

THE EPIC OF EVEREST

Directed by Captain John Noel

UK 1924, 85 mins, Cert tbc

Featuring a new score by Simon Fisher Turner

A BFI National Archive Restoration



The official record of Mallory and Irvine's 1924 expedition

**Opening on 18 October 2013
at the Curzon Mayfair, IFC Dublin and selected cinemas nationwide**

28 August 2013 – *The Epic of Everest*, the official film record of the third attempt to climb Mount Everest is one of the most remarkable films in the BFI National Archive. The BFI's new restoration will be released in cinemas nationwide on 18 October to coincide with its world premiere Archive Gala screening at the 57th BFI London Film Festival. Its release coincides with the 60th anniversary of the final conquest of Everest in 1953 by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay.

The 1924 Everest expedition culminated in the deaths of George Mallory and Andrew Irvine, two of the finest climbers of their generation, sparking an on-going debate as to whether or not they ever actually reached the summit.

Filming in brutally harsh conditions with a specially adapted camera, Captain John Noel captured images of breathtaking beauty and considerable historic significance. The film is also among the earliest filmed records of life in Tibet and features sequences at Phari Dzong (Pagri), Shekar Dzong (Xegar) and Rongbuk monastery. But what resonates so deeply is Noel's ability to frame the vulnerability, isolation and courage of people persevering in one of the world's harshest landscapes.

The restoration by the BFI National Archive – undertaken in collaboration with Sandra Noel, the director's daughter – has transformed the quality of the

surviving elements of the film and reintroduced the original coloured tints and tones. Revealed by the restoration, few images in cinema are as epic – or moving – as the final shots of a blood red sunset over the Himalayas.

Captain Noel was a heroic, pioneering explorer who had reconnoitred the mountain in disguise while on leave from his Indian regiment, as early as 1913. In 1919, in the course of a paper to the Royal Geographical Society, Noel made the first public suggestion that Mount Everest should be climbed, a challenge taken up in 1920 when members of the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club of Great Britain formed the Mount Everest Committee.

The first reconnaissance trip was undertaken in 1921 and no moving images are known to exist. The second Everest expedition took place in 1922 and Captain John Noel took the first ever film of the mountain, which is also the first ever film shot in Tibet. For the third Everest expedition in 1924 Noel bought the rights to all still photography and moving image material and was himself the official cameraman.

The film will have a newly commissioned score composed, orchestrated and conducted by **Simon Fisher Turner** (*The Great White Silence*) which features a haunting combination of electronic music, found sounds, western and Nepalese instruments and vocals.

The restoration is supported by The Eric Anker-Petersen Charity.

Captain John Noel's daughter Sandra Noel and composer Simon Fisher Turner are available for selected interviews.

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Notes to Editors

- *The Epic of Everest's* **world premiere Archive Gala screening** at the 57th BFI London Film Festival takes place on 18 October 2013 at the Odeon West End cinema in London's Leicester Square, with a live score performed by Simon Fisher Turner and a specially created musical ensemble.
- The film's **soundtrack album** will be released on Mute on 21 October.
- *The Epic of Everest* will be released on **DVD and Blu-ray** in a Dual Format Edition by the BFI in January 2014.
- Beginning in late October and running until the end of November, **BFI Southbank** will mark the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest with **Extreme Summits**. This season of films will celebrate the heroic endeavours of mountaineers, from Everest to K2 and Kangchenjunga to Mount Kamet. The centrepiece of the season will be *The Epic of Everest*.

- BFI Southbank will also host some of the best films from the **Kendal Mountain Festival** with a special weekend of events (Friday 22 – Sunday 24 November). This film festival will bring the best of adventure, discovery and mountain film to BFI Southbank.

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
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences