

Mass-Observation in the 1990s

Spring Directive 1999

PART ONE

Going to the cinema



As usual, please remember to start your reply with a very brief mini-biography: your M-O number, (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

If you have ever worked in the cinema business or in film-making please say so when you begin.

Right from the start in 1937, Mass-Observation was interested in people's cinema-going behaviour. We have 12 boxes of papers in the Archive full of reports on different films and what audiences made of them, which film stars people liked, what usherettes and cinema managers thought about films, letters from the public to film magazines, competitions entries with prizes to encourage all kinds of people to send M-O their views on films and cinemas.

So far in M-O in the 1990s, we have only touched on films in passing. Here's your opportunity to tell us about going to the cinema in the late 1990s. Remember that if you don't like films or the cinema, please still reply and tell us so.

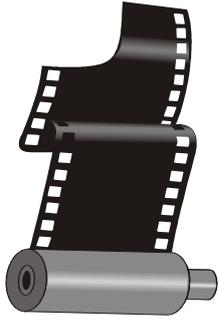
I've divided it into sections to make it a bit easier, but there's no reason why you can't answer in the way you prefer.

Please as always use these questions as prompts to get you writing. There will be lots of things I can't think of to ask you and I rely on you to fill in the gaps.

Going to the cinema today

Perhaps you could start by saying whether you go to the cinema. If you do, please tell us something about any patterns you have - if you think you have a regular pattern. For example you might cover the following questions (though not necessarily in the same order).

How often do you go? Where you go? How do you travel there?



Do you have a preferred day of the week or time you like to go? Is there a time when you would *not* want to go?

What kind of cinemas do you prefer? What are the important factors?

What is the cost of an outing to the cinema and how does it compare with what you spend on other activities? Is this just the price of the ticket or food, travel etc?

Do you generally go with a particular person or group of people?

What decides you to go? Is it the interest in the film itself or the social occasion which is most important to you?

Where do you like to sit?

Do you like to be with quiet audiences or do you enjoy a bit of noise?

Do you see different films with different people? For example, cartoons with children? Romances with a loved one? Comedies with a group? Have you ever felt uncomfortable at the cinema with someone?

Would you say you were a film buff or enthusiast?

Can going to the cinema be counted as a date?

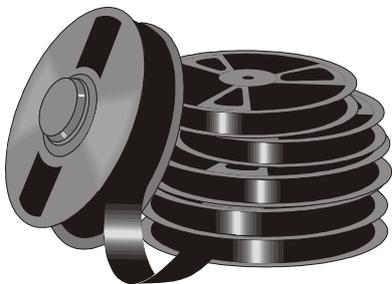
The last time you went to the cinema

Please describe the last outing to the cinema you had - when and where it was, who you went with, what you saw, whether you ate and drank, whether you enjoyed it, what it cost and so on. Stories please!

Your first time in a cinema, and the cinema in the past

When was the first time you went to the cinema? When was it? (Tell us the year and how old you were if you can). Can you remember much about it? Please describe as much as you can.

Has going to the cinema changed over the years for you? Please tell us.



Films

What films did you see in the last twelve months? Can you describe, say, six of the most memorable and what you liked or didn't like about them? Feel free to write as much as you like mentioning actors, plots, photography, music, sound effects, special effects and so on.

Do you prefer some kinds of films over other kinds?

Do you ever see a film more than once? Which ones and why?

Do you see films in other languages from your own? How do you find subtitles or dubbing?

In 1937, Mass-Observation asked people to compare films from the US with British films? Is this still an important divide? What do you think of as a Hollywood film?

Censorship?

What are your views on censorship? Does the classification of films (eg 18,15, PG) affect your choice of what to see?

What are your views on sexual scenes in films? And on screen violence? Please use films you have seen or heard about to illustrate your answers.

Finding out about films

Where do you find out about films you want to see - reviews in the press or on TV or radio, advertisements, trailers, friends' recommendations - other? How much do you find out about films before you see them? Do you read film magazines?

Film actors

Do you have any favourite film actors? Who are they? Can you say why? Would you try to see them whenever they appear in films?

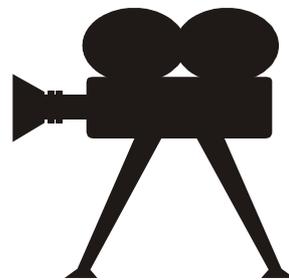
Please look back over the years as well as talk about your present preferences. If you belong to any fan clubs, please say so. If you have pictures of film stars in your home or in your work place, please tell us.

Films on video

Do you watch films on video? Do you buy videos or hire them, or both?

Describe your usual patterns when you watch a video - is it a special occasion?

What is the difference for you between seeing a film at the cinema and watching it at home?



Finally.....

Any further thoughts on the subject? Do you think films influence you?

Have you seen one film that really had a tremendous impact on you? What was it?

PART TWO

Current issues

Please remember to start a new page with your M-O number and a brief autobiography: your sex, age, town, occupation, and whether you are retired or currently employed.

It is a while since we asked you to record your thoughts on some of the contemporary issues. Could you please give us some of your thoughts on any issue you feel we should be covering for the Archive. As I write, the following issues are now in the news or have been recently, and future researchers will be interested in your reactions. Please add your own subjects if you feel I have missed something important or relevant to you.

(Not in any special order)

- ◆ Kosova and the war in Bosnia
- ◆ Genetically modified foods
- ◆ The Stephen Lawrence Enquiry
- ◆ The predicament of the Kurds
- ◆ The present situation over the Irish peace process
- ◆ Nurses' pay and conditions
- ◆ The private lives of politicians: recent scandals and "exposures"
- ◆ The solar eclipse, and the impact on Cornwall

PART THREE

Documenting the Millennium

Please remember to start a new page with your M-O number and a brief autobiography: your sex, age, town, occupation, and whether you are retired or currently employed.

This section is not exactly about the Millennium itself but rather what you think we should be doing (if anything) to document the event, and people's feelings and experiences. Is it a significant occasion which we should cover? Or should we ignore it? Will people in the future be interested, do you think?

If you think we should be recording it, how should we do it? Ask for your opinions in the Autumn 1999 Directive? Ask for diaries to be kept for a period (if so, which period?). Ask whether people have plans for 31 December 1999? Ask about the millennium bug? The Millennium Dome?

As a Mass-Observer, what would you be prepared to do to record the event? Your views please.

DS/15 March 1999/Dir.No.56