

It isn't Very Pretty...
The Complete Films of John Waters
(Every Goddam One of Them...)



Photo credit: Lawrence Irvine, Greg Gorman, Phillip V. Caruso, Larry Dean, Henny Garfunkel

**This September at BFI Southbank, featuring a night with
John Waters on stage “in conversation”
with season curator Justin Johnson**

“Where do these people come from? Where do they go when the sun goes down? Isn’t there a law or something?” - Film critic Rex Reed on John Waters’ *Female Trouble*

Friday 3 July 2015, London

From 1 September – 6 October 2015 **BFI Southbank** will be celebrating 50 years of filth, with a retrospective dedicated to the legendary film director **John Waters**, famous for cult hits such as *Pink Flamingos* (1972), *Female Trouble* (1974) and *Hairspray* (1988) as well as bigger budget films like *Cry Baby* (1990) and *Serial Mom* (1994) starring Johnny Depp and Kathleen Turner respectively. The season *It isn't Very Pretty... The Complete Films of John Waters (Every Goddam One of Them...)* couldn't claim to be screening 'every goddamn one' of his films without including Waters' earliest forays into filmmaking, and the BFI is thrilled to be able to include, completely free of charge, his short films from the 60s, which have never been seen in the UK. John Waters will take to the **BFI Southbank** stage for a very special *In Conversation* event with season curator Justin Johnson on **Friday 18 September**, as well as introduce a number of screenings during the season. As an additional treat John Waters has also personally selected six eclectic British films to accompany the season in a dedicated sidebar *Teabaggin' in the Kitchen Sink: My Favourite British Films* – these films have moved or inspired him in some shape or form, and include Joseph Losey's *Boom!* (1968) and Roger Michell's *The Mother* (2003).

John Waters said: “This tribute is like receiving a plenary indulgence from the movie gods above and for once I can be show-biz thrilled without the slightest drop of irony in my thanks. Yikes, respectability...the final outrage”

Lovingly dubbed ‘The Pope of Trash’, ‘The Prince of Puke’ and most recently by Paul Oswell of The Guardian, ‘The People’s Pervert’, John Waters is a director who has, over the course of his 50-year career, consistently pushed the boundaries of taste. A remarkable filmmaker by any measure, Waters began making short films as a teenager, having been influenced by the likes of Federico Fellini, William Castle and George and Mike Kuchar; born and raised in Baltimore he often used his home as a location, and his friends and associates as actors. This band of like-minded individuals known as the *Dreamlanders* included Divine, Mary Vivian Pearce, David Lochary and Mink Stole and they were the core cast members in Waters’ shorts: *Hag in a Black Leather Jacket* (1964), *Roman Candles* (1966) and *Eat Your Makeup* (1968). These underground short films will screen in a compilation programme - *John Waters: The Early Shorts* – and are fascinating examples of juvenilia, with moments of genius that hint at the films that would follow.

For his first feature *Mondo Trasho* (1969) Waters drew on the influence of both Andy Warhol and Russ Meyer to produce this guerrilla-style art piece, which sees us further acquainted with his Dreamland Studios ensemble. *Multiple Maniacs* (1970) introduced audiences to ‘Lady Divine’s Cavalcade of Perversions’ - a free exhibit of various fetish acts and obscenities, that is also a front for a group of unruly criminals whose thirst for blood and violence will not be quenched. Unseen on the big screen for decades, *Multiple Maniacs* will screen alongside *The Diane Linkletter Story* (1970), a short improvisation about the last hours of Diane Linkletter, the supposed drug-using daughter of a US TV personality. This film was all the more shocking for being made the day after this real-life event actually happened.

One of Waters’ most notorious films is *Pink Flamingos* (1972), a film which legendary critic Roger Ebert famously offered zero stars. With scenes involving chicken sex, a singing orifice and the infamous dog-walking scene, this *Citizen Kane* of filth movies still has something to offend just about everyone, even 40 years on. Divine returned two years later to play Dawn Davenport in *Female Trouble* (1974); this delinquent teenager embarks on a life of crime and a search for fame after being dealt the ultimate snub by her parents one Christmas: not receiving a pair of coveted cha-cha heels. Water’s described his final film of the 70s as a ‘monstrous lesbian fairy-tale about political corruption’; *Desperate Living* (1977) tells the story of Peggy Gravel and her maid Grizelda, who leave behind the suburban dream and find themselves in Mortville, a town for misfits and perverts ruled over by the sadistic and sexually suspect Queen Carlotta.

Waters’ nod to the 50s melodramas of Douglas Sirk, *Polyester* (1981), pairs the unlikely duo of Divine as Francine Fishpaw, a woman on the edge, and Hollywood hearthrob Tab Hunter as Todd Tomorrow, the man who promises to make her problems vanish. As with the original release of the film, *Polyester* will be presented during the season in joyful ‘Odorama’ with scratch ‘n’ sniff cards, so audiences can fully enjoy this feast for the senses. *Hairspray* followed in 1988, and gave Waters the biggest hit of his career thus far; spawning an award-winning Broadway musical and a film remake. *Hairspray* may have been a joyous PG-rated film, but it maintained the subversive edge which had come to define Waters’ work. Ricki Lake played overweight teen Tracey Turnblad opposite Divine as her mother Edna. The film gave Divine the recognition he so longed for as a serious actor just weeks before his untimely death.

Following the success of *Hairspray*, Waters began working with bigger budgets and more well-known stars, but his work continued to surprise and shock. *Cry Baby* (1990) starring Johnny Depp was set in 50s Baltimore and told of the forbidden romance between Cry Baby Walker, a juvenile delinquent, and Allison Vernon-Williams, a square. *Serial Mom* (1994) starred Kathleen Turner as Beverly Sutphin, a suburban housewife who also has an appetite for murder; the New York arts scene came under scrutiny in *Pecker* (1998), a sweet tale about a Baltimore boy with an eye for photography who makes a splash with his snaps of neighbourhood friends and family. Waters returned to bad-boy

form in the grotesque and hilarious send up of Hollywood and mainstream cinema, *Cecil B. Demented* (2000), while sex addiction went under the microscope in his last film to-date *A Dirty Shame* (2004). From his early movies through to Hollywood, Waters has consistently produced films that shock, entertain and challenge in equal measure, and BFI Southbank is delighted to be able to present this complete retrospective for the first time in the UK.

TEABAGGIN' IN THE KITCHEN SINK: MY FAVOURITE BRITISH FILMS

Introduced here by John Waters (in his own words)...

The Deep Blue Sea (Terence Davies, 2011) Unrequited love never looked more appealing. As you walk out of the theatre you'll wish your loved one would dump you in the lobby so you could go home and wallow in suicidal misery as beautiful as what you just saw on screen.

Blue (Derek Jarman, 1993) An incredibly radical film that goes beyond the gimmicks of William Castle's *Emergo*, beyond the boredom of Warhol's *Empire*, beyond the theories of Lars von Trier's Dogme 95 to a whole new minimalist level of what colour film can do when it is framed within the sound of sadness.

The Mother (Roger Michell, 2003) How would you feel if you came home and found your 65-year-old mother on her knees doing you know what with your boyfriend? Especially when she had told you he was no good for you? Especially when he's Daniel Craig! Especially when he's Daniel Craig looking this hot!

Trog (Freddie Francis, 1970) One of the most ludicrous, touching, mind-boggling star vehicles ever. Joan Crawford, desperate for a job, teams up with director Freddie Francis(!) and an actor in a pitiful monkey mask for a sci-fi howler like no other.

The Naked Civil Servant (Jack Gold, 1975) If there was a patron saint of damaged souls, Quentin Crisp would be the first to be canonised and his autobiography, *The Naked Civil Servant*, could serve as scripture. This TV movie adaptation of the same is so filled with respect and dignity that the director and actors will definitely go to movie heaven.

Boom! (Joseph Losey, 1968) Beyond bad, the other side of camp – a film so beautiful and awful there is only one word to describe it: perfect. If you don't like this film, I hate you.

John Waters will be available for a limited number of media interviews. For more information please contact: liz.parkinson@bfi.org.uk / 020 7957 8918

- ENDS -

NOTES TO EDITORS

Press Contacts:

Liz Parkinson – Press Officer, BFI Southbank
liz.parkinson@bfi.org.uk / 020 7957 8918

John Waters' first ever exhibition in London, Beverly Hills John, will take place at Sprüth Magers from 1 July – 15 August.

Screening in the season:

John Waters in Conversation

Fifty years after his filmmaking career began, we're joined by John Waters to talk with season curator Justin Johnson about what inspired him to first pick up a camera and assemble his regular cast under the Dreamland banner. From his early underground films through to Hollywood and back again, Waters has consistently produced films that shock, entertain and challenge in equal measure.

John Waters will be signing copies of his books and DVDs at the BFI Shop following tonight's screening of Serial Mom.

Tickets £16, concs £12 (Members pay £1.70 less). Joint ticket with Serial Mom £26.40, concs £18 (Members pay £1.70 less)

FRI 18 SEP 18:30 NFT1

John Waters: The Early Shorts

TRT 89min

For the first time in the UK we present Waters' early, underground shorts (films that have never been in commercial distribution); fascinating examples of juvenilia with moments of genius that hint at works to follow.

Hag in a Black Leather Jacket

USA 1964. With Mary Vivian Pearce, Mona Montgomery. 17min

Roman Candles

USA 1966. With Maelcum Soul, Bob Skidmore, Mona Montgomery, Divine, Mink Stole, Mary Vivian Pearce, David Lochary,. 27min

Eat Your Make-Up

USA 1968. With Maelcum Soul, David Lochary, Marina Melin, Divine, Mary Vivan Pearce, Mona Montgomery. 45min

Tickets are free and can be booked in person only, from 30 mins before the start of each programme on the day of the screening. Only one ticket per person. Under 18's will not be admitted

SAT 19 & SUN 20 SEP

16:10, 18:10 STUDIO

Mondo Trasho

USA 1969. Dir John Waters. With Mary Vivian Pearce, Divine, David Lochary, Mink Stole. 90min. 18

For his first feature Waters drew on the influence of both Andy Warhol and Mondo Cane to produce this underground, guerrilla-style art piece, which sees us further acquainted with his Dreamland Studios ensemble. We follow a woman's surreal journey as she encounters a foot-fetishist, a sadistic doctor, a topless tap dancer and the Virgin Mary herself.

This film has been long out of commercial distribution

FRI 4 SEP 18:20 NFT2

WED 9 SEP 20:40 NFT2

Mutiple Maniacs + intro by John Waters

USA 1970. Dir John Waters. With Divine, David Lochary, Mary Vivan Pearce, Mink Stole, Edith Massey. 90min. 18

'Lady Divine's Cavalcade of Perversions' is not only the sleaziest show on Earth but also a front for a group of unruly criminals whose thirst for blood and violence will not be quenched. Unseen on the big screen for decades, this early work displays a strong sense of narrative and a winning performance from a lobster.

This film is not currently in commercial distribution

+ The Diane Linkletter Story

USA 1970. Dir John Waters. With Divine, David Lochary, Mary Vivian Pearce. 17min

This short improvisation of the last hours of Diane Linkletter, the supposed drug-using daughter of a US TV personality, is all the more shocking for being made the day after this real-life event actually happened.

This film was never in commercial Distribution

SAT 19 SEP 18:20 NFT1

Pink Flamingos

USA 1972. Dir John Waters. With Divine, David Lochary, Mary Vivian Pearce, Mink Stole, Danny Mills, Edith Massey. 93min. 18

After Divine is officially declared ‘the filthiest person alive,’ Connie and Raymond Marble channel their jealousy into bringing her down. With scenes involving chicken sex, a singing orifice and the infamous dog-walking scene, this *Citizen Kane* of filth movies still has something to offend just about everyone, even 43 years later.

SUN 6 SEP 20:45 NFT1

SAT 19 SEP 20:45 NFT1

Female Trouble

USA 1974. Dir John Waters. With Divine, David Lochary, Mary Vivian Pearce, Mink Stole, Michael Potter, Edith Massey.. 89min. 18

Dawn Davenport, a delinquent teenager, causes havoc at school and is finally pushed over the edge when she misses out on a pair of cha-cha heels one Christmas. So begins a life of crime and a search for everlasting fame – with shocking consequences.

SUN 13 SEP 18:30 NFT1

WED 23 SEP 20:40 NFT2

Desperate Living

USA 1977. Dir John Waters. With Liz Renay, Mink Stole, Susan Lowe, Edith Massey, Mary Vivian Pearce, Jean Hill.. 90min. 18

Peggy Gravel and her maid Grizelda leave behind the suburban dream and find themselves in Mortville, a town for misfits and perverts ruled over by the sadistic and sexually suspect Queen Carlotta. The film was described by Waters as a ‘monstrous lesbian fairytale about political corruption.’ Who could ask for more?

SUN 13 SEP 20:45 NFT1

FRI 25 SEP 18:20 NFT2

Polyester

USA 1981. Dir John Waters. With Divine, Tab Hunter, Edith Massey, Stiv Bators, David Samson, Mary Garlington, Ken King, Mink Stole, Joni-Ruth White. 86min. 15

Waters’ nod to the 50s melodramas of Douglas Sirk pairs the unlikely duo of Divine as Francine Fishpaw, a woman on the edge, and Hollywood heartthrob Tab Hunter as Todd Tomorrow, the man who promises to make her problems vanish. Presented in joyful ‘Odorama’ with scratch ‘n’ sniff cards, *Polyester* really is a feast for the senses.

TUE 1 SEP 18:30 NFT2

TUE 22 SEP 20:45 NFT1

SUN 27 SEP 18:20 NFT2

Hairspray

USA 1988. Dir John Waters. With Sonny Bono, Ruth Brown, Divine, Deborah Harry, Ricki Lake, Jerry Stiller, with special appearances by Ric Ocasek and Pia Zadora. 92min. PG

When overweight teen Tracey Turnblad dances her way onto Baltimore TV and a spot on the Corny Collins Show she uses her platform to send up the absurdity of segregation. Who knew that Waters could make a joyous, PG-rated film while maintaining the subversive edge of his previous work?

TUE 8 SEP 18:20 NFT2

SAT 26 SEP 20:45 NFT1

THU 1 OCT 18:30 NFT1

Cry Baby

USA 1990. Dir John Waters. With Johnny Depp, Amy Locane, Susan Tyrrell, Iggy Pop, Ricki Lake, Traci Lords, Kim McGuire, Stephen Mailer, Darren Burrows, Polly Bergen, with special guest stars Patricia Hearst, David Nelson, Troy Donahue, Mink Stole, Joe Dallesandro, Joey Heatherton, Willem Dafoe. 85min. 12

1950’s Baltimore, once again, is the setting for the forbidden romance of ‘Cry Baby Walker,’ a drape, and Allison Vernon-Williams, a square. This glorious celebration of American rock ‘n’ roll films contains a chicken race, wrongful imprisonment and a great soundtrack. Like *Hairspray*, the film threatened to introduce Waters to a wider audience, but its tone and larger-than-life characters more than marked his territory.

TUE 15 SEP 18:20 NFT2

MON 28 SEP 20:45 NFT1

FRI 2 OCT 20:45 NFT2

Serial Mom

USA 1994. Dir John Waters. With Kathleen Turner, Sam Waterston, Ricki Lake, Mink Stole, Patricia Hearst, Matthew Lillard, Mary Jo Catlett, Patricia Dunnock, Traci Lords, with a special appearance by Suzanne Somers. 95min. 18

If you're ill-mannered, have a poor sense of social responsibility or are just plain careless then beware; Beverly Sutphin may seem like an ordinary suburban housewife but she also has an appetite for murder – and you could be next!

Joint ticket with John Waters in Conversation available.

FRI 18 SEP 20:30 NFT1

Pecker

USA 1998. Dir John Waters. With Edward Furlong, Christina Ricci, Bess Armstrong, Mary Kay Place, Martha Plimpton, Brendan Sexton III, Mink Stole, Lili Taylor. 87min. 15

The New York arts scene comes under scrutiny in this sweet tale about a Baltimore boy with an eye for photography who makes a splash with his snaps of neighbourhood friends and family. When word of his fame reaches his home town will he stay true to his roots?

TUE 29 SEP 18:30 NFT2

SAT 3 OCT 20:40 NFT2

TUE 6 OCT 18:20 NFT2

Cecil B. Demented + intro by John Waters

USA 2000. Dir John Waters. With Melanie Griffith, Stephen Dorff, Alicia Witt, Adrian Grenier, Larry Gilliard, Jr., Mink Stole, Ricki Lake, Patricia Hearst, Kevin Nealon. 88min. 18

Waters returns to bad-boy form in this grotesque and hilarious send up of Hollywood and mainstream cinema. If *Forest Gump* made you nauseous then this tale of a group of guerrilla filmmakers who kidnap an A-list star and re-educate her in the ways of underground cinema is for you. 'Power to the people who punish bad cinema.'

SUN 20 SEP 18:20 NFT1

A Dirty Shame

USA 2004. Dir John Waters. With Tracey Ullman, Johnny Knoxville, Selma Blair, Chris Isaak, Suzanne Shepherd, Mink Stole, Patricia Hearst, Jackie Hoffman, with special appearance by David Hasselhoff. 89min. 18

Waters' last film to-date is a Baltimore sex comedy focusing on one street in a divided neighbourhood made up of neuters and perverts. Sylvia Stickles is a repressed housewife who suffers a concussion that unexpectedly makes her a sex addict. With the freak-show mentality of Waters' early work, the sweeter, contemplative tone of his later films and a cast featuring Hollywood movie stars and the surviving Dreamlanders.

TUE 29 SEP 20:50 NFT1

TUE 6 OCT 20:30 NFT3

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

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 £11.00, concs £8.50 Members pay £1.50 less on any ticket. Website www.bfi.org.uk/southbank

Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment

*** PICTURE DESK ***

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at
www.image.net under BFI / BFI Southbank / Southbank 2015 / September / John Waters