

Introduction: Edinburgh International Film Audiences Conference, 2014

Lesley-Ann Dickson

University of the West of Scotland, UK

I am delighted to introduce this selection of papers from last year's Edinburgh International Film Audiences Conference (EIFAC), held at Filmhouse in Edinburgh in March 2014, <http://www.filmaudiencesconference.co.uk/>. EIFAC is a bi-annual event which brings together academics, industry representatives and others interested in the latest empirical research on audiences of film and other media, both at present and historically.

The central connection between each of the papers in this section is a shared interest in 'real' film audiences. That is to say that each of the papers featured moves beyond discursive constructions and conceptualisations of the audience, by instead producing empirical accounts of the patterns and processes that exists within particular audience configurations.

Interestingly, a film festival theme has surfaced in the section. Papers by **Martinez et al**, **Ateşman**, and **Dickson** all deal with film festival audienceship by directly engaging with festival attendees (via interviews or focus groups) or conducting participation observation, or a combination of both. These papers offer experiential accounts of film festival attendance, uncovering the various forms of practices that play out at these hugely popular events. While Ateşman suggests that film festivals have the capacity to transform attendees' wider political practices, Martinez et al argue that film festivals in small nations/territories can strengthen struggling cultural identities. Dickson on the other hand considers the spatiality of these events, and proposes a typology of key festival pleasures, which signals various synergies, and distinctions, between cinema and festival engagement. What is particularly interesting about each of these articles, however, is the way in which being part of a festival audience produces a sense of shared experience, community formation, and identity construction.

Continuing with contexts of public film consumption, **Saryusz-Wolska's** paper moves from a contemporary context to a historical one. Using archival research methods, this paper examines cinema-going in divided Berlin between 1945 and 1949. Given that most research on post-war German film culture focuses on film production, this paper makes an

important contribution to understandings of cinema culture in Germany's war-ravaged capital post-1945.

Shifting focus from context to text, **Ralph and Barker's** essay considers the ways in which audiences talk about acting and performance in their appraisal of films. The paper draws on a small-scale study – using a special screening followed by discussion groups – on *The Usual Suspects* (1995) and proposes a tentative model for thinking about audience/acting relations, which is particularly useful given the lack of scholarship on audiences' engagements with, and responses to, film acting.

I would like to conclude by thanking everyone who was involved in the reviewing process and each of our contributors. Also special thanks to Martin Barker for his ongoing support of the conference.

Following a very successful conference in 2014 when we welcomed our most international delegation yet, we are now looking forward to the 2016 conference. The EIFAC 2016 Call for Papers is expected to be out mid-2015. In the meantime, if you require any further information on the conference please contact me direct.

Biographical note:

Lesley-Ann Dickson is co-organiser of the Edinburgh International Film Audiences Conference. Contact: lesley-ann.dickson@uws.ac.uk