

Welcome

In the following pages we offer a taste of the buzzing culture in Film Studies and the international impact of our activities. This newsletter wants to celebrate how staff and students jointly help to shape our thriving teaching, research and creative environment. It is a credit to all that in 2011 we were once again ranked among the top two places to study Film in the UK by *The Guardian's* University Guide. In other respects, it has been another productive year for us as well. Congratulations to those students who won scholarships and other funding on our undergraduate and postgraduate courses this year, including those supported by the AHRC Block Grants Partnership scheme.

Michael Williams | Editor

Filmmakers triumph

We are delighted that two of our BA Film students, Emma Kinni and Emily Reynolds, have work selected for Screentest, the 2011 National Student Film Festival, and will be attending the ceremony in late March.

Emma writes: 'I spent 3 years gaining knowledge from my course before making *Triumph*. The film, dealing with gender portrayals, was inspired by my dissertation on Pedro Almodóvar's representation of femininity. I wrote and directed the film, recruiting most of my cast and crew from the University. Wessex Films, the student filmmaking society, was a massive help, providing me with people, equipment and brilliant advice. I will continue writing and directing films through an MA degree in Film Directing which I am due to start in January 2012.'

Emily, currently in her second year, tells us: 'The film *Working Lunch* that some of my friends and I made over the summer has been nominated for best script at Screentest, and I cannot wait to go to the awards ceremony. It would be fantastic if I won but just to be involved is so exciting.' We wish both filmmakers the best of luck.

Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award for Film lecturer

The quality of teaching in Film Studies has been recognised by a Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award for Veronica Spencer. Every year, the Vice Chancellor's Teaching Awards celebrate teaching which is inspirational, innovative or of an exceptionally high standard. Veronica received her award for her work not only in Student Support, but also for curriculum development in Film Studies and within the Faculty of Humanities as a whole.

With regard to her own teaching, Veronica runs one of the most popular modules on the Film Studies programme, Technical and Creative Writing, a second-year option. The course is aimed at students who will need to write professionally in their future careers, giving them the opportunity to produce a wide range of pieces written for different audiences. It is key that the students learn to assess the quality of their own work and so the module includes an element of peer assessment, in which the students review and grade their own and their classmates' work, with guidance from the tutor. These are skills that the students will need if they are to take their place alongside other former Southampton graduates in the media and creative industries.

Veronica said, "We take teaching and curriculum development very seriously in Film Studies. The students are good at telling us what works and we continuously review the effectiveness of our teaching practice in light of their comments. I was really pleased to receive the award at summer graduation, where I could celebrate with both colleagues and graduating students."

You can read more on the Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award and Veronica's nomination at: www.soton.ac.uk/lateu/professional_development/VC_Teaching_Awards/vct2010winnersA.html

Veronica Spencer, middle row, first on the left





A Student's View of the MA in Film and Cultural Management

To tell you the truth, I have been pretty much 'brought up' by the University of Southampton. Before starting the MA in Film and Cultural Management, I did my undergraduate degree here in Film and Philosophy. I thoroughly enjoyed it and my tutors were extremely knowledgeable and very supportive. After graduating, I was determined to study media management as part of my postgraduate education, but as the only other similar full-time campus-based course is at New York University (and costs a fortune!), I decided to confirm my place in Southampton.

What I enjoy most about this course is the opportunity to gain an academic as well as a business perspective on film and cultural management. Having visiting speakers from both academia and the industry is also an extremely valuable experience. The combination of film theory and film management modules renders the programme appropriate for students coming from very different educational and, indeed, cultural backgrounds. The good thing about living in Southampton is that the city offers a few part-time job and internship opportunities to get a taste of 'working life'. In addition, the place is big enough to have a vibrant culture and nightlife – there is always an event or initiative on campus or in the city – yet is less overwhelming than the usual metropolis.

The MA has influenced a PhD Film project that I am currently developing, which examines film policy in Bulgaria. However, whatever I do next, my master's degree has not only prepared me for further academic research but also equipped me to seek employment straight after graduation, possibly in music video production and marketing.

Maya Nedyalkova

Postgraduate Profile

I have been working on my PhD thesis 'Representations of Hispanic Masculinity in Contemporary US Cinema' since October 2008, but I have been a student in Film Studies at Southampton since long before then, both at MA and undergraduate level. Back then, I did not anticipate that I would develop the skills, particularly of time management, or the confidence to engage in many of the activities that I do now.

I have had the opportunity to organise a one-day postgraduate conference on the theme of 'Masculinity and Popular Culture', hosted by Film Studies at Southampton in March 2011 with the support of the Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA), and the Higher Education Authority subject centre for Art, Design and Media. This conference is the culmination of my work as Outreach Officer for the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network which publishes its own journal and supports research and training events for postgraduates and early-career researchers. It is my job to encourage increased participation in the network through



promotional initiatives and develop and put into practice ideas for network supported events.

I also organise the series of Film PGR Screenings which provide an informal opportunity to engage with the research of postgraduate students, as well as that of invited guest speakers. This semester I have also enjoyed, and learnt a lot, from teaching on the first year module 'Introduction to European Cinema', which I took myself many years ago as an undergraduate. This reflection on my own experience suggests that current first years have the potential to exceed their own expectations of what they can achieve at Southampton, as I have.

Victoria Kearley

Pam Cook meets Baz Luhrmann

Baz Luhrmann was a challenging project. The book is based on detailed original research into Luhrmann's background, working methods and decision-making process. The filmmaker is one of the most talked-about figures in contemporary cinema, but I was not prepared for the sheer volume of press and media coverage of his projects. While this situation provided a gratifying amount of source material, it also made verification of that material a daunting task. Time spent in Melbourne in the Australian Film Institute research collection, and in the Luhrmann personal archive in Sydney, produced a vast treasure trove of information.

I was privileged to be able to interview Baz Luhrmann and his wife and chief collaborator, designer Catherine Martin (a hero of mine), at their production base, the House of Iona in Sydney. This gave me invaluable insight into their creative processes, and the influences on their work. It also illuminated their relationship as independent filmmakers to the major Hollywood studio 20th Century Fox, with whom they have a long-standing first-look agreement. I discovered the importance of their Australian context in their international dealings and transnational cultural exchanges.

My empirical research also raised theoretical questions: about authorship, collaboration, performance, travesty, postcolonial culture and history. It uncovered the significance of branding in the global entertainment industries in reinforcing local context. Analysis of these issues, together with the unfolding story of Luhrmann's work in theatre, music and film, revealed his unique position in today's cinema.

Pam Cook

Pam Cook is Professor Emerita in Film Studies and editor of *The Cinema Book*



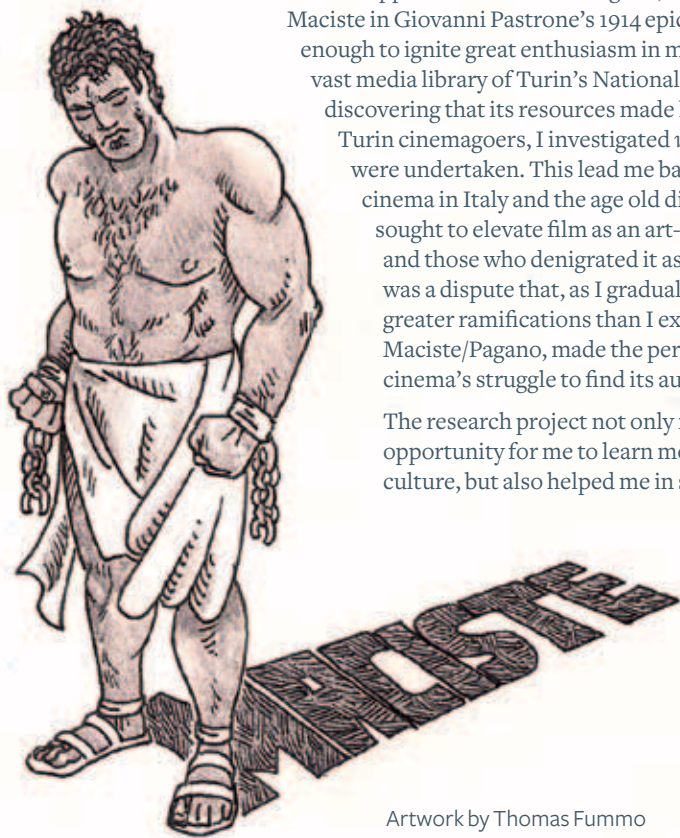
Maciste and the missing audience

Before coming to Southampton to study, I had always felt slightly uninterested in Italian culture, despite having been born and raised in Italy. However, once I had finally accomplished my dream and began life as an undergraduate in England, I started re-examining my roots with a new sense of pride. One opportunity to do this was a project for the Early and Silent Film module.

The assignment called for local research consisting principally of primary sources, such as film magazines, reviews, promotional material and audience studies of the time. I thus happily returned to my Italian hometown of Turin to investigate the star persona and audience appeal of Bartolomeo Pagano, who played the strongman Maciste in Giovanni Pastrone's 1914 epic, *Cabiria*. This alone was enough to ignite great enthusiasm in me, as it meant visiting the vast media library of Turin's National Cinema Museum. On discovering that its resources made little reference to actual Turin cinemagoers, I investigated *why* no audience studies were undertaken. This led me back to the very origins of cinema in Italy and the age old dispute between those who sought to elevate film as an art-form – the 'tenth muse' – and those who denigrated it as mass entertainment. It was a dispute that, as I gradually discovered, had much greater ramifications than I expected, and for which Maciste/Pagano, made the perfect case-study of Italian cinema's struggle to find its audience.

The research project not only represented another opportunity for me to learn more about Italian film culture, but also helped me in shaping a critical argument of my own. I can honestly say that, though it took a lot of work, it was an enjoyable and highly informative experience.

Thomas Fummo



Artwork by Thomas Fummo

Rethinking Franco-British Cinema

Despite close geographical, political and cultural links between France and Britain, the dynamics of Franco-British cinematic relations remain critically neglected. Southampton's Lucy Mazdon and Catherine Wheatley address this oversight in *Je t'aime, moi non plus: Franco-British Cinematic Relations*, their edited collection of essays from leading experts in the fields of French, British and European film history. The book analyses the ways in which each cinema has been shaped by its cross-channel 'other' and presents a significant challenge to the constructions of a 'national' cinema which have dominated so much British and French film history. This collection of essays emerges from Lucy's AHRC funded research project on French Cinema in Britain which ran from 2006 to 2010. Lucy and Catherine are currently completing a second book, also to be published by Berghahn, entitled *Sex, Art and Cinephilia; French Cinema in Britain since 1930*.



The Westin Bonaventure Hotel

Southampton goes to Hollywood

In March 2010 film academics from around the world descended upon downtown Los Angeles to share their latest research with other scholars. Already the largest event of its kind, the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) conference held even greater significance this year not only for being held so close to Hollywood, but also in marking the culmination of SCMS's fiftieth anniversary celebrations. Southampton's Film department had a strong presence at the event.

Southampton University had seven film specialists attending the event to present papers, network with colleagues and publishing contacts, and conduct research at the city's archives: Tim Bergfelder, Lucy Mazdon, Catherine Wheatley and Michael Williams from Film, along with Shelley Cobb, Michael Hammond, and Linda Ruth Williams from English. Film's team all gave papers at the conference. Michael discussed research from his forthcoming book on classicism and silent stardom, while Tim and Lucy chaired panels on cosmopolitanism in cinema and Franco-British cinematic relations.

The conference venue was the Westin Bonaventure hotel. The building's external scenic elevators gave delegates the vertiginous thrills they had provided in James Cameron's *True Lies*, while its labyrinthine towers of glass and steel were described by theorist Fredric Jameson as an exemplar of postmodern architecture. Not far away were other LA landmarks including the 1893 Bradbury Building – most famously seen in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* – and of course Hollywood itself. In 2011, the conference will be held in New Orleans, and our Film academics and postgraduate students will once more be flying the flag for Southampton.



Gemma Arterton poses for cameras

Southampton rolls out the red carpet

The strong film culture at Southampton University was probably best reflected this year when a highly active film society in the Students' Union won the privilege of hosting the world premiere of the Gemma Arterton film *The Disappearance of Alice Creed*. An online competition was organised by the promoters of the film for any cinema across the UK to host the premiere, and a very strong campaign was run by Union Films, the cinema run by students for students, to win the privilege. Students all over the university voted to bring the premiere to their union and by the end of the competition, Union Films had over twice the number of votes as the runner-up.

The premiere itself was a huge success, with the union building being temporarily transformed into Leicester Square, complete with a red carpet to add extra glamour to the proceedings. Hollywood star Gemma Arterton and director J Blakeson

were among the celebrities to pose for cameras and later sit down for an interview in front of the hundreds of students who had turned up to see the event.

Were it not for the incredible effort of the film community within the university, something like this would never have happened. It is a testament to how much students love film that they were able to respond so passionately to the competition and help something like this to happen at their union. Hopefully another opportunity will come along soon!

Bill Sich | BA Film/Head of Publicity, Union Films



Our students meet the filmmakers

For more information

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email: mtw1@soton.ac.uk or visit our website at: www.southampton.ac.uk/film/

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Student Exchange with Huston School of Film and Digital Media

We were very pleased to welcome Michael Byrne and Michael Talty to Film Studies in February. Both are visiting undergraduate students from the National University of Ireland, Galway.

Film Studies has established an exchange with the Huston School of Film and Digital Media in Galway (founded with the active support of the family of legendary director John Huston) under the ERASMUS scheme, which offers students the opportunity to study in another European country. Galway is not only a vibrant cultural centre but also offers a Film course whose aims match our own. Southampton Film students are offered the opportunity to study in Galway in the first semester of their second year.

Veronica Spencer

Talks and Seminars

Leading researchers continue to engage staff and students at Southampton through the Research Seminar series. This year's presentations include:

- Daniel O'Brien (University of Southampton) 'White Supremacy? Difference as Degeneracy in 300'
- Amanda Field (Film Historian & University of Southampton alumna) 'England's Secret Weapon: How Sherlock Holmes Travelled Through Time to Fight the Nazis'
- James Chapman (University of Leicester) 'H.G. Wells and Science Fiction Cinema'
- Mark Glancy (Queen Mary, University of London) 'Domesticating the Western: Hollywood Westerns on British Screens'
- Cathy Johnson (University of Nottingham) 'Design for Air: Branding US and UK Television in the Digital Era'
- Michael Hammond (University of Southampton) 'Transatlantic Low Brow Sensation: European Freak Performers and the Aesthetics of the Thriller in 1920s Hollywood'
- Michael Chanan (Roehampton University) 'Opposing the Philistines: Work in Progress'
- Elena Caoduro (University of Southampton) 'Mothers and Slayers: Portraits of Female Terrorists in European Cinema'
- Paul MacDonald (University of Portsmouth) 'Contemporary Hollywood Stardom and the Awards System'
- Belén Vidal (King's College London) 'Sheen/Morgan: The Compressed Frame of Impersonation'

See the Film Studies website for more news about our events:

www.soton.ac.uk/film/news/index.shtml