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A restoration by the BFI National Archive

ACCIDENT

(UK 1967)

Directed by Joseph Losey

Written by Harold Pinter

Starring: Dirk Bogarde, Stanley Baker, Jacqueline Sassard, Michael York

105 min / cert 12A

A BFI release

Release date: 5 June 2009

Opening Venues: BFI Southbank plus other venues tbc

Newly restored by the BFI National Archive to mark Joseph Losey's centenary this year, *Accident* will be released in UK cinemas on 5 June, following its presentation in the Classics section of this year's Cannes Film Festival. *Accident* was Losey's second collaboration with Harold Pinter and Dirk Bogarde, and many consider this subtle, witty study of simmering class conflict and sexual tension to be Losey and Pinter's finest work together.

The film plays out in Oxford over a few languid, hot summer weeks. Stephen (Dirk Bogarde) is a fortyish academic with a wife, two children and a third on the way. He develops an obsession with one of his students, Anna (Jacqueline Sassard), a beautiful Austrian princess. When, however, he discovers that another of his students, William (Michael York), is also attracted to her, and that she is having an affair with his middle-aged, married colleague Charley (Stanley Baker), the three enter into a disastrous power struggle to win her.

Based on the novel by Nicholas Mosley, *Accident* won the Grand Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1967 and is now considered one of the great British films of the era. Joseph Losey had fallen foul of the Hollywood blacklist in the 1950s and had fled to London, where he remained until his death in 1984. By the time he made *Accident*, he considered himself as much British as American, and his collaborations with some of the best British talent of the time situated him squarely within the British film industry.

Shot in Eastmancolor and suffused with soft summer light, *Accident* was Gerry Fisher's first film as Director of Photography, and he was to work with Losey on a further seven films. John Dankworth, composer of the film's jazz score, had started his collaboration with Losey as early as *The Criminal* (1960), while Pinter had of course already worked with Losey on *The Servant* (1963) and went on to *The Go-Between* (1970) and the never-realised Proust adaptation.

In Dirk Bogarde and Stanley Baker, Losey paired two of his favourite actors – although they weren't necessarily so happy to be working together. As Losey was to say in an interview:

'I wanted to get them together in this film and neither one wanted it very much because Dirk is completely a non-physical man. He can't ride a horse, he can't swim, he can't play tennis, he can barely walk. The only thing he can do is garden. Stanley Baker was an athlete, a true athlete, with an animal - a lion's - body. Despite the disfigurement of his body, from acne on his face and his body in general, he was quite a beautiful animal.' Michael York makes his debut in **Accident** as William, the young, rather naïve aristocrat caught up in the older men's games, and both Pinter and Nicholas Mosley have cameo roles – Pinter as the hyperactive BBC producer and Mosley as a relaxed don taking in a day's cricket.

In the words of Tom Milne, reviewing the film for *Sight & Sound* on its original release: *'More perhaps than with any other Losey film, with its bland surface being invisibly gnawed away from within, Accident forces one to look and look again, to make connections where none are apparent ... watching patiently and absorbedly as the characters live their lives, cook their omelettes, change their trivial chat, and one is rewarded almost constantly by the moments of glittering illumination.'*

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Accident is released on 5 June 2009 at BFI Southbank plus key cities tbc. www.bfi.org.uk/releases

Accident screens at BFI Southbank as part of a major retrospective of the cinema of Joseph Losey, highlights of which will subsequently tour to key cities.

The restoration of **Accident** was a collaboration between the BFI National Archive and Studio Canal. The team worked with Gerry Fisher, the film's original Director of Photography, in order to compare original prints and make a full digital colour correction. A painstaking restoration of the soundtrack was also carried out.

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

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