

Made in Britain: Jeremy Thomas



April at BFI Southbank

Made in Britain – BFI Southbank’s annual focus on UK film – will this year celebrate the career of one of the nation’s most pre-eminent and highly respected independent producers **Jeremy Thomas**. For four decades he has been making films of artistic merit, ambition and originality. His projects are often labours of love and his filmography is packed with films with a personal significance.

According to Lawrence Turman “*A producer is dependent on writers, directors, actors, and studios, but it is he who starts the balling rolling, keeps the ball rolling, and makes sure it stays on the rolling path he has in mind.*” Thomas has done just this and has worked with legendary directors from around the world - his resume reads like a who’s who in independent and world cinema, featuring **Julien Temple**, **Agnès Varda**, **Karel Reisz**, **Johnny Depp**, **Takashi Miike**, **Richard Linklater**, **Bob Rafelson**, **Phillip Noyce**, **Harmony Korine** and **Terry Gilliam**. These relationships have seen him produce audience pleasing films with cool cult status, such as **Nicolas Roeg’s** *Bad Timing* (1978), titles that spark controversy, as with **David Cronenberg’s** *Crash* (1996), alongside **Bernardo Bertolucci’s** multi-Oscar®-winning *The Last Emperor* (1987), **Wim Wender’s** *Pina* (2011) and, most recently, **Jim Jarmusch’s** latest offering *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013). This season will demonstrate the pivotal role of ‘the producer’, one that is often somewhat overlooked, starting on **Thursday 3 April** when Jeremy Thomas will talk about his remarkable career at BFI Southbank.

Jeremy Thomas was born to play a part in the film industry. His childhood ambition was to work in cinema – and his father, Ralph Philip Thomas, and uncle, Gerald, were both successful directors, having made the ‘*Doctor*’ comedies with Dirk Bogarde, and the ‘*Carry Ons*’,

respectively. At Pinewood Studios he climbed the production ladder from clapper-boy to assistant director and then editor, working on **Ken Loach's** *A Misfortune* (1973). It was after this that Thomas made his debut as a producer with the Australian western *Mad Dog Morgan* (1976), starring **Dennis Hopper**, before returning to the UK when he founded the **Recorded Picture Company**, where he remains chairman. The first title produced here was **Jerzy Skolimowski's** *The Shout* (1978), a supernatural tale of a man who can kill with the power of his voice, which won the **Grand Prix de Jury** at the **Cannes Film Festival** that year. Subsequent projects saw Thomas work with **Nagisa Oshima**, **Stephen Frears** and **Bernardo Bertolucci** on his epic portrayal of China's final sovereign as *The Last Emperor*, which won nine Oscars® and will screen at BFI Southbank in its new 3D digital format. It was this film, co-written by **Mark Peploe**, and shot partly in Beijing's Forbidden City, that raised the producer's profile to great new heights.

Subsequent years have seen Thomas establish the sales company **HanWay Films**, Chair the **BFI** for five years, receive the Michael Balcon Award for Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema from **BAFTA** and produce his only directorial outing to date, the modern, dark fairytale *All the Little Animals* (1998), featuring **Christopher Bale** in an early role. After this his some notable works have included **Jonathan Glazer's** seminal feature debut *Sexy Beast* (2000), brooding thriller *Young Adam* (2004) and the Oscar®-nominated Norwegian epic *Kon-Tiki* (2012). This programme will screen a selection of films to intrigue and excite audiences from the career output of this cinematic luminary. In most cases they are the first film of a number made with each of the directors – the bond of trust and support between director and producer often evokes a deep respect – providing a cornucopia of extremely varied treasures that demonstrate the success of a great producer.

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BFI SOUTHBANK EVENT SCREENING PROGRAMME:

Made in Britain: Jeremy Thomas in Conversation

One of Britain's most important, distinctive and independent producers (and a former Chair of the BFI), Jeremy Thomas has worked with an extraordinary line up of directors, actors and creatives. His projects are labours of love; his filmography is packed with movies that mean something to him on a personal level. For nearly four decades he has been making films of artistic merit, ambition and originality. We're pleased to invite Jeremy Thomas to discuss his remarkable career.

Joint ticket available, £15, concs £11.50 (Members pay £1.50 less) with the 19:50 screening of *The Last Emperor* (3D), Thu 3 Apr 18:00 NFT1

The Studio: *Only Lovers Left Alive* Friday 18 – Wednesday 30 Apr

USA 2013. Dir Jim Jarmusch. With Tilda Swinton, Tom Hiddleston, John Hurt. 123min. Digital. 15
Jarmusch's highly imaginative and typically idiosyncratic update of the vampire movie depicts an undead romance between Adam (Hiddleston), a reclusive musician holed up in Detroit, and Eve (Swinton), his lover of centuries, who travels from her home in Tangier to ease his anxieties. Trouble is, her irresponsible young sister Ava (Mia Wasikowska) turns up, too... Visually striking, allusive, witty yet touching as a love story, it also boasts John Hurt, mischievously savouring his role as Christopher Marlowe.

Mad Dog Morgan

Australia 1976. Dir Philip Mora. With Dennis Hopper, Jack Thompson, David Gulpilil. 103min. 15
Inspired by a true story, Thomas's first film as producer was this superior Australian variation on the Western, with Hopper in fine fettle as the Irish settler-turned-bushranger determined to exact rough justice on the authority figures who ruined his life. Pacy, action-packed and pleasingly unglamorous, the film also boasts an excellent cast featuring many of Australia's finest actors: Frank Thring, Bill Hunter and John Hargreaves included.

Mon 31 Mar 20:30 NFT3, Wed 9 Apr 20:30 NFT3

The Shout

UK 1978. Dir Jerzy Skolimowski. With Alan Bates, Susannah York, John Hurt, Robert Stephens. 86min. 15
Adapted from a story by Robert Graves (played by Tim Curry in the framing narrative), this centres on a tale related at a cricket match by the possibly insane Crossley (Bates) about a certain Crossley who visited a musician (Hurt) and his wife (York) in Devon and began to dominate their lives through cunning and the possession of a strange power: being able to kill with his shout. An intriguing, engrossing play with ideas of truth and falsehood, sanity and madness, beautifully performed by all concerned.

Tue 1 Apr 20:50 NFT2, Sun 6 Apr 21:00 NFT1, Tue 15 Apr 18:30 NFT1

Bad Timing

UK 1978 Dir Nicolas Roeg With Theresa Russell, Art Garfunkel, Harvey Keitel 123min Digital. 18
A characteristically dense and fragmented work from Roeg, which delves backwards in time from the attempted suicide of a young woman (Russell) to examine her tempestuous affair with a psychoanalyst (Garfunkel) – as envisioned, at least, by the investigating detective (Keitel). A dark, intense study of sexual obsession, the film, set in Vienna, is richly inflected by the shadow of Freud.

Tue 1 Apr 18:10 NFT3, Sat 5 Apr 20:30 NFT1, Mon 7 Apr 20:40 NFT1

Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence

UK 1983 Dir Nagisa Oshima. With David Bowie, Tom Conti, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Takeshi Kitano 123min 15
Adapted by Oshima and Paul Mayersberg from Laurens Van der Post's novel about the experiences of Allied prisoners of war in a Japanese camp during World War Two, this focuses on the various cultural, ethical and emotional clashes that come to a head when Major Jack Celliers (Bowie) arrives, arousing conflicting feelings in Captain Yonoi (Sakamoto). Audacious and stylish, it also boasts a fine early performance by Takeshi Kitano.

Wed 2 Apr 18:20 NFT2, Fri 11 Apr 20:40 NFT2, Tue 15 Apr 20:40 NFT1

The Hit

UK 1983. Dir Stephen Frears. With Terence Stamp, John Hurt, Tim Roth, Laura Del Sol. 98min. 18
Blending taut suspense and sleek action scenes with moments of psychological and philosophical resonance, this film centres on the fraught encounter between two hitmen (Hurt and Roth) and the police informant (Stamp) they've been hired to capture and escort from his hideaway in Spain to Paris. But after a decade of reading and relaxing, he's strangely none too fazed by the prospect of execution... Frears' unfussy direction makes the most of Peter Prince's deft script, and the performances are pitch-perfect.

Wed 2 Apr 21:00 NFT2, Sat 12 Apr 20:40 NFT2, Sun 13 Apr 18:10 NFT3

The Last Emperor (3D)

China-Italy 1987 Dir Bernardo Bertolucci With John Lone, Joan Chen, Peter O'Toole 163min EST 15
Winning nine Oscars®, this intimate epic tells the story of Pu Yi – made Emperor of China at the age of three, forced to abdicate three years later when China became a republic, and thereafter variously a prisoner, puppet of the Japanese, playboy and humble gardener. It was a triumph for all concerned, not least Jeremy Thomas, who made the whole thing possible. Bertolucci and Vittorio Storaro's handling of the visuals is typically exquisite. We shall be screening the recently released 3D version of the film.

Thu 3 Apr 19:50 NFT1 Joint ticket available with Jeremy Thomas Q&A, Sun 6 Apr 17:50 NFT1

Everybody Wins

UK 1990. Dir Karel Reisz. With Debra Winger, Nick Nolte, Will Patton. 97min. 15
A film version of Arthur Miller's darkly comic tale of corruption and credulity, with Nick Nolte as the Connecticut private investigator encouraged by a seductive, seemingly well meaning beauty (Winger) to look into the case of a young man she claims is innocent of the murder for which he's languishing in

prison. Miller himself wrote the screenplay, Reisz brings an almost hallucinatory strangeness to the proceedings, and Winger, especially, gives a performance of subtlety and versatility.

Fri 18 Apr 16:00 NFT2, Sat 19 Apr 20:30 NFT2

Naked Lunch

UK-Canada 1991 Dir David Cronenberg With Peter Weller, Judy Davis, Ian Holm. 115min 18

Not a straight adaptation of William Burroughs' novel – as if such a thing could exist – but an ingenious commingling of biographical details which led to his writing the book with themes from his works. Weller is well cast as the author's alter ego Bill Lee, a cockroach exterminator trapped in a nightmare of drug addiction, guilt over the death of his wife (Davis), sinister authority figures and bizarre creatures. A deeply unsettling study of the impulse to write, it also boasts great music from Howard Shore, Ornette Coleman and Sufi trance collective 'Master Musicians of Jajouka'.

Thu 17 Apr 20:45 NFT1, Mon 21 Apr 18:20 NFT1

Blood and Wine

USA 1996. Dir Bob Rafelson. With Jack Nicholson, Michael Caine, Jennifer Lopez, Judy Davis. 101min. 15

A rich mix of noir crime drama and character study, Rafelson's underrated movie centres on a down-on-his-luck Florida wine merchant (Nicholson) who plans to steal a client's \$1million necklace with the help of his lover (J-Lo in an early role) and a shady safecracker (Caine). But he doesn't reckon on his wife's suspicions about his fidelity, and things get very complicated. An incisive, witty, tortuous account of compromise and corruptibility, beautifully performed throughout.

Fri 18 Apr 18:30 NFT3, Sun 20 Apr 20:30 NFT3

All the Little Animals

UK 1998. Dir Jeremy Thomas. With John Hurt, Christian Bale, Daniel Benzali, James Faulker. 112min. 15
Thomas' sole directorial outing to date is an ambitious and intriguing modern fairytale, adapted from a book by Walter Hamilton. An innocent, brain-damaged boy (Bale) flees London and his ogre-like stepfather (Benzali) for Cornwall, where he encounters an eccentric recluse (Hurt) who spends his time burying roadkill creatures. Stylishly shot in CinemaScope by Mike Molloy (DoP on several Thomas films since they first collaborated on *Mad Dog Morgan*), the film is a hallucinatory study in good and evil, in the tradition of *Night of the Hunter*.

Sat 19 Apr 15:50 NFT3, Mon 21 Apr 15:45 NFT2, Mon 28 Apr 20:40 NFT2

Brother

Japan 2000. Dir Takeshi Kitano With 'Beat' Takeshi, Omar Epps, Claude Maki 114min 18

Rather like Kitano's earlier crime movies but with the more lyrical or philosophical aspects simply removed, this stars the director as Yamamoto, a yakuza forced out of his Tokyo outfit and taking refuge in LA with his younger half-brother, himself already dealing drugs with a multiracial gang. Immediately, Yamamoto starts showing them how to widen their influence – brutally and lethally, of course. A near-abstract exercise in the mechanics of violent conflict.

Mon 21 Apr 20:40 NFT2, Sat 26 Apr 18:10 NFT2

Sexy Beast

UK 2000 Dir Jonathan Glazer With Ray Winstone, Ben Kingsley, Ian McShane 89min 18

Glazer's bold and impressive first feature chronicles the encounter between Gal (Winstone), a safecracker happily retired with his wife in Spain, and Don Logan (Kingsley), a psychopathic former associate bent on persuading him to accompany him back to London for another job. But Gal's not keen... Funny, frighteningly tense and furiously foul-mouthed, the film benefits from Glazer's very striking visual sense and from superb performances.

Fri 18 Apr 20:40 NFT2, Wed 23 Apr 21:00 NFT1, Sun 27 Apr 20:45 NFT1

Young Adam

UK 2003. Dir David Mackenzie. With Ewan McGregor, Tilda Swinton, Emily Mortimer 98min. 18

Adapted from Alexander Trocchi's novel, this brooding drama tells of Joe (McGregor), a drifter helping out on a coal barge, and his relationship with his boss (Peter Mullan) and his wife (Swinton) – a relationship profoundly affected when the men find the drowned corpse of a young woman (Mortimer). Switching between past and present, the film – for all its forthright eroticism – is not unlike a vintage film noir; a dark tale of dashed dreams, alienating ambition and betrayal, buoyed by the persuasive naturalism of the four lead performances.

Sun 20 Apr 18:10 NFT3, Sun 27 Apr 16:00 NFT2

Tideland

UK-Canada 2005. Dir Terry Gilliam. With Jodelle Ferland, Jeff Bridges, Janet McTeer. 120min. 15

When her mother overdoses, a young girl is taken by her junkie father (Bridges) to a decrepit family home out in the remote Texan countryside; when he too sinks into unconsciousness, she is left more alone than ever, with her dolls... Gilliam and Tony Grisoni's adaptation of Mitch Cullin's novel is a tough but very tender account of the girl's necessary escape into her own fantasy world – grotesque and almost surreal at times but always plausible and profoundly sympathetic.

Sat 19 Apr 18:10 NFT3, Thu 24 Apr 20:40 NFT3, Sat 26 Apr 20:20 NFT3

Kon-Tiki

UK-Norway 2012. Dir Joachim Ronning, Espen Sandberg. With Pal Sverre Hagen, Anders Baasmo Christiansen, Agnes Kittelsen. 113min

A visually spectacular, well acted and mostly faithful dramatic recreation of the historic journey undertaken by Norwegian anthropologist Thor Heyerdahl in 1947, when he and a small crew left Peru on a balsawood raft hoping to reach Polynesia, and thereby prove his theory that South Americans could have settled there in the pre-Columbian era. Sturdy storytelling and a strong sense of the crew's vulnerability make for gripping viewing.

Sun 27 Apr 18:10 NFT1, Tue 29 Apr 20:30 NFT3

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Jeremy Thomas is available for interview; please contact Ilona if you have a request.

About the BFI

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- 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

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***** PICTURE DESK *****

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