

“Simples, divertissants, mais nuls”: Vichy cinema and the everyday
Steve Wharton, The University of Bath

ABSTRACT

The title of this paper, taken from a comment attributed to Goebbels in respect of his views on what French cinema should be, is in fact the very opposite of cinematic production during the *années noires*. Reorganised as an industry, with state-provided frameworks for cinema programmes and in some cases content, film in France merits our attention as an illustration of how the everyday can be far from *quotidien*.

In examining the mechanisms of production, some outputs – *grand film*, documentary and newsreel – and their promotion, we shall explore the way in which the apparently banal film programme offers an insight into the politics and society, as well as the culture, of France during the Occupation. We shall look in particular at André Robert and his *Arts, Sciences, Voyages* screenings of documentaries in Paris from 1941-1944, accompanied by special events to launch them. Designed to promote documentary as ‘a good watch’ but also subtly underscoring the tenets of the regime, these screenings offer an interesting case study of how ‘ordinary’ or everyday cinema played its part. What did Vichy seek to achieve, how was it done, and are people’s reactions as expected?