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Saturday night and Sunday morning

Director: Karel Riesz Country: UK Date: 1960

A review of the film's 2006 re-release by Philip Horne for *The Daily Telegraph*:

For those who know Albert Finney mainly from his middle age - say, as the portly, shambling lawyer in *Erin Brockovich* (2000) - it will be a shock, a blast of bracing Nottingham air to encounter the slim, muscular, dynamic 24-year-old who plays Arthur Sillitoe's angry young hedonist Arthur Seaton in Karel Reisz's superb *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

Seaton is an emblematic figure of the era that cast off its fetters and opened up from 1950s austerity into the Swinging Sixties, one of those unsettled, aspiring working-class heroes of the British New Wave that included Richard Burton's Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* (1958), Laurence Harvey's Joe Lampton in *Room at the Top* (1959), Richard Harris's Frank Machin in *This Sporting Life* (1963), Tom Courtenay in *Billy Liar* (1963), and Michael Caine in *Alfie* (1966).



As physically fired-up as any of these, he's a vortex of sensual energy and mischievous rebellion: "What I'm out for is a good time," he announces. "All the rest is propaganda."

The film shows his struggle to have that good time - to the strains of John Dankworth's restless jazz score - despite all the forces of repression and envy that a grim, smoky, cobbled, black-and-white Britain of "fat cows" and "nosey-parkers" can array against him. "Don't let the bastards grind you down" is one of his catchphrases. Significantly, another quote from the film ("Whatever people say I am, that's what I'm not") has provided the title for the debut album from the latest working-class heroes, Arctic Monkeys.

This swaggering factory worker with a chip on his shoulder, a racing bike, an eye for the girls, and quite a stomach for downing pints (though not the beer gut to match) actually isn't, as his foreman asserts, "a bit of a red", but, being a natural rebel, he hates the boss class anyway. He's having an adulterous affair with the older, loving, attractively earthy Brenda (the magnificent Rachel Roberts), his "married piece" as this harsh world's brutal language calls her. But soon he's going out with a "smashing bit of stuff", the younger, more glamorous Doreen (Shirley Anne Field). We're torn, as he is.

The painful, searing raw sensuality of Reisz's beautifully observed and judged (and edited) film is still amazingly potent: Finney and Roberts are a revelation. Arthur may be ruthless, abrasive - even, as he's called, "a pig"; but his mixture of aggression and decency makes him one of the great characters of British cinema.

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