

This Gun For Hire (PG)

Set in 1942, this noir is based on Graham Greene's novel of the same name. Seven members watched the film in the Westlake Room on Wednesday 13th May.

Ostensibly starring Robert Preston and Veronica Lake, the film was really an introduction to Alan Ladd – his first major role. Ladd plays Phillip Raven, a cold hearted hired killer. After despatching a blackmailer, Raven's employer (Willard Gates, played by Laird Cregar) double crosses him by paying him in \$10 bills that have been notified to the police as stolen. Police Lieutenant Michael Crane (Robert Preston) is assigned the case, but Raven eludes him and escapes on a train, inconveniently sat next to Ellen (Crane's girlfriend, played by Lake). The film develops as Ellen starts to sympathise with Raven after he explains his background, particularly his early years, with chase scenes on railroad tracks, before the denouement in the head office of the company that employs Gates.

The initial reaction to the film was “they don't make them like that any more (thankfully)”. The early misogynistic attitude of Raven was particularly grating, and even Ellen was written as a woman dependant on her man (and often filmed in soft focus). So a film very much of its time...

One member reflected that there were similarities with the second world war film, *Went The Day Well*, but that film was more realistically handled than *This Gun For Hire*.