

The Main Feature



Season 36 - Issue 5 screening 12.11.15

UK 2014 129 minutes cert 12A

Director James Kent
Producers Rosie Alison and David Heyman
Screenplay Juliette Towhidi
Music Max Richter
Cinematography Rob Hardy
Editor Marcia Zucchetti

Cast

Vera Brittain	Alicia Vikander
Roland Leighton	Kit Harington
Victor Richardson	Colin Morgan
Edward Brittain	Taron Egerton
Mr Brittain	Dominic West
Mrs Brittain	Emily Watson
Aunt Belle	Joanna Scanlon
Hope	Hayley Atwell
Geoffrey Thurlow	Jonathon Bailey
Winifred Holtby	Alexandra Roach
Mrs Leighton	Anna Chancellor
Betty	Charlotte Hope
Miss Lorimer	Miranda Richardson



In February 2009, it was announced that BBC Films and Heyday Films producer David Heyman were developing a feature film based on the memoir Testament of Youth written by Vera Brittain about women's experiences during World War 1. In the event, the film went through a series of changes and additions to the cast and was finally released in late 2014 as part of the First World War commemorations. Testament of Youth is a searing story of love, war and remembrance. A powerful and passionate journey from youthful hopes and dreams to the edge of despair and back again. It is a film about young love, the futility of war and how to make sense of the darkest times.





The book, Testament of Youth, was the first instalment, covering 1900-1925, in the autobiography of Vera Brittain. It was published in 1933. Brittain's memoir continued with Testament of Experience, published in 1957, and encompassing the years 1925-1950. Between these two books came Testament of Friendship, which was published in 1940, and is essentially a memoir of Brittain's close colleague and friend, the novelist Winifred Holtby. A final segment of biography, to be called Testament of Faith or Testament of Time, was planned by Vera but remained unfinished at her death in 1970.

Testament of Youth has been acclaimed as a classic for its description of the impact of World War 1 on the lives of women and the middle class civilian population of Great Britain. The book shows how the impact extended into the post war years. It is also considered to be a classic in feminist literature for its depiction of a woman's pioneer struggle to forge an independent career in a society only grudgingly tolerant of educated women.

The film which had the support of Shirley Williams, Vera Brittain's daughter, was well received upon its release. Alicia Vikander, the Swedish star of A Royal Affair, which was included in and acclaimed during the Club's last season, gives an outstanding performance as Vera Brittain.



I am very much looking forward to seeing the film having missed it when it was in Woking. The book, which I read many years ago, is one of inevitability and unrelieved sadness. A sadness repeated in so many families and to so many people during the First World War.

Let us conclude with Shirley Williams' preface of 1979 in my version of the book Testament of Youth.

"I hope that a new generation, more distant from the First World War, will discover the anguish and pain in the lives of those young people sixty years ago; and in discovering will understand."

Neville Ledsome

The printing of the notes by Reppoint is undertaken free of charge



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Laurel and Hardy receive anniversary makeover

It's a decade since classic comic duo Laurel and Hardy were last shown on British TV screens - but now some of their best work has been digitally re-mastered.

Four films - *Way Out West*, *Towed in a Hole*, *The Music Box* and *Block-Heads* - will be shown for the first time in HD at venues throughout the UK and Ireland in October and November to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Stan Laurel's birth.

During their career, Laurel, who was born in Ulverston, then in Lancashire, and American Oliver Hardy, made 107 films together.

Comedians including Ricky Gervais, John Cleese, Matt Lucas, Steve Martin and Steve Coogan cite them as influences, while the *Homer Simpson* catchphrase, "D'oh!", originated in one of their films.

As late as 1975, one of their songs, *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, was at number two in the British charts - nearly 20 years after Hardy died.

"It's time to introduce the next generation to Laurel and Hardy," says Ross Owen, the organiser behind the Laurel and Hardy Roadshow, and the screenings. "And we want to do it on a big screen, which was what the original films were intended for. Most of them are being re-mastered and restored in the USA, to preserve them for the future."

The double act's appeal to younger viewers, according to Owen, is that "they are the original Dumb and Dumber". "They just pick themselves up and dust themselves down and go on to the next disaster. I don't think there are many other comedians who could make three generations of a family laugh together these days - big belly laughs as well. And yet that's what Laurel and Hardy could, and still can, do."

The duo won only one Oscar, for a short film in 1932 called *The Music Box*, which memorably saw them trying to lift a piano up a set of stairs.

Their catchphrases, such as: "Here's another nice mess you've gotten me into", became as famous as they did.

When they toured, towards the end of their career in 1950, they were nearly crushed in the streets by fans. Despite this, they did not become wealthy. Hardy - who died in 1957 - reportedly had to sell his house to fund his medical bills.



Laurel lived in Santa Monica, in California, until his death in 1965. Actor Sylvester McCoy, who has played Laurel twice during his career, says the comedian would have died in poverty had not actor Jerry Lewis fought a legal battle on his behalf to get him TV royalties.

"They really had no idea how big they were, and how much they meant to people, even when they toured," says McCoy. "Stan Laurel's phone number was in the telephone book and so fans, as they rediscovered them, would just phone him up for a chat. He really was an incredibly humble man, and yet he wrote most of their material. Oliver Hardy was a real southern gentleman, who liked to leave work at five and go and play golf with Bing Crosby. It was Stan who was the workaholic genius."

But Ross Owen says he's had requests for screenings from as far afield as India and Australia. "That's what we'd like to do next year if we can," he says. "But I think it's time that Laurel and Hardy were also returned to British TV screens. That type of humour never ages."

Comments and reactions to: **The Band's Visit**

An ironic parable in current circumstances
Nice sentiments but far too slow
A lovely gentle film – a little bit slow!
Even more hilarious than promised!
An interesting little film – beautifully acted
Perhaps I just wasn't in the mood?!
A quirky, atmospheric film – sad
A strange film – funny in part but at the same time sad!
Liked it very much – I wish the female star had a sister
A gentle, funny film with some sharply observed moments
An interesting film with the cultures interacting in a new way for an English audience
A gentle film chosen with genius
For me, too slow a build up to the message of the film. Film an appropriate one for One World Week though.

Fascinating! Lots to think about!
Oh dear, too sloooooow!
Plenty of dry humour but a bit slow
Deep, pedantic and boring
Excellent acting, story; sad, funny
My kind of film!
The Band got there, in the end!
A nice little film
Enjoyable and charming
Loved the end music!

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	~	3	5	6	14	7	5	1	~
No of reaction slips received = 41								Average Score = 5.88			

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	Belle	8.00
2 nd	The Theory of Everything	7.84
3 rd	Rebel Without a Cause	7.16
4 th	The Band's Visit	5.88

Our next film on 24 November:

"Terrific performances by Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto elevate this socio-medical drama out of the realms of the ordinary into something quietly remarkable."

"An uplifting story of undying hope and unlikely heroism."

"This incredible film charts one man's determination to stay alive against astounding odds and, most tantalisingly, supporting the very people that he despised. "

"A powerfully moving film, and McConaughey's extraordinary physical transformation is much more than a stunt. "

