



NEWSLETTER 7

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Well Nobody's Perfect!



There is a prize of a one-inch tub of popcorn to the first person to tell us which film closes with the words above, as *we* bring to a close, for now at least, our compilation of comments about what works well, and what could be better at the Phoenix!

The lack of comedies in our programme: Why? I think many of you will know the answer to this one, because we have mentioned this problem before. At film selection time, our absolute priority is to select around thirty films of high quality, that will entertain, stimulate, gratify, amuse, scare, annoy, and generally satisfy your

reasons for coming to the Phoenix in the first place (and we are working on a membership of some 200 different souls with different tastes etc!). The bottom line is that if there are few comedic films of quality released, then our selection task is made all the harder! If at times it seems that film makers only tell tales of misery, torment and depression, then be reassured that every May/June we sometimes agree with you as we clutch at any potential title that might have a frisson of the **Carry On** ... spirit, world cinema style.

Wobblycam: I felt queasy! Spoilt the film. I was starting to shake myself. So, could we flag it up in advance, and if not, why don't we? The use of wobblycam is now a regular feature of many filmmakers. It is cheap and easy to use (try it on your smartphone!), although some folks like John would also say it is a lazy tool in the film director's range of techniques. He often says that real filmmakers *never* use wobblycam. Nevertheless, we feel we should not mention this effect in advance, for example, in our programme. It is how the director made the film and as such that is presumably how s/he would want it screened. Adrian adds this partial response to the problem: "As a fellow sufferer of wobblycam, I make a point of sitting mid- or to the back of a cinema. This minimises the visual angle of wobble of any subject and thence my irritation (or worse!)."

Wobblycam has its place in film production when the type of scene, action or emotion justifies it. However, I get really annoyed when it is just lazy production i.e. 'we can't afford a Steadicam operator'. Doing substantially still shots which randomly wander is just awful and there is just no excuse for it any more." So when we say in our WFNs "Please be early to ... ensure you have a seat", take that as saying choose your seat with care and early. Obviously, once the film has started, moving to a different seat is scarcely an option!

Popcorn, to eat or not to eat?: In our honest opinion, and scarcely up for discussion, NOT! But it's difficult to prevent it once folks who are used to consuming it during a movie buy their tub. So we ask all our members to refrain from eating whilst a film is showing, but if you must, please ensure this is "silent" (i.e. no crisp bag rustling, or popcorn chomping!) and please also be aware that for some just the smell of popcorn can be very distracting.



And whilst we are on the subject of noise during our films, yes believe it or not some people do indulge in conversation mid-movie, although so far we are not aware of anyone engaging in a full-on *Sight and Sound* style discussion of the film's merits

and demerits! So, please, no chatting whilst the film is on – save it for the lobby after the movie. This may all seem a bit draconian, but we do want all our members to enjoy our films to the full. It is worth pointing out that some of our films have little or no musical soundtrack, and may have periods when there is also little dialogue, so any noises in the auditorium are magnified at such times.

Mobile phones: This old chestnut comes around regularly, yet our policy seems to need repeating. Mobile phones should be switched OFF for the duration of the film. The light emitted is as distracting as the conversation you might be having with your Granny in Melbourne.



Mumbling in films, otherwise known as the “Jamaica Inn” effect: Marlon Brando (mumble, mumble, mumble) was brilliant in **The Godfather**, playing the role of Don Vito Corleone in a style (mumble, mumble, mumble) nobody could refuse. But, and for many it was a big but (mumble, mumble, mumble), he proved a tad difficult to understand. And that in what many consider to be one of the best films ever made. A few years ago, the BBC adaptation of the Daphne Du Maurier novel **Jamaica Inn** apparently received no fewer than 2,182 complaints about the mumbling actors, and it was even an item on the channel’s main news broadcasts. I suspect that series may no longer be accessible on iPlayer, although director Philippa Lowthorpe seems to have come through the critical brouhaha relatively unscathed producing the highly successful (and clearly audible) **The Crown** in 2017. But from our point of view, what can we do. Once again, if the director chooses mumbling as part of the dialogue, then no matter how many complaints it may raise, we have to put up with it! (and Brando won an Oscar, tho not for Best Mumbling in a film).

And now an age-old difficulty, never raised in your comments, but we know the problem is out there, What should one wear to go to a Phoenix screening? Always a tricky one this, since we cannot insist on gowns and black tie, and we do not expect members to wear phancy dress appropriate for the film being screened. Admittedly 1950s suits and dresses would have looked good for **Cold War**, and uniforms suitable for the trenches would have been in order for **Journey’s End**. And



whilst tutus, leotards and ballet pumps might have been a bit chilly for our Autumn screening of **Dancer** in 2017, it would be great if we had the cowboy and cowgirl stetsons out for **The Rider** in February (go on, we dare you!), although I think sore bums at the end of the film (from the rodeo scenes, you understand, not our comfy seats) is the best we can expect on that night.

← On the subject of millinery however...
Well, that’s all for now

folks so unless you can tell us any more things you think we could do better (please let us know), check you don’t get up to any of the activities shown alongside at the Phoenix ... →



Before rolling the credits on this Newsletter, a plea to you from us: please may we have your answers to the following (all pretty easy) questions.

What was the first film you ever saw in a cinema?

What is your favourite film ever?

Who are your favourite actors (one male, one female)?

Which is your favourite ever movie moment? (the farewell scene from **Brief Encounter**? the shower scene in **Psycho**? any scene in **Bambi**? that **Wizard of Oz** moment when you realise you’re not in Kansas anymore?

Or the moment you realised you couldn’t leave the party in Buñuel’s **Exterminating Angel**?

Please find room on your voting slip for your answers (add your name if you wish, but not obligatory) and we will publish as many as we can in a future Newsletter.