

Around the Town – History

Around the Town was first trade shown at the Shaftsbury Pavilion, London, on the 30th October 1919. The production company, *Around the Town Ltd.*, was co-directed by Aron Hamburger, inventor of the *Polychromide* colour process (in 1918) and later director of *British Polychromide Ltd.* National distribution of the series began on the 8th December 1919 (London having received the first issue on the 4th) and the series was ‘exclusively controlled’ and distributed by *The Gaumont Company Ltd.*¹

Around the Town began as a 750ft reel released once a week, described as ‘varied interest’ but with an emphasis on the Arts and Literature. Its first slogan was ‘Beauty and Celebrity Everywhere’. The ‘town’ mentioned in the title was most definitely London, a number of the first issues began with a scenic tour of parts of the city, and the advertising material often featured outlines of the London skyline behind its central images. The implied intention of the cinemagazine in this advertising was to allow the public a glimpse into Society. The series was initially well received by the press, as a novelty in cinema programmes, *The Times* commenting that *Around the Town* was ‘visualizing gossip columns ... so popular of late’.²

As well as its usual fare of fashion, sports, science and theatre, *Around the Town* ran a beauty competition in 1920, ‘*The Golden Apple Competition*’, whose winner, Winifred Nelson, subsequently appeared two minor British movies. This was followed by a *Screen Joke Competition* in 1921. This self-promotion may well have been aimed at combating the new competition that *Around the Town* itself was facing in the guise of Pathé’s new cinemagazine, *Eve’s Film Review*. In 1921, *Around the Town*’s slogan was changed to ‘The Original and Best Weekly Review’, presumably as a poke at their new rival. At this point *Gaumont* also chose to emphasise the appeal that *Around the Town* had to men, as well as its predominantly female audience. In addition, their 1921 advertising campaign focused on the ‘prestige’ conferred on the magazines by its coverage of the great and good. In 1922, *Gaumont* went one step further with their attempts to increase consumption of *Around the Town*, launching a poster competition in association with the *London Evening News* with a first prize of £1,000.

Gaumont announced their intention to continue producing and distributing *Around the Town* in the *Bioscope* of January 4th 1923, boasting that ‘Everybody who is Anybody is screen-interviewed in ‘*Around the Town*’’. This however, was not to be, and *Around the Town* was no longer mentioned in the trade press after 1923. This may well be connected to the fact that Mr. H. T. Redfern, Editor and Secretary of *Around the Town* since his demobilisation in 1919, left *Gaumont* in January 1923. This move seems to have coincided with bigger changes in the structure of *Around the Town*’s parent company, as January 1923 was also the date that Messrs. Bromhead took sole control of the *Gaumont Company Ltd.* The last issue of *Around the Town* that we have record of was released on 5th July 1923.

¹ *Bioscope*, 30/11/1919, p.19

² *Kinematograph Weekly*, 27/11/1919