



## A Midsummer's Night's Dream in Cheam

28 June 2023



**Epsom Choral Society** gave us a night to remember at St Andrews Church in Cheam last Saturday. Their programme was an unusual and attractive coupling of works by **Constant Lambert** and **David Fanshawe**. In *The Rio Grande*, Lambert sets a poem by Sacheverell Sitwell for choir, two pianos and percussion, while in *African Sanctus*, written following visits to Africa in 1969, Fanshawe combines African sounds, both human and natural, with live musicians and a Latin Mass.

The concert got off to rousing start with the choir in fine voice, with plenty of rhythmic verve and effective dynamic contrasts throughout. It's worth remembering, however, that in very soft passages articulation needs to be even crisper. I did also wonder whether there might have been slightly more sway and swagger in phrases such as "... they dance in the city, down the public squares...". These are minor quibbles; the performance was as accomplished as one might expect.

**Marion Lea**, the choir's regular accompanist, took the solo piano role, with its virtuosic cadenzas, while **Peter Jaekel**, a regular visitor, took the 'orchestral' part. Both pianists dealt expertly with the technical demands, and they displayed an excellent rapport. This was also apparent as two pianos became one for the three lollipops from Walton's *Façade* suite, namely Polka, Popular Song and Foxtrot, hugely enjoyed by the sizeable audience. The first half ended with a brief introduction to *African Sanctus* by the late composer's widow **Jane Fanshawe**. During her very informative words and photographs, conductor **Julian Collings** was presented with one of David Fanshawe's trademark caps.

The second half of the concert was heralded by a mighty roar of "Sanctus" from the choir, accompanied by a full percussion ensemble. Having conducted this work myself many moons ago, I recall just how tricky it was to get all elements perfectly aligned - I wish I had had professional sound engineers such as the excellent team on Saturday! A mesmerising muezzin's call to prayer got the next movement under way. Here the gorgeous blend of the voices produced some exquisite singing with perfect intonation. Other qualities such as stamina and staying power presented themselves in the next two movements. The call of the muezzin translates into the key of D, and as any soprano will tell you a very high D lies well out of the comfort zone so full marks to the sopranos here.

Following the Credo came Love Song, a tender and moving episode in which a cattle boy in East Sudan sings about a girl called Abdha. At the start of the movement, we hear a recording of a mother ringing tiny bells outside her tent in an ancient custom signifying the birth of a baby son. In the context of the mass this signifies the birth of Jesus Christ, and as the sound of the bells gently faded the effect was intensely poignant.

The Crucifixus is described by the composer as the "heart of the work" and it features a fearsome mix of war cries, rainstorms and dances, resulting in a dramatic and menacing texture. I wondered for a moment whether the percussion was slightly overpowering here - the war cries from South Sudan, for example, were not easily picked out. A belated mention here of the excellent soprano soloist, **Lisa Swayne**, who managed the wide jagged leaps with great style and aplomb.

The gentle Lord's Prayer which followed drew a lovely gospel feel to the singing, although I did feel that the lead guitar was slightly over-amplified. After a movement of chants and a superbly effective Agnus Dei - with the soloist once again shining in her three consecutive cries of Jesu Christe - a thrilling, exhilarating and exuberant finale brought this unique work to a close. Rapturous applause followed, leading to an encore - a repeat of the Lord's Prayer - during which Julian Collings, fittingly I thought, wore the cap presented to him earlier.

### Martin Seath

Related Reports:

[Epsom choristers go south for the Summer](#)

[Epsom Choral Society opens its centenary celebration 2022](#)

Photo credit: Clive Richardson

## Epsom and Ewell's refugee talent

28 June 2023



Celebrating World Refugee Week (19th - 25th June) Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network has been celebrating the talents and success of refugees the charity has supported.

**Natalia Zadorizhna** is a concert pianist who started playing the piano at the age of 4. She graduated from the Glier Kyiv Academy of Music and also has a PhD in Linguistics. She arrived here in May to flee the war in Ukraine.

Natalia has been appointed as a peripatetic piano teacher for Surrey Arts and also gives private piano lessons. She has formed a Ukrainian choir in Epsom and is a top-class musician who has played in several concerts in and around Epsom.



**Ksenia Bugrimova** is an award-winning film producer and creative director who has made many films and tv programs in Ukraine. Since arriving in the UK, she founded Talented U – <https://talented-u.com/en> – a Ukrainian-British Association of screen industry professionals. Here is an example of her much acclaimed work <https://youtu.be/ayVgCK-3f00>

**Samira** is a 17-year-old Afghan girl who came to the UK in summer of 2021 and moved to Epsom in May 2022. She is a gifted artist and doing a dressmaking course at college. EERN provided her with a sewing machine and one of our volunteers helped her learn how to use it (as she had never used an electric machine before). Within 2 weeks she had made 4 traditional Afghan dresses and she hopes to become a professional tailor.

Samira has been working very hard at her English, supported by EERN, and was very pleased to pass her driving theory test first time!



**Helin Konyar** was studying singing at Kiev Municipal Academy of Circus and Variety Arts when, at the age of 20, she had to leave Kyiv last May. When she arrived here, she auditioned for the famous Laine Theatre Art College in Epsom and was awarded a 3-year scholarship. This week she appeared in her first show at Epsom Playhouse.

**Yuliia Komyshan** is a professional bandura player from Poltava, Ukraine (a bandura is a Ukrainian plucked-string folk-instrument). She has degrees from Poltava Professional College of Arts and from Glinka Dnipropetrovsk Academy of Music and a PhD in Educational and Pedagogical Sciences.

Yuliia came to the UK when the war started in Ukraine. She dreams of introducing people all over the world to the interesting and rich Ukrainian culture and traditions. She loves giving people the opportunity to listen to the bandura and to connect with Ukrainian musical culture, both traditional and modern. She performs at concerts whenever she can.



Yuliia says that she is very grateful to the government, sponsors, volunteers and new friends for the support which she has received here.

For more information about the work of Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network visit their website. <https://epsomrefugeenetwork.org>

Related reports:

Flight of refugees: history repeating?

Ukrainian refugees made welcome by King's rep.

Cllr Alex Coley: Refugees in Epsom and Ewell

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## Epsom choristers go south for the Summer

28 June 2023



This year, **Epsom Choral Society**'s summer concert will take you on a journey of discovery with two exciting British 20th century works on Saturday 24th June 2023 in St Andrew's Church, Cheam.

From green and leafy Surrey, Epsom Choral Society travels firstly to **Brazil** to enjoy the jazz rhythms and sparkling piano of **Constant Lambert**'s popular 1927 work *The Rio Grande*.



In the second half, the singers cross the Atlantic to **Africa** with **David Fanshawe**'s African Sanctus (1972), a work which combines the traditional Mass with an original soundtrack of African music recorded by the composer during his travels up the Nile.

Jane Fanshawe, David's widow, will attend the concert and will give an introduction and her personal memories of African Sanctus. David Fanshawe (1942-2010) was an English composer and self-styled explorer with a fervent interest in world music. His best-known composition is his choral work, African Sanctus, written in 1972.

**EPSOM CHORAL SOCIETY**

**AFRICAN SANCTUS**  
**David Fanshawe**

**THE RIO GRANDE**  
**Constant Lambert**

**Saturday 24th June  
2023 at 7:30pm**

**Julian Collings | conductor**  
**Lisa Swayne | soprano**  
**Marion Lea | piano**  
**Peter Jaekel | piano**  
**Percussion ensemble**

**St Andrew's Church, Northey Avenue, Cheam SM2 7HF**

**Tickets: £18, £9 (students and U18s)**  
[www.epsomchoral.org.uk/tickets](http://www.epsomchoral.org.uk/tickets)  
**Box office: 01372 727078 or 07522 111219**

**EPSOM  
CHORAL  
SOCIETY**  
Registered charity number 273757

African Sanctus features soprano soloist, Lisa Swayne, and the soloist playing the fiendishly virtuosic piano solo in The Rio Grande is ECS's very own Marion Lea, a formidable pianist who next year celebrates 50 years as the choir's accompanist! Marion will also be joined by Peter Jaekel for duets from Walton's Façade. The concert will be conducted by Epsom Choral Society's Musical Director **Julian Collings**.

Chairman **Isobel Squire** said: "This is an exciting end to our season, and we look forward to transporting our audience from a gentle English summer to the dynamic rhythms of more southerly climes."

The concert takes place at St Andrew's Church, Northey Avenue, Cheam on Saturday 24th June 2023 at 7.30pm.

Entry is £18, or just £9 for students and under-18s.

Tickets are available via Epsom Choral Society website [www.epsomchoral.org.uk/tickets](http://www.epsomchoral.org.uk/tickets)

Epsom Choral Society has been singing for 100 years with around 90 singers. It puts on at least four concerts each year which attract a loyal following. Epsom Choral Society is a friendly choir - it does not require auditions but does aim for high performance standards. Rehearsals are on Wednesday evenings under the baton of their Musical Director, Julian Collings.

Related reports:

Epsom Choral works 100 years

Epsom Choral Society opens its centenary celebration 2022



## “Oh Fate” fills lofty Epsom Church

28 June 2023



**Ashtead Choral Society** – review of its concert on 13th May **St Martins Church, Epsom**. The evening began with Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Written in 1936, this secular work has remained a favourite of many choral societies as it is great fun to sing and encompasses a wide range of musical genre and emotion.

The choir began with the punchy accents we know so well of the '**O Fortuna**' (Oh Fate), filling the space of St Martin's full of grandeur. The first male-only entry was strong and confident, as was the lamenting unison passage to follow. Then we heard the first of the fantastic Baritone soloist Rupert Pardoe, who shone with his clarity of lyric and tone. The choir returned to sing with great joy and spirit, aptly reflecting the 'welcoming of spring' in the text. The Tanz, or dance, gave the Kent Sinfonia a moment in the spotlight, with especially lyrical pizzicato from the strings and the first of many incredible flute solos, again beautifully reflecting the tone and content of this meadow dance. Now into the 'Floret Silva Nobilis,' the sopranos tackled those pianissimo high notes with tremendous grace – I know how hard those are myself! Both choir and orchestra injected some energy into the 'Swaz Hie Gat Umbe,' before switching to a more calming and melodic timbre, again supported and balanced by the flute melody.

The energy returned, and the choir sang regally on 'Were diu welt all min,' leaning in on the outrageous storytelling about the Queen of England, and what a great 'Hej!' at the end of the passage! Speaking of storytelling, what a performance from the countertenor, Richard Decker! Aside from the fantastic singing, the facial expressions of the soon-to-be-roasted swan told us of the dread and terror (and slight comedy) of the situation! On to the men's time to shine, in the Tavern, which they sang very well with clear diction and gusto, and finally we were joined by the soprano soloist Ana Beard Fernandez. Her projection was especially impressive in the pillared setting of the church, and the duet with the flute was a particular highlight. 'In trutina' is widely considered the most beautiful moment of the work and Fernandez's rendition definitely lived up to this claim. The energy began to return for both choir and orchestra in the drive up to the finale, finishing with the reprise of the 'O Fortuna' with the same energy and punch as at the start.

In the second half of the evening, the choir sang 'The Armed Man', by Karl Jenkins. He is known for a wide range of work, recently having composed for the King's Coronation, but this piece is his most widely-sung setting, originally written for the millennium, and subtitled 'A Mass for Peace.'

It began with a strong drumbeat to set the military scene, and a wonderful folk-style piccolo solo. The choir came in strongly in unison, and moved on to a fantastic canon section, really giving them space to shine as it was unaccompanied. The call to prayer was then given by Mr Noor Sheikh from Baitul-Futuh Mosque in Morden, which was a huge highlight, and really gave light to the range of religions and genres this piece calls upon. The 'Kyrie' then began with some moody strings and a gentle melodic soprano line, with the choir overall sombre and well balanced. Another strong male entry complimented the flowing scalic passages, and the choir handled the chromaticism with ease.

The Sanctus was great in spirit with especially clear consonants, accompanied by the sweeping cinematic writing in the orchestra. Towards the end of the Charge is some quite unique musical writing, where in the score it says 'convey horror!', and the choir did just that! The Last Post, usually always surrounded by silence, was this time played with some eerie string accompaniment at the end and this painted a similarly haunting scene. The altos then had a very strong solo line, and everyone came together for another excellent chromatic passage. The Agnus Dei was a really beautiful sing, with sweeping melodic lines and really great harmonic resolutions. It was at this point especially I felt that the choir was really enjoying their singing, which added an extra something special to the performance. The penultimate section, the Benedictus, was another spotlight on the orchestra, with a great cello solo. To finish off the piece, the final section is broken up by a really fantastic piccolo solo – to get such clarity on a piccolo and at such speed is really impressive! The choir then interjected with the repeated word 'Ring!', very effectively passing the melody between the parts. They really did sound like bells, ringing out for peace, as I imagine the composer intended!

Overall a thoroughly enjoyable performance, with two great showcases of popular choral works. I look forward to seeing what ACS produces next.

Lizzie McCaffrey

**Ashtead Choral Society** is one of the leading choral societies in Surrey with around 90 singers giving three concerts a year with professional orchestras and soloists.

It is a non-auditioned choir and welcome new members. For more information visit [www.ashteadchoralsociety.org.uk](http://www.ashteadchoralsociety.org.uk) or contact [secretary@ashteadchoralsociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ashteadchoralsociety.org.uk)

## Ewell film festival ends with a bang

28 June 2023



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](http://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.....

28 June 2023



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.ticktaylor.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.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/romanasustar/>

## Epsom and Ewell's Satisfying Film Festival begins

28 June 2023



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)

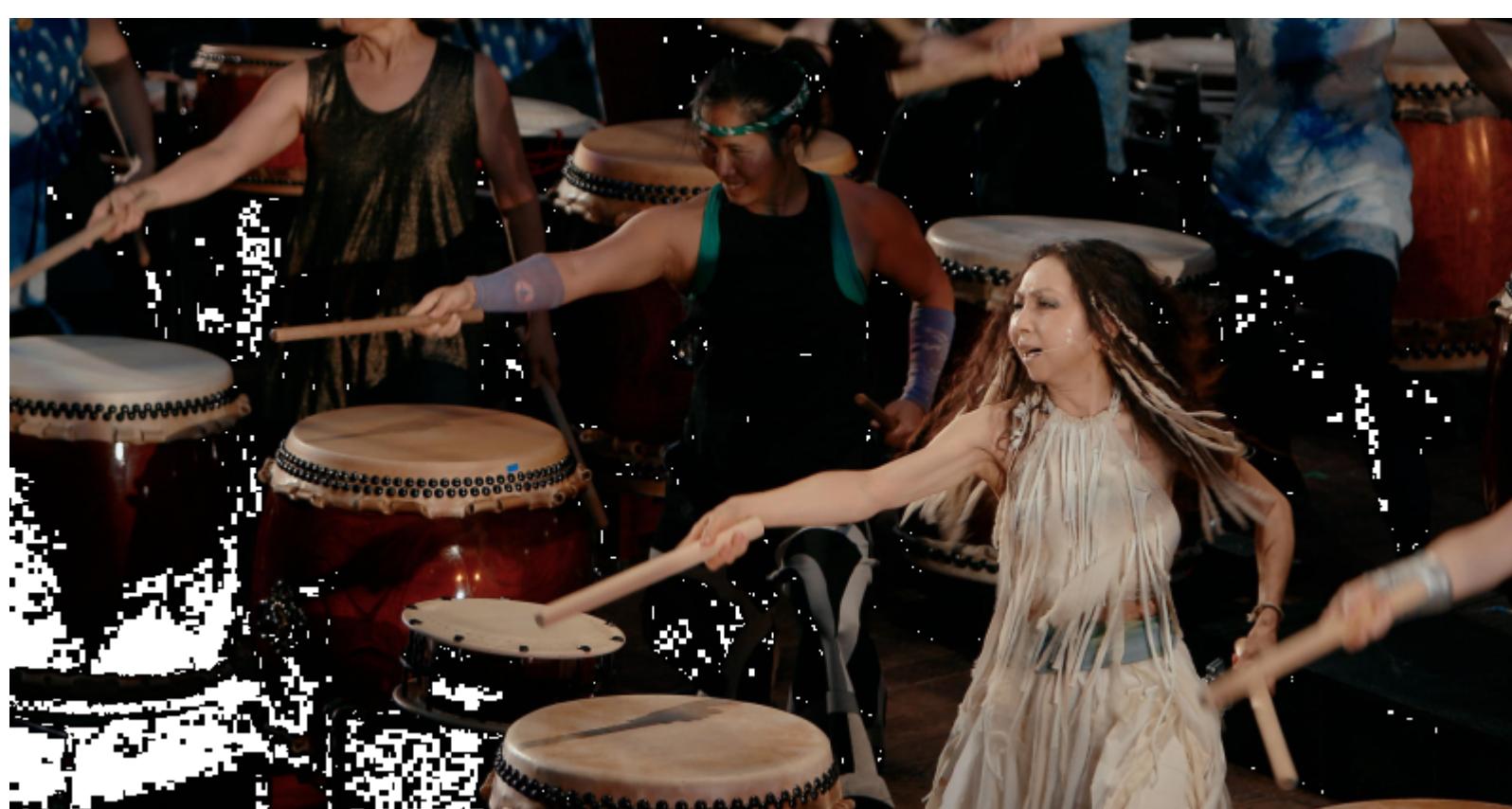
4.30 Wonder Women (a selection of our best shorts directed by women filmmakers)

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](http://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](http://www.satisfiedeye.com/tickets)

Related reports:

[Spotlight on Epsom's Film Festival](#)

[The Times to award film festival passes has come \(tickets already won\).](#)

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## The Times to award film festival passes has come

28 June 2023



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.

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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**.

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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.

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## Epsom author says hearing is believing -the inside story

28 June 2023



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](http://www.calibreaudio.org.uk)

The Magazine Girls is available in bookshops and online at [www.troubador.co.uk](http://www.troubador.co.uk)

Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper <https://eetn.org.uk>

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## Spotlight on Epsom's Film Festival

28 June 2023



**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.

**Q: 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>.

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**BUY TICKETS HERE**

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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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About Romy:

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

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/romanasantar/>