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**London SadFest 2017: The Saddest Weekend You'll Spend in London - Ever.
(And You'll Love it!)**

London SadFest is a unique film festival that celebrates and explores the world of sad films, music and poetry.

Blue Monday is the name given to the saddest day of the year. Some people say it is the last Monday in January, others argue that it's actually later in February when winter is at its bitterest and the disappointments of Valentine's Day have really started to sink in.

One thing though is for sure, the saddest weekend in London this year will be the first weekend in March, because that's when the London SadFest 2017 will be taking place at the Genesis Cinema in Mile End.

Festival organiser Steve Todd says, "this is a festival for anybody that loves really sad and heart-breaking films. We've got a great line up of beautiful films and some really interesting speakers, live music performances and some sad poetry too. But above all, it is a place where you can come and cry your heart in out in great company!"

Why would anybody want to go to see so many sad films in one weekend?

Recent research by Prof. Dunbar, an evolutionary psychologist at Oxford University, suggests that people might actually feel good after watching sad films. Higher endorphin levels leave people feeling more socially connected and stronger to deal with psychological pain.

"We seem to be scared of sadness as a society, we're always running away from it. I think we need to stop running and instead face up to and even embrace sadness. It's a big part of being human and I think it's at the heart of our feelings of compassion.", says Steve Todd.

Can a festival of sad films really be called a 'festival'?

The organisers think so, "we're hoping the talks and Q&A after the screenings as well as the live performance track and after show-events will really create a strong feeling of coming together as festival community. The celebration aspect is just as important as the sadness."

The festival kicks off with a launch event on Friday 3rd March, showing "The Elephant Man" by David Lynch, chosen as the world's most influential director by film critics. It is an extraordinarily beautiful and sad film and is set in the Whitechapel area where the festival is taking place. Dr Åsa Jansson from Queen Mary's Centre for the History of Emotions will be giving a talk after the film with a Q&A, followed by a drinks reception and live music performances.

The festival runs until Sunday evening along with a full track of live music performances, poetry, talks and spoken word performances. The films include: **Ken Loach's "Kes"**, a sad classic and number 7 in the BFI top 100 British Films list; Wong Kar Wai's melancholy delight from 2000: **"In the Mood For Love"**; **"Sophie's Choice"** with an amazing performance from Meryl Streep and Lee Daniels' powerfully moving **"Precious"** from 2009.

Every ticket sold will also include a donation to the Samaritans charity to support their amazing work.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates and Times

Friday 3rd March - 6pm until 10pm: 1 screening, talk and drinks reception in the bar area
Film: **"The Elephant Man"** (6pm)

Saturday 4th March - 2pm until 10pm: 2 screenings followed by talks; music and spoken word in the bar area (in parallel)
Films: **"Kes"** (3.30pm), **"In the Mood For Love"** (6pm)

Sunday 5th March - 3pm until 9pm: 2 screenings followed by talks, music and spoken word in the bar area (in parallel)
Films: **"Sophie's Choice"** (3pm), **"Precious"** (6pm)

All events in the bar area are free and open to the public.

Venue

Genesis Cinema
93-95 Mile End Rd, London E1 4UJ

Google Maps:

<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Genesis+cinema/@51.521115,-0.0511071,15z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0x3e2931af6317216!8m2!3d51.521115!4d-0.0511071>

Nearest Tubes: Stepney Green, Whitechapel, Mile End

Tickets

Tickets can only be bought on-line: <http://buytickets.at/completegeniusltd/82160>

- £10 per film.
- £16 day ticket (for Saturday or Sunday)
- £40 whole festival ticket (includes a free drink at the launch event + festival tote bag)

All tickets include a £1 donation to the Samaritans.

Tickets will go on sale at the end of January via an event ticketing service. Tickets are not available through the Genesis box office. The link to the ticket service will be sent out on the mailing list and social media channels below.

FURTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

Media contact: steve@londonsadfest.com

General contact: enquiries@londonsadfest.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/londonsadfest>

Twitter: @LondonSadFest #lsf2017

Website: <http://www.londonsadfest.com>

Guest Speaker Profiles

Dr Åsa Jansson will be talking after the screening of *The Elephant Man* and asks: "When is it ok to be sad?" The Elephant Man asks us to feel empathy toward the film's protagonist -to feel with him, not just for him. We are invited to recognise our own humanity in this visually monstrous figure, to see him not just as our equal but as our potential self. The film conveys a kind of soothing sadness, a sadness that speaks to our shared fear of loneliness and desire to belong. The Elephant Man has been criticised for its overt sentimentality, but are the feelings of sadness and vulnerability it evokes necessarily a bad thing? Since the emergence of modern psychiatry in the nineteenth century, 'negative' feelings have increasingly been cast as medical abnormalities to be managed or cured, rather than as an essential and valuable part of a diverse repertoire of human emotion. But even when sadness is not seen as an illness, it is often perceived as an undesirable and useless emotion. Instead, we are told to pursue happiness at ever cost.

Åsa Jansson's talk will explore the question of useful sadness within the context of the history of sadness and melancholy in modern Britain, inviting the audience to consider whether the twenty-first century pursuit of happiness and our growing aversion to sadness prevent us also from feeling passionate sadness, the kind of sadness that inspires us see past that which divides us and reach out to our fellow human beings.

Dr Åsa Jansson is an associate member of the Centre for the History of the Emotions at Queen Mary, University of London. Her research explores the history of "disordered" or "pathological" emotions since the 1800s, and the different ways in which modern medicine has tried to label and categorise our emotions as normal or deviant in different contexts. For more details about Åsa's research, including publications, please see her [Academia page](#).

Sarbjit Samra will be talking after the screening of Ken Loach's *Kes* (1969) and sharing his personal perspectives directly after the film screening. According to Sarbjit, *Kes* is one of the most powerful and emotionally devastating films in the history of cinema. It is one of those rare films that is truly authentic because it doesn't compromise. *Kes* delivers some strong and honest messages about social class that are arguably even more relevant today than the time when it was released.

Sarbjit was born in Coventry in 1967. He studied Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University where he specialised in new media, film and video. In the 90s, during the Brit pop era, Sarbjit was one of the UK's leading live artists and performed frequently at the ICA as well as shows in Ireland and the US. Sarbjit worked as an events production manager at the BBC between 1997 and 2015 and freelanced as a live events producer for BAFTA. He currently works in communications.

Dr. Jennifer Wallace will be talking after the screening of *Sophie's Choice*. Traditionally, since the ancient Greeks, tragedy has been thought to be the province of the theatre. But can we speak about a tragic film? And how would we define it? Jennifer Wallace offers a whistle-stop tour through some essentials of tragedy - choice, recognition, pity and fear, fate, catharsis - to guide our assessment of "sad" films.

Jennifer Wallace teaches English Literature and Comparative Drama, specialising in Tragedy, at the University of Cambridge. She is the author of *The Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy* (2007), as well as of books on archaeology (*Digging the Dirt: The Archaeological Imagination*) and Romantic Hellenism (*Shelley and Greece*). Her first work of fiction, *Digging Up Milton*, set in London's East End in 1790, was published last year.

Jennifer is currently writing a book on *Witnessing Tragedy Since 9/11*. It looks at the critical events and technological developments of the last two decades, from terrorism and conflict through drone warfare to climate change, and considers how to interpret these from the perspective of traditional tragic drama and philosophy. The book is scheduled for publication by Bloomsbury in 2019.

Marcia Harris will be talking before the screening of *Precious*. She will be talking about some of the issues that made the film quite controversial when it was released and divided critical opinion.

Marcia's interest in Children's rights led her to take her first degree as an adult, with a focus on Childhood Studies and Social Psychology, earning her a B.Sc. Social Sciences through the OU, which she gained whilst working and raising her now teenaged son.

Marcia holds a core belief that agency and power, especially a child's, grows strongest when nurtured from within, rather than bestowed upon us by acts of benevolence. Because of this she has become an NSPCC Schools program volunteer and a Home Start perinatal health coach.

She is also involved in several volunteer projects at Jamyang Buddhist centre and works for Jamyang's CIC, a unique combination of vegetarian cafe, garden and community. Marcia is a creative, a baker at heart, believing all art can be therapeutic.

Live Performances

The following performers and speakers have already confirmed for the live performance and spoken word track in the bar area of the cinema (all performances and talks in this area are free):

Ana Zed and Lou Welby, Emmanuel Speaks, David Callahan (solo performance), Robert Paul, Joseph Paice, Chris Hodgkinson, David Cialfi

Talks: "The Tyranny of Happiness and the Medicalisation of Misery", Dr Angela Byrne; "Mad, Bad, Sad and Dangerous", Raza Griffiths.

More music, poetry and spoken word performers to be announced soon...

Times for the live performances in the bar area will be provided nearer the date.