

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

USA (1930) 133 minutes

Director: Lewis Milestone

Cast: Lew Ayres (Paul Bäumer); Louis Wolheim (Stanislaus Katczinsky)



Screening 7 November 2018 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

As the centenary of Armistice day 1918 approaches the strong anti-war sentiments of *All Quiet on the Western Front* hit home as powerfully today as when it was first shown. This seminal adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's 1929 novel depicts the lives of a group of young recruits who join up amid the jingoistic idealism of 1914 Germany, only to find brutality and deep disillusionment in the trenches of the 'Great War'.

Reviews



All Quiet on the Western Front, which is hailed nine decades on as one of the greatest anti-war films ever made, opened in America on April 29, 1930, to strong reviews.

When the film, based on the novel of the same name by German World War One veteran Erich Maria Remarque, opened in Germany eight months after the US screening, all hell broke loose. The film was denounced by Joseph Goebbels, Adolf Hitler's future propaganda minister, who publicly burned Remarque's novel. There were street riots generated by Nazi gangs and Goebbels broke up the Berlin premiere screening by throwing stink bombs and releasing mice and sneezing powder into the cinema. A few weeks later, the picture was banned as "prejudicial to German national prestige". Swiss cinemas across the border organised buses and trains to bring German citizens to see it. *All Quiet on the Western Front* was not shown in Germany again until the early Fifties.

Martin Chilton, The Telegraph

Lewis Milestone's groundbreaking war film is up with *La Grande Illusion* as one of the finest humanitarian antiwar movies ever made, though the treatment could not be more different.

Made in 1930, on the cusp of the silent and the sound eras, this follows a group of German schoolboys as they are encouraged to volunteer for the First World War, and end their lives in the senseless carnage of the trenches.

The violence and the battle scenes are, frankly, awesome and the tone of dark, accusatory irony is maintained right through to the bitter end when Lew Ayres's soldier unthinkingly reaches for a butterfly across a silent no-man's land. Amazing.

Neil Norman, Evening Standard

Film Facts

- *All Quiet on the Western Front* was the first 'talkie' war film to win an Oscar.
- Lew Ayres, influenced by the movie, declared himself a conscientious objector during World War II.
- Due to its anti-war and perceived anti-German messages, both the novel and the film were banned in Nazi Germany during the 1930s and 1940s. It was also banned during the 1930's in Australia, Austria and Italy.