

## **GOOD AT BEING BAD: THE FILMS OF GLORIA GRAHAME**



**BFI Southbank, 13 Nov – 30 Dec 2017**

**Wednesday 13 September 2017, London.**

Running at BFI Southbank from Monday 13 November until Saturday 30 December, **GOOD AT BEING BAD: THE FILMS OF GLORIA GRAHAME** will be a season celebrating the irresistible and alluring Hollywood starlet **Gloria Grahame**. The season will tie in with the release of *Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool* (Paul McGuigan, 2017), about the passionate relationship between British actor Peter Turner and the Academy Award-Winning actress, starring Annette Bening and Jamie Bell. The film, which will be a Headline Gala at this year's BFI London Film Festival on Wednesday 11 October, will be previewed as part of the season on **Tuesday 14 November** ahead of its UK-wide release. The season complements the BFI's major UK-wide season **BFI THRILLER: WHO CAN YOU TRUST?** as Grahame was perhaps most famous for her femmes fatales roles in film noirs such as *Sudden Fear* (David Miller, 1952), *Human Desire* (Fritz Lang, 1954), *In a Lonely Place* (Nicholas Ray, 1950) and *The Big Heat* (Fritz Lang, 1953). The latter two films will both be re-released in selected cinemas by Park Circus on **Friday 24 November** and screen on extended run at BFI Southbank. The season opens with an illustrated talk – **Gloria Grahame: Femme Fatale Film Noir Icon** – conducted by Film London CEO Adrian Wootton on **Monday 13 November**, exploring her working relationships with major filmmakers such as Frank Capra, Fritz Lang and Vincente Minnelli, as well as her tumultuous and often controversial personal life.

Although Grahame never reached the heights of major stardom, she excelled at playing complex, damaged women. Her innate ability to tap into the psyche of troubled characters imbued them with an emotional depth that hinted at a troubled past, and a doomed future. *Crossfire* (Edward Dmytryk, 1947) offered Grahame one of her earliest substantial roles; her portrayal of a dance-hall girl who witnesses a murder earned her an Oscar®-nomination and set the mould for her screen persona. Nicholas Ray's beguiling blend of murder mystery and love story *In a Lonely Place* (1950) is one of the finest American movies of the early 50s, which sees a Hollywood scriptwriter (played by

Humphrey Bogart) become the prime suspect in the murder of a young woman, that is, until his neighbour played by Grahame provides him with a false alibi. As the pair embark on a romance, his volatile temper makes her wonder whether he might have been guilty. *In a Lonely Place* is re-released by Park Circus on Friday 24 November, and plays on extended run; also re-released on the same day is ***The Big Heat*** (1953), Fritz Lang's stark thriller about a cop fighting city-wide corruption. Lang's film is pacy, unsentimental and to the point in exploring the thin line between the law and rough justice. The robust direction, terse script and unfussy performances ensure the movie feels strangely modern. Grahame read *Macbeth* in preparation for the role of Irene Neves in ***Sudden Fear*** (David Miller, 1952) – looking to Lady Macbeth to locate the emotional drive to manipulate a man to murder, as she does with actor-cum-fraudster Lester Blaine. Joan Crawford is at the film's core and plays the melodramatic angle to perfection, but Grahame is compelling as the driving force behind the murderous plot.

Alongside the noir titles, part one of the season in November will also include Vincente Minnelli's classic Hollywood take on the movie business ***The Bad and the Beautiful*** (1952), which tells the tale of a ruthless producer and the effect his dealings have on his friends and colleagues. Grahame received the Oscar® for Best Actress in a Supporting Role for the role despite being on screen for only nine minutes. One of Grahame's lesser-known titles ***The Glass Wall*** (Maxwell Shane, 1953), also offered her a rare starring role; she appears opposite Italian star Vittorio Gassman, who plays a Hungarian illegal immigrant determined to remain in the US, with one night to track down the person who can save him from deportation. Grahame gives an exquisite performance as a woman on the breadline who forms a bond with the desperate man.

Part two of the season in December further explores Grahame's *femme fatale* finesse, but also showcases some of her lighter roles including Vincente's Minnelli's lush melodrama ***The Cobweb*** (1955) in which she plays the neglected wife of a doctor, frustrated by his dedication to his work and stifled by the small-town mentality of those around her. In ***Naked Alibi*** (Jerry Hopper, 1954) Grahame is at her most seductive as a nightclub singer caught between a two men: a policeman, and a suspected murderer who the policeman has pursued to a Mexican border town. Although she was not a natural singer (her singing was dubbed in *Naked Alibi*) Grahame's naïve, endearing vocal style in the classic Rogers and Hammerstein musical western ***Oklahoma!*** (Fred Zinnemann, 1955) brings genuine charm to her portrayal of the flirtatious Ado Annie.

Showing how fast Hollywood forgot its roots, ***Merton of the Movies*** (Robert Alton, 1947) is a broad parody of silent cinema that was made barely 20 years after the coming of sound. Leading man Red Skelton was coached in physical comedy by Buster Keaton for his performance as a small-town boy seeking fame and fortune in the movies, while Grahame luxuriates in the glamour of her role as a film star who seduces him. Completing the season is ***Odds Against Tomorrow*** (Robert Wise, 1959), a heist movie with a twist; a troubled WWII veteran confronts his prejudices when he embarks on a bank job with a black jazz performer played by Harry Belafonte. A very personal project for Belafonte, the film is one of the last Hollywood noirs ever produced and Grahame makes an impression in the small role of a sexually frustrated neighbour, in her swansong as a screen siren. The selection of films screening in the season illustrates Gloria Grahame's great acting talent and reveals a scintillating screen presence and effortless glamour. Her scandalous and turbulent private life has intensified her legendary status, but this shouldn't distract viewers from her most important legacy: her uniquely compelling performances.

**– ENDS –**

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**SEASON LISTINGS:**

**Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool**

*UK 2017. Dir Paul McGuigan. With Annette Bening, Jamie Bell, Julie Walters, Vanessa Redgrave. 105min. Digital. Cert tbc. Courtesy of Lionsgate*

Ageing Hollywood star Gloria Grahame (Bening), a goddess of the silver screen in the 1940s, now resides in Liverpool doing small theatre gigs to help support her children. While dealing a health scare, she develops an unlikely romance with charming 20-something Peter Turner (Bell) – a relationship that's soon tested to its limits.

*Tickets £15, concs £12 (Members pay £2 less)*

**TUE 14 NOV 18:10 NFT1**

**Gloria Grahame: Femme Fatale Film Noir Icon**

*TRT 90min*

This lavishly illustrated talk by Adrian Wootton OBE, CEO of Film London, will celebrate the onscreen brilliance that defines Gloria Grahame as one of the iconic *femme fatale* heroines of the era. Wootton will explore her working relationships with major filmmakers such as Frank Capra, Fritz Lang and Vincente Minnelli, as well as her tumultuous and often controversial personal life.

*Tickets £6.50*

**MON 13 NOV 18:20 NFT3**

**In a Lonely Place**

*USA 1950. Dir Nicholas Ray. With Humphrey Bogart, Gloria Grahame, Frank Lovejoy. 98min. Digital. PG. A Park Circus release.*

Nicholas Ray's beguiling blend of murder mystery and unusually adult love story is one of the finest American movies of the early 50s. The lonely place is Hollywood: scriptwriter Dix (Bogart) is prime suspect in the murder of a young woman, until neighbour Laurel (Grahame) provides him with a false alibi. But as the pair embark on a romance, his volatile temper – exacerbated equally by the studio and the cops – makes her wonder whether he might have been guilty... Brilliantly adapted from Dorothy B Hughes' novel, Ray's tough but tender film is spot-on in its insightful characterisation of Tinseltown and of the troubled lovers. Marvellously cast, Bogart and Grahame bring an aching poignancy to their painful predicament.

**FROM FRI 24 NOV**

**The Big Heat**

*USA 1953. Dir Fritz Lang. With Glenn Ford, Gloria Grahame, Jocelyn Brando, Lee Marvin. 89min. Digital. 15. A Park Circus release*

Fritz Lang's stark thriller about a cop fighting city-wide corruption is also a classic tale of revenge and redemption. After a senior policeman kills himself, detective Dave Bannon (Ford) begins to suspect a cover-up between his superiors, local politicians and a seemingly inviolate crime-lord. Persisting with his investigations,

he comes under attack, at which point his mission turns personal rather than professional. Famous for its (off-screen) violence – notably a scene involving Gloria Grahame, Lee Marvin and boiling coffee – Lang’s film is pacy, unsentimental and to the point in exploring the thin line between the law and rough justice. The robust direction, terse script and unfussy performances ensure the movie feels strangely modern.

**FROM FRI 24 NOV**

#### **Crossfire**

*USA 1947. Dir Edward Dmytryk. With Gloria Grahame, Robert Mitchum, Robert Ryan, Robert Young. 86min. 35mm. PG*

This was one of Grahame’s earliest substantial roles. Her portrayal of a dance-hall girl who witnesses a murder earned her an Oscar® nomination and also set the mould for her screen persona. As the police investigation into the crime leads to a manhunt for a missing GI, the film takes an uncompromising look at the problems men had readjusting to life after war.

**WED 15 NOV 18:30 NFT2 / SAT 18 NOV 18:30 NFT2**

#### **Sudden Fear + intro by Adrian Wootton OBE, CEO of Film London\***

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

Gloria Grahame read *Macbeth* in preparation for the role of Irene Neves – looking to Lady Macbeth to locate the emotional drive to manipulate a man to murder, as she does with Palance’s actor-cum-fraudster Lester Blaine. Joan Crawford is at the film’s core and plays the melodramatic angle to perfection but Grahame is compelling as the driving force behind the murderous plot

**MON 13 NOV 20:30 NFT2\* / SUN 19 NOV 17:00 NFT2**

#### **The Bad and the Beautiful**

*USA 1952. Dir Vincente Minnelli. With Gloria Grahame, Kirk Douglas, Lana Turner, Dick Powell, Walter Pidgeon. 118min. 35mm. PG*

This classic Hollywood take on the movie business tells the tale of a ruthless producer and the effect his dealings have on his friends and colleagues. Grahame received a Best Actress in a Supporting Role Oscar® for her portrayal of Rosemary, the wife of screenwriter James Lee Bartlow (Powell), despite being on screen for only nine minutes.

**FRI 17 NOV 18:20 NFT2 / THU 30 NOV 20:35 NFT2**

#### **The Glass Wall + intro by season curator Jo Botting, BFI National Archive\***

*USA 1953. Dir Maxwell Shane. With Gloria Grahame, Vittorio Gassman, Ann Robinson. 85min. 35mm. PG*

One of Grahame’s lesser-known titles, this film also offered her a rare starring role. She appears opposite Italian star Vittorio Gassman, who plays a Hungarian illegal immigrant determined to remain in the US, with one night to track down the person who can save him from deportation. Grahame gives an exquisite performance as a woman on the breadline who forms a bond with the desperate man.

**MON 20 NOV 18:20 NFT2\* / MON 27 NOV 20:40 NFT2**

#### **Human Desire**

*USA 1953. Dir Fritz Lang. With Gloria Grahame, Glenn Ford, Broderick Crawford. 91min. 35mm. PG*

The role of Vicki Buckley in this classic noir about a man’s affair with a married woman shows Grahame at her most complex and scheming. As the film progresses the layers of her character are slowly peeled away, and the audience teeter between sympathy for her tragic life and abhorrence at her capacity for manipulation

**TUE 21 NOV 18:20 NFT3 / SUN 26 NOV 14:45 NFT1**

#### **The Cobweb**

*USA 1955. Dir Vincente Minnelli. With Gloria Grahame, Richard Widmark, Lauren Bacall, Charles Boyer, Lillian Gish. 123min*

Vincente Minnelli's lush melodrama revolves around the struggle for power among staff and inmates at a psychiatric hospital. Grahame plays the neglected wife of Dr McIver (Widmark), frustrated by his dedication to his work and stifled by the small-town mentality of those around her. The colour photography emphasises her brassiness, enhancing her waspish yet sensual performance.

**DATES AND TIMES IN DECEMBER TBC**

### **Oklahoma!**

*USA 1955. Dir Fred Zinnemann. With Gloria Grahame, Shirley Jones, Gordon MacRae, Rod Steiger. 145min. U*  
While she was not a natural chanteuse (in fact her singing was dubbed in *Naked Alibi*) Grahame's naïve, endearing vocal style in this musical western brings genuine charm to her portrayal of Ado Annie. Annie's romantic to-ing and fro-ing offers comic relief from Rod Steiger's menacing pursuit of the wholesome Laurey (Jones), while the whole is interspersed with some of Rodgers and Hammerstein's liveliest tunes.

**DATES AND TIMES IN DECEMBER TBC**

### **Naked Alibi**

*USA 1954. Dir Jerry Hopper. With Gloria Grahame, Sterling Hayden, Gene Barry. 86min*

A policeman pursues a suspected murderer to a Mexican border town, both men driven by desperation and their own personal demons. Grahame is at her most seductive as a nightclub singer caught between them; she finally finds the love she's desperate for, but will the chance for happiness come too late?

**DATES AND TIMES IN DECEMBER TBC**

### **Merton of the Movies**

*USA 1947. Dir Robert Alton. With Gloria Grahame, Red Skelton, Virginia O'Brien. 82min*

Showing how fast Hollywood forgot its roots, this broad parody of silent cinema was made barely 20 years after the coming of sound. Red Skelton was coached in physical comedy by Buster Keaton for his performance as a small-town boy seeking fame and fortune in the movies. Grahame luxuriates in the glamour of her role, as a film star who seduces the innocent abroad.

**DATES AND TIMES IN DECEMBER TBC**

### **Odds Against Tomorrow**

*USA 1959. Dir Robert Wise. With Gloria Grahame, Robert Ryan, Harry Belafonte, Shelley Winters. 96min*

Director Robert Wise offers a heist movie with a twist, as Robert Ryan's troubled WWII veteran confronts his prejudices when he embarks on a bank job with a black jazz performer (Belafonte). A very personal project for Belafonte, the film is one of the last Hollywood noirs ever produced. Grahame makes an impression in the small role of Ryan's sexually frustrated neighbour, in her swansong as a screen siren.

**DATES AND TIMES IN DECEMBER TBC**

### **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.

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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**

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#### **The benugo bar & kitchen**

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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.

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

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