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- * Transcript ID: WW-95-083PL001
- * Scan ID: WW-95-083PL001
- * CCINTB Document ID: 95-83-1a-b
- * Number of pages: 2
- * Date sent: 9 February 1995
- * Transcribed by: Adelle Poole/Standardised by Jamie Terrill
- * Format: Letter
- * Details: from William Ward to Annette Kuhn and Valentina Bold
- * Notes: This transcription has rendered the original text as written, including some spelling and grammatical errors. In response to call for cinemagoing memories published in the *Manchester Evening News*.

[redacted],
Middlewich,
Cheshire, CW10 [redacted].
9th Feb 1995

Misses Kuhn and Bold.

Dear Ladies,

Reference your letter in the Manchester Evening News. I was born in 1923 so by the time that the thirties came along I was old enough to go to the cinema (Pictures) on my own, it was safer on the streets in those days. I lived in Old Trafford, Manchester in those days and the nearest cinema was about five minutes walk away the Trafford at the end of Seymore Grove. At that age we use to go to the Kids Matinee, two pence downstairs or if you were rich three pence in the balcony, the programme usually contained a cartoon, a short comedy, maybe two, and a serial where the hero was left in danger of being killed off by the villain, of course the next week he was never in any danger at all. That was at one of the better cinemas. Some times when funds were low we would go to what was known as the flea pit. A cinema called the BIJOU or as we kids called it the BI JO. The entrance fee was one penny plus either an orange or an apple was given to each patron on entering. I remember that both the orange and the apple were quite in ediable they were so sour. For one penny the seating was rows of forms at the front of the cinema. Although there were three isles, one at each side and one down the middle, entrance was always down the middle. This was a clever trick on the part of the management, kids were seated on the ends of the forms and as others came along they were moved further and further along the form until they were pushed off at the other end.

Waiting for them in the side aisle was almost always an old man, well he appeared old to us, always very bad tempered who would then eject the poor kids on the pretext that they were creating a disturbance. At this point the ejected kids would return either the orange or apple to the management, always from a distance and via the front box office. I must say that my visits to that cinema were very frequent. I must say that I do remember being taken to see the first talking picture by one of my aunts, at the New Oxford Cinema in Oxford St Manchester. I was about four years old and the film was Al Jolson in the Jazz Singer if my memory serves me right. As I grew older I was allowed to visit the cinema in the evenings, which in those days was quite a night out. The management of the cinema used to use every device at their disposal to attract the patrons. Once I went to see Richard Tauber in Blossom Time and the whole of the front entrance was covered with pink blossom and two girls dressed in pink costumes. During the performance ushers sprayed the cinema with perfume.

The larger cinemas in the city centre were of course of a higher calibre. The organ was much in evidence, raising out of the floor both before and during the interval of the performance. Often during the interval a stage performance took place sometimes with quite well known performers.

One of the things that has given rise to some thought is whether children are affected by TV or Cinema. While I am not in a position to judge the present day children (mine have all grown up and my grandson is now twenty) I do know that for days after a performance at the cinema we acted out the plot. One would be Tom Mix and one the baddie or some other hero or villain of the time.

I hope that this short letter may be of some use to you and I wish you well in your project. If I can be of any further help, please let me know or, ring me on [redacted],

Yours sincerely,

W Ward, Mr