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## The Great British Film and Television Show

### New Mediatheque offers unparalleled free public access to the BFI National Archive

Over 225 hours of Archive film and television material can be seen by the public when BFI Southbank opens on 14 March. Visitors to the state-of-the-art Mediatheque, one of the exciting new facilities at the BFI's expanded and rejuvenated building at the heart of London's South Bank cultural centre, will be able to view more than 300 titles, completely for free.

Many of the moving images have not been seen since they were originally made and most will be new to today's generation. The Mediatheque will become a door to the BFI National Archive and is another ambitious step forward by the BFI to open up public access to the nation's film and television heritage.

The opening programme mixes popular, well-known titles alongside less familiar films and television programmes, as well as some out and out quirky material. **Essentially British** is a collection that explores Britain and British identities with 100 titles dating back as far as 1900. Visitors to the Mediatheque can call up images of Victorian tourists at Stonehenge, see life in Britain during the war as depicted to audiences in the US or take a sweep through the history and traditions of cricket. They will be able to see scenes of communities in the 1950s linked by their connection to the coal mining industry, and a film that follows the fortunes of young punk rockers in Northern Ireland.

In **London Calling** we show off some of the capital's hidden or forgotten glory through the eyes of filmmakers throughout the 20th century. We include some of the very earliest film in the Archive, including **Blackfriars Bridge**, a 25 second film from 1896. In a film from 1903 we are taken on a journey round central London taking in familiar sights and some that have long since disappeared. Visitors to London Zoo today will be familiar with the Modernist animal compounds, but in a 1937 documentary film we can see how London was at the centre of a design revolution. As each successive generation rues the demise of their favourite part of London life, whether it be the Carnaby Street 'scene' or lunch at the top of the Post Office Tower, they can relive those happy times through the magic of archive moving image.

2007 marks the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery and the Mediatheque commemorates this significant date with **Exodus** – a collection of 25 or more documentaries and TV dramas that tell the story of Britain's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade.

Each month the Mediatheque will take the more adventurous visitor on a trip into the world of the odd, the esoteric, the delightful and the downright

dangerous. From early appearances by now-famous people to strange fragments of film that we know next-to-nothing about, **Pandora's Box** is the home of the cult films of tomorrow. Where else could you see Jude Law's big screen debut, a juggling bluebottle, nuns at bayonet point or Sean Connery helping to promote the RNIB all together in the same place?

March and April's highlights include an elephant's funeral pyre in *Lights and Shades on the Bostock Circus Farm* (1911); *The Scarlet Woman* (1924), Evelyn Waugh's Catholic fantasy filmed in his back garden; a very young Joan Collins demonstrating the by-products of coal in *Facts and Fancies* (1951) and a terrifyingly amorous Germaine Greer in *Darling, Do You Love Me?* (1968).

Since early 2006, the BFI has been digitising film and television material from its collection specifically to show in the Mediatheque. This hugely expensive digitisation project has been funded through a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Mediatheque's opening programme of more than 300 titles will be added to each month as more archive moving image is digitised. By the end of 2007 it is expected that over 700 titles or 550 hours of material will be available. Hewlett-Packard is providing the technology to power the Mediatheque and is a principal sponsor of BFI Southbank.

The BFI aims to establish a number of Mediatheques around the UK and is keen to work in partnership with local multi-arts centres and regional film archives to create opportunities for people all over Britain to experience their national and local heritage captured on film. The first partnership to be agreed is with QUAD, the new £10 million centre for contemporary arts, film and media in Derby, where a Mediatheque will open with a programme of national and regional archive film in late 2008.

There has never been greater interest in the history of film and television in this country as has been demonstrated by the success of the BFI/ BBC co-productions *The Lost World of Mitchell & Kenyon* and *The Lost World of Friese-Greene*. Now people of all age groups, whether they be families, students, teachers, nostalgia buffs or the merely curious, will find something to whet their appetites for more archive footage with a visit to the Mediatheque. They will be able to sit back in one of the 14 bookable viewing stations and use the database to search for an entire feature film to enjoy, take a quick look at fondly remembered television, or browse to discover unexpected delights.

For programme listings and other highlights for May 2007 and beyond visit [www.bfi.org.uk/mediatheque](http://www.bfi.org.uk/mediatheque) (from 13 March. Also see Notes to Editors).

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**Notes to Editors**

The Mediatheque will be open Tuesday – Sunday from 11am – 9pm and Bank Holiday Mondays throughout the year. Every month new specially selected programmes will be added to the Mediatheque's collections.

The Mediatheque's dynamic interior design was created by internationally acclaimed architects David Adjaye Associates. Mr Adjaye comments:

'This is a unique opportunity for Adjaye Associates to work with the new archive media of the future and to contribute to the debate about the kind of environment these media labs have the potential to be. The BFI are an extraordinary institution and this project is really the DNA for something which should have international significance.'

Selected pictures and cleared clips from the Mediatheque programme are available for television or radio by arrangement.

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archive, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

### **Coming soon for May 2007**

- **Play for Today** – a complete retrospective (300 titles) of the groundbreaking BBC drama strand including *Blue Remembered Hills*, *Nuts in May* and *Abigail's Party*. 30 titles will be launched in May followed by new additions every month.

Other programme highlights for later in 2007 include:

- **The Way We Ate** – A social history of food, eating and feasting in Britain – from rationing to Fanny Cradock to the rise and rise of the chicken tikka masala.
- 100 titles which reveal the hidden history of Black Britons
- 100 titles reflecting lesbian and gay experience in British film and television

### **Acknowledgements**

The BFI would like to thank the following for generously supporting the Mediatheque:

