

Todayâ??s AFI Movie Club selection: SELMA

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

I canâ??t imagine a more timely film than todayâ??s AFI Movie Club selection, *Selma*.

Selma, covers a three-month period surrounding the events of the peaceful Civil Rights protest march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, that led to United States President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Poignantly, Ava DuVernayâ??s visionary film invited audiences â??to rise above the breathless shame of our nationâ??s past and come together as one as we look to the future.â?• â??SELMA was honored with an AFI AWARD in 2014.

Hereâ??s an exclusive AFI Archive video, watch Ava DuVernay talk about working on SELMA.

Interesting Facts

Many directors were involved with the project over the years including Michael Mann (with whom director Ava DuVernay worked as a publicist), Stephen Frears, Paul Haggis, Spike Lee and Lee Daniels. Ava DuVernay ultimately directed the picture, and it went on to earn an Academy AwardÂ® nomination for Best Picture.

Ava DuVernay reworked the script for SELMA, emphasizing King and the female characters over President Lyndon B. Johnsonâ??s point of view.

When Ava DuVernay signed on to direct Selma, she was informed that she would not be able to use the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.â??s original speeches because his estate had already given permission to Steven Spielberg for an upcoming, untitled film. Undeterred, DuVernay wrote new speeches that embodied Kingâ??s spirit herself, although she is not credited onscreen as a writer.

SELMA is based on a real-life movement that helped lead to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The title of the film refers to the 54-mile march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery that concluded on March 25,1965, with a total of 25,000 demonstrators.

SELMA is the first feature film on Martin Luther King Jr. While his life has been captured on the small screen on several occasions, including 1978â??s KING and 2001â??s BOYCOTT, and in a number of documentaries, it wasnâ??t until 2014 that his story was brought to the big screen by Ava DuVernay.

The actor portraying Martin Luther King, Jr. in the film â?? David Oyelowo â?? is British. The historical elements of the film were not a part of his own direct cultural upbringing, but he has stated that his distance helped him approach King as a man rather than just an icon.

Star David Oyelowo and director Ava DuVernay previously teamed up for MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. The film earned DuVernay the Best Director award at the Sundance Film Festival, making her the first African American woman to receive the honor.

SELMA was nominated for an Academy AwardÂ® for Best Picture and won the OscarÂ® for Best Original Song for â??Gloryâ?• performed by John Legend and Common.

Carmen Ejogo not only played Coretta Scott King in SELMA but also in the 2001 TV movie BOYCOTT.

All the extras in the bridge scene were actually from Selma, Alabama. This was important to director Ava DuVernay in terms of the authenticity of the story.

The movie doesnâ??t end at the credits. Engage with your family, friends and others like you who love the movies. Check out the AFI Movie Club Discussion Questions for this movie and post your responses in the comment section!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

-What is the significance of the film being titled SELMA, as opposed to naming it after Martin Luther King, Jr.? Why do you think the filmmakers made this creative choice?

-How did SELMA show an individual securing major social and political reform?

-Why do you think disenfranchised citizens would risk their lives to ensure the right to vote?

â??Oprah Winfrey was a producer on the film and also portrayed civil rights activist Annie Lee Cooper. Can you name some of the other real-life civil rights leaders who were included in the film?

-Initially, there was very little focus on Coretta Scott King and the women activists in the script. Why is it important that DuVernay reframed the story to include them? Why have women often not been considered as part of the historical narrative?

-How was Lyndon B. Johnson portrayed in the film? Do you agree with his depiction?

-Several attempts have been made to rename the Edmund Pettus Bridge because it was named after a Confederate brigadier general, but none have been successful so far. The latest petition is to name it after U.S. Representative John Lewis. Do you think the bridge should be renamed? Who would you

name it after?

-Because the filmmakers of SELMA did not have the rights to use Kingâ??s speeches, Ava DuVernay had to interpret his words and adapt their spirit for the film. Do you think the film captured the importance he played in a specific moment in American history?

-How would you rate SELMA?

About AFI Movie Club

I hope the AFI Movie Club brings some inspiration and entertainment during this uncertain time. AFI has created a global, virtual gathering of those who love the movies where each dayâ??s film â?? announced by a special guest â?? is accompanied by fun facts, family-friendly discussion points and material from the AFI Archive to bring the viewing experience to life. As a non-profit, AFI Movie Club is a member-powered organization, dependent upon the support of its movie fans. To support AFI Movie Club please consider becoming a member or donating.

AFI Movie Club is a newly launched free program to raise the nationâ??s spirits by bringing artists and audiences together â?? even while we are apart. AFI shines a spotlight on an iconic movie each day, with special guests announcing the Movie of the Day. Audiences can â??gatherâ?• at AFI.com/MovieClub to find out how to watch the featured movie of the day with the use of their preexisting streaming service credentials. The daily film selections will be supported by fun facts, family discussion points and exclusive material from the AFI Archive to enrich the viewing experience.

(Source: AFI News Release)

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Tags

1. Ava DuVernay
2. Selma

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hollywoodglee