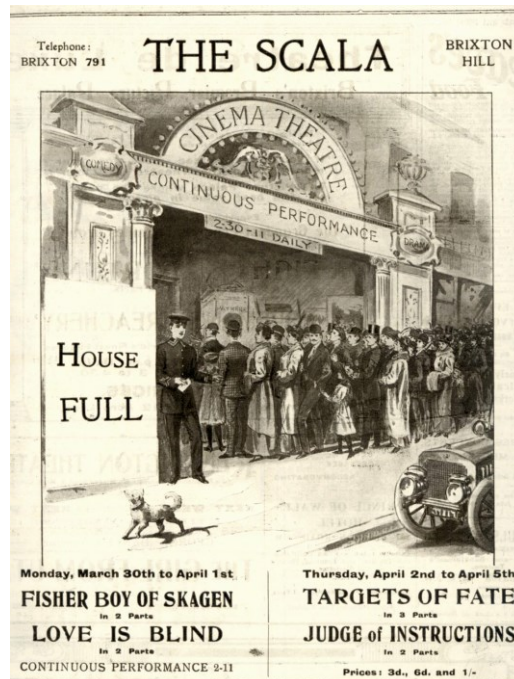


## **A NIGHT AT THE CINEMA IN 1914**

UK/USA, 1914, 85 mins, Cert TBC

A compilation of shorts from the BFI National Archive  
With music by Stephen Horne



**Opening on 1 August 2014 at BFI Southbank  
and selected cinemas nationwide,  
with special screenings at 20 independent cinemas on 4 August**

25 June 1914 – Marking the centenary of the start of World War I, this special programme of early films recreates a typical night out at the cinema in 1914. A glorious miscellany of comedies, adventure films, travelogues and newsreels, it is released in selected cinemas around the country on 1 August.

Cinema a century ago was a new, exciting and highly democratic form of entertainment. Picture houses across Britain offered a sociable, lively environment in which to relax and escape from the daily grind. With feature films still rare (*The Birth of a Nation* was to arrive the following year), the programme was an entertaining, ever-changing roster of short items with live musical accompaniment.

Among the highlights of this selection of 14 short films are a quirky comic short about a face-pulling competition, a sensational episode of the American film serial *The Perils of Pauline*, an early aviation display, scenes of suffragettes protesting at Buckingham Palace and Allied troops celebrating Christmas at the Front. There is also an early sighting of one of cinema's greatest icons ...

The BFI has commissioned composer and pianist Stephen Horne, one of Britain's leading accompanists of silent film, to create a new improvised score – with abundant references to music of the period - which reflects the spirit in which the films were made.

Bryony Dixon, Curator of Silent Film, BFI National Archive says:

*"We've trawled the Archive to find films that will give audiences a real taste of what it felt like to go to the cinema in 1914. Cinemas, or 'picture houses' as they were known then, were beginning to boom and attract millions of people, from courting couples to children who would go regularly. It wasn't only a social event, but also a chance to catch up – via newsreels and travelogues – with the world beyond your local high street. Amazingly, some of the original cinemas that opened in Britain around 1914 are still operating today."*

See attached for a full list of the films included in *A Night at the Cinema in 1914*.

**Curator Bryony Dixon is available for press and radio interviews.**

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Images are available at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) >BFI>Theatrical releases

More details on venues at [www.bfi.org.uk/releases](http://www.bfi.org.uk/releases)

### **Notes to editors**

- This month BFI Southbank is presenting *The War That Changed Everything: The World Before the War*, the first of three programmes over four years (with parts 2 and 3 following in 2016 and 2018) to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. In addition, Frank Borzage's *A Farewell to Arms* (1932) has been released theatrically and is currently screening in selected cinemas nationwide. A major BFI National Archive restoration of a pivotal, dramatic, British silent film will be revealed later this summer for an October 2014 theatrical release.

### **About the BFI**

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

Cont/...film notes

## **A Night at the Cinema in 1914 – film notes**

### **Looping the Loop at Hendon (March 1914)**

Pioneering British aviators Gustav Hamel and Bentfield Hucks perform stunts at the legendary Hendon airfield. Although not hard news, this was a topical story.

### **Palace Pandemonium (May 1914)**

The leading campaigner for votes for women, Emmeline Pankhurst, goes to petition the King in person at Buckingham Palace. The campaign for votes for women was very high-profile and often featured in the news. The suffragettes would stage appearances at events for maximum impact.

### **Austrian Tragedy (July 1914)**

Following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, this newsreel shows footage of the Austro-Hungarian royal family, including the wedding of Archduke Karl who succeeded Franz Ferdinand as heir to the imperial throne.

### **Dogs for the Antarctic (August 1914)**

Following the death of Captain Scott, Sir Ernest Shackleton plans another expedition to Antarctica, taking plenty of dogs. This is typical of the 'magazine' style film shorts of the time.

### **Daisy Doodad's Dial**

American Vitagraph studio star Florence Turner ran her own film company at the Hepworth studios on the Thames. In this comedy 'dial' means 'face'. The ebullient Daisy Doodad practises for a face-pulling competition and ends up getting herself arrested.

### **Egypt and Her Defenders**

This travelogue of the famous sights of Egypt shows Lord Kitchener as British Consul General before he was made Secretary of State for War. In this film with colour tinting, he is seen reviewing the troops.

### **Lieutenant Pimple and the Stolen Submarine**

Fred Evans was the most popular British comedian of the age, turning out hundreds of 'Pimple' films which made a virtue of their low budgets. Here Pimple foils the plans of dastardly foreign spies. If Monty Python had made comedies in 1914 they would look like this.

### **Scouts' Valuable Aid (August 1914)**

As the nation gears up for war even the young are mobilised to help the war effort ... Here a pair of Sea Scouts are on the look-out on the cliff tops for an invading fleet.

### **German Occupation of Historic Louvain (September 1914)**

When Germany invades neutral Belgium, the destruction of the historic town of Louvain and its ancient university library provokes worldwide outrage. This newsreel was presumably filmed by a cameraman from a neutral country.

### **General French's Contemptible Little Army**

General French, commander of the British army in France, gets the better of the Germans in this lightning sketch by pioneering animator Lancelot Speed. Animation was popular and commonly distributed as part of the newsreels. Cartoons allowed Speed to be splendidly irreverent.

### **Christmas at the Front (December 1914)**

Troops celebrate Christmas at the Front. We're not told where for reasons of national security. But it's good to see the boys being well fed before they return to the trenches.

### **The Perils of Pauline**

American imports were always popular and serials were the latest sensation in 1914. In this excerpt, Pearl White stars as Pauline, a feisty heroine pursued by villains eager to get their hands on her fortune and features both an accidental hot air balloon trip and a spectacularly daring rescue from a burning building.

### **The Rollicking Rajah**

Years before the arrival of the 'talkies', this Vivaphone song film (which wonderfully shows the ladies fashions and dance moves of the day) would have been accompanied by a synchronised sound disc, which is now lost. The song is recreated here from the surviving sheet music. The Vivaphone was a British sound on disc system pioneered by Cecil Hepworth.

### **A Film Johnnie**

In 1914, Hollywood is born and British comedian Charles Chaplin is its greatest star. He explodes onto British screens in summer of that year. This is one of his very first films and is, appropriately, set in a cinema.