

Title: A POPSTAT Dataset of Filmgoing in Portsmouth, England in 1934

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NB: The information comes in two parts - this note and an Excel table.

Guidance Notes to the Excel table:

Portsmouth cinemas screened 825 films during 1934, each of which appeared at least once on a weekly or half-weekly programme of one of the 21 cinemas listed in Table 1 below. The dataset has been constructed from the film programmes advertised daily in the Portsmouth Evening News, and includes all entertainment films longer than 30 minutes running time. Therefore, it excludes shorts – serial episodes, cartoons, filmed sporting events such as the Baer v. Carnera boxing match, and filmed social events, such as the Duke of Kent's wedding. However, this very large number of films includes those films that had been first screened in 1933, and which, by the early months of 1934, were appearing at lower-order cinemas. As a result, the dataset does not include a complete record of these films.

The Excel table, "A POPSTAT Dataset of Filmgoing in Portsmouth, England in 1934" is an ordered list of the POPSTAT scores of all the films shown in the sample cinemas, and it constitutes the POPSTAT Index of film popularity computed for Portsmouth for the year 1934.

I devised the POPSTAT (popularity statistic) methodology to get around the problem of counting each cinema as equal by estimating a proxy measure of the *relative* box-office revenues earned by any one film screened among a population of cinemas. For each film at each cinema, a POPSTAT value is the product of a weight given to the cinema at which a particular film is screened, a weight depicting the length of run of that film in weeks at that cinema, and a weight depicting that film's billing status on the film programme of that cinema. By summing the POPSTAT values from all the cinemas at which a film was screened a POPSTAT score is obtained for that film in relation to that sample population of cinemas, in this case, the cinemas of the City of Portsmouth in 1934; see the final columns of the dataset for this score.

In contrast to my earlier Bolton, Brighton, and national studies (see Sedgwick, J., *Popular Filmgoing in 1930s Britain: a Choice of Pleasures*, Exeter, Exeter University Press (2000)), this current dataset makes a distinction between leading and supporting films on a double bill programme, awarding a higher weight (0.8) for films more prominently advertised, an equal weight (0.5) where they shared the billing, and a lower weight (0.2) where a film was clearly depicted as being the bottom part of the bill. The billing status of film(s) at any one cinema sum to 1.0. The possibilities are a single-bill programme (1.0); a double-bill programme with a major and minor attraction (0.8+0.2); or a double-bill programme in which both films were billed equally (0.5+0.5). In the previous studies, the last of these arrangements was assumed for all double-bill programmes. The reason for doing this is that the previous practice of awarding equal weights for each film on a double bill programme underestimated the relative contribution of leading films, and over-estimated that of the supporting films.

The column entries in the dataset for each screening of each film are:

1. Film
2. Cinema of first/joint first screening
3. Cinema Weight - an index measure of the box-office potential of the cinema relative to the average of the population of cinemas, where the average = 1.
4. Date
5. Number of weeks that the film was screened
6. Was the film a single feature? 1 if yes, 0.5 if part of double bill.
7. If single feature, s. If double feature but top billing, t; joint billing, joint; and if second billing, f.
8. If billing was s, 1; if t, 0.8; if joint, 0.5; if f, 0.2.
9. Weighted score is Cinema Weight (item 3), multiplied by the number of weeks the film was screened (item 5), multiplied by the billing status of the film (item 8).
10. The non-weighted score is the same as in item 9 but this time a simple distinction is made between single or double bill and hence item 8 is replaced by item 6.

The final two columns aggregate the weighted and non-weighted scores for each film.

Table 1: *Portsmouth Cinemas in 1934*

Cinema	Owner	Run Status (Weekly Changes)	Seating Capacity	Lowest Price (d)	Highest Price (d)	Mid-Price (d)	Revenue Potential (£) ¹	Cinema Weight ²
Apollo	Local Owner	1st (Mostly Once)	1257	6	18	12	62.85	1.11
Arcade	Local Owner	4th (Twice)	504	5	12	8.5	17.85	0.32
Carlton	Local Circuit	2nd (Mostly Twice)	1294	7	18	12.5	67.40	1.19
Commodore	ABC	1st (Once)	1000	7	18	12.5	52.08	0.92
Cosham/ Waverley	Local Owner	4th (Twice)	545	4	22	13	29.52	0.52
Empire	Local Owner	3rd/4th (Twice)	574	7	15	11	26.31	0.46
Gaiety	ABC	1st Mostly Once	1382	7	18	12.5	71.98	1.27
Majestic	Local Owner	(1st) Once	1095	7	18	12.5	57.03	1.01
Princes	Local Owner	1st Once	1488	7	18	12.5	77.50	1.37
Queens	Local Owner	3rd/4th (Twice)	452	6	12	9	16.95	0.30
Palace	Local Circuit	1st (Mostly Once)	626	6	15	10.5	27.39	0.48
Plaza	APPH	1st (Once)	1770	7	24	15.5	114.31	2.02
Regal	Local Owner	3rd (Twice)	828	7	15	11	37.95	0.67
Regent	APPH	1st (Once)	1972	7	24	15.5	127.36	2.25
Rialto	Local Owner	2nd/3rd (Twice)	1250	7	15	11	57.29	1.01
Scala	Local Owner	3rd (Twice)	743	7	24	15.5	47.99	0.85
Shaftesbury	Local Circuit	1st (Mostly Once)	1127	7	16	11.5	54.00	0.95
South Parade Pier	Local Owner	4th (Twice)	496	4	18	11	22.73	0.40
Theatre Royal	Local Circuit	2nd (Once)	1418	6	18	12	70.90	1.25
Tivoli	Local Owner	1st (Once)	1752	9	15	12	87.60	1.55
Victoria	Union Circuit	2nd (Mostly Twice)	1407	3	18	10.5	61.56	1.09

Sources: City of Portsmouth Minutes of the City Council, 1934, 1935; Kinematograph Year Book of 1935; Portsmouth Evening News for 1934. All sources found at Portsmouth City Library.

¹ For each cinema this is given as the seating capacity multiplied by the mid-range price.

² For each cinema this is derived by expressing its revenue potential as a proportion of the mean revenue potential of all cinemas in the population.

