

Entertainment & Leisure

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Besties: Mia Goth as Harriet and Anya Taylor-Joy as Emma in Autumn de Wilde's new adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma*

Tinder is the night for today's Emmas

PERHAPS the most spirited and witty of all Jane Austen's heroines, Emma Woodhouse has long resonated with cinema audiences and her imminent return to the big screen is one of the most anticipated films of the year.

For some of us, it may not seem all that long since a pre-Goop Gwyneth Paltrow was charming film fans with her 1996 turn in the role.

But that was then, and in the era of Time's Up the timing of this new take on Emma could scarcely be better.

Austen's tale centres on a young woman who knows her own mind and refuses to conform to the social norms of the day.

It's also about a girl who tries to fix up her friends and apply her matchmaking theories to the dating game — something the Tinder

CINEMA PREVIEW

Film: Emma

Certificate: U

Director: Autumn de Wilde

Stars: Anya Taylor-Joy, Josh O'Connor, Tanya Reynolds, Gemma Whelan, Johnny Flynn, Mia Goth, Bill Nighy

generation will surely relate to all too readily.

But then, women and men have been relating to *Emma* since 1815.

On first reading the book, Austen's contemporary Susan Edmonstone Ferrier wrote to a friend that, "*Emma* is excellent; there is no story whatever, and the heroine is no better than other people; but the

characters are all true to life and the style so piquant that it does not require the adventitious aids of mystery and adventure."

By focusing on that character, wit and wisdom, and giving it an edgy spin, director Autumn de Wilde's adaptation follows in the tradition of recent period dramas like *The Favourite*.

Not that the film's literary credentials are exactly lacking, with the screenplay having been written by New Zealand novelist Eleanor Catton, whose second novel *The Luminaries* won the 2013 Man Booker Prize.

Taking the title role is Anya Taylor-Joy, whose previous films include *The Witch* (2015), *Split* (2016), *Thoroughbreds* (2017) and *Glass* (2019).

She has all the spark, charisma and withering looks needed to bring a

contemporary spin to the woman Jane Austen called "a heroine whom no one but myself will much like".

At the same time, with her background as a photographer turned filmmaker who made her mark with a fashion film series for Prada starring Elijah Wood, de Wilde promises an Austen adaptation whose look is distinctly different to anything audiences have seen before.

The director has also assembled a stellar cast, with Bill Nighy as Emma's sharp-witted father Mr Woodhouse, Miranda Hart as the chatty Miss Bates, and Mia Goth as Emma's friend and matchmaking guinea pig Harriet.

Emma is showing at the Regal Picturehouse cinema from today (Friday).

Matthew Wilson

Also showing this week:

Title	Cast	Synopsis	Rating
Parasite (15)	Song Kang-ho, Chang Hye-jin, Choi Woo-shik, Lee Sun-kyun, Jeong Ji-so, Jung Hyeon-jun, Cho Ye-jeong, Park So-dam	A poor family, the Kims, con their way into becoming the servants of a rich family, the Parks. But their easy life gets complicated when their deception is threatened with exposure.	An urgent, brilliantly layered look at timely social themes. <i>Parasite</i> finds writer-director Bong Joon Ho in near-total command of his craft.
Dolittle (PG)	Robert Downey Jr, Kumail Nanjiani, Tom Holland, Emma Thompson, Rami Malek, Jessie Buckley	A physician who can talk to animals embarks on an adventure to find a legendary island with a young apprentice and a crew of strange pets.	<i>Dolittle</i> may be enough to entertain very young viewers, but they deserve better than this rote adaptation's jumbled story and stale humor.
The Personal History of David Copperfield (PG)	Dev Patel, Tilda Swinton, Ben Whishaw, Gwendoline Christie, Hugh Laurie, Aneurin Barnard, Peter Capaldi	From birth to infancy, from adolescence to adulthood, the good-hearted David Copperfield is surrounded by kindness, wickedness, poverty and wealth as he meets an array of remarkable characters in Victorian England.	<i>The Personal History of David Copperfield</i> puts a fresh, funny, and utterly charming spin on the Dickens classic, proving some stories truly are timeless.
1917 (15)	George MacKay, Dean-Charles Chapman, Mark Strong, Andrew Scott, Richard Madden, Claire Duburcq, Daniel Mays, Jamie Parker, Benedict Cumberbatch, Colin Firth	Two young British soldiers during the First World War are given an impossible mission: deliver a message deep in enemy territory that will prevent 1,600 of their comrades from walking straight into a deadly trap.	Hard-hitting, immersive, and an impressive technical achievement, <i>1917</i> captures the trench warfare of the First World War with raw, startling immediacy.

Beethoven celebration married technique and musical insight

Review

Beethoven Triple Bill
St Mary's Church,
Wallingford, February 8

LAST Saturday evening the second concert in the 2020 Winter Recitals Wallingford series took place in St Mary's Church, Wallingford.

Pianist Anita D'Attellis founded these annual recitals in 2018 and was the soloist for the evening.

In her Beethoven Triple Bill she performed three of Beethoven's piano sonatas, each one representing a different period of the composer's creative output.

The venue was ideally suited to the intimacy of a solo recital; the audience was seated "in the round" so to speak, with the piano being in the centre and the fine acoustics in the church enhanced by its high vaulted ceiling.

After Haydn and Mozart, whose sonatas were intended to be played in the salons of the aristocracy, Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas were the first cycle of major piano pieces suited to concert hall performance and are recognised to be one of the most important collections in the history of music.

They provide a vivid commentary on the composer's life and allow us to see a great and tragic personality reacting to circumstances around him, including the despair of his increasing deafness.

Anita began with Sonata *Pathétique* in C minor Op 13, composed in 1798 when Beethoven was just 27.

The striking solemnity of the opening chords grabbed the audience's attention



Picture: John Downing

Moving: Anita D'Attellis played three Beethoven sonatas

immediately, plunging us into Beethoven's troubled world. The following *Allegro* passage with its incessant bass tremolo octaves was carefully controlled, the dynamics rising and falling in sympathy with the turbulent journey through an assortment of keys and shifts in mood.

The *Adagio Cantabile*, played very slowly and perhaps overly measured at times, nonetheless projected a strong melodic line with good balance between the parts. The *Rondo*, a mix of pathos and humour, flowed well with its musically shaped phrases and crisply clean runs.

The *Waldstein Sonata* Op 53, composed just five years later in 1803 during Beethoven's "middle" period, is on a whole new scale and recognised to be one of his greatest and most challenging sonatas.

It demands virtuosic techniques such as a simultaneous pedal trill, high melody and rapid left hand runs, as well as many glissandi.

Anita took these challenges in her stride with great energy,

demonstrating not just a powerful technique but her musical insight; the profound harmonies of the short middle section brought a sense of stillness and space between the thunderous complexity of the outer movements.

The final work, Sonata in E major Op 109, composed in 1809, was a return to Beethoven's smaller, more intimate style, with the focus on the third movement's theme and variations.

Anita brought out the special lyricism of the simple "theme" beautifully, all the while highlighting exquisite melodic and harmonic shifts, ornaments and embellishments which suggest the romanticism of later composers.

It was particularly fitting to hear these sonatas at the beginning of this significant year, the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth.

While we may hear plenty more performances of his music in the coming months, for the lucky members of last week's audience this will surely be one of the most memorable.

Maureen Idowu

Ex-Henley MP saw how to get the ball loose from the scrum

BORIS Johnson was the editor of the *Spectator* and the *Daily Telegraph's* star columnist.

But he wasn't content to go down in history as a Fleet Street legend.

Nor was he prepared to sit on his laurels as the MP for Henley.

No. He wanted a statue in Parliament Square. Maybe even Trafalgar Square.

Having declared at a young age his ambition to be "world king", he arguably still has time to achieve this unlikely sounding goal.

A number of biographies have already been devoted to Boris's life and times.

We can look forward to them being revised and updated in due course.

Boris will no doubt get around to writing his memoirs one day. In the meantime, why not a play?

Let history record that the crisis that eventually helped propel Boris through the front door of Number 10 was not of his making — even if he had played a bit fast and loose with some of the finer details of his despatches from Brussels back in the day.

Jonathan Maitland's play takes as its starting point a real-life dinner party that Boris and his wife Marina Wheeler hosted at their Islington home in February 2016. The guests were

Review

The Last Temptation of Boris Johnson
Theatre Royal Windsor
Monday, February 10

Michael Gove, Sarah Vine, and the *Evening Standard's* owner, Evgeny Lebedev.

The main topic of discussion was, of course, the then-impending referendum on Brexit.

While Gove had been a significant player in David Cameron's government, the same could not really be said of Boris.

But at this vital juncture in our national life, both men faced a momentous decision over whether to back "leave" or "remain".

We all now know which way they jumped — but this was the moment of truth.

Maitland adds to the drama by freezing the "real life" action and having Will Barton's Boris banter with the shades of Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher and an audience-conscious Tony Blair.

There are some big laughs. At the very start of the play, just ahead of being interviewed by Tim Wallers's Huw Edwards, Boris frantically ruffles his hair and untucks his shirt.

When an effusive Evgeny Lebedev tells him "You can put the 'great' back into

Great Britain because you are a great man," Barton's jocularly deadpan "Good point" is so convincing a response that you briefly wonder if the real Boris has snuck on to the stage.

The same could almost be said of Emma Davies's Mrs Thatcher — whose entry into the drama is one of the production's visual coups.

In the event it is Bill Champion's Churchill who seems to persuade Boris to plump for leave when he intones: "Sometimes it is better to lose honourably than to win."

The suggestion that Boris was shocked by the result of the referendum is fair play, but in that case the notion that his choice of side was cynically calculated to secure career advancement doesn't really stack up.

Had leave lost, David Cameron would still be PM, Britain would still be in the EU, and we would be due a general election in May.

Set in 2029, the second half of the play proved of rather less interest as far as this reviewer was concerned, though having Michael Gove take holy orders was pretty funny.

Suffice to say, I'll look forward to reading about what really happened on that fateful night in 2016 in Boris's memoirs.

Until Saturday.

Matthew Wilson