

Talking Pictures

Issue 30
December
2013

www.keswickfilmclub.org

Spring programme 2014

May I wish you all a merry Christmas and a very happy New Year! I hope you enjoy our Spring Programme.

We'd like to invite you as usual to have a drink with us at the beginning of our spring programme, so please do come along at **4.15 p.m. on 5th January** to toast the New Year before our opening film - *'Marius'*.

The **spring pass** will be on sale there at **£30** - a great bargain, with twelve films this season!

Have you thought about your passes and tickets for the **15th Keswick Film Festival**? On sale in January; You can ring the Theatre on 017687 74411 or online via www.keswickfilmfestival.org

Expect the unexpected this season. You want comedy? Well, we actually have some for you this time. This season we have two - *'Papadopoulos and Sons'* and *'Gloria'* - plus another film which should bring the odd smile to your face - *'Prince Avalanche'*.

Then there is some Belgian Bluegrass in *'Broken Circle Breakdown'* plus two films from the same director; Daniel Auteuil is such a fan of the author Pagnol that he has decided to bring out a trilogy; *'Marius'* and *'Fanny'* are released together and we have them as the first and last films of the season (warning, don't read the review of

'Fanny' in the brochure until after you have seen *'Marius'*! They can be watched separately, but do follow on)

The 'Oddity of the season' award probably goes to *'Prince Avalanche'*, an American independent 'eccentric charmer', whilst the 'Poetic film of the Season' award goes to *'The Patience Stone'*, an Afghan film which has a woman pouring out her troubles to her badly injured husband.

The Festival is even more special this year; it is the fifteenth in Keswick (which is no small achievement in itself), but it is also the centenary of the Alhambra Cinema! One of the longest running cinemas

in the country, and certainly one of the best buildings, we are sharing in the celebration with Tom Rennie over the festival. Work has been going on to produce a film of the history of the Alhambra, and Tom is putting on films from each decade over the festival week which will all be FREE to enter. This will be your chance to see some classics on the big screen, from *'Laurence of Arabia'*, to *'Shrek'*. Add this to the festival mix of Cannes in Keswick, a trip to Rheged, our Best of the Fests review and a Bangladeshi special, PLUS guests, and we have an exciting time to look forward to! Read on for Tom's memories of the Alhambra...

An interview with... Tom Rennie, Alhambra sup- premo & ex club treasurer

Cinema Paradise...



With The Alhambra Centenary in February, it seemed the right time to get Tom's memories of his time here. How did you come to be where you are today?

I arrived in Keswick in July 1989 after working in Africa for 25 years - having sent the children to boarding school in Keswick, it seemed a logical place to resettle on our return to the UK.

One of the first jobs that appeared was managing the Alhambra Cinema, since the current manager was leaving to manage the Rendezvous Cinema in Workington. My first solo running of the Alhambra was AIR

AMERICA in February 1991 with Mel Gibson and I remember it well!

Well, you are still here, so you obviously enjoy it!

I have always looked upon my work at the Alhambra as a well-paid hobby which didn't seem to take up an excessive amount of time and provided a great deal of interest and interaction with a great number of locals and visitors alike. (Sylvia might disagree on the amount of time it takes up!)

So what have been some of the high points?

One of the most amazing successes we had during this time was the screening of JURASSIC PARK; this film, in 1993 was seen by nearly 10,000 customers, a third of our normal annual total and is still to date our biggest box office success ever. (We are screening it again in 35mm during our Centenary celebration in February 2014.)

Ah - always time for a plug!

Another memorable event was the screening of TITANIC. We screened

this on **FRIDAY 13TH** (!) March 2008. On arrival I found that the reels had been very hastily dismantled and were all totally shambolic; the projectionist at the last cinema had not finished work until 2:00am that morning and he 'might have made a few mistakes'... It took me two hours to try and assemble the film and I was aware that there might still be problems; in the event, I had got reels 4 & 5 the wrong way round; at the end of reel 5 Leonardo de Caprio was securely handcuffed to the bowels of the ship, but at the start of reel 4 he was happily chatting up Kate Winslett on the promenade deck; the reaction in the cinema can only be imagined! I had to stop the film and explain the situation to a full house before continuing. The event made the national media - "Have you seen the version of TITANIC where the ship sinks *before* it hits the iceberg? Come to Keswick!!

And you STILL wanted to run the place yourself! How did that come about?

(Continued overleaf)

Memories of the Alhambra (continued)

... Graves, who own the building, ran the cinema until April 2006, but then decided to offer the operating lease. Alan Towers took this on, together with that for the Alhambra in Penrith. I remained as manager.

Alan invested a great deal of time, care and money into the Alhambra; new carpeting throughout, new seating and digital Dolby surround sound. As a result of this investment, he found that the returns were failing to cover costs and reluctantly decided to stop at the end of March 2012.

I was appalled at the idea of the Alhambra having to close its doors after continuously running as a cinema for 99 years, so I offered to take on a five year lease and keep the business running for at least that time, but I also hoped to make it viable beyond my tenancy. I was fortunate to be able to screen BEST EXOTIC MARI GOLD HOTEL as my first film and this proved to be a huge success with a long run and it (together with SKYFALL) ensured that my first year of operation was highly profitable.

Luckily for us as a club, and Keswick as a whole. You too have invested...

Yes, In August 2012 I installed Digital Cinema, initially on the grounds of ensuring supply of films since the supply of 35mm form was in rapid decline and

and the choice would become more and more restricted, but an additional bonus has been the greatly reduced complexity of film screening and the marked increase in picture and sound quality. Although the total cost of this installation was £60,000 I received substantial support from the Digital Funding Partnership. They had secured funding from all the major film distributors to reduce duplication and distributions cost.

My time at last!. The first digital screening was a club film, I am proud to say...

Yes, A ROYAL AFFAIR, shown in September 2012 and I was blown away by the picture quality, sound and ease of operation. The installation of digital equipment also allowed me to install satellite reception equipment in June 2013 and the first live satellite broadcast was THE AUDIENCE with Helen Mirren, which played to great acclaim.

Ah yes,, I was there; these shows are great. And all is going well, I hope?

After 19 months of operation I can confidently say that the operation of the Alhambra as a "Family Business" along the lines of CINEMA PARADISO (also showing during our centenary) is a perfectly viable concern; it is great fun to do, provides an enormous amount of interest and enjoyment and provides a profit margin which provides a very acceptable income. I am pretty sure that when the lease ends in 2017 I will hand it over to someone younger, but who knows!

Going back in time a bit, what do you remember of the start of the Film Club?

Tony Martin arrived in 1998 and had previously lived in Wales where he had been responsible for setting up a successful Film Club. He immediately suggested to me that we set up a Keswick Film Club and his enthusiasm for the project was such that we promptly secured the approval of the landlord (Michael Graves), Tony took the chairmanship, I became treasurer and Rod Evans became secretary with numerous others forming an enthusiastic committee. Tony immediately got a range of films secured for our first season, starting with THE GOVERNESS screening on the 7th February 1999 which was seen by 127 enthusiastic members and guests.

From little acorns.. And what about the festival?

Tony immediately capitalised on this high level of support for alternative film in Keswick and began to plan the club's first Film Festival which screened in February 2000 with considerable success. This established the format of film club activity in Keswick for the next 14 years; a 30 week season from September to April every year, with a four day festival in February. After kick starting this highly successful venture, Tony moved on to spread the word even further afield, but he left behind an enthusiastic body of people who have kept his idea alive and well for 14 years.

We do our best, standing on the shoulders of giants... Thanks Tom, from the Film Club and Keswick as a whole!

V.A

KFC Autumn 2013

Film	score
Therese	68.52%
White Elephant	68.48%
Broken	85.16%
Sleep Tight	55.34%
In The Fog	70.78%
Selam	42.74%
Baraka	82.65%
The Gatekeepers	83.19%
Damaged Goods	73.15%
The Sea	80.90%
Beyond The Hills	71.43%
Like Someone In Love	64.86%
I Am Nasrine	68.13%
The Great Beauty	n/a
Wadjda	n/a

Average audience size: 101

Top Ten Films At Alhambra Since 1990

No	Film	Total Tickets	Best Week	Year
1	Jurassic Park	9738	2596	1993
2	Mamma Mia	9314	1456	2008
3	Robin Hood	7552	1184	1991
4	Best Exotic Marigold	5729	945	2012
5	The Full Monty	5700	1598	1997
6	Chicken Run	5362	1718	2000
7	Miss Potter	5022	1142	2007
8	Skyfall	4656	2053	2012
9	Harry Potter	4498	1580	2009
10	Lost World	4219	1634	1997