

**SUMPTUOUSLY RESTORED AND FIT FOR A KING
THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII TO WORLD PREMIERE AT
62nd BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL**



Image: The Private Life of Henry VIII (1933)

For Immediate Release: 05 September, London: The **BFI National Archive** and **The Film Foundation's** new **4K digital restoration** of **Alexander Korda's** vivacious portrait of **The Private Life of Henry VIII** will world premiere at the upcoming 62nd BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express. Showing on **20th October** at **BFI Southbank** the festival screening is also a taster for the BFI's upcoming **Kordas season at BFI Southbank** in January 2019.

Flamboyant producer/director **Alexander Korda**, a Hungarian Jewish émigré, arrived in Britain in 1931 and promptly shook up British cinema. A charming maverick, Korda transformed the landscape of the British film industry, proving that Britain could compete with America on its own terms. He was joined not only by his brothers, art director Vincent (production designer of *The Private Life of Henry VIII*) and screenwriter/director/producer Zoltán, but a number of other key European collaborators who between them helped to define the Britishness of British cinema in the 1930s and beyond. The second production from Korda's newly constituted London Films, ***The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933)** was a huge critical and popular success. The film which broke the US market, won a **nomination for Best Picture Oscar®**, establishing Korda's reputation and setting the tone for a new era of British filmmaking, bringing national heritage to the screen with a light, fresh touch and epic, lavish sets and costumes.

A wide range of actors have played England's most infamous ruler on film and television over the years including, Damian Lewis, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Robert Shaw and Sid James, but none have donned the tights to give a more spirited, full-bodied portrayal than **Charles Laughton**. Unarguably born to the role, the larger than life Laughton gave a career-defining, vividly exuberant **Oscar®-winning performance**. Veering between spoiled man-child and regal grace, it is the man, not the King, who is the real subject of Korda's

film. Laughton delivers Arthur Wimperis and Lajos Biro's whip-smart, dialogue with a mix of bawdy humour and witty panache.

The Private Life of Henry VIII has been restored by the **BFI National Archive** and **The Film Foundation**, in association with **ITV** and **Park Circus**, with funding provided by the **George Lucas Family Foundation**. Returning to existing nitrate materials preserved by the BFI National Archive, the film has undergone substantial 4K restoration to faithfully reproduce its original photography and innovative sound construction. Both had been hidden across eight decades' accumulation of printing faults, as well as tears, dirt, scratches and graininess. The results represent a quantum leap forward in the clarity and quality of film restoration, for this early period of British sound, presenting sound and picture in an authentic contemporary context.

Intricate scanning of the original nitrate picture elements and the completion of all sound digitisation and restoration for the 4K digital restoration was carried out by preservation experts at the **BFI National Archive's Conservation Centre**. Digital intermediate picture restoration, including grading and image repair was supervised by BFI archivists at **Dragon Digital** in Wales, with whom the BFI worked on the restoration of *Napoleon* (1927).

The Private Life of Henry VIII displays many of the best qualities of Korda's vision. Brilliantly performed, beautifully designed and endlessly entertaining, it is a model of the intelligence and good taste with which London Films would continue to be associated in future releases. Alexander Korda directed the film himself, recruiting an impressive cast, including his future wife **Merle Oberon**, the gifted comic actress **Elsa Lanchester** and **Robert Donat**. The film's creative team was a European affair, alongside regular collaborator screenwriter Lajos Biró (Hungarian), were cinematographer Georges Périnal (French), composer Kurt Schröder (German) and producer Ludovico Toeplitz (Italian). Unsurprisingly, a wry European note appears not infrequently in the very British story of Henry VIII.

Henry: "This little island of 3 million souls is no match for all Europe... If those French and Germans stop cutting each other's throats, what's to stop them cutting ours?... I'm an Englishman - I can't say one thing and mean another!"

The BFI London Film Festival premiere heralds the upcoming **Magic and Madness: the Golden Age of the Kordas** season, taking place at **BFI Southbank** throughout **January 2019**. Between 1933 and 1941 Alexander Korda brought to British (and international) screens some of the most sumptuous and glamorous productions ever seen. The BFI Southbank season will focus on this key period in Korda's career, showcasing the restoration of *The Private Life of Henry VIII* alongside the best of his 1930s titles including such classics as, *The Ghost Goes West* (1935), *Things to Come* (1936) and *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940). From erecting extravagant sets on the lot at Denham Studio, to filming exotic locations in Technicolor, Korda pushed the boundaries of British filmmaking with his uniquely ambitious and visionary approach to production. A free exhibition complementing the Southbank season, drawn from the visually rich stills, posters and design collections of the BFI National Archive will run in the **BFI Southbank Mezzanine Gallery**. Full details of the Kordas season will be announced in November.

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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.

ABOUT THE BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the one of the largest and most important collections of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 750,000 television programmes. For over 80 years the BFI has been an international leader in film preservation and guardian of Britain's unparalleled film and TV heritage. The BFI is an innovator in presenting films to audiences in new and dynamic ways, from cinemas to film festivals, outdoor events to online video-on-demand. At the heart of all its activities is the BFI's central aim to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to the widest possible range of film and their own film heritage.

That heritage includes all time great British directors Alfred Hitchcock, David Lean and Powell and Pressburger; and the rich vein of documentary filmmaking, in which Britain led the world, including the lyrical work of Humphrey Jennings. The archive also boasts a significant collection of filmmakers' papers as well as extensive stills, posters and production and costume designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera.

Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films at the BFI John Paul Getty Jr Conservation Centre in Hertfordshire. The BFI's most precious film materials are kept in optimum conditions in the world-leading Master Film Store in Warwickshire.