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CRIMINAL SILENTS

The British Silent Cinema Festival will celebrate its tenth anniversary (26th – 29th April 2007) in Nottingham with a series of major re-discoveries on the theme **Underworld: Crime and Deviancy in the British Silent Film** and the inaugural **Rachael Low lecture** by **Professor Sir Christopher Frayling**.

The festival focuses on British cinema 1895 –1930. It is organised in partnership between the Broadway Cinema Nottingham and the BFI by is programmed by **Bryony Dixon**, curator for silent film, BFI National Archive and **Laraine Porter**, director, Broadway Nottingham. The Festival aims to showcase the vast collection of films, fiction and non-fiction, produced in Britain before the advent of sound, principally from the holdings of the BFI National Archive, the UK's national collection of film and television.

This year's festival features legendary detectives, true crime and the sensational thrills that only vice, corruption and scandal can inspire. From the first ever crime film, the newly discovered **Arrest of a Pickpocket** (1895), to **Hitchcock's** Ripperesque fantasy **The Lodger** (1926), the programme offers rich pickings.

The festival will reveal how film-makers and audiences have always been fascinated by a glimpse of the criminal underworld. British cinema was from its earliest beginnings obsessed with thieves, murderers, criminal masterminds, serial killers and international terrorists.

Josef von Sternberg's masterpiece **Underworld** (1927) is often cited as the first gangster film. **Clive Brook**, von Sternberg's leading man, in **Underworld** was a major British actor of the silent period. A special screening of this rarely screened film will offer a chance to see this great actor in one of his finest performances. But there is world of British cinema with a claim to precede it.

True crime films include notorious Nottingham folk-hero **Charlie Peace** in **The Life Story of Charlie Peace** (1905), the newly restored 1906 **Story of the Kelly Gang**, **The Life of John Lee: the Man They Couldn't Hang** (1921) and **Mitchell & Kenyon's** pioneering crime reconstruction **The Arrest of Goudie** (1901).

Fictional crime can be just as terrifying as true crime. The festival will feature a host of gripping silent serials once the staple of everyday cinema-going with heroes and villains such as **Fu Manchu**, **Sherlock Holmes** or the terrifying **Ultus: The Man from the Dead** (which only survives in a fragment) seen alongside the macabre tales of Fred Paul's **Grand Guignol**.

The inaugural **Rachael Low Lecture** will be delivered by **Professor Sir Christopher Frayling** on Thurs 26th April. Rachael Low is one of the most important figures in the history of the study of early British cinema. Her pioneering studies published as *The History of the British Film 1895 – 1929* (BFI) are an unparalleled source for students of the subject and it remains the unchallenged standard text in its field. Now in her eighties this annual lecture series will celebrate her unique contribution to the field of silent cinema studies while championing the use of film archives for wider research.

A host of distinguished experts will be delivering presentations during the festival and these include **Matthew Sweet** on **Eille Norwood** (the most prolific Sherlock Holmes), **Andrew Higson** on Crime and Deviancy in the Picture House, **Gerry Turvey** on “Another of those sex films” - The Transgressive Films of **Harold Weston** 1914-17 and **Lawrence Napper** ‘Exploiting the Dead Actress: **Billie Carleton** and The Case of the Shocking Life Drama’

All films at the Festival are accompanied by world-class musicians and the films are presented to the highest standard.

The British Silent Film Festival is the only film festival in the UK dedicated solely to the presentation of British silent film.

For more details www.britishsilentcinema.com or www.bfi.org.uk

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Festival programmers Bryony Dixon and Laraine Porter are available for interview as are selected lecturers.

