SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION

US, 1994, 142 minutes
Certificate 15

Cast	
Andrew Dufresne	Tim Robbins
Ellis "Red" Redding	Morgan Freeman
Warden Samuel Norton	Bob Gunton
Heywood	William Sadler
Capt. Byron Hadley	Clancy Brown
Tommy Williams	Gil Bellows
Bogs Diamond	Mark Rolston
Brooks	James Whitmore
Director	Frank Darabont
Cinematography	Roger Deakins
Music	Thomas Newman
Screenplay	Frank Darabont based on Stephen King's *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption*

It has to be admitted that *The Shawshank Redemption* suffers from two of the conditions most likely to discourage the average punter from parting with his or her money to see it: it has a title which tells you nothing and it is almost two and a half hours long. We hope you will agree after this evening's screening that it is two and a half hours well spent and that the title, while obscure when you came in, makes some sense by the time you leave.

Set against those disadvantages are considerable strengths: an absorbing story, unfolding slowly but surely over some twenty years; and first-rate performances from all the cast, particularly Tim Robbins, Morgan Freeman, Bob Gunton and James Whitmore. Robbins and Freeman create a screen partnership which combines the buddy theme of Newman and Redford in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*; and the comrades-in-adversity element of McQueen and Hoffman in *Papillon*.

Reviewers have also detected a more than passing nod to *The Birdman of Alcatraz* and compared *The Shawshank Redemption* to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. From that list, you should be able to conclude (if reading this before the film) that it's not an easy film to pigeonhole; and if you keep the notes for later, you may well have your own comparisons to make.

It is tempting to categorise *The Shawshank Redemption* simply as a buddy movie or a prison drama. However, it is more complicated than either of those labels would indicate. The relationship between Andy Dufresne (Robbins) and "Red" Redding (Freeman) is not as intimate as the buddy movie usually requires: Red is in many ways more an observer than an ally and one with problems of his own. Struggling to earn his release but repeatedly turned down by the parole board, Red makes time inside more bearable for himself and his fellow inmates by smuggling in all manner of contraband which he barters. His commentary is full of the philosophical musings of a man with time to think and plenty of observations to mull over.

> *These walls are funny. First you hate them; then you get used to them; then you start to depend on them.*

The basic storyline is this: respectable middle-class banker Andy Dufresne is found guilty of murdering his wife and her lover and sentenced to life imprisonment in Shawshank Penitentiary. Rather than rot inside, he decides to fight against the demeaning and depressing regime, building up a library for the prisoners and keeping his own skills sharp by working on tax returns for the guards. Protesting his innocence, he refuses to be ground down by his imprisonment and holds on to the hope that one day his innocence will be proved. Meanwhile, as Red says, he is faced with the choice:

> *Get busy living or get busy dying.*

WNCC

WOKING'S NEW CINEMA CLUB

If it were only a question of coping with the loss of liberty, Andy's experiences would be considerably less of an ordeal. However, the brutality of the guards and the other inmates, and the corruption which is endemic in the staff and the state prison authorities, combine to exert a powerfully oppressive influence. It is Andy's refusal to be cowed by these forces that pushes the narrative.

Filmed in a disused prison in Ohio, *The Shawshank Redemption* has a melancholy feel to it, with drab colours and dark, claustrophobic settings. Occasionally, as a visual counterpoint to the more optimistic scenes, we are taken to open spaces or lighter, larger rooms than the miserable cells in which the convicted men spend most of their time. The credit for the subtle changes in mood go to the Director, Frank Darabont, and the Cinematographer, Roger Deakins, both of whom were deservedly nominated for Academy Awards but neither of whom won one.

Supporting the lead players is an impressive cast, fleshing out characters who are mostly well rounded, although the prison Warden (Bob Gunton) is a Bible-bashing hypocrite worthy of a Dickensian workhouse. There's something about a man in a movie who speaks like an Old Testament prophet that sets the alarm bells ringing, justifiably in this case. That minor gripe apart, I have no hesitation in recommending this film as an engrossing and uplifting tale well told. Having sat through a Sunday morning screening, I found it hard to believe that I was leaving the cinema at lunchtime: if time passes slowly for the inmates of Shawshank Penitentiary, it seems to go by at a different rate as you watch their tale unfold.

GILL ROLLINGS

KEMP ROOM: A VIABLE NEW VENUE?

At their meeting on December 5, your Committee will discuss whether the Club should move to the Kemp Room in Woking Planets after Christmas. Pinned to the noticeboard, you will find a letter from the Chairman raising questions concerning the conditions of hire for the venue and the response from management at the Planets. Please read the letters and consider them carefully; and then let the Committee know if you feel strongly that we should or should not move.

If we move, there will inevitably be changes: the question we must all ask ourselves is whether we want to embrace those changes or stay where we are and continue in our current way. In discussions at previous meetings, the Committee has considered various changes which may or may not come into effect if and when we move, which are listed below.

- The new venue will be more comfortable.
- It will cost more to hire each week.
- It will be equipped with a new screen.
- Meeting in the town centre may raise our profile and entice guests; either commuters returning from work in London or shoppers who have spent the evening in the Peacocks and are in no rush to get home.
- The Planets will not allow us to continue providing our own refreshments; while we will probably have more choice of what we eat and drink, the costs will be higher.
- The "clubby" atmosphere which several people have commented on since this season started may be threatened by leaving a small venue and moving to a larger venue designed for conferences and exhibitions.

You may be able to think of other changes and they may be strong arguments for or against a move. If you want to have your say, please do so in one of the following ways:

talk to a member of the Committee tonight;
phone or write to a Committee member before December 5;
make a note on your Reaction Sheet before you hand it in.

Remember, if you don't tell us what you think, we won't know. Until the meeting, we won't know whether all the members of the Committee feel the same way about the Kemp Room. Whatever your reason for not being on the Committee, don't feel that it doesn't entitle you to have your say.

WAR OF THE WORLDS CONCERT

The Civic Concert which had to be postponed due to the building work going on in the Peacocks will now take place on December 10. Carl Davis will conduct the London Philharmonic Orchestra. The programme will include a variety of classical pieces which have an astronomical theme (such as Holst's *Planets Suite*) and music composed for science fiction films (including *Star Wars, E.T.* and *Star Trek*).

Tickets are available from the Peacocks Box Office on 01483 761144.

GET TRAVOLTA!

From 6-19 December, the Barbican is screening a season of John Travolta films to celebrate the Comeback Kid's resurgent career. Most films only get one screening (from *Get Shorty* to *Blow Out*) but there are several opportunities over the fortnight to see *Saturday Night Fever* and *Grease*. If you haven't booked your Christmas bunfight, there are two meal packages available (at £12.95 or £23.50 including the film). The telephone number for meal package bookings is 0171 638 8891.

On 10 December at 8.30pm, Trevor Nunn will be talking about his recently released screen adaptation of *Twelfth Night* to launch a new season of *The Observer Screen Talks*. The evening includes a screening of the film. Tickets available from the Barbican Box Office on 0171 382 7000, price £7.50 (concessions £5.00).

WATERMANS SUNDAY DOUBLE BILLS

December's double bills at Brentford Arts Centre continue to be imaginative combinations. December 1 (World AIDS Day) *Beautiful Thing* and *Jeffrey*; December 8 *The Last Supper* and *Living in Oblivion* (two excellent US independent features); December 15 *In the Bleak Midwinter* and *Oliver Twist*; December 22 the recent screen adaptations of Jane Austen's *Emma* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

REDGRAVE THEATRE REOPENS

The Redgrave Theatre in Farnham reopens on Friday 29 November after refurbishment. The theatre will be screening films as well as presenting plays, so if you live in southern Surrey watch out for advertisements in the local press.

THANK YOU

to everyone for your good wishes, and the card and flowers which were waiting to greet me when I came home from hospital on November 15. The flowers are still looking attractive over a week later - it must be something to do with the rather cooler climate we enjoy here (few flowers survive for long on the maternity ward at St. Peter's!). At the time of writing, Bryn is still in the Special Care Baby Unit where he'll be staying until he can take all his feeds by mouth instead of down a tube and starts putting on some weight. If he bucks his ideas up, he can still be home a week before he was actually due!

Gill Rollings

Our Next Presentation

12 December 1996

A runaway heiress falls in love with a reporter who is pursuing her across America by bus. One of the great 30's comedies.

Performance Ends 10.15pm (approx.)

100 YEARS OF CINEMA 1896 • 1996

AUDIENCE REACTIONS

THE ROUNDUP
(Screened 14 November 1996)

Average Mark: 5.7
No. of slips returned: 18

10	
9	*
8	*
7	****
6	**
5	***** **
4	
3	***
2	
1	

One member of the audience managed to summarise the majority of views with the comment "*interesting - unusual - different*", which covers all angles! Although pulled down by some low marks, *The Roundup* obviously had its appeal for some; and it proves that just because a film is relatively little known doesn't necessarily mean it's poor.

Unusual but most interesting.

Undoubtedly good film - but not my historical forte.

Very dramatic!

Dull and tedious. The best bit was the end.

Good close-up photography.

Pluses for authenticity but ultimately its preoccupation with everyday activity didn't seem all that interesting. Wanted to like it more than I did in the end.

Brilliant - thanks, Marten.

Obviously, you're not a real Hungarian if you can't grow a decent moustache!

Previous scores: Remains of the Day 8.4; Anchors Aweigh 7.2; The Usual Suspects 6.8., Once Were Warriors 6.6

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