

# OSCAR WILDE ON SCREEN



## Week Nine

The Importance of Being Oscar

## Welcome to *Oscar Wilde on Screen*

### Week Nine

As we race towards the end of our time together, it's time to visit those films and television programmes that depict Oscar himself, whether as a supporting character or in an attempt to tackle his life and, more often than not, the classical tragedy that concluded it.

It's interesting to note that *playing* Oscar Wilde, as late as 1960 when *Oscar Wilde* and *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* went head-to-head in British cinemas, it was considered, depending on your point-of-view, either shocking or brave to play the part.

For while it was one thing for Oscar Wilde's reputation as an author to have recovered so quickly, it was quite another – some years before homosexuality would be decriminalised – to portray the central character in a story that – however delicately handled – gay life so obviously played a part.

And so there were many versions of Oscar, often a dreamy not-quite-of-this-world writer led astray rather than a man with a sexual component to himself with which the world took issue.

Or he is a witty cipher. There purely to offer the expected *bon mots* while being fabulously dressed.

As time progressed, cinema made genuine attempts to get to the heart of the man, notably in 1997's *Wilde* with Stephen Fry and, much later (and more starkly) in 2018's *The Happy Prince*.

We seem more comfortable with a complex Oscar these days. Neither angel nor devil. Flawed but certainly undeserving of his end.

## FILMS WEEK NINE

Oscar Wilde (1960)

*Dir. Gregory Ratoff*

The Trials of Oscar Wilde (1960)

*Dir. Ken Hughes*

The Rolling Stones - We Love You (1967)

*Dir. Peter Whitehead*

Lillie (1978)

*Dir. John Gorrie*

Oscar (1985)

*Dir. Henry Herbert*

Salome's Last Dance (1988)

*Dir. Ken Russell*

Ned Blessing (1993)

*Dir. David Hemmings*

Wilde (1997)

*Dir. Brian Gilbert*

The Happy Prince (2018)

*Dir. Rupert Everett*