

## **Fierce: The Untameable Joan Crawford** **1 August – 9 October 2018, BFI Southbank**



**Friday 7 July 2018, London.**

Running at **BFI Southbank** from **Wednesday 1 August – Tuesday 9 October**, **FIERCE: THE UNTAMEABLE JOAN CRAWFORD**, will be a major season of 20 films starring the incomparable **JOAN CRAWFORD**, spanning a period of more than 40 years working in Hollywood. One of the most iconic actors to have ever graced the silver-screen, Joan Crawford's tumultuous personal life, which included four marriages, and a highly publicised falling-out with two of her children (including Christina, who wrote the tell-all memoir *Mommie Dearest*), has often detracted from her supreme acting talents. Despite being labelled 'box-office poison' towards the end of the 1930s, Crawford could never be deterred, slowly regaining her leading-lady status and eventually winning an Oscar for the iconic melodrama *Mildred Pearce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945). **FIERCE: THE UNTAMEABLE JOAN CRAWFORD** will offer audiences a chance to see beyond the complicated personal life; from her early years as a flapper during the silent era to her middle-age melodramas and late-career genre resurgence, Joan Crawford was a cinematic chameleon who always dominated the screen with her formidable presence.

The season will include extended runs of two of her best-loved films, George Cukor's *The Women* (1939), which zings with whip-smart dialogue and ruthless high-society politics, and *Mildred Pearce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945) for which Crawford famously received her Best Actress Oscar in bed, blaming her absence from the ceremony on sickness. Both films will be re-released in selected cinemas across the UK by Park Circus on **Friday 17 August** and play on extended run at **BFI Southbank**. Other key films in the season will include Crawford's first A-list talkie *Grand Hotel* (Edmund Goulding, 1932), *The Bride Wore Red* (Dorothy Arzner, 1937) opposite her then-husband Franchot Tone, Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954) in which she plays a strong-willed saloon owner who is wrongly accused of murder, and the box office hit *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Robert Aldrich, 1962), the film which last year provided the back-story for the critically-acclaimed TV drama *Feud* starring Jessica Lange and Susan Sarandon as Joan Crawford and Bette Davis.

On **Saturday 4 August** there will be a special event – **An Afternoon with Joan Crawford** – which will explore the many faces of one of Hollywood's biggest stars through a series of illustrated talks. We'll look at her origins as the original 'it girl' and flapper superstar, to the much-parodied larger-than-life figure that has permeated films, TV series and books. One of Crawford's earliest roles was in Tod Browning's *The Unknown* (1927) about a criminal who becomes obsessed with Crawford's Nanon, the daughter of a circus ringmaster, who is a neurotic beauty crippled by anxieties. In *Mannequin* (Frank Borzage, 1937) Crawford plays ambitious Jessie who longs to escape from the poverty and squalor of her family; when her new husband turns out to be just as penniless as herself, the newlyweds turn their gaze on a self-made millionaire played by Spencer Tracy, who has developed a liking for Jessie. Crawford stars opposite Clark Gable a number of films, including the delightful pre-code musical *Dancing Lady* (Robert Z Leonard, 1933), *Strange Cargo* (Frank Borzage, 1940) about convicted prisoner who tries to corral a saloon girl into helping him escape from a penal colony and *Possessed* (Clarence Brown, 1931) about a factory girl who impulsively moves to New York and meets a divorced attorney played by Gable.

In *A Woman's Face* (George Cukor, 1941) Crawford plays a facially disfigured and bitter ringleader of a gang of blackmailers; Crawford forwent her glamorous screen persona to be taken seriously as an actress in Cukor's remake of the Swedish original starring Ingrid Bergman. *Humoresque* (Jean Negulesco, 1946) sees a talented but troubled

violinist (John Garfield) fall in love with married society lady Helen (Crawford), and they embark on a tempestuous romance marked by passion, jealousy and fits of rage. As a self-centred, acid-tongued socialite, Crawford was once again at the peak of her powers and settling into the melodramatic roles that rekindled her career. Also screening will be one of Otto Preminger's least-known films, *Daisy Kenyon* (1947), an emotionally turbulent melodrama about a love triangle between three complex characters, and *Harriet Craig* (Vincent Sherman, 1950) about a woman who is, underneath an impeccable suburban façade, a manipulative, neurotic and obsessive perfectionist that lies and bullies everyone around her.

Obsessive stalkers, robbers, cheaters, bullies, divas, murderesses, manipulative socialites; Joan Crawford has played them all. Throughout her career she thrived on roles of complicated and unlikeable women, pushing the envelope as her Hollywood clout grew – and then developing roles for herself when the offers started to dry up. In the latter part of her five-decade career she continued to reinvent herself, and developed partnerships with genre-friendly directors like Robert Aldrich and William Castle, becoming a late-career scream queen with *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Robert Aldrich, 1962), *Straight-Jacket* (William Castle, 1964) and *Saw What You Did* (William Castle, 1965), which will all screen in the season.

– ENDS –

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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#### **SEASON LISTINGS:**

##### **The Women**

USA 1939. Dir George Cukor. With Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Rosalind Russell. 133min. Digital. U. A Park Circus release

The film adaptation of Clare Boothe Luce's acclaimed stage play boasts a starry all-female cast Anita Loos' and Jane Murfin's screenplay zooms in on the lives and relationships of a disparate group of Manhattan women, but focuses on the well-liked and well-off Mary (Shearer), who discovers through gossip that her husband is having an affair with a manicurist (Crawford) with lofty ambitions. With its glorious, whip-smart dialogue and ruthless high-society politics, the film puts the women's inner lives and relationships – with men and also each other – centre stage. Crawford fully embraces her conniving, social-climbing character, and delivers some of the greatest side-eye shade in cinema history.

**ON EXTENDED RUN FROM FRI 17 AUGUST**

##### **Mildred Pierce**

USA 1945. Dir Michael Curtiz. With Joan Crawford, Jack Carson, Ann Blyth, Jo Ann Marlowe, Eve Arden. 111min. Digital 4K (in NFT1, NFT2 and NFT3 only). PG

Joan Crawford came back full force from a career slump in this iconic melodrama with a challenging mother-daughter relationship at its core. Mildred Pierce (Crawford, in her only Oscar®-winning role) is brought in for questioning after her second husband is shot. Through a series of flashbacks we track Mildred's extraordinary life: recently separated, she started working to provide for her two daughters, the spoilt Veda (Blyth) and tomboy-ish Kay (Marlowe), and became a successful business woman – at the expense of her relationship with her children. Starting off as a film noir murder mystery, *Mildred Pierce* is a rare beast of a film that centres on a middle-aged woman's ambition, and devotes more attention to her relationship with her daughters than it does to her love life.

**ON EXTENDED RUN FROM FRI 17 AUGUST**

##### **An Afternoon with Joan Crawford**

Join us for an afternoon that will explore the many faces of one of Hollywood's biggest stars, Joan Crawford. Through a series of illustrated talks led by experts and fans alike, we'll look at her origins as the OG 'it girl' and flapper superstar, to the much-parodied larger-than-life figure that has permeated films, TV series and books. As we prepare to delve into a two-month retrospective of some of her most memorable screen performances, we consider Crawford's best performance of all – herself. No wire hangers, please.

**SAT 4 AUG 12:00-16:00 NFT3**

##### **The Unknown**

USA 1927. *Dir Tod Browning. With Lon Chaney, Joan Crawford, Norman Kerry. 69min. 35mm. With live piano accompaniment. PG*

A criminal on the run (Chaney) pretends to be an armless knife thrower, hiding in plain sight in a circus. He becomes obsessed with Nanon (Crawford), the daughter of the ringmaster, who is repulsed by the touch of any man. Tod Browning (*Freaks*) cast Crawford in one of her earliest roles as a neurotic beauty, a disarming object of desire crippled by anxieties.

**WED 1 AUG 20:45 NFT2 / MON 6 AUG 18:30 NFT2**

### **Grand Hotel**

USA 1932. *Dir Edmund Goulding. With Greta Garbo, John Barrymore, Joan Crawford. 112min. 35mm. Print courtesy of Academy Film Archive. U*

Edmund Goulding's Best Picture Oscar®-winner revolves around a group of eccentric characters, including Grusinskaya (Garbo), a dancer, penniless Baron von Geigern (Barrymore) and money-hungry stenographer Flaemmchen (Crawford). In her first A-list talkie, a major turning point in her career, Crawford steals the show from an all-star cast, though she never got to share a scene with Garbo.

**SAT 4 AUG 16:15 NFT3 / SAT 25 AUG 15:30 NFT2**

### **The Bride Wore Red**

USA 1937. *Dir Dorothy Arzner. With Joan Crawford, Franchot Tone, Robert Young. 103min. 35mm. U*

In the last film where she co-starred with then-husband Franchot Tone, Crawford plays Anni, a cabaret singer who's sent to an upper-class resort in the Alps under the pretence of being an aristocratic debutante as part of a social experiment. She soon finds herself torn between her attraction to philosophical postman Giulio (Tone) and the appeal of rich playboy Rudi (Young).

**SUN 5 AUG 13:30 NFT2 / THU 9 AUG 18:30 NFT2**

### **Mannequin**

USA 1937. *Dir Frank Borzage. With Joan Crawford, Spencer Tracy, Alan Curtis. 94min. 35mm. U*

Ambitious Jessie (Crawford) longs to escape from the poverty and squalor of her family, and her hopes are on her boyfriend Eddie (Curtis). When he turns out to be just as penniless as herself, the newlyweds turn their gaze on self-made millionaire John Hennessy (Tracy), who has developed a liking for Jessie.

**SAT 11 AUG 20:40 NFT2 / WED 15 AUG 18:15 NFT2**

### **Dancing Lady**

USA 1933. *Dir Robert Z Leonard. With Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, Franchot Tone, Fred Astaire. 92min. 35mm. U*

Young, aspiring dancer Janie (Crawford) is arrested for indecent exposure as she's making ends meet by stripping. Millionaire playboy Tod (Tone) is smitten with her, he bails her out and pulls some strings to get her a part in a new Broadway musical in an effort to gain her love. But he didn't count on the theatre director (Gable) complicating things. The chemistry between Gable and Crawford sizzles in this delightful pre-Code musical.

**MON 13 AUG 18:30 NFT2 / SUN 19 AUG 15:30 NFT2**

### **Strange Cargo**

USA 1940. *Dir Frank Borzage. With Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, Peter Lorre, Ian Hunter. 113min. 35mm. PG*

Convicted prisoner Verne (Gable) tries to corral saloon girl Julie (Crawford) into helping him escape from a New Guinea penal colony. Instead, she turns him in. When the soft-spoken convict drags her into his escape with a group of prisoners, things take a strange turn... Frank Borzage manages to turn what could have been a classic romance into a haunting moral fable.

**THU 2 AUG 20:45 NFT3 / MON 13 AUG 20:30 NFT3 / THU 16 AUG 18:20 NFT3**

### **A Woman's Face**

USA 1941. *Dir George Cukor. With Joan Crawford, Melvyn Douglas, Conrad Veidt. 105min. 16mm. Print courtesy of Academy Film Archive. PG*

Anna (Crawford), the facially disfigured and bitter ringleader of a gang of blackmailers, encounters a plastic surgeon (Veidt) who offers her the chance to recover her looks. Crawford forwent her glamorous screen persona to be taken seriously as an actress in Cukor's remake of the Swedish original starring Ingrid Bergman.

**WED 8 AUG 18:05 NFT2 / SUN 19 AUG 17:40 NFT2**

### **Humoresque**

USA 1946. *Dir Jean Negulesco. With Joan Crawford, John Garfield, Oscar Levant. 124min. 35mm. Print courtesy of The Library of Congress. U*

Talented but troubled violinist Paul Boray (Garfield) falls in love with married society lady Helen (Crawford), and they embark on a tempestuous romance marked by passion, jealousy and fits of rage. As a self-centred, acid-tongued socialite, Crawford was once again at the peak of her powers and settling into the melodramatic roles that rekindled her career.

**TUE 21 AUG 20:30 NFT2 / FRI 24 AUG 18:15 NFT3**

### **Johnny Guitar**

USA 1954. *Dir Nicholas Ray. With Joan Crawford, Mercedes McCambridge, Sterling Hayden. 110min. Digital. PG*

In one of her best-known roles, Crawford plays Vienna, a strong-willed saloon owner who is wrongly accused of murder and robbery. As the townsfolk rally against her, trying to get her to leave town, Vienna stands firm, aided by her old friend, the mysterious Johnny Guitar (Hayden).

**FRI 10 AUG 20:40 NFT2 / MON 20 AUG 20:45 NFT1 / SUN 26 AUG 17:40 NFT1 / TUE 28 AUG 18:10 NFT2**

### **What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?**

USA 1962. Dir Robert Aldrich. With Joan Crawford, Bette Davis, Victor Buono. 134min. Digital. 12A

This box-office hit marked Crawford's comeback and one of the greatest on-screen (and off-screen) feuds with Bette Davis. Crawford stars as wheelchair-bound movie star Blanche, who lives with her ex-child star sister Baby Jane (Davis). As their relationship grows increasingly toxic, Jane's emotional torture of her sister escalates to dangerous levels.

**WED 1 AUG 18:00 NFT2 / SUN 26 AUG 20:00 NFT3 / MON 27 AUG 17:10 NFT1 / FRI 31 AUG 20:20 NFT1**

### **Possessed**

USA 1931. Dir Clarence Brown. With Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, Wallace Ford. 98min. 35mm PG

Marian Martin (Crawford) is a factory girl, determined to carve out a better life for herself than the one she can have if she married factory boy Al (Ford). In an impulsive move to New York City, she gets trained in the art of socialising and charming wealthy men, and puts it to good use with divorced attorney Mark (Gable).

**SAT 1 SEP 18:30 NFT1 / THU 6 SEP 20:30 NFT3**

### **Possessed**

USA 1947. Dir Curtis Bernhardt. With Joan Crawford, Van Heflin, Raymond Massey. 108min. 35mm PG

Crawford is electric in one of her most difficult roles as a manipulative woman that takes her obsession with a family man to dangerous extremes. Initially hired to take care of the ailing matriarch of the Graham family, Louise (Crawford) becomes enamoured with their neighbour David (Heflin), an infatuation that develops into an all-consuming obsession that threatens Louise's grasp on reality.

**WED 5 SEP 20:40 NFT2 / SAT 8 SEP 16:15 NFT1**

### **Daisy Kenyon**

USA 1947. Dir Otto Preminger. With Joan Crawford, Henry Fonda, Dana Andrews. 99min. 35mm PG

Successful artist Daisy Kenyon (Crawford) is torn between her affair with an arrogant lawyer that won't leave his family (Andrews) and a widowed veteran (Fonda) who has some unresolved issues. One of Preminger's least-known films, this emotionally turbulent melodrama about a love triangle between three complex characters deserves to be revisited.

**MON 10 SEP 18:10 NFT3 / SAT 15 SEP 18:30 NFT1**

### **Harriet Craig**

USA 1950. Dir Vincent Sherman. With Joan Crawford, Wendell Corey, KT Stevens, Lucile Watson. 94min. 35mm PG

Harriet Craig's house is perfect. Her hair is just so. Her husband fits in flawlessly. Everything is designed to be the epitome of suburban perfection. But behind the impeccable facade is a woman that lies to and bullies everyone around her – with Crawford playing the manipulative, neurotic, controlling, obsessive perfectionist title character to a tee.

**SUN 16 SEP 18:20 NFT2 / WED 19 SEP 20:40 NFT2**

### **Sudden Fear**

USA 1952. Dir David Miller. With Joan Crawford, Jack Palance, Gloria Grahame, Virginia Huston. 111min. Digital. PG

In this independently produced (a rarity for the era!) film noir, Crawford is a Broadway playwright who, after a whirlwind romance, marries an ambitious stage actor (Palance). When she discovers that he's plotting to murder her in cahoots with an old girlfriend (Grahame), she decides to concoct a plot of her own.

**SUN 16 SEP 16:00 NFT1 / TUE 2 OCT 20:45 NFT1**

### **Autumn Leaves**

USA 1956. Dir Robert Aldrich. With Joan Crawford, Cliff Robertson, Vera Miles. 107min. Digital. 12A

In her first collaboration with Aldrich (who would direct her again in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*), Crawford plays an older woman who's having a troubled romance with a young Army vet (Robertson). Crawford was particularly proud of her work in this film, which wasn't admired by critics at the time but has since garnered a solid following.

**MON 1 OCT 20:30 NFT3 / SUN 7 OCT 15:50 NFT3**

### **Strait-Jacket**

USA 1964. Dir William Castle. With Joan Crawford, Diane Baker, Leif Erickson. 93min. 35mm

This psychological horror (produced and directed by the king of gimmicks, William Castle) was Crawford's 'psycho-biddy' follow-up to *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* It earned the aging star her last Academy Award nomination. She plays axe-murderer Lucy Harbin, recently released from the psychiatric hospital after being locked up for two decades. Lucy attempts to rebuild her life with her now-adult daughter (Baker), but a series of brutal axe murders threatens her town and her fragile grip on sanity.

**SAT 6 OCT 18:20 NFT2 / TUE 9 OCT 20:40 NFT2**

## **Saw What You Did**

USA 1965. Dir William Castle. With Joan Crawford, John Ireland, Leif Erickson. 82min. 35mm 12A

In her second collaboration with Castle (the first being *Strait-Jacket*), Crawford plays nosy neighbour Amy Nelson, who becomes entangled in a dangerous murder plot when two teen girls make a prank call to her neighbour – and object of her affections – Steve Marak (Ireland). Steve has just murdered his wife, and becomes convinced that the girls onto him. He must get rid of them...

**THU 20 SEP 20:40 NFT3 / THU 4 OCT 18:20 NFT2**

## **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 is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

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 £12.65, concs £10.15 including Gift Aid donation. Members pay £2.20 less on any ticket - [www.bfi.org.uk/southbank](http://www.bfi.org.uk/southbank).

Young people aged 25 and under can buy last minute tickets for just £3, 45 minutes before the start of screenings and events, subject to availability - <http://www.bfi.org.uk/25-and-under>.

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

## **BFI Shop**

The BFI Shop is stocked and staffed by BFI experts with over 1,200 book titles and 1,000 DVDs to choose from, including hundreds of acclaimed books and DVDs produced by the BFI.

## **BFI Reuben Library**

BFI Southbank is home to the BFI Reuben Library which holds the world's largest collection of books, journals and digitised material about film, television and the moving image. The library is free to access and hosts a year-round programme of talks and events.

'Not just for movie nerds - this huge collection of film and TV books, periodicals, scripts, stills and posters is full of inspiration for anyone involved in the creative arts' – Evening Standard Magazine

The BFI Reuben Library is open 10:30-19:00, Tuesday-Saturday.

## **The benugo bar & kitchen**

Eat, drink and be merry in panoramic daylight. benugo's décor is contemporary, brightly lit and playful with a lounge space, bar and dining area. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip on a cocktail. 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.

## **BFI Mediatheque**

Free to access BFI Mediatheques offer users an opportunity to explore the digital collections drawn from the BFI National Archive and partner collections, at select UK-wide locations.

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

**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank can be found via the link below:**

<https://bfi.sharefile.com/d-s3f51db7a0e04db49>

