

Screen Secrets



STARRING

Blackheath Halls, Fox and Firkin, Downham and Forest Hill Libraries, Horniman Museum, Café Crema, Broadway Theatre and introducing The Brockley Jack Theatre



Without a permanent cinema in Lewisham, more and more of us are swapping the thrill of the big screen for a somewhat less exciting DVD at home. Thankfully there are a number of cheap – and often free – independent screenings and film clubs popping up all over the borough that not only offer up the usual big blockbusters but an exciting mix of classics, world cinema and cutting-edge films, too.

Vintage film nights

Blackheath Halls may be best known as a top music venue, but it also hosts independent film seasons with themes such as literary adaptations and musicals. Its vintage film nights feature a particular star of the silver screen and often an accompanying talk. Doris Day and Katharine Hepburn have already been put in the spotlight, and other big names being considered for the next run of films (beginning in September) include Frank Sinatra, Gene Kelly and Bette Davis.

WHY ISN'T THERE A CINEMA IN LEWISHAM?

The borough was once home to several cinemas, including the Gaumont Palace in Lewisham High Street (demolished in 1991), the Eros in Rushey Green (demolished in 1961) and the Catford ABC on Bromley Road (now a church). Cinema audiences started to decline in the 1960s due to the growth of television,

and were at an all-time low by the mid-1980s. By the late 1980s, there were no operating cinemas left in Lewisham. Audience numbers started to creep up again in the 1990s with the coming of out-of-town multiplexes.

The good news is that Lewisham may get a cinema. Mayor Sir Steve Bullock

says: 'We have been working hard for some years to try to secure a new cinema as part of the proposals to develop Lewisham Town Centre. There is strong interest from the main cinema operators to be part of the project, so I hope Lewisham could have its own cinema in a few years' time.'



Art house flicks

For those who prefer contemporary films to classics, there's the Fox and Firkin's film night. Situated opposite Ladywell Leisure Centre, the pub recently relaunched its regular film night and now offers up everything from student films and art house flicks to animation and music videos. The Motion Picture and Independent film night, held on the first Wednesday of every month, is run by local film producer Sarah Scott. 'It gives people a chance to show their films in a low-key environment,' says Sarah. 'We've been really lucky to get such a high standard.' There's even free popcorn, plus handy access to the bar, making it a good place to relax with friends.

Downham and Forest Hill libraries regularly put on free film screenings for all age groups, which at Downham Library ranges from a sing-a-long cartoon club to arty flicks and the latest big action blockbusters. And the refurbished Brockley Jack Theatre in Brockley Road SE4 is hoping to launch a film club later in the year.

Al fresco screenings

In the summer months, warm evenings mean film screenings can venture outdoors. The Horniman Museum is a popular and scenic setting for al fresco screenings, and every summer film buffs gather in front of the bandstand, grab a chair

Above: Broadway Theatre and Forest Hill Library



Below: Horniman Museum and Downham Library

FILMS SHOT IN LEWISHAM

Miss Pettigrew Lives For A Day

This comedy starring Frances McDormand was filmed at Brockley's famous Rivoli Ballroom last year.

Bullet Boy Hard-hitting film about black Britain's gun culture filmed around Deptford and Lewisham.

Eastern Promises Watergate Street around the river in Deptford was used as a grisly dumping ground in this Russian mobster film starring Naomi

Watts and Viggo Mortenson.

Nil by Mouth Gary Oldman's partly autobiographical portrayal of life in south-east London used the streets, estates and pubs of Deptford and New Cross as a backdrop.

Shaun of the Dead This Zombie romantic comedy, starring Simon Pegg and Nick Frost, used The Duke of Albany pub in New Cross for outside shots of The Winchester Pub.

and watch a film as the sun goes down – all for free. The museum generally shows two outdoor films each summer, as well as one or two indoor showings at other points in the year. The choice of film ties in with ongoing exhibitions. Their forthcoming programme includes Chinese film *Hero* on 14 August (8.30pm) and Indian film *Bride and Prejudice* on 28 August (8pm).

Meanwhile, over in New Cross, popular vegetarian eaterie Café Crema serves up film nights alongside organic food to Goldsmiths students and locals alike. The screenings are organised by south London independent

project Fresh Films, set up by Kiri Lewin. Previous events have included a children's film festival, French film festival and a blend of cult films, world cinema and more. Film nights cost £6, with a meal included, and details of upcoming screenings can be found on a notice board inside the cafe.

The Broadway Theatre in Catford is another great Lewisham venue that offers film alongside plays, concerts and musicals. The theatre is planning a new season of films for Thursday nights across October and November – visit www.broadwaytheatre.org.uk for more information.