Jesus At The Movies

OLLI Spring Semester – 2017

Based on “Jesus At The Movies” by W. Barnes Tatum

Presented By: Jack Dalby
The King of Kings

Directed By: Cecil B. DeMille - 1927
Did You Know That...

1) One of the last, great, silent films.
2) The movie cost over two million dollars. Premiered on 4/19/27 at the Gaiety Theatre in NYC.
3) DeMille claimed that his movie told the story of Jesus to more people than any other medium except the Bible (800 million).
4) DeMille sought the advice of religious advisers to ensure accuracy. (Hail Caesar video)
5) DeMille encouraged prayer on the set, including Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist.
6) The actors contracts stipulated that they must lead exemplary lives away from the set.
7) The actor playing Jesus, H.B. Warner, could only speak to DeMille while in costume.
8) DeMille revised scenes and titles asked for my Jewish groups.
The Greatest Story Ever Told

Directed By: George Stevens - 1965
Did You Know That...

1) George Stevens wanted to film in Israel, but settled on sites in the American southwest, especially Glen Canyon in Utah.
2) The movie’s 10 million budget swelled to 20 million.
3) The character of Jesus was played by Swedish actor, Max Von Sydow.
4) Supporting actors included, Pat Boone, Charlton Heston, Van Heflin, Angela Lansbury, Sidney Poitier and John Wayne to name just a few.
5) Critics noted that Jesus was in competition with not only a who’s-who of Hollywood stars, but also a landscape familiar to fans of countless “westerns.”
6) The movie was 260 minutes long with a formal intermission.
7) The devil, played by Donald Pleasance, is called the dark hermit.
8) The movie opened one month before the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.
Jesus Christ Superstar

Directed By: Norman Jewison - 1973
Did You Know That...

1) The movie is based on a musical and gives us a singing Jesus.
2) Godspell was released the same year.
3) Music was composed by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber.
4) Started as a single song; became a two disc album; next came a touring rock opera then a 1971 stage production before being adapted for film.
5) The original Broadway Jesus, Jeff Fenholt, went on to become a televangelist.
6) The movie was filmed in Israel.
The Last Temptation Of Christ

Directed By: Martin Scorsese - 1988
Did You Know That...

1) The movie is based on a 1955 novel by Nikos Kazantzakis. Translated from Greek to English in 1960.

2) The Jesus story is used by Kazantzakis to examine his own lifelong struggle between the flesh and the spirit.

3) Scorsese waited to make the movie, directing Mean Streets, Taxi Driver and Raging Bull in the interim.

4) A letter writing protest convinced Paramount to drop their support of the movie in 1984. Universal agreed to finance the movie in 1987. Shooting was moved from Israel to Morocco.

5) Jerry Falwell called for a boycott of all theaters showing the film.

6) Ironically, Universal studio chairman, Lew Wasserman, himself a Jew, was accused by Christian groups of fomenting anti-Jewish hatred.
The Passion Of The Christ

Directed By: Mel Gibson - 2004
Did You Know That...

1) The film was released on Ash Wednesday, February 25, 2004.

2) Mel Gibson self financed the $25 million film.

3) Gibson directed the movie. His hand makes an on screen appearance holding a nail during the crucifixion.

4) The film was shot in Matera, Italy.

5) James Caviezel plays Jesus. He also starred in the TV show, Person of Interest, through 2016.

6) Gibson originally wanted his actors to speak in Aramaic and Latin without subtitles.

7) The movie grossed $350 million by Easter weekend.