

A BFI release

CHINATOWN

Directed by Roman Polanski
USA 1974 | 131 mins | Cert 15

Starring:
Jack Nicholson, Faye Dunaway, John Huston,
Burt Young, Diane Ladd



Released 4 January 2013

Opening venues: BFI Southbank plus selected cinemas nationwide

www.bfi.org.uk/releases

On 4 January 2013, the BFI releases two of Roman Polanski's most celebrated films: **Repulsion** (UK 1965), the director's first feature after leaving Poland, and **Chinatown** (US 1974), widely regarded as one of the greatest American crime films ever made. Illustrating different periods in the director's career, these two releases in selected cinemas nationwide, partner a major retrospective of Polanski's work at BFI Southbank throughout January and February.

Chinatown is a Chandleresque neo-noir detective movie, set in the Los Angeles of 1937. Jake Gittes (Jack Nicholson), a private eye in the

mould of Philip Marlowe or Sam Spade, is visited by a woman who asks him to spy on her philandering husband, one Hollis Mulwray, chief engineer of the city's water and power department. Gittes advises her to let sleeping dogs lie, but she won't. The affair becomes a public scandal and the wisecracking detective gets a rude awakening when the chief engineer's real wife (Faye Dunaway) – bearing no resemblance to the woman who hired him - appears on the scene. Evelyn Mulwray is icily furious. She is also a beautiful seductress with something, indeed many things, to hide ...

When first released in 1974, **Chinatown** dazzled critics and audiences alike. Jack Nicholson had given a colossal performance which cemented his reputation as the greatest American actor of his generation; Polanski had directed his finest film yet; Robert Towne's complex script about all manner of public and private corruption in 30s LA was smart and droll; and LA itself, photographed in Scope by John Alonzo, had never looked so beautiful nor so sinister.

Robert Towne had written the script with his friend Jack Nicholson in mind: the actor's temperament, manner and use of language all helped inspire the character of Jake Gittes. Nicholson and Polanski had long been looking for a project to work on together, while Paramount producer Robert Evans was keen to have a European's vision. Although Polanski was reluctant to return to LA so soon after the death of his wife, Sharon Tate, Towne's script made CHINATOWN an irresistible proposition.

Polanski knew immediately that he wanted Faye Dunaway for the part of Evelyn Mulwray and resisted pressure to cast Jane Fonda in her place. John Huston, who played Noah Cross, Evelyn's father, was also Polanski's choice from the start. Genial yet frightening, he exudes malevolent charm, creating an unforgettable portrait of evil. And Polanski himself has a brilliant and memorable cameo as 'man with knife'.

Chinatown was nominated for eleven Academy Awards but won only one – for Best Original Screenplay – in a year dominated by *The Godfather Part II*. Polanski's thriller was also garlanded with four Golden Globes and three BAFTAs and was selected in 1991 by the Library of Congress for preservation in the United States National Film Registry.

A dark, disturbing and deeply absorbing masterpiece, Polanski's wonderful film noir in colour is a must-see for all devotees of the genre – indeed for any true connoisseur of cinema – and should on no account be missed on the big screen.

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*** PICTURE DESK ALERT ***

**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting
BFI theatrical releases can be found at www.image.net**

Notes to Editors:

- Roman Polanski's **Chinatown** and **Repulsion** are both released on 4 January 2013. (The latter will be press screened in December, date tba).
- **Chinatown** and **Repulsion** partner a major retrospective of Roman Polanski's work which takes place at BFI Southbank during January and February
- BFI Distribution is also making available new DCPs of the following Polanski titles for nationwide screening: **Knife in the Water** (Poland, 1962), **Cul-De-Sac** (UK 1966) and **Tess** (France 1979 – a superb new 4K digital restoration by Pathé Éclair Group and Le Diapason)

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
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences