

A COLOUR BOX

Len Lye's pioneering **A Colour Box** (UK 1935) is the third title in the BFI's archival shorts initiative bringing the UK's national film heritage to a wider cinema-going public. Short films drawn from the BFI's archival collections are supplied free of charge to cinemas across the UK for screening before main features.

A Colour Box is one of the great classics of British animation. It was created by the application of paint directly onto film stock itself, dispensing with the need for a camera. Len Lye's dizzying parade of dancing lines, squiggles, dots and arabesques is set to a joyful Cuban soundtrack. The result is a daring and delightful three-minute movie which will be enjoyed by audiences of every kind.

John Grierson was shown the film by Len Lye and was so impressed by it that he suggested adding some words extolling the value of the parcel post which are incorporated into the final minute of the film. The film was then bought by the General Post Office and Lye was offered a job at the GPO Film Unit. This is probably one of the most innovative uses of film in the history of advertising and a tribute to the instincts of the GPO Film Unit under John Grierson. The film is presented with the kind permission of Royal Mail and The British Postal Museum & Archive.

The original handpainted elements of **A Colour Box** have been painstakingly preserved and restored by the BFI National Archive and are as fresh and bright as when they were first seen on British cinema screens.

Len Lye was born in New Zealand in 1901. He emigrated to London in the 1920s where he became involved in the art world. His animation work is associated with the stylish formal innovation of the British Documentary Movement. He worked extensively as a painter and sculptor and died in 1980.

A Colour Box / UK 1935 / Director: Len Lye/ Produced by the GPO Film Unit / 3 mins / Cert U

For more information see:

www.bfi.org.uk/colourbox

www.postalheritage.org.uk

www.royalmail.com

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Press contact: BFI Press Office

Brian Robinson, tel: 020 7957 8940 or email: brian.robinson@bfi.org.uk

Notes to Editors

1. For more information on the BFI, including details of the BFI's theatrical touring programmes, DVDs and books, visit www.bfi.org.uk
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.
2. The BFI National Archive is one of the world's largest and busiest archives. It contains more than 230,000 films (features, shorts and documentaries) and more than 675,000 television programmes. The collection also contains internationally renowned holdings of posters, stills and designs along with the papers of major directors.

The collection is made available through public screenings at festivals and cinemas throughout the UK including regular screenings at the BFI's National Film Theatre, alongside video and DVD releases, and online through the BFI's screenonline website.

The Mediatheque on BFI Southbank opened in March 2007 and it is hoped to establish a range of satellite facilities across the UK which will allow free access to curated programmes of film and television from the archive. The archive is regularly used by documentary film-makers for its extensive range of material from across more than 110 years of film-making.

3. **A Colour Box** will screen with Patrice Leconte's **My Best Friend** (opening 11 May) at over 35 venues including Cineworld and City Screen cinemas and a range of independent arthouses, courtesy of Optimum Releasing.
4. A selection of images for press use taken from the film are available at www.image.net in the section marked BFI releases