



TOMMY TRINDER



'*If it's laughter you're after, Trinder's the name*'; was one of **Tommy Trinder**'s most popular catchphrases. Throughout August the **BFI Southbank** will offer a rare opportunity to catch many of his timeless performances and to re-evaluate his popularity as we celebrate the centenary of his birth.

At the height of his success, during and immediately following World War II, **Tommy Trinder**'s jovial personality seemed to encapsulate the national spirit of good-humoured fortitude. His wartime popularity helped him conquer the big screen, and, despite his reservations about the medium, he would do likewise with television, becoming one of the foremost faces of ITV following the channel's launch in September 1955.

Trinder spent much of the 1920s singing in variety and review shows, before refining his comedy skills throughout the following decade. Bolstered by some earlier film appearances, including his debut *Almost a Honeymoon* (1938), **Trinder**'s big break arrived in 1939 when he was invited to join the **Arthur Askey-Richard Murdoch** show, *Band Waggon*, then being staged at the London Palladium. This was followed in the 1940s by a string of his own shows at the same theatre. This wartime stage popularity was replicated in cinemas with a run of successful films made for Ealing Studios including *Sailors Three* (1940) and *Bitter Springs* (1950). These were largely comic performances, however, he also demonstrated his dramatic potential in such films as **Basil Dearden**'s *The Bells Go Down* (1943) and **Alberto Cavalcanti**'s *Champagne Charlie* (1944). Although never entirely discarding his comic persona, he

nevertheless demonstrated enough acting prowess to hold his own against the likes of **James Mason** and **Stanley Holloway**.

After the war Trinder concentrated mainly on his stage act, while also finding renewed popularity on television with ITV's flagship variety show, **Val Parnell's Sunday Night at the London Palladium** - which he hosted for two and a half years. Despite this success, he never fully warmed to the medium of television, believing that the amount of daily rehearsal sapped performances of their spontaneity. Nevertheless, this month's tribute season features a number of those television appearances, in addition to many of his popular film vehicles.

As the man himself would have said, '*You lucky people*'.

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PROGRAMME

Almost a Honeymoon

UK 1938. Dir Norman Lee. With Linden Travers, Frederick Burtwell. 78min. **PG**

Trinder made his film debut in this boisterous farce, an adaptation of Walter Ellis' popular stage play. After being offered a colonial appointment, an impecunious idler (Trinder) begins a frantic search to find a wife within 24 hours after he discovers that the post is for a married man.

Plus an episode of nostalgia show **Looks Familiar** (Thames 1981, 25min), with Trinder, Max Wall and Larry Adler.

Sat 1 Aug 17:20 NFT2

Wed 5 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Save a Little Sunshine

UK 1938. Dir Norman Lee. With Dave Willis, Peggy Novak. 75min. **U**

While Trinder is relegated to second lead in this sprightly musical comedy, he is at least teamed with the incomparable Max Wall as down-on-their-luck variety artists helping out at a boarding house. They make such a good comedy duo that one wishes they had made more films together. The vivacious Pat Kirkwood supplies the songs.

Plus another episode of **Looks Familiar** (Thames 1976, 26min), with Trinder, Wall and Arthur Askey.

Sun 2 Aug 16:00 NFT2

Tue 4 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Laugh It Off

UK 1940. Dir John Baxter. With Jean Colin, Geraldo and his Orchestra. 77min. **U**

Delightful musical comedy, packed to the brim with spirited musical numbers, with Trinder joining the army and organising, against all the odds, a successful concert party.

Plus, to mark the comedian's long association with the Water Rats, **Royal Appointment** (BBC 1975, 28min), with Trinder and a host of comedians appointing Prince Charles a Companion Rat, and a clip from the Water Rats celebration, **This is Music Hall** (BBC 1955, c5min).

Tue 11 Aug 18:10 NFT3

Fri 14 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Sailors Three

UK 1940. Dir Walter Forde. With Carla Lehmann, James Hayter. 87min. **U**

Trinder found his greatest success on the screen with a series of films made at Ealing Studios, and, in the first of these, he helps the war effort by capturing, with the assistance of Royal Navy shipmates Claude Hulbert and Michael Wilding, a German battleship after mistakenly going aboard in a fog. A fast-moving, energetic entertainment in which the adventure, comedy and song elements are masterfully orchestrated by director Forde.

Wed 5 Aug 18:30 NFT2

Wed 12 Aug 20:50 NFT2

The Foreman Went to France

UK 1942. Dir Charles Frend. With Clifford Evans, Constance Cummings, Gordon Jackson, Robert Morley. 85min. **U**

Trinder gives an impressive straight performance (without entirely forsaking his trademark humour) in this exciting wartime drama. A British factory foreman is aided by an American woman and two British soldiers in staying one step ahead of both the German army and Nazi sympathisers in his attempts to prevent specialist machinery from falling into the hands of the enemy.

Plus It's Up To You (1942, 4min), a charity appeal short.

Mon 10 Aug 20:30 NFT2

Sun 16 Aug 16:00 NFT2

The Bells Go Down

UK 1943. Dir Basil Dearden. With Mervyn Johns, Philippa Hiatt, Finlay Currie. 89min. **U**

Tommy Trinder and James Mason may sound like strange bedfellows, but they actually work extremely well together in this stirring account of the work of the Auxiliary Fire Service in London's East End during the Blitz. While largely studio-bound, it nevertheless remains a convincing depiction of the heroism of London's fire fighters.

Plus Eating Out With Tommy Trinder (1941, 7min), a promotional short for wartime community restaurants.

Tue 18 Aug 18:10 NFT3

Wed 26 Aug 18:20 NFT2

Champagne Charlie

UK 1944. Dir Alberto Cavalcanti. With Betty Warren, Jean Kent, Austin Trevor. 105min. **PG**

A rousing comedy musical with a loving period recreation of London's Victorian music halls, with a story centred on the professional rivalry between the two foremost music hall personalities of the day, George Leybourne (Trinder) and The Great Vance (Stanley Holloway).

Plus an episode of television variety show **The Music Box** (Jack Hylton TV Productions 1957, 26min), hosted by Trinder and climaxing in a celebration of British music hall.

Sun 23 Aug 15:50 NFT2

Thu 27 Aug 18:10 NFT3

Mon 31 Aug 15:30 NFT3

Bitter Springs

UK 1950. Dir Ralph Smart. With Gordon Jackson, Michael Pate, Charles Tingwell. 86min. **PG**

Trinder provides good comic support in this story of conflict between Aborigines and white settlers (led by Chips Rafferty) in 19th-century Australia. The story and staging are reminiscent of a Western (settler treks, smoke signals, cabin sieges), a perception that the exemplary location filming only serves to reinforce.

Plus A Night With the Stars (1950, 33min), with Trinder hosting a benefit concert held at the London Palladium.

Mon 24 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Sun 30 Aug 16:00 NFT2

You Lucky People!

UK 1955. Dir Maurice Elvey. With Mary Parker, Rufus Cruickshank. 79min. **U**

Cue the usual armed-forces high jinks (invariably at the expense of the sergeant major) when Trinder finds himself back in the army as a reservist on a refresher course. There's always time for a song or two, of course, and there is good support from Dora Bryan. It's as if the war had never ended.

Plus an interview with Trinder from **Late Night Line-Up** (BBC 1966, c8min).

Tue 25 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Fri 28 Aug 18:10 NFT3

Val Parnell's Sunday Night at the London Palladium

ATV 1958. With Sarah Vaughan, Dick Shawn, Marvin Rainwater. 52min

Trinder, with his close associations with the Palladium, was an obvious choice as the first host of this variety show, and we here present the only surviving episode showing him in action.

Plus The Old Boy Network (BBC 1979, 40 min), with Trinder recalling his long show business career.

Thu 13 Aug 18:20 NFT2

NOTES TO EDITORS

The **Tommy Trinder** season takes place at BFI Southbank from **1 – 31 August**

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 £9.00, concs £7.60 Website www.bfi.org.uk/southbank

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