

**WILLIAMSTOWN FILM SOCIETY**

[www.williamstown-film-society.org](http://www.williamstown-film-society.org)

Last Wednesday of the month, 7:30pm at the Council Chamber,

Williamstown Town Hall, Ferguson Street, Williamstown, 3016

AGM

?? October 2020

Council Chamber, Williamstown Town Hall

President’s Report

2020 has been a most unusual year.

We got off to a flying start with our first two films: **Crazy rich Asians** in January was a hoot and even had some of our toughest misting up at the happy ending; February’s film **Guilty,** a taut Danish thriller, had our viewing audience answering the emergency hot line with the main protagonist, as he dealt with a call in which the situation escalated. Both films were well received by our membership.

The March screening did not happen because of Coronavirus restrictions. For the safety of our membership we took the decision on 16th March to suspend screenings. There was a glimmer of hope that we could resume by August but that soon evaporated.

Distributors with whom we had agreements for the non-theatrical screening rights for the films we had scheduled for the remainder of 2020 were quite understanding as film societies across the state were in a similar situation.

To that end, the WFS committee decided in early August that the period of time covered by the 2020 membership fee will now be extended to also include our season of films in 2021.

In early September Marcus Cassidy-Anderson, the venues manager at Hobsons Bay City Council, contacted WFS with regard to our bookings for the remainder of 2020. The WFS committee was consulted and unanimously it was felt that the safest course of action was to write off 2020 and make an early start on planning 2021. So, the decision was made to cancel our venue bookings and the remaining screenings of our 2020 program.

A council venue has been secured for the last Wednesday in each month, from January to November for 2021. Depending on restrictions, it may be The Chamber or a larger space, The Supper Room, to allow us all to fit safely. Screenings may not look the same next year but we will certainly try to make it feel the same, be rest assured.

Our program for 2021 will essentially be our 2020 season with replacements for those films we were lucky enough to see. Always one to look on the bright side, the interruption to our 2020 program will now allow us to screen **‘Swallows of Kabul’** a highly regarded French animated feature from 2019, initially scheduled for May, it became unavailable and was replaced by **‘Osama’**, a live action film with a similar theme. The delay has worked in our favour and ‘Swallows of Kabul’ has now be included next year. All other films not screened have been re-booked and two fresh films have been added to our 2021 program which is now complete (and can be studied in great detail on our website).

A significant development in 2020 was the new website. With my retirement at the end of 2019, one goal that I had set myself was to update the ‘Weebly’ website and keep it current to make it more relevant and user friendly. Barbara and I sat down a couple of times in January and eventually decided that it was probably more efficient to start again, from scratch. After researching some different web building sites, I decided on SITE123, because it used templates which were straight forward to use, it provided instant Q&A assistance and the pages looked impressive and appeared to be quite easy for users to negotiate. We could also have a domain name which included our name:

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At our February screening our new website was previewed ‘on the big screen’ to our audience, which provided some valuable suggestions and feedback. It was published on 11th March 2020 and not a moment too soon. It has been well used during our non-screening period with the weekly movie quiz question.

The Wednesday Movie Question served two functions, providing – (1) one way for me to keep in touch with film society members and (2) an opportunity for members to visit the site, explore it and provide feedback about the site. Over the months I have been able to fine tune aspects of the site thanks to suggestions from our members. The website presents well on smart phones, tablets and PCs. When things return to normal I envisage the site to become a bit of a ‘go to’ for what’s on. The home page will feature the month’s up-coming film and any other details about the screening. One of the key features of the website is that it is extremely easy to maintain (it takes less than 5 minutes to update the home page with details of next month’s film). With an annual cost of approximately $173, time will tell if it is money well spent.

The website also makes a lot of film society information readily available to members and also the general public. The following can be found on the Newsletters etc. page:

* WFS Past Newsletters
* WFS Past Program Calendars
* Reel News – the newsletter of FVFS
* The Bulletin – the newsletter of ACOFS
* WFS Catalogue – a spreadsheet listing every film screened by WFS (since 1996) and those available to borrow

Thanks to the generosity of the Hobson’s Bay Library, the WFS now has a stock of ex-library books available for members to borrow (see website for details). Our DVD/BluRay collection also expanded courtesy of Ann Morrow. These too will be added to our current list of titles. Keep an eye out for details on how to borrow any of these titles.

Last year’s Presidents report included a list of things to work on in 2020. On reviewing that list it is pleasing to note that a number of them have been ticked off or are well in hand. These include:

* Star Box ratings are now forwarded to FVFS. They receive our monthly newsletter, which includes the Star Box ratings for the previous month.
* Website (see above)
* DVD/BluRay/Book Borrowing system is on track.
* The other dot points related to establishing links with other community groups.

It was nice to see some new faces at our first two screenings in 2020 – a great sign. But of course since then we have not held a screening and so the questions raised in my report last year are still relevant.

Membership numbers have remained static (25-30) over the years. New members have helped maintain the balance by replacing those we have lost, for a range of reasons. We do have some questions to ponder: Do we want to / need to grow? If so, how large? How do we promote the WFS to attract new members?

In concluding this report I would like to thank a few people and the organisations that they represent.

Thank you to Mr Marcus Cassidy-Anderson and the venues staff from Hobson’s Bay City Council for their advice and support during 2020 and a special thank you to venue staff for their assistance in setting up the Council Chamber for our Wednesday screenings. We love our venue: it is central, comfortable and suits us well, in particular the tea trolley.

Thank you to the WFS Committee, particularly Maria Kouppas (secretary) and Dimi Simeonidis (treasurer). They have been instrumental in keeping the WFS ticking over, especially as we have not been able to get together and do what we love doing - watching a movie and having a good chat about it.

Thank you to our wonderful members. The membership of the WFS are very willing to watch all styles of cinema and our post-movie cuppa & chat is often the highlight of the night with the many and varied opinions. And this year in particular thanks for appreciating the Movie Question each Wednesday. A select few actually managed to answer quite regularly but I also heard that many more read it and enjoyed the exercise, for which I am glad.

Finally, I would like to encourage anyone interested to join the committee. We meet only a few times during the year, the main meeting each year in November, to frame up the program for the following year. The get together is quite informal; it is more like friends getting together around a table of tea and cake and discussing the merits of movies. Sounds great? Give it a go. If it’s not for you, you are allowed to leave and we won’t hold it against you and you can still come to the screenings. You never know if you don’t have a go.

So, thanks for an interesting 2020 and it’s onward to 2021, our *‘deja vu’* season.

Michael Slee

President

Williamstown Film Society

213/200 Stephen Street

Yarraville 3013