



THIRST: FEMALE DESIRE ON SCREEN

1-30 April 2020, BFI Southbank

Thursday 13 February 2019, London.

The BFI today announces details of **THIRST: FEMALE DESIRE ON SCREEN**, a season of films running at **BFI Southbank** from **1-30 April**. **THIRST** will flip the switch on a century of the male gaze and find space for women's own lust and sexual expression in film; from wild Hollywood classics of the pre-code era to unabashed celebrations of the male body that leave women flocking to the cinema in droves. The season coincides with the publishing of a new book of essays *She Found It at the Movies – Women Writers on Sex, Desire and Cinema*, edited by film and culture writer, **Christina Newland**, who has also programmed the season. **THIRST** takes its name from a buzzword which in this context describes intense lust and the expression of that lust – a subject which has been popularised online by a proliferation of think pieces and thirsty tweets and by influential podcast *Thirst Aid Kit*, in which hosts Bim Adewunmi and Nichole Perkins dig deep into the various ways women express their desire.

THIRST includes screenings of films which explore the complicated relationship between fantasy, feminism, and desire, such as *In the Cut* (Jane Campion, 2003) and *Instinct* (Halina Reijn, 2019) and tales of teen sexual awakening like *Diary of a Teenage Girl* (Marielle Heller, 2014), and *Turn Me On, Damnit!* (Jannicke Systad Jacobsen, 2011). Also screening are queer love stories like *Bound* (Wachowski Sisters, 1996) and *Pariah* (Dee Rees, 2011) as well as mainstream films starring male pin-ups and matinee idols like *Dirty Dancing* (Emile Ardolino, 1987), and *Magic Mike XXL* (Gregory Jacobs, 2015).

"Movies have long influenced the way we think about sex. For women, those formative crushes often give us room to think about our more unspoken desires or preferences in a safe environment, communing with the fiction playing out on screen. For some women (including me) it's a rare comfortable space to explore a relationship with desire. Films are a dream space, allowing room for elaborate sexual fantasia neither as blunt nor as frowned upon as pornography. It's the reason why fanfiction exists, why teen pinups and matinee idols are reliable bellwethers for every generation's adolescence. From Rudolph Valentino to Marilyn Monroe to Chris Hemsworth, they've been with us for a century." – **THIRST** programmer **Christina Newland**, in *She Found It at the Movies*

SPECIAL EVENTS IN THE PROGRAMME:

- **THIRST** kicks off on **Wednesday 1 April** with a **Season Introduction and Book Launch**, celebrating the release of *She Found It at the Movies* (available to purchase in the BFI Shop). Alongside **Christina Newland**, the launch will welcome a selection of the book's contributors to the stage to discuss key themes and films featured within the season, asking what it means to be a thirsty cinema-going woman.
- **Halina Reijn**, director of the provocative and debate-inspiring *Instinct* (2019), which touches on the uncomfortable line between consent, danger and animalistic desire, will take part in a **Q&A** following a screening of the film on **Thursday 23 April**.
- Throughout the season, there will be multiple opportunities to join the thirsty debate including **Still Thirsty? A Conversation Series** – weekly post-screening discussions about the film that has just been screened. The conversation series, which will be free to ticket-holders of the film and will take place every Tuesday night in April, will include evenings dedicated to *In the Cut* (hosted by film critic Simran Hans), *Bound* (hosted by producer-director Catherine Bray), *The Way We Were* (hosted by season programmer Christina Newland) and *Pariah* (hosted by film writer and programmer Grace Barber-Plentie).
- BFI Southbank's regular **Hot Take** series returns on **Wednesday 22 April** with **The Hot Take: Is There Such a Thing as Ethical Thirst?** in which guests speakers and the audience will debate what it means to desire a 'problematic' man of the silver screen, addressing whether audiences can reconcile their feminist beliefs with the often-knotty issue of desire
- In contrast, the **BFI Quiz: Thirst!** on **Friday 24 April** will lighten the mood with the ultimate thirsty quiz, testing how well teams know their matinee idols and dreamboats, heartthrobs and head-turners; an evening of cinematic sexiness and fun, co-hosted by season programmer **Christina Newland**.

THIRST will seek to encourage discussion about the female viewers' relationship with movie-going, welcoming female and female identifying audiences to experience a sex-positive examination of the movies, taking pleasure in shamelessly ogling their onscreen desire and finding joyous and consensual pleasure in the female gaze.

FULL DETAILS OF FILMS SCREENING IN THIRST:

CLASSICS

In the loose and wild days of early 1930s Hollywood, before enforcement of the Hays censorship code, Ernst Lubitsch's sophisticated romantic comedies were progressive and sexually frank. Few were as daring as *Design for Living* (1933), starring Miriam Hopkins as an artist who rejects monogamy for a ménage à trois with two distinctly handsome men, played by Gary Cooper and Fredric March. Sydney Pollack's beloved romantic melodrama *The Way We Were* (1973) stars Barbra Streisand as a bookish lefty and Robert Redford as a golden-haired jock – their challenging love affair set against the Red Scare in Hollywood. It is a perfectly cast, heartbreakingly film about female yearning, and the difficulties associated with it, using the power of movie-star chemistry to woo the audience. A cultural phenomenon, *Dirty Dancing* (Emile Ardolino, 1987) made Patrick Swayze a sex symbol and a sensual focus for the female gaze. As the camera ogles his graceful physicality, the story itself offers a counter-narrative to traditional ideas about women and sex often seen in movies, including its pro-choice messaging. Jennifer Grey's Baby is a plucky, desirous feminist hero who offers 'everywoman' identification for her audience.

STRIPPERS AND SEX-POSITIVITY

Also screening is *Magic Mike XXL* (Gregory Jacobs, 2015), the smash-hit sequel to Steven Soderbergh's *Magic Mike* (2012), starring Channing Tatum, a pair of films which had women flocking to the cinema in droves and spawned a hugely successful live strip show. Offering a diverse, open-minded, and sex-positive portrayal of a group of male strippers on their way to one last stripping convention, *Magic Mike XXL* celebrates tender male friendship as much as it does the hunks who get satisfaction from giving women pleasure. A perfect pairing with *Magic Mike XXL* is *This One's for the Ladies* (Gene Graham, 2018), a feel-good, risqué documentary following a crew of male strippers and their adoring female audiences, highlighting a sense of love and community within the exotic dancing scene. With names like 'Double Trouble' and 'Poundcake', these black men – and one woman – entice and give pleasure to their audiences in a feedback loop of fun, while dispersing stereotypes about black masculinity and female sexuality all at once.

DESIRE IN EROTIC THRILLERS

The season will address the complex relationship between fantasy, feminism, and desire with screenings such as Jane Campion's erotic thriller *In the Cut* (2003). Caught up in the investigation of a series of grisly murders in her neighborhood, Meg Ryan's Frannie falls hard for a homicide detective and homme fatale played by Mark Ruffalo. The film throws convention out the window with its departure from Ryan's 'good girl' roles and genuinely titillating sex scenes that privilege a female perspective. There will also be preview screenings of Halina Reijn's as-yet unreleased *Instinct* (2019), which premiered in the BFI London Film Festival 2019. Reijn's debut feature sees an experienced criminal psychologist who is working in a secure unit for sex offenders finding herself suddenly and intensely infatuated with one of her patients, a violent rapist. Touching on the uncomfortable line between consent, danger and animalistic desire, *Instinct* is a provocative and debate-inspiring exploration of a woman's lust at its most extreme.

QUEER LOVE STORIES

Directed by the remarkable proto-feminist director Leontine Sagan, *Mädchen in Uniform* (1931) might be ground zero for lesbian films. With its all-female cast and first narrative depiction of a lesbian kiss, the film was later banned by the Nazis for 'decadence'. Even with age, it's still a remarkable and radical document, setting a forbidden student-teacher love against the suggestive backdrop of a girls' boarding school. The Wachowskis' debut feature *Bound* (1996) stars Jennifer Tilly as Violet, a gangster's moll to Joe Pantoliano's Ceasar. Their dysfunctional dynamic is interrupted by lesbian ex-con Corky, played by Gina Gershon, whose seduction of Violet comes with a plan to steal money from the mob. This violent neo-noir puts a rare focus on two women who not only unapologetically enjoy sex, but enjoy it with each other. From *Mudbound* director Dee Rees, *Pariah* (2011) tells the story of a young black woman coming to terms with her lesbian identity, and fearing her parents' reaction. Highlighting both the sensual pleasures and emotional pain of the protagonist's sexual awakening, *Pariah* is as lyrical as it is sexually assertive as it moves from New York lesbian bars to a sterile dinner table in the family home.

TEEN SEXUAL AWAKENING

Marielle Heller's debut *Diary of a Teenage Girl* (2015) tells the audacious story of Minnie (Bel Powley), a teen girl growing up in San Francisco at the tail end of the 1970s. Minnie feels a growing attraction to her mother's dirtbag boyfriend and an inappropriate affair begins between the two. The result is a pithy, funny film that's honest about teen sex-drive in a way that's usually reserved for boys. Completing the season is *Turn Me On, Dammit!* (Jannicke Systad Jacobsen, 2011) a lean coming-of-age comedy about a horny teenage girl experimenting with her sexuality in her small Norwegian town. After calling a sex hotline, stealing porn, and having a strange run-in with a penis-wielding classmate, she is ostracised both at home and at school, but refuses to soften or disguise her lustiness.

THIRST takes place at BFI Southbank from 1-30 April 2020

16 to 25-year-olds can book £3 tickets in advance – part of BFI Southbank's [25 & Under scheme](#) – for the entire season (excludes special events)

She Found It at the Movies – Women Writers on Sex, Desire and Cinema is published by Red Press on 31 March 2020.

– ENDS –

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SEASON LISTINGS:

Season Introduction and Book Launch

TRT 90min

Tickets £6.50

WED 1 APR 18:20 NFT3

The Hot Take: Is There Such a Thing as Ethical Thirst?

TRT 120min

Tickets £6.50

WED 22 APR 18:30 BLUE ROOM

Still Thirsty? A Conversation Series

TRT 45min

Join us in the Blue Room for a series of audience-focused conversations throughout our Thirst season. Our guest hosts will facilitate these post-screening conversations by providing a series of guided questions and provocations.

In the Cut conversation, hosted by film critic Simran Hans – **TUE 7 APR 20:15**

Bound conversation, hosted by producer-director Catherine Bray – **TUE 14 APR 20:30**

The Way We Were conversation, hosted by season programmer Christina Newland – **TUE 21 APR 20:30**

Pariah conversation, hosted by film writer and programmer Grace Barber-Plentie – **TUE 28 APR 20:30**

Free to ticket holders of the respective films, otherwise £5 (tickets must be booked in advance due to capacity)

Diary of a Teenage Girl

USA 2015 Dir Marielle Heller. With Bel Powley, Kristen Wiig, Alexander Skarsgård. 102min. Digital. 18

THU 2 APR 18:10 NFT2 / MON 20 APR 20:30 NFT2

Bound + intro by Willow Catelyn Maclay, writer and film critic MUBI Notebook (via Skype)*

USA 1996. Dirs Lilly and Lana Wachowski. With Jennifer Tilly, Gina Gershon, Joe Pantoliano. 108min. 35mm. 18

SAT 4 APR 20:30 NFT2 / TUE 14 APR 18:15 NFT3*

Dirty Dancing

USA 1987 Dir. Emile Ardolino. With Jennifer Grey, Patrick Swayze, Cynthia Rhodes, Jerry Orbach. 96min. Digital. 15

FRI 3 APR 20:50 NFT2 / WED 22 APR 20:40 NFT2

Magic Mike XXL

USA 2015. Dir Gregory Jacobs. With Channing Tatum, Joe Manganiello, Matt Bomer, Kevin Nash. 115min. Digital. 15

MON 30 MAR 18:10 NFT2 / WED 15 APR 20:30 NFT2 / SUN 26 APR 18:00 NFT3

Mädchen in Uniform

Germany 1931. Dirs Leontine Sagan, Carl Froelich. With Hertha Thiele, Dorothea Wieck, Emilia Unda. 83min. Digital. EST. PG

SUN 5 APR 17:20 NFT2 / SUN 12 APR 14:10 NFT2

Design for Living

USA 1933. Dir Ernst Lubitsch. With Miriam Hopkins, Fredric March, Gary Cooper, Edward Everett Horton. 91min. Digital

TUE 31 MAR 18:20 NFT1 / FRI 10 APR 14:30 NFT3 / THU 30 APR 18:30 NFT1

This One's for the Ladies

USA 2018. Dir Gene Graham. 82min. Digital. 18

MON 6 APR 18:15 NFT2 / SAT 25 APR 20:45 NFT3

Preview: Instinct + Q&A with director Halina Reijn

The Netherlands 2019. Dir Halina Reijn. With Carice van Houten, Marwan Kenzari, Marie-Mae van Zuilen. 98min. Digital. EST

THU 23 APR 20:30 NFT3

The Way We Were + intro by season programmer Christina Newland*

USA 1973. Dir Sydney Pollack. With Robert Redford, Barbra Streisand, James Woods, Bradford Dillman. 113min. Digital. PG

MON 30 MAR 20:35 NFT2 / WED 1 APR 14:30 STUDIO / TUE 21 APR 18:10 NFT2*

In the Cut + intro by film critic Simran Hans*

UK-Australia-USA 2003. Dir Jane Campion. With Meg Ryan, Mark Ruffalo, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Kevin Bacon. 119min. 35mm 18

TUE 7 APR 17:50 NFT3* / MON 13 APR 20:00 NFT3

Pariah + intro by film writer and programmer Grace Barber-Plentie*

USA 2011. Dir Dee Rees. With Adepero Oduye, Kim Wayans, Aasha Davis, Pernell Walker. 86min. Digital. 18

THU 2 APR 20:50 STUDIO / TUE 7 APR 20:50 NFT2 / TUE 28 APR 18:35 NFT3*

Turn Me On, Dammit! Få meg på, for faen!

Norway 2011. Dir Jannicke Systad Jacobsen. With Helene Bergsholm, Malin Bjørhovde, Beate Støfring, Matias Myren. 73min. Digital. EST

WED 8 APR 20:50 NFT2 / MON 13 APR 17:40 NFT2

BFI Quiz: Thirst!

TRT 120min

Tickets £5 (no concessions) Teams of 6 people maximum

FRI 24 APR 19:30 BLUE ROOM

About the BFI

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

BFI Southbank

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 £13.75, concs £11.25 including Gift Aid donation. Members pay £2.20 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.

BFI Bar & Kitchen

BFI Bar & Kitchen reflect the buzzing atmosphere of BFI Southbank. Terrific cocktails and craft beers in the lounge complement contemporary British cuisine in the restaurant, while The Drawing Room bar behind the secret bookcase door offers a more intimate experience. Film-goers can take advantage of a pre-movie menu or great value Movie and Meal Deal. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip a cocktail.

BFI Riverfront

With spectacular views of Waterloo Bridge and the River Thames, BFI Riverfront is the hottest spot on the South Bank. From stonebaked pizzas to homemade pastas, British classics to something sweet from the Gelato Bar. Upstairs the Balcony Bar offers a unique never seen before view of Waterloo Bridge, whose concrete structure forms the ceiling of the space. Visitors can come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a lively DJ set with drinks on Saturday nights.

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.

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 *****

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

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bvv5defzi4rm5bg/AABM_AW1iEB18kPTK1CVNSU1a?dl=0

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