



NEWSLETTER 6

What's in a name? The Phoenix on tour.

We are proud that we have such a thriving Southampton Film Society in **The Phoenix**, and that it is one of the longest-running such cinema organisations. But we are alongside some similarly-named competition around the British Isles (and Eire) - did you know that there are Phoenix cinemas in no fewer than eleven locations in our fair and filmic lands. If you just happen to be on holiday in, say Falmouth, Leicester, or the Orkneys, you have no need to miss your weekly fix of Phoenix films! So, with our train, plane, coach, ferry and cinema tickets in hand, we're off on a lightning tour of those other Phoenixes.

Firstly, down in the West country, although Exeter has its own Harbour Lights-type of cinema in the Picture House, it also boasts film screenings in the multi-artform venue named The Phoenix, where forthcoming events include a Scandi-film festival and a Bafta shorts 2017 Q&A, as well as a full programme of mainstream and art house movies.



Heading off to Cornwall next, we come to Falmouth. For all your latest film needs, look no further than Falmouth's Phoenix Cinema. Their blurb states it is a modern five-screen cinema offering three fully licenced screens with a waiter service allowing you to watch films in real style. The cinema is also capable of showing the latest 3D movies as well as traditional 2D offerings. "With a healthy selection of both the latest blockbusters and more highbrow offerings, the Phoenix caters for all tastes whether you're looking for a family trip out or a romantic evening for two."

Traveling on God's wonderful railway from the Cornish peninsular up into the Rhondda Valley brings us to the village of Ton Pentre, just 18 miles from Cefn Fforest, where **Dark Horse** was filmed. Their Phoenix is described thus: "The hall opened in 1904 and was showing pictures by 1908. It later became a regular cinema. It has gables and canted two-storey bays to front, which is in coursed rubble stone with ashlar dressings. The auditorium is a chapel-like rectangular room with panel-fronted balconies on three sides supported on slender cast iron columns. There is a flat



ceiling with brackets at intervals down sides and a square proscenium opening with bracketed corners and moulded architrave. The Bethesda Chapel to the rear is currently used for workshops and storage."

Staying on the GWR (who said this was about trains?) and crossing the border back into England but only just, to Ross-on-Wye we can find a recent screening of **I, Daniel Blake** at their Phoenix, in a theatre possessing an intimate stage and 64 tiered seats, in a building dating from 1923.



Not quite on Brunel's classic line to the east is Oxford, whose "nationally leading art house" Phoenix in the city centre is another PictureHouse cinema, so with a similar line-up of films to our HL.

The National Express coach up the M40 and M69 brings us next to Leicester where the Phoenix has a Monthly Mystery Film

which always is a virtual sell out. A recent blog about this feature read thus: "People wonder out loud what's it going to be, discuss previous screenings and what they don't want to see. Then there's some oohs and aahs as the titles come up - or in my case, a groan. I'm not a Woody Allen fan. But for £3 I was prepared to sit through *Annie Hall* again. And to be fair, it was better than I remember it. Funnier too." Food for thought - perhaps we should do this here?

A quick flight from East Midlands airport over to Dingle in County Kerry will enable us to visit their Phoenix, which has its own Féile Idirnáisiúnta Scannán an Daingin (International Film Festival). Their



blurb runs thus: “The first cinema was built in 1918 and it burned down; when it was rebuilt they called it The Phoenix Cinema in 1938. Two brothers built it, John and James C. Houlihan, two very astute men, who had many interests including the supply of electricity to the whole town. They burned pete (*sic – the manager perhaps?*) to create electricity. They had two projectors and showed pictures twice weekly – Thursdays and Sundays. The cinema doubled up as a dance venue, with a superb maple floor”.



The plane from Dingle (Shannon) brings us to Newcastle from where we will take the metro almost to Blyth which has a Phoenix Theatre that shows classic films once a month, the Autumn season including **Rebel Without A Cause**, **Doctor Zhivago** and **Dial M For Murder**.

The coastal town of Oban is our next stop to see the latest movie at the Taigh-Dhealb An Oban (yes, it's a Gaelic Phoenix!). Under the heading “Luxury films at the seaside” this TripAdvisor review said: “This cinema reopened a few years ago thanks to a high profile campaign . It was worth the effort , the refurbishment is superb and offers a great viewing experience . We took in **Bridget Jones Baby** taking advantage of the Monday 2 for 1 offer . If you're up in Oban please give the place a visit” although a same-day review ran “we got an overwhelming fusty smell! We sat down to enjoy the movie anyway. Within a few minutes we were cold and by end of movie we were all freezing!!”

Let's hope the ferry to Orkney is warm for our penultimate Phoenix experience at the New Phoenix Cinema in the Pickaquooy Centre in Kirkwall. There had been a Phoenix Cinema in the town since 1955, but declining audiences thirty years later meant it looked like indeed “the end of ‘picture going’ in Orkney”, but the new cinema took up the name, perhaps in response to a poem that had been written for that 1985 closure “*Farewell to the Phoenix*”.



And so, finally, flying way back down south to East Finchley and another wonderful art-house Phoenix. Formerly known as the Picturedrome, the Coliseum, and the Rex, this moviehouse has been completely refurbished, complete with a wonderful logo on its façade, and boasts Ken Loach, Michael Palin and Mark Kermode amongst its patrons. Presently, it has **Toni Erdmann** and **Denial** in its programme. Adrian's visit to see the latter sparked off this article in fact! - I wonder if Mrs. Thatcher ever went there?



But, of course, there's no place like home, so we return to the best **Phoenix** of them all here in Southampton (well, we think so anyway!) And that's a worldwide claim – after all, there must surely be Phoenixes around the globe? Do let us know if you have ever encountered one anywhere. Portugal, Samoa, Tanzania, Chile, anyone?



Union Films programme for the Spring Term

- Sun Feb 12: 5 p.m. **Moana**; 8 p.m. **Passengers**
- Sun Feb 19: 8 p.m. **A Monster Calls**
- Tues Feb 21: 7 p.m. **Silence**
- Sun Feb 26: 5 p.m. **Swiss Army Man**; 8 p.m. **Sully**
- Sun Mar 05: 5 p.m. **Trainspotting**; 8 p.m. **T2 Trainspotting**
- Tues Mar 07: 7 p.m. **Split**
- Sun Mar 12: 5 p.m. **Assassin's Creed**; 8 p.m. **The Lego Batman Movie**
- Tues Mar 14: 7 p.m. **La La Land**
- And coming soon to UF ... **Logan**



Don't forget also on February 18th: **Journeys in Film** and on May 6th: **Woman and British Film** both courses run by the University's Lifelong Learning department. Full details at <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/lifelonglearning/index.page>