

TEENAGE FLICKS

Week 1: From Clean Cut Kids to Delinquents - Post War Depictions of Adolescence – the Emergence of the Teen.

The Guinea Pig (1948)

Roy Boulting

- Directed by Roy Boulting
- Produced by John Boulting
- Written by Roy Boulting and Bernard Miles
- Based on the play by Warren Chetham-Strode
- Cinematography by Gilbert Taylor
- Edited by Richard Best
- Music by John Wooldridge

- Though Attenborough was playing a fourteen-year-old, he was actually twenty-five at the time
- The film was largely financed by a 'mystery industrialist'
- Whereas later British films about young working class adults embodied a healthy form of rebellion, this film seems to do the opposite, inferring that the only way for working class people to 'get on' is to take advantage of opportunities dealt out to them by the upper echelons
- The film was inspired by the changes brought about by The Fleming Report
- The Education Act 1944 offered a new status to endowed grammar schools receiving a grant from central government.
- The grammar schools would receive partial state funding in return for taking between 25 and 50 percent of its pupils from state primary schools
- The Fleming Committee recommended that one-quarter of the places at public schools should be assigned to a national bursary scheme for children who would benefit from boarding.
- Jack Read (Attenborough) gains a scholarship at a public boarding school as part of a post war experiment
- While at the school Jack is faced with snobbery and bullying
- After much hardship, Jack is able to 'fit in'
- The film feels miles apart from the later kitchen sink working class dramas that would dominate screens in the late 50s early 60s
- The piece reeks of conformity and the character only seems to 'get on' once he's accepted to be part of the still largely unequal system

I Was a Teenage Werewolf (1957)

Gene Fowler Jr

- Directed by Gene Fowler Jr
- Produced by Herman Cohen
- Written by Herman Cohen and Aben Kandel
- Music by Paul Dunlap

- It became the first film to use the word teenager in its title
- Samuel Z Arkoff of AIP faced much resistance
- AIP (American International Pictures) became the first to really explore the idea of genre based 'teenage' flicks and soaked up the market that more mainstream Hollywood studios were ignoring
- It cost somewhere in the region of \$82,000 and \$122,000 and made around \$2,000,000 at the box office

The Drive-in Theatre

- Though drive-ins had been around since 1933, this unique way of watching films came into its own in the 1950s
- In many ways, they were a way in which film makers could compete with the rise of television
- The setting also gave rise to teenagers being able to interact on a more intimate level 'cheapest motels in town'
- They could be problematic as the films being shown could be seen from a distance.
- This didn't prove a problem if what was being shown was a family film but more salacious material may have caused offence to casual passers by
- They provided an outlet for cheaper movies that would not have been picked up by more 'respectable' theatre chains
- By 1957 there were over 6000 drive-in theatres in the US
- In 1958 65% of American films were made by independent studios

Rebel Without a Cause (1955)

Nicholas Ray

- Directed by Nicholas Ray
- Produced by David Weisbart
- Screenplay by Stewart Stern
- From a story by Nicholas Ray, adapted by Irving Shulman
- Cinematography by Ernest Haller
- Edited by William Ziegler
- Music by Leonard Rosenman

James Dean (February 8, 1931 – September 30, 1955)

- Born James Byron Dean
- An only child he grew up in Marion, Indiana
- His family moved to Los Angeles in the 30s
- Dean lost his mother to cancer when he was just nine years old
- During his early adolescence, he developed a close relationship with a Methodist pastor Rev James DeWeerd
- In later life, he would confide to Elizabeth Taylor that he had been sexually abused by DeWeerd
- He later quit college to concentrate on acting full-time becoming an associate of the prestigious Actors Studio

The Wild One (1953)

László Benedek

- Depicted a group of teenagers causing havoc in a small town and escaping without punishment

Rebel Without a Cause (1955)

Nicholas Ray

- Though there had been other 'teenage films' this was the first to really explore and directly address not just delinquency but more importantly the lack of direction and frustration which many adolescents were feeling at that time
- It becomes an angst-ridden melodrama which intelligently looks at the generation gap, not merely in a crass, predictable manner but also in a way which allows us to examine the disappointment we grow to feel about our 'olders and betters'
- The film also looks at the way in which young people, even relatively well-off young people may be neglected on an emotional level by parents who are feeling increasingly out of step with an ever-changing American cultural landscape
- The film provides an unflinching look at the metamorphosing family dynamic – the idea of the nuclear family is laid to waste in an explosive psychodrama

Themes

Miscommunication

- Generational
- Sex/gender/parenthood

Masculinity

- Male characters struggle with their own masculinity or at least the pressure society places on them to 'act like a man'

Homoeroticism

- Sal Mineo was bi-sexual and it was rumoured that Nicholas Ray was too, though he always denied this
- Dean refused to be pinned down on his sexuality

Johnny Guitar (1954)

Nicholas Ray

- It is a Western and not a Western
- It contains many 'trappings' of a true Western but also many other elements which set it apart – this led to the film being rejected by American audiences but adored by European critics and filmmakers.
- Intensive use of colour
- Highly stylized
- Characters are often cast against unusual settings/scenery
- Highly charged melodrama
- It's 'operatic' in tone – passionate/serious/tense

American Teen Movies

- Many stateside films featuring young Americans often focus on fairly privileged characters going through some sort of existential crisis – their concerns are on an emotional level
- What 'tears them apart' appears to be a lack of direction hampered by the world's refusal to accept their frustration

The Monstrous Child

- The overly sexualized temptress
- The demon or possessed child
- The rebellious mob
- The misfit or outsider
- The delinquent
- The criminal