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From the BFI National Archive: A fresh look at London and British feature films

Remarkable portraits of London and its denizens, and an unearthing of under-known British feature films – the BFI launches two new monthly programmes at BFI Southbank in April.

Capital Tales and *Projecting the Archive* are the two new monthly slots that will give a big screen outing to films from the BFI National Archive that deserve rediscovery.

London is one of the world's great cinematic, iconic cities and has inspired filmmakers from British film pioneer **RW Paul**, working in the late 19th century, onwards. Each month *Capital Tales* will focus on how filmmakers have interpreted and imagined the life of the city and its inhabitants. Venturing beyond the well-known films that feature London, the monthly slot will provide a chance to see the capital through unfamiliar eyes. On offer will be a range of rarely-seen documentaries and major features films from the BFI National Archive, which holds the world's largest collection of films about London.

Projecting the Archive goes beyond the usual list of classics to unearth and reappraise under-known British feature films, offering a fresh take on British cinema. Twice-monthly screenings, starting in April, will offer a range of little-known British films that have not screened for a long time in London or on television, and are not available on DVD. The screenings will be introduced by BFI curators and special guests, who will provide an expert context for these great films that have been overlooked in the annals of cinematic history.

Robin Baker, BFI Head Curator, said: "These two new monthly programmes at BFI Southbank are part of our drive to give people access to the wonderful films we look after in the BFI National Archive – the world's most significant collection of film and TV. In particular, they help us to tell a story about British cinema that goes beyond the famous classics, and puts great, under-known British films back where they belong – on the big screen."

The two programmes launch with the following screenings:

CAPITAL TALES

Four in the Morning UK 1965. Dir Anthony Simmons. With Judi Dench, Ann Lynn, Brian Phelan, Norman Rodway, Joe Melia. 94min

The body of a young woman is dragged unceremoniously from the Thames by two river police who have clearly seen it all before. This opening shot is typical of *Four in the Morning's* expertly judged documentary realism: a bleak, shabby London of frustrations and disappointments – a far cry from all the swinging that apparently was taking place elsewhere. Juggling the stories of three women – including a BAFTA-winning Judi Dench as a young mother on the verge – the film plays like a *L'Avventura* of the Docklands framed by an enigmatic mystery. Simmons uses the Thames to great effect, like an artery connecting the lives of the Londoners. Best of all, he manages to conjure up a city of surprises. The landscape looks foreign and unknown, and even the more familiar locations such as the Royal Naval College at Greenwich or Aldgate tube station seem re-imagined.

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Colour on the Thames UK 1935. Dir Adrian Klein. 8min

The Thames has never looked lovelier than in this test for the early colour film stock, Gasparcolor.

Wed 21 Apr 18.20 NFT1

PROJECTING THE ARCHIVE

The Passing of the Third Floor Back UK 1935. Dir Berthold Viertel. With Conrad Veidt, René Ray, Frank Cellier. 90min

A fascinating blend of mysticism and documentary realism, adapted from the stage play by Jerome K Jerome. A mysterious, saintly stranger (Veidt) takes a room in a boarding house of quarrelsome lodgers. Under the stranger's guiding hand – and on a steamer trip to Margate – they rediscover their better selves. Viertel and Veidt, with fellow emigrés cinematographer Curt Courant and art director Oscar Werndorff, lend a subtle Expressionism to the drama.

This screening will be introduced by writer/broadcaster **Matthew Sweet**.

Mon 12 Apr 18.20 NFT3

The Little Ones

UK 1965. Dir Jim O'Connell. With Dudley Foster, Carl Gonzales, Kim Smith. 66min.

+ **Jemima and Johnny** UK 1965. Dir Lionel Ngakane. 30min

Forget the cute title, this is a refreshingly unsentimental and witty tale of the adventures of two ten-year-old boys – one white, one mixed-race – as they flee poverty and parents in a decidedly ungentrified Notting Hill. They make their way to the Liverpool docks where they plan to stow away to Jamaica. Teamed with Lionel Ngakane's acutely observed story of children equally oblivious to the divisions of race.

Wed 28 Apr 18.20 NFT3

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

*** PICTURE DESK ***

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting these seasons can be found at www.image.net under BFI /BFI Southbank/Southbank 2010/April 2010

Interviews

BFI Head Curator Robin Baker is available for interview for *Capital Tales*.

The BFI National Archive

The BFI National Archive is the world's most significant archive of film and television. 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 BFI promotes understanding and appreciation of Britain's rich film and television heritage and culture.

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.