

Researching Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain

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1. The study of film reception
2. Historical research on film reception
3. Researching cinema culture in 1930s Britain

The reception studies I seek would be historical, would recognise the dialectics of evidence and theory, and would take up a critical distance on the relations between spectators and texts. It would not interpret texts but would attempt a historical explanation of the event of interpreting a text.

Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*

- How do filmgoers' tastes connect with broader questions around reception?
- If British audiences favoured particular genres, films or stars, why might this have been?
- What did audiences get out of going to the cinema?
- How did their cinemagoing function socially, culturally, affectively?

Aims:

- to investigate the ways in which films and cinemagoing figured in the everyday lives of people throughout Britain in the 1930s;
- to situate cinemagoing and film fandom in the period within their broader social, cultural and discursive contexts.

Objectives:

- to gather data, in various forms, on cinemagoing and other popular leisure pursuits of the 1930s, and to document regional, gender and class variations in these;
- to devise and put into effect a set of 'ethnohistorical' methodologies appropriate to the collection, analysis and interpretation of these various data.

Ethnographic inquiry:

- Interviews
- Postal questionnaires
- Diaries, essays, letters, memorabilia

Historical inquiry:

- 1930s film fan magazines and other popular press
- 1930s film trade magazines
- Other 1930s written sources, published and unpublished
- Films

Interviewees:

Glasgow (Scottish industrial city--shipbuilding)	17
Greater Manchester (industrial conurbation--textiles)	22
East Anglia (rural—agriculture)	21
Harrow (1930s London suburb—white collar)	18

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Films Popular in Britain, 1930-39

[The first title given for each year is

British]

- 1930 Rookery Nook (Tom Walls)
The Love Parade (Ernst Lubitsch)
- 1931 Sally in Our Alley (Maurice Elvey)
A Free Soul (Clarence Brown)
- 1932 Sunshine Susie (Victor Saville)
Arrowsmith (John Ford)
- 1933 I Was a Spy (Victor Saville)
Cavalcade (Frank Lloyd)
- 1934 Private Life of Henry VIII (A.
Korda)
Queen Christina (Rouben Mamoulian)
- 1935 Escape Me Never (Paul Czinner)
Lives of a Bengal Lancer (Henry
Hathaway)
- 1936 The Ghost Goes West (Rene Clair)
Mr Deeds Goes to Town (Frank Capra)
- 1937 Victoria the Great (Herbert Wilcox)
Stowaway (William A Seiter)
- 1938 It's in the Air (Anthony Kimmins)
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

(Disney)

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