

Up the pictures

They didn't have children's Saturday morning cinema when I was a boy. My first three trips to the pictures were for studies in imperialism: *Zulu*, *Goldfinger* and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the latter, of course, an allegory of British colonial occupation of pygmy mining communities. I reckon it's this that's left me with a taste for 'art house' cinema, the more obscure, the more foreign, the better. So I'm fortunate to live within popcorn-flicking distance of the Duke of York's.

The Duke of York's celebrates its 100th birthday this month. It's the oldest purpose-built cinema in the country still showing films, and it once came in the top 10 most comfortable, which is credible as long as you don't sit on one of the broken seats and finish up on the

floor. I love the Duke of York's. It's one of the best things about Brighton, and so unlike the odious Odeon, where people leave before the closing credits have stopped rolling. Do they not care who the key grip was?

My finest moment was being the sole member of the audience for a Wednesday afternoon screening of a satire on the Korean pop music industry, the joy of seemingly having it put on just for me only spoiled by a couple who came in late. They must have been even more clueless about the plot than I was.

The Duke of York's charm lies in its eccentricities, such as the cramped



vestibule – did they really purpose-build it like that? When it's busy the various queues, for the box office, the cake counter and the auditorium itself, get tangled up. More than once I've queued for a ticket and finished up with a Ben & Jerry's.

Then there are the legs on the roof, erected by a previous owner who brought them with him from the theatre in Oxford he had them made for. I bet he takes the light bulbs when he moves house.

And there was always something else about the Duke of York's I couldn't quite put my finger on until I discovered it's built on the site of the old Amber Ale Brewery. That explains everything.

Phil Mellows reviews the films he sees at the Duke of York's on his website at www.philmellows.com/PhilMellows_Reviews.htm