the screen, and is quite ideal for this part. She is, moreover, excellently supported, particularly by Ralph Forbes, as her lover, who has obviously modelled his "make-up" on that of a well-known royal personage. It is to be doubted, however, if heirs to earldoms really do appear in public wearing a jacket suit and a silk hat, but this is the most notable slip made in a production that is full of technical interest, so perhaps it may be pardoned. "A Lowland Cinderella" is, however, a distinct triumph for Joan Morgan, and we heartily congratulate her upon it.

EXCELLENT SETTING.

The setting of this story is most effective, and some of the lowland scenes are extremely well done, while the ball given by the Duchess of Niddersdale is a veritable triumph of screen-craft in its elaboration of detail. There are many touches of humour that go to lighten the more dramatic moments of the story, but it has to be confessed that the scene where the wicked uncle falsely accuses the heroine of stealing the rubies he originally filched from her father is unconvincing, and is probably the weakest part in the production. On the other hand, the episode of the youthful lovers gleefully jumping over a broomstick, and so deluding themselves into the belief that they are legally married under Scottish law, is delightful in the extreme. Nothing but praise can be bestowed upon the production, and it is much to be hoped that exhibitors generally will realise that here they have offered to them a production that will make swift appeal to audiences, and is worth dozens of the machine-made films that come to us from abroad.

STORY OF UNIVERSAL APPEAL.

The story is a simple one, of a type that has been told throughout the ages, and which is likely to continue to be so told. It deals with the adventures of a girl, bereft of her mother, and whose father is separated from her by some thousands of miles. Her grandmother dies, and not only is she robbed of the rubies her father had left for her maintenance, by an unscrupulous uncle and aunt, but is compelled to do menial work in their household, while she is slighted on every possible occasion by her two girl cousins. Ultimately, however, she comes into her own. She is befriended by a kindly-hearted, but undoubtedly eccentric Duchess, marries the heir to an earldom, while her father arrives in time to carry out the dream of her childhood, and to bear her off in a coach and six. All this is very naive, and the *dénouement* is plainly to be seen from the very start, but it makes a story that will make powerful appeal to audiences throughout the country, if only by reason of the downright honest sentiment that runs through it all.

TRIUMPH OF YOUTHFUL ACTRESS.

For the success that this production is likely to achieve it will have to thank youthful Joan Morgan to a considerable extent. Here is a really gifted young actress who has talent

"AROUND THE TOWN" AT THE THEATRICAL BALL.

LAST Friday evening "Around the Town" provided a novel feature of the Theatrical Garden Party Bal Masque. At intervals of an hour, three separate 1,000 feet pictures were projected, consisting of the theatrical celebrities who have been filmed by "Around the Town" from time to time. Dancing went on in the light provided by the projection rays. When "Around the Town" was not being projected, its cameras were at work recording the scene, and in due course exclusive pictures will appear of the celebrities and the dresses they wore at the dance.