



**BFI PRESS RELEASE**

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## David Lean Centenary

Sir **David Lean** (1908 – 1991) was one of the greatest British film-makers of all time. This year is the centenary of his birth and to mark this occasion the **BFI** celebrates his prolific career.

This UK-wide celebration marks the conclusion of a three-year project by the BFI National Archive, working with Granada International and Studio Canal, to restore the first ten of the 16 feature films directed by David Lean: ***In Which We Serve*** (1942), ***This Happy Breed*** (1944), ***Blithe Spirit*** (1945), ***Brief Encounter*** (1945), ***Great Expectations*** (1946), ***Oliver Twist*** (1948), ***The Passionate Friends*** (1948), ***Madeleine*** (1949), ***The Sound Barrier*** (1952) and ***Hobson's Choice*** (1953).

This ambitious and demanding £1 million restoration programme has involved everything from the hand-cleaning of the original negatives through to image and sound repair with the latest digital technology. It will ensure the long-term preservation of Lean's films for future generations, generously funded by The David Lean Foundation.

The BFI's centenary celebrations include the theatrical release of the rarely seen ***The Passionate Friends*** (1948) on 6 June; a major two-month retrospective at **BFI Southbank** and a nationwide tour of the ten newly restored titles.

### ***The Passionate Friends*** (1948)

**UK Release date: 6 June 2008**

Newly restored by the BFI and Granada International, ***The Passionate Friends*** is one of the least known films in David Lean's distinguished canon, yet this absorbing love story, a fascinating companion piece to *Brief Encounter*, constitutes a significant rediscovery.

**Ann Todd** stars as the enigmatic, emotionally reticent Mary who has chosen a comfortable life with her rich banker husband (**Claude Rains**) over romantic passion with her first love Steven (**Trevor Howard**). Five years into her marriage, she encounters Steven again at a New Year's Eve ball and the old fires are rekindled. The banker is suspicious, and – following some scenes of almost unbearable tension – Mary decides once more to follow her head and not her heart. The War intervenes, and a couple of years later the old lovers meet again by accident while on holiday in Switzerland - this time with truly devastating consequences.

## Rediscover David Lean: Retrospective

### June – July, BFI Southbank

To celebrate the centenary of Sir David Lean, throughout June and July BFI Southbank will present a retrospective of his work, screening films that David Lean directed as well as some that he edited, plus a programme packed full of events. These will range from presentations by experts to screenings introduced by those associated with individual titles. Many events will be illustrated with materials drawing on the BFI Archive's David Lean collection. We will also present the opportunity to see works made for UK television about him and his career.

The retrospective opens with a David Lean tribute evening offering a chance to hear from special guests. This opening night gala will include film clips as well as personal memories.

The centrepiece of this two-month season will be the titles which have been meticulously restored to their original splendour by the BFI National Archive. The latter part of the season will include ***The Bridge on the River Kwai*** (1957), ***Doctor Zhivago*** (1965) and spectacular 70mm screenings of ***Lawrence of Arabia*** (1962) and ***Ryan's Daughter*** (1970).

Throughout the season, BFI Southbank's **Mezzanine Gallery** will feature an exhibition of posters, production sketches and press books revealing the immense importance placed on design by David Lean throughout his entire career, from a teeming Dickensian London to wide desert vistas.

### National Tour

From mid-June, the ten newly restored titles, all made in Britain in the 1940s and 50s, will be screened at cinemas across the UK. For critic David Thomson, the films of this period constitute Lean's greatest achievement: "They are lively, stirring, and an inspiration – they make you want to go out and make movies, they are so in love with the screen's power."

The tour is organised by the BFI and Park Circus in association with Optimum Releasing. For venues see: [www.bfi.org.uk/lean](http://www.bfi.org.uk/lean)

### About David Lean

David Lean first made a name for himself in the British cinema of the 1930s as a highly respected editor. By the end of the decade, working on such prestige productions as **Anthony Asquith's *Pygmalion*** (1938), he was as familiar a presence on the sound stage as in the cutting-room, demonstrating an instinctive command over the entire film-making process before he made his *début* as a director with **Noël Coward's *In Which We Serve***. He went on to collaborate with Coward on *This Happy Breed*, *Blithe Spirit* and *Brief Encounter*.

His genius for the kind of popular, visual narrative that could hold a mass audience won him unrivalled commercial success in his lifetime, but also the comparative disregard of critics who increasingly upheld personal expression as the measure of artistic worth.

Chief among his sometimes overlooked qualities was an extraordinary eye for the telling image, which was behind some of the most breathtaking moments in film history. But equally impressive was the discipline with

which he tied this flair for spectacle closely to the needs of story and character.

Lean was a film-maker who worked on the largest possible scale, yet in his fascination with themes of love and obsession he created a cinema far more personal than has previously been recognised.

The BFI's David Lean Centenary offers us a rare opportunity to rediscover and celebrate this unique talent. None of this would have been possible without the generous support of the **David Lean Foundation**, **Granada International** and **Park Circus**, to whom we owe a massive debt of gratitude. Our thanks, too, to Studio Canal and Film 4.



The David Lean Foundation



PARK CIRCUS

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**Notes to Editors:**

**David Lean's *The Passionate Friends* is released in cinemas on 6 June; the complete retrospective: *Rediscover David Lean, plays* at BFI Southbank through June and July; a selection of David Lean's films will also screen at cinemas across the UK [www.bfi.org.uk/lean](http://www.bfi.org.uk/lean)**

Two of David Lean's newly restored films have been selected to screen at the 61<sup>st</sup> Cannes Film Festival. Gleaming restorations of ***The Passionate Friends*** (1948) and ***This Happy Breed*** (1944) are included in the Cannes Classics programme, with Gala screenings at the Salle Buñuel on Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 May respectively.

Kevin Brownlow's definitive biography, *David Lean: A Biography* (Faber & Faber UK) will be re-issued by Faber & Faber later in 2008.

**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.**

**Booking information**

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £8.60, concs £6.25 Members pay £1 less on any ticket. Website [www.bfi.org.uk/southbank](http://www.bfi.org.uk/southbank)

**\*\*\* PICTURE DESK ALERT \*\*\***

**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) under BFI / David Lean**