

LOST IN AMERICA: THE OTHER SIDE OF REAGAN'S '80S



Friday 23 May 2018, London.

American cinema in the 1980s is usually thought of as favouring coming-of-age teen movies, the macho action heroes of *Rambo* and *Predator*, and the glossy spectacle of films like *Top Gun*, but there was another side to American movies during the 80s, which audiences will be able to discover at **BFI Southbank** this May. **LOST IN AMERICA: THE OTHER SIDE OF REAGAN'S '80S** is the latest in the BFI's **Deep Focus** series, programmed by **Sight & Sound** magazine, and will include films such as *Out of the Blue* (Dennis Hopper, 1980), *Lost in America* (Albert Brooks, 1985), *Running on Empty* (Sidney Lumet, 1988) and *Suburbia* (Penelope Spheeris, 1983), which all continue the personal, adventurous spirit of the 'New Hollywood' of the 60s and 70s in their focus on story and character over the box office bottom line. The gritty dramas, revealing documentaries and spiky comedies showing in this season, many of which have been long-overlooked, will expose the real 80s America, in all its troubling, fascinating complexity.

Where Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* captured the thwarted promise of the 60s, his unvarnished third feature *Out of the Blue* (1980) channelled the raw power of punk to lay bare the realities faced by many at the dawn of Reagan's presidency. Meanwhile, the distance travelled between 60s idealism and Reagan's America of the 80s are at the heart of Sidney Lumet's poignant drama *Running on Empty* (1988). River Phoenix is outstanding as the eldest son of a pair of 60s political radicals-turned-fugitives from the FBI; he yearns to carve his own path, but, thanks to his parents' past, he's condemned to a life on the run. A forerunner to the New Queer Cinema of the 1990s, Bill Sherwood's Brooklyn-set indie *Parting Glances* (1985) follows a man dealing with his partner's imminent departure for a work trip, while caring for an ex (played by Steve Buscemi) who's dying of AIDS. Despite being one of the first films to confront the unfurling AIDS crisis, Sherwood's deeply human film never becomes a simple 'issue' movie.

Lost in America (Albert Brooks, 1985) is a hilarious send-up of yuppie anxiety in which director Albert Brooks also stars as an advertising exec who convinces his wife to join him in quitting her job, exchanging their 'nest egg' house for a Winnebago, and reviving the faded idealism of their 60s youth to hit the road in pursuit of the 'real' America. Another take on the 'yuppie nightmare' is Jonathan Demme's neo-screwball *Something Wild* (1986), which sees Jeff Daniels' buttoned-up New York office worker Charlie meet Melanie Griffith's impulsive Audrey one lunch hour, and

get whisked into a riotous interstate road trip that opens his eyes to the multitude of people and places, ethnicities and cultures that make up the melting pot of America. BFI Southbank's regular **PHILOSOPHICAL SCREENS** series will this month address *The Philosophy of Screwball and 'Something Wild'*, reflecting on this neo-screwball's narrative structure through a philosophical lens.

Streetwise (Martin Bell, 1984) is an unforgettably vivid documentary on the lives of Seattle's homeless street kids; Bell's Oscar®-nominated portrait of America's underbelly, which captures the lives of the homeless youth with a raw poetry, would prove a key influence on filmmakers like Harmony Korine. After making *The Decline of Western Civilization*, the definitive documentary of the burgeoning US punk scene, Penelope Spheeris teamed up with producer Roger Corman and a cast of non-professionals to expose the generational culture gap within 80s America in *Suburbia* (1983). Her authentic and energetic film focuses on the various runaway kids who forge an embattled alternative community within LA's punk scene, one they pointedly call 'The Rejected.' LA is also the backdrop for the unjustly neglected thriller *Mike's Murder* (James Bridges, 1984), which stars Debra Winger as a woman whose on-off relationship with wayward Mike exposes her to a world of drugs, decadence and violence.

Also screening will be *Smooth Talk* (Joyce Chopra, 1985) starring Laura Dern, in a brilliant first lead performance, as a typical 15-year-old with a fractured relationship with her mother and a fledgling sexual awareness; *River's Edge* (Tim Hunter, 1986), a downbeat film focusing on a group of teens in the aftermath of the senseless murder of one of their classmates, and featuring early performances from Keanu Reeves, Crispin Glover and Lone Skye; and *The Hidden* (Jack Sholder, 1987) – a delirious action-horror-sci-fi hybrid, starring Kyle MacLachlan, which is well deserving of its cult reputation.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Press Contacts:

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

Elizabeth Dunk – Press Office Assistant
elizabeth.dunk@bfi.org.uk / 020 7957 8986

SEASON LISTINGS:

Out of the Blue

Canada 1980. Dir Dennis Hopper. With Linda Manz, Dennis Hopper, Sharon Farrell, Raymond Burr. 93min. 35mm. 15

Where Hopper's *Easy Rider* captured the thwarted promise of the 60s, his unvarnished third feature channelled the raw power of punk to lay bare the realities faced by many at the dawn of Reagan's presidency. Events are seen through the eyes of 15-year-old Cebe (a sensational Linda Manz), living in nowhereville and abandoned by everyone from Elvis and Sid Vicious to her junkie mother (Farrell) and drunk, abusive father (Hopper).

TUE 1 MAY 20:40 NFT2 / SAT 5 MAY 20:50 NFT2

Suburbia

USA 1983. Dir Penelope Spheeris. With Chris Pedersen, Bill Coyne, Jennifer Clay, Flea, Timothy O'Brien. 96min. 35mm. 18

After making *The Decline of Western Civilization*, the definitive documentary of the burgeoning US punk scene, Spheeris teamed up with producer Roger Corman and a cast of non-professionals to expose the generational culture gap within 80s America. Her

rough 'n' ready but authentically energised film focuses on the various runaway kids who forge an embattled alternative community within LA's punk scene, one they pointedly call 'The Rejected.'

MON 7 MAY 20:30 NFT2 / FRI 18 MAY 18:20 NFT2

Mike's Murder

USA 1984. Dir James Bridges. With Debra Winger, Paul Winfield, Mark Keyloun, Darrell Larson. 109min. 35mm. 18

Los Angeles has rarely seemed more unsettling than in James Bridges' unjustly neglected thriller, which conveys the physical dislocation and lonely anonymity behind the glitz of that freeway-crossed city. Debra Winger gives a superb performance as Betty, whose on-off relationship with wayward Mike (Keyloun) exposes her to a world of drugs, decadence and violence. A genuine rediscovery.

FRI 4 MAY 20:45 NFT2 / FRI 11 MAY 18:15 NFT2

Choose Me

USA 1984. Dir Alan Rudolph. With Geneviève Bujold, Keith Carradine, Lesley Ann Warren, Rae Dawn Chong. 106min. 35mm. 15

The game of looking for love in 80s America is given an offbeat spin in Alan Rudolph's intoxicating comic roundelay. The film traces several night owls looking for a connection: a radio sex therapist (Bujold), an emotionally wounded bartender (Warren), a drifter (Carradine) and a naïve alcoholic (Chong), as they fumble through neon-soaked nights, all to the sensual sounds of Teddy Pendergrass.

SAT 12 MAY 15:50 NFT3 / SUN 20 MAY 20:20 NFT3

Streetwise

USA 1984. Dir Martin Bell. With Erin Blackwell, Baby Gramps, Rat, Lou Ellen Couch. 91min. Digital. 18

An unforgettably vivid documentary on the hardscrabble lives of Seattle's homeless street kids, Bell's Oscar®-nominated portrait of America's underbelly would prove a key influence on the likes of Harmony Korine. The film introduces us to tragic characters like hustler 'Rat' and teen prostitute 'Tiny,' but captures their lives with a raw poetry. One of the key documentaries of the decade.

SUN 13 MAY 17:50 NFT2 / TUE 22 MAY 21:10 NFT3

Smooth Talk

USA-UK 1985. Dir Joyce Chopra. With Laura Dern, Treat Williams, Mary Kay Place. 91min. 35mm. 15

The sugary comforts of the 1980s coming-of-age drama are spun into a more unsettling confection in Chopra's sensitive yet troubling film. In a brilliant first lead performance, Laura Dern plays Connie, a typical 15-year-old Californian with a fractured relationship with her mother and a fledgling sexual awareness, whose attraction to enigmatic older misfit Arnold Friend (Williams) brings unforeseen danger.

FRI 11 MAY 20:50 NFT2 / SAT 19 MAY 18:20 NFT2

Lost in America

USA 1985. Dir Albert Brooks. With Albert Brooks, Julie Hagerty, Tom Tarpey, Maggie Roswell. 91min. Digital. 15

In his hilarious send-up of yuppie anxiety, Brooks plays an advertising exec who convinces his wife (Hagerty) to join him in quitting her job, exchanging their 'nest egg' house for a Winnebago, and reviving the faded idealism of their 60s youth to hit the tarmac *Easy Rider*-style in pursuit of the 'real' America. But even the best-laid plans often go awry...

THU 10 MAY 20:50 NFT3 / MON 21 MAY 17:45 NFT3

Something Wild

USA 1986. Dir Jonathan Demme. With Jeff Daniels, Melanie Griffith, Ray Liotta, Leib Lensky, John Waters. 114min. 35mm. 15

Jonathan Demme's screwball, thrift-shop styled take on the 'yuppie nightmare' movie sees Jeff Daniels' buttoned-up New York office worker Charlie meet Melanie Griffith's mercurial Audrey one lunch hour, and get whisked into a riotous interstate road trip that opens his eyes to the multitude of people and places, ethnicities and cultures that make up the melting pot of America.

WED 9 MAY 18:10 NFT2 / SUN 13 MAY 20:00 NFT2

Philosophical Screens: The Philosophy of Screwball and 'Something Wild'

TRT 75min

The latest event in our popular discussion series exploring cinema through a philosophical lens looks at issues of identity as they manifest in the screwball genre. In *Something Wild*, the lives of electrifying Audrey and straight-man Charlie get turned upside down, and both are plunged into unexpected journeys of self-discovery. Our regular Philosophical Screens gang will reflect on this neo-screwball's narrative structure, with a particular focus on Lucretius' concept of 'clinamen' and unexpected events.

Free to ticket holders of *Something Wild* on Wed 9 May (must be booked via the box office due to limited capacity), otherwise £6.50

WED 9 MAY 20:20 BLUE ROOM

Parting Glances

USA 1985. Dir Bill Sherwood. With John Bolger, Richard Ganoung, Steve Buscemi. 90min. 35mm. 15

A forerunner to the New Queer Cinema of the 1990s, Sherwood's Brooklyn-set indie follows Michael (Ganoung) as he deals with his partner's imminent departure for a work trip, while caring for Nick (Buscemi), an ex who's dying of AIDS. Despite being one of the first films to confront the unfurling AIDS crisis, Sherwood's deeply human film never becomes a simple 'issue' movie. 35mm restored print courtesy of the Outfest UCLA Legacy Project

FRI 18 MAY 20:45 NFT2 / TUE 29 MAY 21:00 NFT2

River's Edge

USA 1986. Dir Tim Hunter. With Crispin Glover, Keanu Reeves, Lone Skye, Dennis Hopper, Daniel Roebuck. 100min. 35mm. 18

Sitting on the wrong side of the tracks from the typical 80s teen movie – with early performances from Reeves, Skye and a never-more-eccentric Glover – Hunter's downbeat film focuses on a group of Oregon teens in the aftermath of the senseless murder of one of their classmates. Their Gen X apathy towards the crime is all the more shocking for having been based on a true story.

WED 23 MAY 20:45 NFT2 / SUN 27 MAY 20:20 NFT2

Crossing Delancey

USA 1988. Dir Joan Micklin Silver. With Amy Irving, Peter Riegert, Reizl Bozyk, David Hyde Pierce. 97min. 35mm. PG

Joan Micklin Silver's warm, acutely observed film puts a spin on the apple-pie conventions of the 80s rom-com by setting events within Manhattan's Jewish community. Isabelle (Irving) is a thirtysomething, unmarried, intellectual bookshop owner whose mischievous grandmother hires an old-fashioned matchmaker to find her a man – but a humble local pickle-seller isn't quite who Isabelle had in mind.

THU 17 MAY 20:45 NFT2 / SAT 26 MAY 18:00 NFT2

Running on Empty

USA 1988. Dir Sidney Lumet. With River Phoenix, Christine Lahti, Martha Plimpton, Judd Hirsch. 116min. 35mm. 15

The distance travelled between 60s idealism and Reagan's America of the 80s are at the heart of Lumet's poignant drama. River Phoenix is outstanding as Danny, the eldest son of Arthur and Annie Pope (Hirsch and Lahti), 60s political radicals-turned-fugitives from the FBI. Danny yearns to carve his own path, but, thanks to his parents' past, he's condemned to a life on the run.

SAT 26 MAY 20:30 NFT2 / WED 30 MAY 20:40 NFT2

The Hidden

USA 1987. Dir Jack Sholder. With Kyle MacLachlan, Michael Nouri, Claudia Christian. 97min. Digital. 15

Kicking off with one of cinema's wildest (and most under-appreciated) car chases, this delirious action-horror-sci-fi hybrid is well deserving of its cult reputation. When a disparate group of law-abiding citizens suddenly embark on violent crime sprees, an FBI agent and police detective team up to unravel the mystery. Fast-paced, tightly-plotted and bursting with ideas, it doesn't get much more fun than this.

FRI 4 MAY 20:40 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 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 £12.10, concs £9.70 including Gift Aid donation. Members pay £2.00 less on any ticket - 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 screenings can be found at www.image.net under BFI / BFI Southbank / 2018 / May / Lost in America