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## **GROUND-BREAKING NEW BFI PROJECT BOOM BRITAIN: DOCUMENTING THE NATION'S LIFE ON FILM**

In November 2010 the BFI launches **Boom Britain: documenting the nation's life on film**, a landmark project that will transform our understanding of British documentary cinema post-1945 and promises to be a revelation. New prints of many titles, newly restored by the BFI National Archive, will offer a fascinating view of British life which has been all but edited out of history – until now.

**Boom Britain** grants a lost generation of post-war British documentaries their rightful place in history. Over two years in the making, this ground-breaking project examines social, industrial and environmental topics more resonant today than ever as Britain copes with recession and the Government's vision for a 'Big Society'.

### **Boom Britain**

The project includes:

- an accompanying new book ***Shadows of Progress***
- a national touring programme in cinemas nationwide
- a four disc DVD box set
- screenings at BFI Southbank with many film-maker guests
- a BFI Mediatheque programme

Many of these films have a surprising topicality in their subjects: the boundless possibilities of science and technology; the power of education; the beauty of industrial machinery; what to do about the care of the elderly; pioneering statements on women's rights, mental health and children's welfare; the rise of environmentalism; the balance of state and industry, individual and community; a nation and a world travelling from bust to boom and back again.

This is a world of great and enduring character studies which will leave few unmoved: the delights of an evening at Queenie Watts' London pub, the last night of the London trams, the opening of a secondary modern school, a 50s seaside knees-up, the glories of a modern steel foundry or the first steps in film-making by Lindsay Anderson shown in rarely-seen films for industrial sponsors. The early warnings of ecological disaster sponsored by global industrial corporations are starkly prophetic of our world and its future. Nostalgia is leavened with social history and a vivid sense of both how far we have come and just how many social and inherently political issues remain unresolved, whoever is in power.

Britain's famous documentary film tradition – defined and established in the 1930s and 1940s – never stopped evolving. **Boom Britain** charts film from the late 1940s to the late 1970s when commercial sponsors expanded the range of their subjects while public service film-marking continued through the work of enlightened government departments and charities. Both commerce and government supported a body of work that offers a fascinating insight into social history and a vision of the possibilities offered by our then booming industrial society. Alongside Shell, other key sponsors of films in this period were major corporations such as Roche, Ford and BP, and charities such as Dr. Barnardo's, the NSPCC and the Family Planning Association.

Patrick Russell, Documentary Curator, BFI National Archive writes: *“Received wisdom has been that British documentary went into swift decline after the war, resurrected only by Free Cinema and the arrival of television documentary. This project demolishes these simplistic assumptions, presenting instead a complex and nuanced picture of the sponsored documentary in flux.”*

A special feature of this project has been the collaboration of a number of key surviving film-makers, in their 80s and 90s, who are passionate about their work and encouraged to see it living again for new audiences. Screenings will be introduced by film-makers making rare public appearances including John Krish, Anthony Simmons, Derrick Knight, and BAFTA winners Sarah Erulkar and Derek Williams (also an Oscar nominee several times). Specially recorded interviews have informed both the production of the DVDs and the book, **Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain**, which contains original essays on over a dozen filmmakers and an overview of production and sponsorship through the post-war period, edited by Patrick Russell and James Piers Taylor.

**BOOM BRITAIN: DOCUMENTING THE NATION'S LIFE ON FILM** launches 8 November and continues at BFI Southbank and around the country in December, and into Spring 2011. Related BFI Mediatheque collections are a permanent addition.

### **Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain 1951 - 1977**

This four disc box-set will be issued on 15 November as part of the **Boom Britain** project: over 30 films which explore the new social, political and ideological challenges brought about by inevitable and far-reaching change after the war. Filmmakers such as John Krish, Eric Marquis and Derrick Knight employed bold and distinctive new techniques in order to tackle an increasingly diverse array of subjects, in films that are every bit as inspired, ground-breaking and indispensable as anything produced by the Free Cinema or British Documentary Movements. A 90-page booklet will accompany the set, featuring new essays by Dominic Sandbrook, Lord Puttnam, Patrick Russell and others.

Also on 15 November one of the BFI's most popular DVD collections of recent years, **Land of Promise: the British documentary movement 1930 – 1950** will be re-issued. In 2008 Lord Puttnam wrote: My favourite film of the year wasn't really a film at all, but a set of DVDs produced by the BFI entitled Land of Promise. Many of these 40 short films are wonderful in their own right but, more important than that, they should be compulsory viewing in every school and town hall in the country.

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#### **About the BFI**

The BFI is the nation's cultural organisation for film, keeping the breadth of voices in moving image culture alive and known. Through its venues, festivals, film releases and online, the BFI inspires people to understand and enjoy film culture, ensuring that everyone in the UK can see the broadest range and choice of films, otherwise not provided by commercial cinema. The BFI reaches an audience of over 7.5 million in the UK every year.

The BFI is a public body part funded by DCMS through the UK Film Council. For every £1 it receives in grant-in-aid, the BFI raises a further £1.50 through self-generated means.  
[www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk)