

The Main Feature



Season 32 - Issue 2 (screening 22.9.11)



UK UK release 1.10.10 Certificate 15 113 minutes

Directed by Nigel Cole Written by William Ivory
Director of photography John de Borman Original music by David Arnold

Cast

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Sally Hawkins | Rita O'Grady | Andrea Riseborough | Brenda |
| Bob Hoskins | Albert Passingham | Lorraine Stanley | Monica |
| Kenneth Cranham | Monty Taylor | Geraldine James | Connie |
| Rosamund Pike | Lisa Hopkins | Jamie Winstone | Sandra |
| Miranda Richardson | Barbara Castle | Nicola Duffett | Eileen |
| Roger Lloyd-Pack | George | Daniel Mays | Eddie |

“1968. It's a man's world. But not for long.....”

This is a film that should lift your heart, whatever your politics. Like Calendar Girls before it — by the same director, Nigel Cole — one of the film's virtues is that it gives strong roles to some of our best actresses.

There is an indirect connection to The King's Speech film, which we screened last time, because in an interview Sally Hawkins revealed that as a child she stammered and found it hard to look people in the eye. Later it was found she was dyslexic. Discovering acting changed everything. “Something clicked. English was always an academic subject, there was a barrier I found so hard to break. But as soon as I spoke the words I understood what they meant. This whole world of literature unlocked, which I'd been scared of. And

I'm in love with it now. You can go anywhere, be anything for a couple of hours. Sorry, I'm spouting clichés at you..."

Jaime Winstone is proud to be part of a film that tells such an important story, especially as it would have changed the lives of her immediate family. "My mum worked in a factory and so did my Nan, in a sewing factory. My Nan actually taught me to sew for this role! So I realized that sewing those seats is actually the hardest job in the factory. When the women went on strike, they realized they couldn't get men to do that job, because none of them knew how too. Yet the women were graded as "unskilled" and on the same rate of pay as the people that swept the floor. And the conditions that they were working in, with dead pigeons falling on them, were unbelievable. Meanwhile, the men were next door in the gleaming new factory. These women worked so hard and cared for their families. They must have been exhausted, and yet they carried on with this fight. It's inspiring. They didn't know the extent of what they were doing at the time. You look back now and it's revolutionary, but they couldn't have known at the time. They were a force of nature. Of course, equal pay is still an issue, and we're not there yet. But this is where it all started."



This is an extract of an interview Nigel Cole gave to the Socialist Worker Online:

"How did you hear about the story?"

The film's producer, Stephen Woolley, overheard a radio programme (*Radio 4's The Reunion*) that reunited some of the strikers. Their infectious humour and excitement for what they had done during the strike really captivated him. He was so taken by it that he decided there and then to try and make the film.

When Stephen told me the story I was amazed that I'd never heard about it—after all, I'd grown up down the road in Essex.

There are tricky parts of the story that are hard to capture, like the way the dispute starts over grading but only becomes about equal pay when the women find out that the reason they are wrongly graded as "unskilled" is because they are women. The strikers who helped us with the film were particularly pleased that we captured that element of the strike.

Your films often centre on the lives of women. Why is that?

I like making films about women. I think they make for more interesting characters than men. Men have difficulties with emotions—look at Clint Eastwood, he's made an entire career out of not expressing any.

Many films that feature men and male culture are dominated by violence, and I'm just not interested in exploring that.

Was it difficult to get the backing to make a film about a strike?

It's true that strikes do not have a good reputation in the industry—they are seen as negative and rather grim. We had to work very hard to overcome that. But because I had made the commercially successful film *Calendar Girls*, some people could see potential and started to think, maybe we could sell it.

Once we got BBC Films and the UK Film Council on board it started to look like a pucker, blue-chip



project. Now Sony have bought the film and are planning a massive US release—perhaps they'll have to subtitle it!

The film is a comedy, but the subject matter is serious. Does that matter?

We could have made a very different film about the creation of the Equal Pay Act in 1970, and a long and bitter industrial dispute, that was far more complex.

That might have been more interesting for some people, but we wanted to make a film that had a mass audience, not one that only showed in art house cinemas. We wanted to make a film that would inspire people who are struggling today, and by making it feel like a Brit-comedy we felt we could add to the inspirational quality of the film.

I hope that people come out of the film thinking, maybe we don't need to be pushed around, maybe we can stand up for ourselves. There is something that film and drama can do particularly well—push a simple message that says, why don't you have a go?

Do you hope that Made In Dagenham will open the doors to other films about hidden history in Britain?

Working class life is depicted in film, but often in a very negative way. Of course, it's hard to make a film about poor people that doesn't feature their problems. But I think inspirational films are important.

These women, and their husbands, who all worked at Ford, endured terrible conditions but they had what they considered to be good lives. They lived on estates that were a big improvement from where they had grown up in London's East End. The film we've made is not about being ground down by poverty—it's about fighting injustice—and I hope more people make films about that.”



The performance of Miranda Richardson as Barbara Castle (or as Bob Hoskins called her in one of the outtakes from the film “Barbara Cartland”!), made me think that perhaps women’s standing in politics now is less than it was then. For instance I could never imagine the fiery red head appealing for party members to ‘Vote for me because I’m a woman!’ as Harriet Harman did during the election campaign for the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party in 2007.

Some other aspects have not changed over the years:

Forty years on, women in full-time work are paid, on average, 17 percent less than their male counterparts.

When it comes to part-time work, the figures are worse—there’s a 36 percent gap between men and women.

Director Cole and scriptwriter William Ivory manage to inject much-needed emotion and humour into what in reality could be rather dry action; this is done without detracting from or trivialising the core message of the film. Despite its flaws, and there are a few, this is an example of populist British cinema at its very best; an ensemble character piece retelling a pivotal moment in the history of equality.

This is an important film and should be seen, but it's unfortunate that the copious expletives could not be removed from the script in order to lower its certificate and allow a younger audience to experience an historical moment.

Iain McGlashan

Reactions to **The King's Speech** - 8 September 2011

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Score | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Votes | ~ | ~ | ~ | ~ | ~ | ~ | ~ | 2 | 12 | 9 | 6 |
| Total received | - 29 | | | Average Score - 8.66 | | | | | | | |

Your Comments

Excellent! A true test of friendship

Splendid performance by Colin Firth

Very moving, even inspiring. They richly deserved their Oscars. A great story about a quietly heroic figure in our history

Excellent film

Good choice to open the season - all round brilliant film including background music

Just one word - excellent

Comments from those who had seen it before:

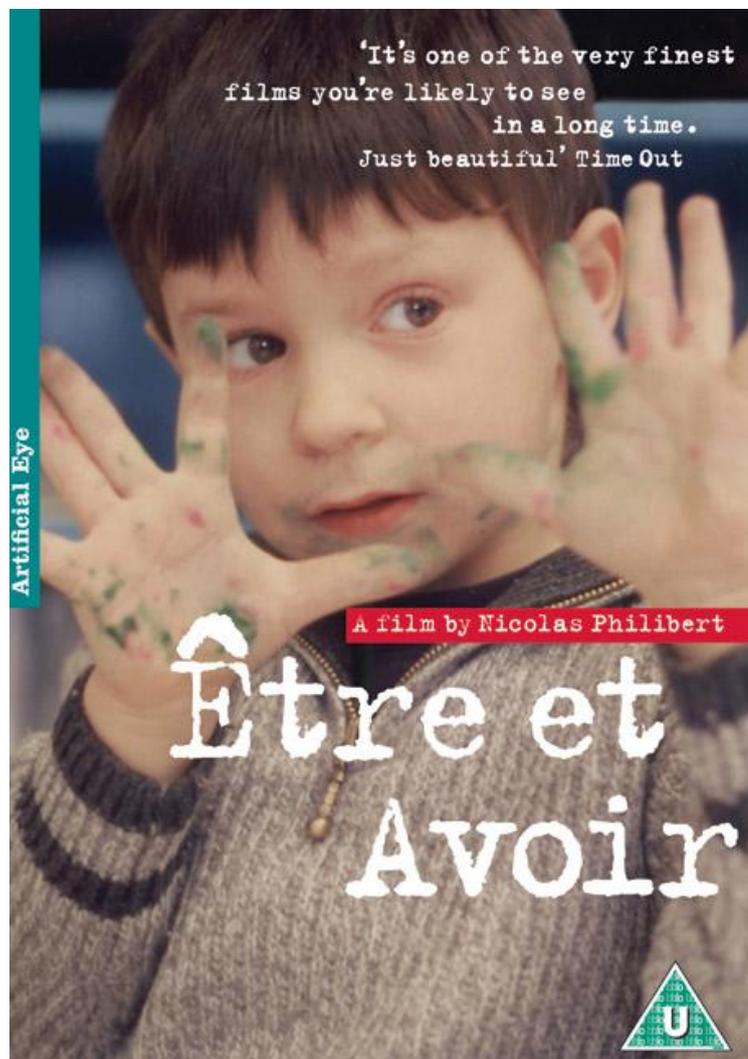
An excellent film - just as good the second time - superb acting

Seeing it the 2nd time I appreciated the acting even more!

Excellent - so much more to see on second viewing

Second time of seeing, but still a great watch.

Our next
film at 8pm
on
Thursday
13
October:



15 Poole Road, Woking Tel: 01483 596280

sponsors photocopying of *the main feature*

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