

PRESS RELEASE 16 March 2010

10/16



## 13<sup>th</sup> British Silent Film Festival

### *The World Before You: Exploration, Science and Nature in British Silent Film*

Early silent films about adventurers and travellers, brave new worlds and wild landscapes will be packed into the four days of this year's British Silent Film Festival –featuring rarely seen rare and fascinating films from the BFI National Archive and other archives round the world.

From 15 to 18 April, the BFI, British Silents and Phoenix Square present the 13<sup>th</sup> British Silent Film Festival, at the glamorous newly-opened Phoenix Square Cinema in Leicester. This year's theme is ***The World Before You: Exploration, Science and Nature in British Silent Film***, focusing on the relationship between the natural world and cinema before 1930.

An eclectic selection of features and shorts, fiction and non fiction includes films about science and nature; exploration of mountains, jungles and oceans with a particular focus on the discovery of the polar regions; early ethnography; natural phenomena, climate and weather; the British coast, maritime activities and natural history on film.

Films range from the earliest nature films made by intrepid British cameramen to **Edith Maude Hull's** steamy Arabian fantasy adventure ***The Sheik***; from a film shot in the Torres Straits to the world's first anthropological film – and a special focus on Polar exploration as we approach the centenary of Scott and Amundsen's epic quests. Highlights include screenings of classic silent version of ***The Lost World*** (1925), John Grierson's lyrical film of North Sea trawlermen ***Drifters*** (1929), a Norwegian masterpiece, ***The Bridal Party of Hardanger*** (1926). Special presentations will include mountaineering in film, the perilous life of the wildlife cameraman, around the British coast in film, and the Race to the South Pole with special guests from Norway showing (amongst many) Amundsen's film of his expedition never seen here before and a sneak preview of a clip of the BFI restoration of ***The Great White Silence***.

Music features very strongly in the programme, with all films and presentations being accompanied by live music from some of the world's leading silent musicians: **Neil Brand**, **Günter Buchwald** (Germany) **Philip Carli** (USA) **Stephen Horne** and **John Sweeney**. In addition we are pleased to welcome back the fabulous **Dodge Brothers**, whose line up includes **Mark Kermode**, playing to the wonderful Louise Brooks vehicle **Beggars of Life** with their unique take on depression-era American music. **Damien Caldwell**'s acclaimed bluegrass score will also be played live to **Tol'able David** and **David Allison** will be playing Celtic folk to the **St Kilda Tapes** on the moving evacuation of 'Britain's Loneliest Isle' in 1930, featuring interviews with the last survivor from St Kilda's lost community.

The Festival is programmed and organised by Neil Brand, Bryony Dixon, Laraine Porter and Sue Porter with the support of De Montfort University Cinema and Television History Research Centre. This project has been enabled by EM Media and the UK Film Council's Digital Archive Fund supported by the National Lottery.

- End -

### **PRESS CONTACTS**

Erica Roberts/Brian Robinson

Tel: 020 7957 8940

Email: [erica.roberts@bfi.org.uk](mailto:erica.roberts@bfi.org.uk) or [brian.robinson@bfi.org.uk](mailto:brian.robinson@bfi.org.uk)

### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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

**Please contact press contacts above for images**

### **Bookings**

Call Phoenix Square Box Office on 0116 242 2800 or visit [www.phoenix.org.uk](http://www.phoenix.org.uk)

Tickets are available for individual films and presentations as well as four-day festival passes and individual one-day passes.

Festival passes include lunch each day and tea and coffee during breaks.

Festival 4-day pass £95 (£70 concessions)

Festival 1-day pass £45 (£30 concession)

Individual tickets prices vary, please call the Box Office for price and availability.

### **Interviews**

Festival Directors Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon are available for interview.

### **Website**

For information and programme updates, check [www.britishsilents.co.uk](http://www.britishsilents.co.uk)

### **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.

### **About Phoenix Square**

The building is supported by public and private sector partners Blueprint, Leicester City Council, Leicester Shire Economic Partnership and De Montfort University. The project is also supported by the EU through the European Regional Development Fund. [www.phoenixsquare.co.uk](http://www.phoenixsquare.co.uk)

## **About Phoenix Square Film & Digital Media**

Based in the heart of Leicester's emerging Cultural Quarter, Phoenix Square Film & Digital Media houses state of the art cinemas, digital gallery spaces, interactive cafe bar and film production facilities with editing suites - capable of hosting festivals, seminars & conferences. This unique space is set to be a hub of activity for the region. It is an educational charity with a remit to enhance moving image and new media work. [www.phoenix.org.uk](http://www.phoenix.org.uk)



## **The programme**

Thu 15 April 11am

### **Q Ships**

Long before Dunkirk, the little ships of Britain played a deadly game of cat and mouse with the German U-Boats. Underneath their modest exteriors these merchant ships were bristling with concealed weaponry, designed to lure the submarines to their doom.

UK/1928 Geoffrey Barkas/Michael Barringer

Thu 15 April 2pm

### **Beeman, Birdman, Hunter, Spy: the heroic age of the wildlife filmmaker**

A particular breed of explorer from the earliest days of films was the wildlife cameraman. These intrepid pioneers risked life and limb, inventing their own equipment, travelling to the remotest parts of the planet to bring us unprecedented access to the natural world and inevitably having a few adventures along the way. This selection will show the work of J. C. Bee-Mason, Oliver Pike, Joe Corbett, and the legendary Colonel F.M. Bailey.

Presented by Bryony Dixon

Thu 15 April 4pm

### **The Masks of Mer**

World Premiere of his new film presented by Michael Eaton

Writer, director Michael Eaton presents the world premiere of his new film about a unique film shot in the Torres Straits by Alfred Haddon in 1898, lasting for less than a minute, and the world's first example of anthropological cinema. The Masks of Mer tells the extraordinary story of this experiment and traces the masks worn in the sacred initiation ceremony Haddon filmed. And, for the first time since Haddon himself publicly presented the work, his films are 'synchronised' with the team's phonographic recordings.

Dir Michael Eaton, UK 2010, 60mins

Thu 15 April 6pm

### **The Bridal Party in Hardanger/Brudeferden i Hardanger**

Presented by Jan-Anders Diesen and Halldor Krogh

A spectacular film based on one of the most famous paintings in Norway; Bridal Voyage on the Hardanger Fjord from 1848. Set amid stunning mountain and fjord scenery, this is the epic story of intertwining lives, love and loss during the lifetime of a young woman. A visual masterpiece that is both moving emotional drama and an authentic portrait of the vanishing cultures of the people who lived and farmed in the mountains of Western Norway.

This film will be screened with the new music score composed by Halldor Krogh

Dir: Rasmus Breinstein, Norway 1926, 74mins

Thu 15 April 9pm

### **The Sheik**

Based on the steamy 1921 bodice ripper by Edith Maude Hull, this tale of passion between an aristocratic English woman and an Arab Sheik is the film that brought Valentino to prominence. He exudes a brooding, muscular sexuality which has lost none of its potency today and watching this film 90 years later, it is easy to see why his premature death drove women to despair and suicide.

Dir: George Melford, USA 1921. 80 mins

+

### **Crossing the Great Sagrada**

Dir Adrien Brunel, UK

Fri 16 April 9am

**She**

Rider Haggard on Film

A sumptuous adaptation of Rider Haggard's best-selling 1887 fantasy about a Cambridge professor's quest for a lost kingdom in the heart of Africa where he encounters a magnificent sorceress who rules over her people as 'She who must be obeyed'. This version was actively supervised by Haggard himself and stars Betty Blythe in the role later reprised by Ursula Andress.

Dir: Leander de Cordova, UK 1925, 2hrs

Fri 16 April 11.15am

**With Lawrence in Arabia**

Presented by Neil Brand and Luke McKernan

Neil Brand and Luke McKernan's work in progress (in collaboration with the IWM) to recreate, using original text, slides and film extracts, Lowell Thomas's famous lecture-cum-spectacle which is credited with creating and publicising the legend of Lawrence of Arabia. Thomas himself, a fascinating and flawed character but a master showman, delivers the narration.

Fri 16 April 12.15pm

**Exploration, Adventure and Science Films from the Imperial War Museum Collection**

presented by Toby Haggith

Fri 16 April 2.15pm

**Sam's Boy**

Sam's Boy is adapted by Lydia Hayward from one of the stories of W. W. Jacobs whose pet subject was the marine life or as Punch sardonically put it "men who go down to the sea in ships of moderate tonnage". Filmed in the Thames estuary and on the Kentish coast this is a charming tale of an urchin in need of a father.

Dir: Manning Haynes, UK 1922 63mins

+

Premieres of recovered short films from the Scottish Film Archive presented by Janet McBain, including:

**To Rona on a Whaler** UK 1914, 12mins

**In the Calm Waters of the Yare** UK 1910, 6mins

Fri 16 April 4.15pm

**The Race to the Pole: Britain and Norway**

A programme of short films documenting early Polar exploration

The extraordinary story of the race to the South Pole by Amundsen and Scott is put into context by polar film expert Jan-Anders Diesen from Norway. The programme concludes with an extract of the BFI National Archive's forthcoming restoration of The Great White Silence, Herbert Ponting's record of Scott's final expedition to Antarctica introduced by Bryony Dixon.

Fri 16 April 6.15pm

**The Lost World**

The first film adaptation of Conan Doyle's classic novel of the land that time forgot and the prototype of every dinosaur movie since including Jurassic Park. Wallace Beery and Bessie Love star as Professor Challenger and Paula White who set out from London to rescue Paula's father, the explorer Maple White lost on the Amazonian plateau where dinosaurs still roam. Conan Doyle took his family to see the film in 1925 and loved this version. Perfect family entertainment, then!

Dir: Harry O Hoyt, USA 1925, 100mins

Fri 16 April 9pm

**South: Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic**

With a special musical score by Neil Brand

The definitive account of Shackleton's legendary 1914-1916 Endurance Expedition, magnificently filmed by photographer Frank Hurley. A monumental document of human survival against all odds amidst the backdrop of some of the most stunning and inhospitable scenery on earth.

Prod. Imperial Trans-Antarctic Film Syndicate/ photography Frank Hurley, UK, 1919, 80mins

Sat 17 April 9am

### **Coast**

Like the TV programme, we will trace the British coastline through its stories but we'll be doing it using archive film from the silent days. With tales of great tempests, rough seas, daring rescues and tragic wrecks, of thronging docks, fishing ports and shipyards as well as scenes of a calmer nature, along the cliffs and beaches of our island home.

Introduced by Bryony Dixon

90mins

Sat 17 April 11am

### **Women in Silent Britain**

Exploration into the hidden histories of women in silent British cinema is gathering momentum and this session will look at some of the fascinating and intrepid women working in film during this period, as writers, producers, technicians and critics as well as actresses.

Presented as part of the AHRC Women's Film History Network – UK/Ireland that was recently set up to encourage new research into women's contribution to cinema.



Sat 17 April 2pm

Family Matinee (PG)

### **Up the Pole**

Get your coat on and join us on for a cornucopia of polar-themed cartoons and comedies featuring screen legends Ben Turpin, Buster Keaton, Jerry the Troublesome Tyke, Pimple and Bonzo the Peppy Pup, all struggling with inclement weather and harsh times. With live piano accompaniment (and much more) from Neil Brand.

This programme is dedicated to Dave Berry who brought Jerry the Troublesome Tyke back to our screens and devoted his life and work to the silent cinema that he loved.

Running time 80mins

Sat 17 April 2.15pm

### **A Maid of the Silver Sea**

Husband and wife team Ivy Duke and director/ actor Guy Newall play opposite each other in this tale of familial conflict and mysterious death on a small island in the English Channel. The peaceable local fishing community is torn apart by the discovery of silver which threatens their way of life and matters get worse with the arrival of the English manager who falls in love with a local woman and is framed for murder.

Dir: Guy Newall, UK 1922, 63mins

Sat 17 April 4pm

### **The Annual Rachael Low Lecture**

Presented by Tim Boon

This year's Rachael Low lecture will be given by Tim Boon, Chief Curator of the Science Museum.

Tim Boon is the author of the recently published and highly acclaimed *Films of Fact: A History of Science in Documentary Films and Television*. He is also working with the BFI on a forthcoming DVD of the pioneering science and nature series *Secrets of Nature*. Rachael Low is a key figure in the history of the study of early and silent British cinema. Her pioneering studies published as *The History of the British Film 1895-1929* (BFI) are an unrivalled source for students on the subject and they remain the unchallenged standard work in this field. Each year, the Festival pays tribute to her work by inviting a distinguished cultural commentator to give an illustrated lecture on a particular aspect of silent cinema.

Sat 17 April 6pm

### **The St Kilda Tapes**

Live music, archive film and multi-media presented by David Allison

Using the evacuation of St Kilda in 1930 as a starting point, and with St Kilda evacuee Norman Gillies acting as narrator, this acclaimed show takes you on an emotional journey from the lonely Atlantic island to Glasgow, New York and Canada, before a triumphant and poignant return to St Kilda. With archive film and live music performed on guitar, 100 year old zither, ukulele and sampler, *The St Kilda Tapes* explores the themes of migration and home featuring archive films, *St Kilda; Britain's Loneliest Isle* and *A New Way to A New World*.

Sat 17 April 9pm

**Tol'able David** (PG)

Accompanied with a new Blue Grass music score by Damian Coldwell, together with Nick Pynn on fiddle and Appalachian dulcimer and Lee Westwood on guitar

A thrilling David and Goliath story set in the beautiful Virginian Mountains. When the murderous Hatburn gang murders young David Kinemon's older brother, the gentle David swears to protect his widowed mother and brothers and sisters. With a towering central performance by Richard Barthelmess as the young hero, and the unforgettable Ernest Torrence as the leader of the criminal gang. "Tol'able David is one of the enduring classics of the American screen." Kevin Brownlow

Dir. Henry King, US 1921 100 min.

Preserved by The Museum of Modern Art, New York with funds provided by The Film Foundation.



Supported by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

Sun 18 April 9am

**New Discoveries in British Silent Film**

This programme will include new discoveries in British silent film, including regular contributor David Williams & Tony Fletcher with his programme called 'Before and after Nanook', examining how early filmmakers looked at cultures and societies before 1922.

Sun 18 April 11am

**For Those in Peril on the Sea: Drifters and The Trawler Film**

For centuries the deep sea fishermen were a mainstay of our island nation and this is revealed by the fascination with the trade by filmmakers since the earliest days. At the very end of the silent era John Grierson took the tradition of the trawler film and combined it with all the techniques of filmmaking that had developed over the decades to make his remarkable, lyrical film, Drifters, which heralded in a new era for the actuality film, the age of the documentary. This programme will show the whole of Grierson's film and extracts from its antecedents.

Presented by Steve Foxon and Bryony Dixon.

Dir John Grierson, UK 1929, 80mins total

Sun 18 April 2pm

**The Dodge Brothers performing to The Beggars of Life**

The Festival is pleased to welcome the fabulous Dodge Brothers featuring Mike Hammond (guitar/ banjo), Mark Kermode (double bass/accordion), Aly Hirji (guitar/mandolin) and Alex Hammond (percussion) with guest Dodge Brother Neil Brand, performing their particular brand of Americana to William Wellman's legendary tale of Depression-era, rail-riding hobos played by the iconic Louise Brookes and Jim Arlen.

Dir. William Wellman, USA 1928, 100mins

Sun 18 April 4pm

**Climb Every Mountain**

Jan Faull of the BFI presents a programme of mountaineering films including extracts from the ill-fated 1924 British Everest expedition immortalised on film in The Epic of Everest.

Sun 18 April 6pm

**The Battle of the Ancre and the Advance of the Tanks**

With a musical medley, specially reconstructed by Stephen Horne and Toby Haggith

The sister film to The Battle of the Somme, The Battle of the Ancre was filmed between September and November 1916 and contains the first shots of tanks in use at the Front and fraternization between German prisoners and their British captors. The work to reconstruct the original medley for this important First World War film has taken many months with the music suggested in the cue sheet being discovered as far away as Australia. After previewing this project at the 2009 Festival, we are pleased to present the completed score performed by Stephen Horne, Sophie Langdon and Martin Pyne and presented by Toby Haggith.

Dir: Geoffrey H Malins/J.B McDowell, UK 1917, 73mins

