

TEENAGE FLICKS

Week 4: Classic 80s - The brat pack, box office hits and cult classics

Gregory's Girl (1981)

Bill Forsyth

- Directed by Bill Forsyth
- Produced by Clive Parsons
- Written by Bill Forsyth
- Cinematography by Michael Coulter
- Edited by John Gow
- Music by Collin Tully

That Sinking Feeling (1979)

Bill Forsyth

- In the late 70s Bill Forsythe began collaborating with a group of young actors at The Glasgow Youth Theatre.
- The group who were already well versed in the art of performance and sketch building were keen to work with Forsyth, though they were at first sceptical of his designs to make a film with them in it.
- *Gregory's Girl*, an idea initially developed out of scripted scenes and the quirky improvisations of his precocious cast, had drawn the attention of the BFI (British Film Institute)
- For a while at least it seemed a shoe-in to receive the vital financing it required to get off the ground, but the funding never transpired
- Forsyth, with the agreement of his cast set about making a different film, which he would raise the money for himself.
- Forsyth was able to raise £2000 by begging for cash from local businesses, trade unions and the like.
- He was successful too, prudently approaching potential funders in the guise of not a film maker but a social worker.
- It's essentially a comedic heist movie.
- The protagonists are not the sharp mouthed, good looking gangsters of Hollywood crime movies, but a bedraggled and spotty gang of Glasgow teens who set about planning the robbery of ninety sinks from a nearby factory.
- What unravels is a simple story incorporating the planning, build up, then the actual caper and the its aftermath.
- It has the unmistakable touch of Bill Forsyth's style and humour but it is tinged with the bitter taste of increasing urban deprivation.
- The film, though lacking the 'earnestness' of other more po-faced 'realist' dramas, never once flinches from showing us the reality of living on the breadline.
- Its mise-en-scene of rain soaked parks, mould ridden bedsits, demolished houses and boarded up factories ensure that our gaze is never completely drawn away from the many underlined examples of 'multiple social deprivation'
- Yet, in the hands of Forsyth, the grimness is tempered with what would become his stock in trade from of quirkiness and gentility.
- A well-placed form of darkly comic humour runs throughout much of Forsyth's work including the later *Gregory's Girl* and *Local Hero*,
- With *That Sinking Feeling*, we get to see that style forming before us, and in many ways, it could be argued that the film acts as a dry run for his more polished features.

Gregory's Girl (1981)

Bill Forsyth

- Used much of the same actors from *That Sinking Feeling*
- Carried a much stronger narrative structure than its predecessor
- Though many of Forsyth's custom quirks are in place, much more attention is paid to character development
- Whereas *That Sinking Feeling* was sketch like and followed a loose storyline, *Gregory's Girl* is a well-defined teen romantic comedy
- Filmed on location in and around Cumbernauld, North Lanarkshire
- The school scenes are filmed at an actual school, Abronhill High School
- Dee Hepburn (Dorothy) was spotted by Forsyth in a TV commercial for a Scottish department store
- Forsyth spotted Clare Grogan, while she was working at The Spaghetti Factory in Glasgow

The Plot

- Gregory falls in love with new pupil Dorothy
- In order to try and impress her he joins the school football team despite the fact he is useless at football
- Dorothy agrees to go on a date with him, however she and the other girls have other ideas for Gregory
- The cleverly subverts many gender/generational stereotypes

"Forsyth does a good job of making light of the tender part in [Gregory's] teenage psyche, and his friends and little sister in particular are quirky and lovable. Unlike the film's American counterparts, Gregory's Girl is refreshingly free of mean-spirited characters and horny young studs bemoaning their virginity."

Richard Skorman

John Hughes (1950-2009)

- Began his career as a joke writer
- He was able to pick up work as a copywriter
- He became a regular contributor to *National Lampoon* magazine
- His first credited screenplay was *National Lampoon's Class Reunion*
- It was an attempt to cash in on the earlier *National Lampoon's Animal House*, but wasn't particularly successful

John Hughes

- Movies often take place in Shermer, Illinois
- Most of his teen movies from the 1980s have a scene in the school lunchroom, school library, or both.
- References to art - characters discussing art or posed to resemble works of art
- Close-ups of two characters locking eyes with each other
- His movies usually end with a freeze-frame
- Often has one character silently mimicking another character as the line is spoken, as if it's been said before.
- Characters who are either stuck in one place or traveling somewhere
- Often has a scene-stealing and usually dotty supporting character which serves little use for the actual plot (for example: Long Duk Dong in *Sixteen Candles* (1984) and Chet in *Weird Science* (1985).
- Often cast members of the "Brat Pack"
- Portrayal of Yuppie life
- Automobiles play prominent and even character-defining roles in several John Hughes films.
- There's the bizarre station wagon in *National Lampoon's Vacation* (1983)
- The Rolls Royce in *Sixteen Candles* (1984)
- The various cars indicating the social status of the kids on detention in *The Breakfast Club* (1985) (a BMW for the moneyed prom queen, an SUV for the jock); the Ferrari in "*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*" (1986); and the Marathon Car Rental scene in "*Planes, Trains & Automobiles*" (1987).

The Breakfast Club (1985)

John Hughes

- Directed by John Hughes
 - Produced by Ned Tanen and John Hughes
 - Written by John Hughes
 - Cinematography by Thomas Del Ruth
 - Edited by Dede Allen
 - Music by Keith Forsey and Gary Chang
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- Five teenagers who are largely strangers to each other, despite being students at the same school, are forced to spend a day together when they are made to attend a Saturday detention
 - John Bender – the criminal
 - Claire Standish – the princess
 - Andrew Clark – the athlete
 - Brian Johnson – the brain
 - Allison – the basket case
 - The film examines many issues prevalent in adolescence and beyond
 - Peer pressure – the pressure to fit in, to win, to be academically successful, to have sex, to make money, to maintain societal standards
 - It also takes a look at formal education and the failure of a one size fits all system
 - Class, social status and the American way are also criticized

Ferris Bueller's Day off (1986)

John Hughes

- Directed by John Hughes
 - Produced by John Hughes and Tom Jacobson
 - Written by John Hughes
 - Cinematography by Tak Fujimoto
 - Edited by Paul Hirsch
 - Music by Ira Newborn
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- The film uses an 'Alfie' style mode of address – Ferris is allowed to break the fourth wall
 - Cameron is in some respects the character that discovers the most about himself – his journey is the most significant
 - Ferris, in contrast, though the film's protagonist, is in essence a catalyst hero – in that he does not change – his outlook remains the same at the end of the film
 - The film appears to contain a critique of materialism and celebrates the idea of seizing the moment
 - However, the message is weakened by the characters' acceptance of their own privilege, more or less accepting their future complicity with a corrupt system