Ewell film festival ends with a bang

The **Satisfied Eye International Film Festival** wrapped up its 4th edition with a bang on Sunday, closing out this year's event with a thrilling taiko drumming performance.

Festival founder **Chris Hastings** told us: "We'd wanted to end on a high note and we couldn't have hoped for a better festival. Having shifted from the delayed Picturehouse in Epsom, we had no idea whether or not **Ewell and Bourne Hall** would embrace indie cinema but this has been our most successful season ever.* The venue and the community really pulled together to support us. There was a buzz about this year's event which made it something truly special."

One audience member noted "I'm no film buff, I just enjoy a good film and the quality here was really exceptional. I will be thinking about the films I saw for days to come."

In addition to a packed programme of short films, feature films, documentaries and animation, audiences came in large numbers to meet Johnny 5 from Short Circuit, ED209 from Robocop, get a photo in the Back to the Future DeLorean and take their seat in the Iron Throne, while Spiderman thrilled the children who had arrived for free animation screenings.



The drummers of Aber Taiko and Gongming collect the opening award of the festival on behalf of documentary Finding Her Beat which walked away with the Jury Prize

Following three days of World, European and UK premieres and a host of Oscar winners and nominees, the festival wrapped up with a stunning live show by Aber Taiko and Gongming which literally made the ground vibrate! Followed by a sold-out workshop attended by many of the audience, one participant declared that the event was "absolutely epic, the best thing to ever happen in Ewell, I can't wait for next year"!

The full list of the festival's award winners will be announced this week with details available at www.satisfiedeye.com for those attendees eager to discover if their favourite film walked away with any prizes.

*Previous highest box office for SEIFF 88% (in 2019) compared to 92% ticket sales for this 4th season.

The Epsom and Ewell Times was very happy to have sponsored this great community event in our Borough

Picture the opening.....

The 4th Satisfied Eye International Film Festival (26th to 28th May) has opened its doors in Bourne Hall Ewell.

There was a sense of anticipation in the air as people gathered to celebrate and enjoy the best of what cinema has to offer, and there was a feeling of camaraderie among the festival-goers.

One of the visitors who were at previous festivals shared with us that he returned as he wanted to see more different films, styles and types. The festival started with the people's choice selection. Two films from France, "A Travers", a very touching story about a couple who needs to terminate the pregnancy in the seventh month and "The Censor or Dreams". "An Irish Goodbye", this year's Oscar winner, tells us a story about two brothers who reunite after their mother's death and another Oscar nominee, White Eye, from Israel, where a man finds his stolen bike and struggles to remain human.

"The buzz has been very special, we haven't seen it before and long may it last", shared with us **Chris Hastings**, the founder of SEIFF.

Among great films, you can enjoy sitting on a Game of Thrones Throne, letting Johnny5 Replica chase you around The Flying Sauce Cafe.

Please check the schedule below; there are a lot of Oscar-nominated films on Saturday and Sunday to be seen.

Find out more about the tickets here:

https://www.tickettailor.com/events/satisfiedeyeinternationalfilmfestival

Reporter - **Romana Sustar** is a multilingual freelance journalist, University Language Tutor, accomplished marketer and owner of Epsom Digital Ltd., a local digital marketing agency.

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Epsom and Ewell's Satisfying Film Festival begins

Led by Epsom resident and professional producer **Chris Hastings**, this years **Satisfied Eye International Film Festival** is hosted in the iconic flying saucer shaped **Bourne Hall** in **Ewell**. The Festival is sponsored by The Epsom and Ewell Times.

Starts tomorrow (Friday 26th May) through to Sunday. There is something for everyone. Here is a synopsis of the main action:

List of events ...

Friday 26th May: 7.30 People's Choice (our best films as selected by local judges) (already sold out)

Saturday 27th May

- 12.30 Amazing Animations (our best animated shorts)
- 1.45 All Blood Runs Red (selection of shorts celebrating diversity)
- 3.15 Stranger than Fiction (selection of documentary shorts)
- 4.30 Still Working 9 to 5 (full length documentary that looks at the cultural impact of the 80s movie starring Dolly Parton, Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin)
- 6.15 The Darker Side (a selection of twisted shorts)

Sunday 28th May

- 12.30 Best of British (a selection of our best home grown films)
- 1.45 The Lighter Side (a selection of comedy shorts)
- 3.15 Sobs, Sniffles & Smiles (a selection of shorts focusing on the human condition)
- 4.30 Wonder Women (a selection of our best shorts directed by women filmmakers)

6.00 Finding Her Beat (full length documentary about the attempt to put on the world's first all female taiko concert)

There are also a number of additional events:

Saturday and Sunday 12.30-4.30 Free Kids Animation

All weekend, several photo ops including The Iron Throne, Back to the Future DeLorean, a working Johnny 5 from Short Circuit



Sunday 7.30 a live taiko drumming performance and workshop (Finding Her Beat ticket holders only)

See

www.satisfiedeye.com

The Satisfied Eye International Film Festival (SEIFF) returns to Epsom for its 4th season this May.

SEIFF, which rated in the top 100 festivals in the world within its first year, returns with a selection of the best independent features, shorts, documentaries and animation from around the world; as well as free animation screenings for children.

With a high-quality programme including Oscar and BAFTA nominees and winners, premieres, familiar faces ranging from Hollywood legend Jane Fonda to A list regular Oscar Isaac, comedies and cartoons, horror and sci fi, world cinema to the best of British, there is guaranteed to be something for everybody.

Tickets are £5 per screening or a full festival pass costs £25 allowing full access to the entire festival (festival passes at the Early Bird price of £20 until the end of April).

Full event details and tickets at www.satisfiedeye.com/tickets

Related reports:

Spotlight on Epsom's Film Festival

The Times to award film festival passes has come (tickets already won).

The Times to award film festival passes has come

Epsom and Ewell's own international film festival is coming. The **Satisfied Eye International Film Festival**, now in its fourth season and consistently rated in the top film festivals in the world, is already acknowledged for its high quality programme. This year, due to Co-Vid delays, the Festival has two year's worth of submissions from over 50 countries; so the organisers could cherry pick even more for an extra high quality programme.

SUPPORT EPSOM AND EWELL TIMES AND WIN TWO FREE FILM FESTIVAL PASSES

To celebrate the first year of **Epsom and Ewell Times** donors supporting our advertisement free quality news service can choose to be entered into a draw for two full free film festival passes. Click HERE to donate.

The Festival takes place at Ewell's **Bourne Hall** in Spring Street between **Friday 26th and Sunday 28th May.**

There will be more Oscar nominees than ever before, with European and UK premieres and some of the best up and coming directors, producers and other talent from around the world.

The People's Choice screening this year (Friday 27th ... films chosen from the programme by local filmgoers) is probably the strongest they have ever had, with an Oscar nominee, an Oscar winner and a real battle to see who picks up the People's Choice award.

The Festival is part of the sci-fi rebranding of Bourne Hall this year so there will be some extra fun treats in store for film and TV fans.

Anyone who likes a good photo op can come and have their picture taken in the Game of Thrones' Iron Throne, get a selfie with the Back to the Future DeLorean and a whole lot more during the festival.

And there's scheduled to be a live performance after the screening of **Finding Her Beat**. The film is a joyous, uplifting documentary that follows the struggles to launch the first concert for women taiko drummers ... something reserved normally only for men.

There will be free screenings for children throughout the weekend at Bourne Hall, Spring Street.

This year sees the first ever **Emily Davison Award** for Best Female Director. The association with Epsom and Ewell being obvious with the statue to the famous suffragette in Epsom's Market Square.

Epsom author says hearing is believing -the inside story

Once Upon a Lunchtime, several years ago, a group of friends were reminiscing about the exciting lives they lead as young female journalists working on top selling pop and women's magazines in the '60s, '70s and '80s.

It all came flooding back, the incredible interviews, the ground-breaking features, the photo shoots, the dramas, the drugs, the creativity, the opportunities, the freedom, the glitz and the glamour and the sheer excitement about being part of the explosive magazine world in the most crazy and attitude-changing decades.

'We should write a book', they said. And they did.

Top photo: The Magazine Girls left to right: Penny, Linda, Shirley, Sandie and Jan.

The Magazine Girls took six years from possibility to publication, during which time they saw four Prime Ministers, battled with Brexit and struggled with Covid, losing loved-ones along the way, but overcame the trials and particularly the distance and time difference between them, being scattered between Epsom and Sutton, London and Loughton, Herefordshire, Hampshire and Montreal, where co-author Jan Iles-Kaluza has lived and raised her family for many years. Now in their '70s, the seven authors of

The Magazine Girls-The inside story, are still firm friends and celebrated the launch of their book with bubbles, nibbles and sparkling repartee at a signing event in **Waterstones Epsom** on Sunday 23rd April.

'None of this would have been possible without learning that essential new skill – Zooming –says co-author **Jan Collier**. 'It kept us on track and united in our determination as we made important democratic decisions, which to be fair weren't always easy and we did have our differences at times.'

One of the greatest bonuses for the girls, says Jan, who volunteers with **Epsom and Ewell Talking Newspaper** for the blind and visually impaired, was learning about and working with Calibre-Audio. The national charity started in the 70s and brings the written word to life via audiobook, free of charge, for those members who are visually impaired or have any form of disability that makes reading print difficult. 'We are so pleased and proud that members of **Calibre-Audio** will soon be able to hear our 'inside story' and hope it will bring back happy memories of those iconic decades to all who lived through them.'

Former Editor of Rave Magazine who worked with the girls in the late '60s, esteemed comedy writer **Colin Bostock-Smith** adds ''The magazine girls made my life mad -and magical. They were sweetly feminine and tough as old boots. Stunningly sane and frequently quite cuckoo. They were a riot. And judging from this great book, they still are.''

Further information: www.calibreaudio.org.uk
The Magazine Girls is available in bookshops and online at www.troubador.co.uk
Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper https://eetn.org.uk

Spotlight on Epsom's Film Festival

Romy Sustar In conversation with the father of The Satisfied Eye International Film Festival (SEIFF), Chris Hastings:

When discussing film festivals, one thinks of the famous five festivals: Venice, Cannes, Berlin, Sundance and Toronto. However, you might not come up with Epsom when thinking about film festivals in England.

O: Is there a film festival in Epsom?

A: The Epsom Film Festival is also known under the name The Satisfied Eye International Film Festival (SEIFF), and it was launched in 2018. The festival attracted international attention, and in 2020 SEIFF took place at the Odeon in Epsom just a week before the lockdown. 2021 was a year of uncertainties and lockdowns, so the team decided to plan ahead, especially after the Picture House announced its arrival in Epsom 2022. Unfortunately, unpredicted delays took place, and there is still no sign of Picture House opening its doors soon. The good news is that Bourne Hall kindly agreed to host the film festival, and we are grateful to be part of their exciting rebrand and relaunch between the 26th and 28th of May.

Q: Why do you think Epsom needs a film festival?

A: In our first year, we carried out an audience survey to discover local likes and habits. Apart from finding out that Epsom's two most desired things were a Primark and fewer potholes, we found that many people travel to Wimbledon, Kingston and Guildford for entertainment. I grew up in Hastings, like living in an episode of The Last of Us. The town completely reinvigorated and reinvented itself through arts and culture. Many towns and cities have done the same, with arts and culture driving regeneration. When you ask what Epsom is famous for, most people say Epsom Salts or the Derby. And nobody is coming to Epsom for the salts, and the Derby is one weekend yearly. So to have any sense of sustainability and to battle ever-changing shopping habits, there need to be events and attractions that draw people in. After our first year, we were rated in the top 100 festivals in the world so that we could be a part of that cultural change.

Q: Please share with us a few past SEIFF insights.

A: The festival always finishes with our gala red carpet awards ceremony, our chance to enjoy glitz and glamour. The awards ceremony is open to everyone, so we always get a mix of our filmmakers and festival goers and local people. It's an excellent chance for anyone who has been to any of the screenings to come and meet some of the filmmakers and for the filmmakers to talk to their audiences. Generally, the audiences like to dress up for the occasion, and filmmakers, like I, dress down! They're our mini Oscars with all the awards you'd expect and a few particular to SEIFF. We also have a People's Choice award, which goes to the best film chosen by local people who are part of our judging panel. The People's Choice is always the first event of the festival, where we screen 90 minutes of the most popular short films as voted by local filmgoers, and for instance, this year includes one of this year's Oscar winners.

Q: How can Epsom support the Film Festival?

A: SEIFF is an entirely voluntary event run wholly by local volunteers, and local people's excitement and enthusiasm help keep it growing. So, the most important thing is bums on seats and volunteers! We're lucky to have a loyal following, but we want to grow because that will allow us to do more events and bring more fun and excitement to the borough!

Q: Any final thoughts?

A: Every year, some of our films end up at the Oscars or go on to secure big deals. While these are all independent shorts, feature films, documentaries and animation, the quality is phenomenal, and you'll see some of the best films you've seen in your life. That's why a festival like the Satisfied Eye International Film Festival exists. So, save the date and meet us in Bourne Hall, Spring St, Ewell, Epsom KT17 1UF, between the 26th and 28th of May.

Q: How would you describe Epsom with one word and why?

A: Prospect. Epsom is a bit like a rookie footballer or boxer. There's huge potential and the possibility to be something special. It simply needs everyone to come together and help make that happen.

Q: Where can we find out more about the Epsom film festival?

A: The best thing to do is follow our FB group at https://www.facebook.com/satisfiedeye.

BUY TICKETS HERE

About Chris:

Chris Hastings is a multi-award-winning writer, director and producer. He has become a familiar name at festivals around the world. He is the CEO of 1066 Productions, an independent film and television production company based in London.

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Fancy a sausage sandwich?

Danny Baker - The Sausage Sandwich Tour- Epsom Playhouse - 12 April 2023. A review by Epsom and Ewell Times.

Once television's go to cheeky chappie Cockney, Danny Baker demonstrates how much more there is to his life and career than that lazy characterisation: West End record shop assistant at 14, partying with Elton John and Rod Stewart by 17, co-founder of *Sniffin' Glue* underground punk magazine at 19, *New Musical Express* journalist, TV presenter, radio host, script writer to Jonathan Ross, Chris Evans, Peter Kay, Ricky Gervais *et al* all by 40, and now at 66 add to that list raconteur touring the country and playing to sell-out audiences with his stand-up show.

Stand-up? More like stand still, Danny for Pete's sake! Baker notches up his 10,000 steps comfortably in the first half as he walks to and fro across the stage in his fezz and brandishing a wand. After four hours we are exhausted, one can only imagine how Baker is feeling. Leaving the Playhouse at 11.20 p.m. after kicking off at 7.30 p.m. you can see that our host is giving the late Ken Dodd a run for his money in giving his audiences value for money.

The wonderful undercurrent of Danny's life is the sheer unpredictability of it. John Lennon once famously said 'Life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans', well in Danny's case life is what happened to him when he was busy making no plans whatsoever. Driven only by the advice from his Dad never to sign on because 'then, they've got you', Danny meandered into one fabulous job after another. Of course, if he wasn't innately talented and possessing a natural connection with audiences of all kinds he would have fallen at the first hurdle. Baker also has bucketloads of gumption.

Danny hurtles through his life until his knee deep in the names he has dropped. But, why not? He has worked with and knows

nearly everyone from Q4 20th century popular culture. But his feet remain firmly planted in Deptford soil as he refused to play the celeb game. Despite it all he remains one of us, not one of them. He's our imposter in their world. He's a fighter, shaking off cancellation and cancer along the way. He's funny. He doesn't do emoting. He has no messages for us. If there is an opposite to virtue signalling this show is it. He has no lofty pronouncements on his "art". Instead, he tells us his nice home is "the house that Daz built", referencing his cringy TV ads from the 1990s. Danny Baker *is* an unvarnished old school cockney and there are few left. Go and see him while you can.

Passion in the heart of Epsom

Epsom Chamber Choir performed "**Music for Passiontide**" in Epsom's **St Martin's Church** on Saturday 25th March in a varied programme of singing and playing. Passiontide is a name for the last two weeks of Lent, and the repertoire for the concert, which was directed by guest conductor **Jack Apperley**, had been carefully chosen to reflect the emotions and suffering of this time.

The central work was **Dieterich Buxtehude**'s Membra Jesu Nostri, a Passion-meditation for Holy Week, which consists of a series of seven cantatas. On this occasion, the cantatas were performed over the course of the evening, interspersed with other a cappella anthems and motets.

For the Buxtehude, the choir was joined by the **Chamberlain Ensemble**, an early music group of 9 members, including violins, a violone (a large viol), viols, theorbo and organ, along with four excellent soloists (Lily Platts – soprano, Pete Dockrill – alto, Dominic Edwards – tenor, and Fionn Ó hAlmhain – bass). I was particularly moved by Lily's aria in the third cantata, "Ad manus" (to the hands) and I very much enjoyed the well blended trios with alto, tenor and bass in the later cantatas.

The accompaniment by the Chamberlain Ensemble enhanced the variety of moods, often reflective and sombre but sometimes uplifting, and the sound became even more intense when 5 viols joined in the sixth cantata for orchestra and soloists alone. Each member of the ensemble added to the texture and brought out the beauty and

sensitivity in the music. An extra special mention needs to be made here to one of the viol players, **Helen Williams**, who is also a long-standing member of the Chamber Choir.



But what of the **Epsom Chamber Choir** themselves? They obviously knew all the music very well and maintained good contact with the audience throughout. Dynamics, diction and storytelling were beautiful and well executed, and the blend and balance between the voice parts (as many as 9 in **Paul Mealor**'s Ubi Caritas) was clearly heard.

The anthems and motets were all unaccompanied and ranged from the 16th to the 21st centuries. I had two particular favourites. To begin the second half of the concert, the choir processed to the back of the church, formed a semi-circle using the full width of the building, and sang **Antonio Lotti**'s 8-part Crucifixus (written around 1718). The sound was fuller in this configuration, as if surround sound had been switched on... The

suspensions were spine tingling, and the emotional intensity exceptionally powerful representing the agonies of the Crucifixion. You could have heard a pin drop at the end.

My other favourite was Crux Fidelis, (Faithful Cross) with music by **Sarah MacDonald** (born in 1968) and set to words written by **Emilia Lanier** (1569 – 1645) and **Emily Dickinson** (1830-1886). The piece is not as complex from a musical point of view as some of the others we heard, but you could tell that the choir were fully engaged in delivering its message, with the meditative refrain of "Crux Fidelis" underpinning the excellent storytelling.

Jack Apperley, the Guest Conductor for this concert was in fine form, giving clear direction throughout. His energy, his explanations of the music in between items, and his obvious enjoyment of the performances, completed the experience for everyone.

Anne Ridge

Legally Blonde at Epsom Playhouse

The Epsom Players performance at the Epsom Playhouse on Tuesday 21st March is reviewed by Nigel Dams for Sardines and reprinted with permission. It runs till Saturday. Tickets from Epsom Playhouse box office

Until I spoke with one of the cast members (the leading cast member actually, the glorious Lydia May Whiteside) after the show, I thought this was a professional production.

When the curtain went up, I thought, hang on, amateurs can't afford a set like this. And then when the dancing began, I thought, hang on, amateurs can't afford dancers like this. Same with the singing.

So I decided they must be pros, and settled back to be more and more entertained as the evening went on.

Let me get the minor niggles out of the way first. I couldn't always make out the words the singers were putting across. This was sometimes because the band, especially the horns, were just a shade too loud, sometimes because the lead was not cutting through the chorus, and sometimes because the vocal frequencies blended too much with the band's. But this was only in the beginning, really, and got better as the show progressed.



Also, when the stage crew flew in various bits of scenery, they sometimes hung suspended and swinging an inch above the boards, which was pretty distracting. It seemed to me that another inch would have grounded them, and eliminated that.

But the rest was great, and kept getting better and better.

Right from the opening number I kept thinking how sharp the choreography was – kudos to Della Bhujoo – and how fit and well-drilled the dancers were. I have great respect for people who can do intense cardio and sing at the same time. They were singing very well too, all of them. Harmonies were crisp and close, high notes and belt notes all well struck, all very impressive. I must make special mention of the eye-popping opening number in Act 2. The entire troupe were skipping (sorry, jumping rope) in time to the music, with great vigour, while singing, led by Millie Shields as Brooke. Max respect. Especially because Ms Shields had to speak shortly afterward and you could barely tell she'd been working out.

It seems unfair to single anyone out from the cast, because they were all excellent, but I must mention Imogen Smart-Steele as Paulette (excellent accent, great singer), Akhil Gowrinath likewise and Ms Whiteside, who led the whole show, playing an enormous part with total confidence, swagger and beguiling blondness. Oh, and the two dogs who were obviously classmates at RADA.

A final special mention to the whole cast for the 'Gay or European?' number, which was perfect, and very funny.

I have to say again, I can hardly believe that this show was done by amateurs (am I allowed to use that word any more?) it was so slick, so tight, so well done. My humble and sincere congratulations to Director Chris Malone, Musical Director Dan Francis and

the entire cast, band and crew. Superb.

Nigel Dams

Reprinted courtesy of Sardines Magazine

Ashtead Choral Society celebrated Surrey's Vaughan Williams.

Andrew Storey conducts the **Ashtead Choral Society** with enthusiasm and vigour, presenting them at their best in this delightful programme, showing off a range of music by Ralph Vaughan Williams in the 150th anniversary year of his birth. A review of the concert held on 25th February in Epsom.

Starting the evening with **Vaughan Williams**' Five Mystical songs, the choir began with a warm and harmonious sound, which remained well balanced and well blended throughout the evening. Accompanied solely by **Stephen Ridge** on the piano, the sound filled the wonderful acoustics of **St Martin's Church in Epsom**. The choir provided excellent support to the baritone soloist, Daniel Tate, who gave an especially commendable performance as a last minute stand-in, and whose tone and clarity propelled the storytelling of RVW's Mystical Songs. The choir especially shone as the focal point in the 3rd song, demonstrating a beautiful understanding of tonality, and picked up the pace for the 5th song - the well-known 'Let all the world' - with an injection of energy to finish off.

The second piece of the evening was The Lark Ascending, played by The Kent Sinfonia with Christian Halstead as lead and violin soloist. As one of Vaughan Williams' most famous pieces, and an award-winning performance behind Halstead, the audience had a lot to look forward to, and it was as outstanding as we could have imagined!

The orchestra crafted a full-bodied sound and yet took no attention away from the exquisite violin solo, which had the audience mesmerised.

The second half began the titular piece of the evening, Vaughan Williams' Sea Symphony. Demonstrating strong entries all round, the choir and orchestra provided a majestic sound, with especially impressive lone chorus entries standing up to the magnificent sound of the orchestra. We also had our first entry of the soprano soloist **Eleanor Pennell-Briggs**, who gave another sparkling performance. My own conductor often tells me that "Musicians must be actors!", which both soloists and ACS demonstrated beautifully this evening, conveying the power and emotion of the sea.

The symphony continues with some elegant call and response passages, well executed by both choir and orchestra, and it was especially pleasing when the main melody passes around the orchestra sections. The scherzo then starts, feeling energetic and urgent, with the chromatic passages handled with great skill and empathy by the choir. The dynamic contrasts by both parties provide drama, again echoing the feelings of the sea.

The final movement begins cinematic and sweeping, with precision by the chorus when they are left exposed. There is power when the basses sing alone, with a great contrast to the delicate female voices. The orchestra and soloists have a moment to shine on their own, with both soloists again demonstrating exceptional storytelling, before the chorus returns for the start of the finale. The regal fanfare from the horns and the vivid energy from the choir draws to a close to finish up the piece.

Overall both ACS and Kent Sinfonia provided a thoroughly enjoyable evening, showcasing a range of musical talent and shining a spotlight onto Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Lizzie McCaffrey