

12/51

BBFC Centenary Season

*BFI presents season of banned and censored films including screenings of **The Evil Dead**, **Irreversible** and **Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom***



Wednesday 22 August – London To mark the centenary of the **British Board of Film Classification (BBFC)** in 2012, **BFI Southbank** is presenting a season of films which have been either banned or censored in the last century of cinema. Taking place from 1 to 30 November 2012, the season has been curated by film critic **Mark Kermode** and Professor in Film Studies at Southampton University **Linda Ruth Williams**. Established as the British Board of Film Censors in 1912, the BBFC was designed by the film industry to ensure uniformity in film classification. The season will delve into the realms of horror, violence and sexual depravity and will include screenings of such controversial titles as David Cronenberg's *Crash* (1997) banned by Westminster Council at the time of its cinema release and Gaspar Noé's shocking *Irreversible* (2002) which passed uncut with an 18 certificate despite public protestations over the inclusion of a particularly disturbing rape scene. Also screening will be the **UK premiere** of the full uncut version of *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (Dir. Steven Spielberg, 1984), which in order to get a family friendly PG rating had a scene cut from it in which a man's heart is ripped from his chest!

This season will give film fans a chance to see some of the most contentious films ever made in their complete version on the big screen and will aim to illustrate how the BBFC's attitudes to confrontational material have changed over the years. While some films in the season have remained as shocking as the first time they were seen by UK audiences, the impact of some has lessened with time. Each of the films in the season will present a case-study in the BBFC's negotiation of UK law, public opinion, political pressure, and principles of public protection and free speech. Two of the films playing in the season will be released on **BFI DVD** on November 5 - *Sick - The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist* (Dir. Kirby Dick, 1997) and *Maitresse* (Dir. Barbet Schroeder, 1975).

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND PUBLIC OUTRAGE!

A subject which has continued to prove divisive in the popular press is the cinematic portrayal of sexual violence, however, the BBFC has not always followed the political and press consensus in their reaction to these kinds of films. In the wake of sensationalist stories and comments from ill-informed politicians, the BBFC was duty bound to investigate claims that *Crash* (Dir. David

Cronenberg, 1996) was obscene. Despite being cleared by the Board this extraordinary tale of alienation and sexual sub-cultures was still banned by Westminster Council. Gaspar Noé's harrowing *Irreversible* (2002) was reviled in some circles for having a rape scene which was almost unwatchable, but the BBFC decided to pass the film uncut because they concluded that the scene was deliberately repugnant and avoided eroticisation. Similarly, Michael Winterbottom's adaptation of the Jim Thompson pulp noir novel *The Killer Inside Me* (2010) was passed uncut when the BBFC deemed that the portrayals of sadistic violence and sadomasochistic behaviour were not eroticised and did not endorse the kind of violence being seen on screen.

SEXUAL DEPRAVITY THROUGHOUT THE CENTURY!

Sexual imagery is something that the BBFC has dealt with a great deal over the past century. The Board's attitude towards images of a sexual nature has certainly adapted over the years: for instance *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (Dir. St John L Clowes, 1948) was initially described by the *Monthly Film Bulletin* as 'the most sickening display of brutality, perversion, sex and sadism ever to be shown on the screen' and banned by the Board, but it went on to be passed uncut with a PG on video in 2006. *The Killing of Sister George* (Dir. Robert Aldrich, 1968) provoked a similar reaction for a lesbian love scene, with a modified version eventually being approved by the Board. Also screening will be *Sick - The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist* (Dir. Kirby Dick, 1997), which documents the proud life of cystic fibrosis sufferer Bob Flanagan, who remained a staunch supporter of the liberating power of consensual S&M throughout his terminal illness. With scenes of transsexuals masturbating (*Trash*, Dir. Paul Morrissey, 1970), frank depictions of S&M (*Maitresse*, Dir. Barbet Schroeder, 1975), ingestion of dog faeces (*Pink Flamingos*, Dir. John Waters, 1972) and mass orgies (*The Devils*, Dir. Ken Russell, 1971), the 1970s proved a particularly busy time for the Board and the season will see screenings of all these controversial films in their entirety. In a time when *Fifty Shades of Grey* is the literature of choice for millions around the country, it is clear that the British public has had a change in attitudes to sexual imagery since the days of outcry over *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*.

VIOLENCE AND OVER ZEALOUS CUTS!

The mainstream martial arts hit *Enter the Dragon* (Dir. Robert Clouse, 1973) fell foul of the BBFC's anxieties about violence upon its release in 1973. The censors effectively banned the appearance of flying stars and nunchucks from UK screens, arguing that – unlike guns – these weapons could be legally purchased in the UK. Another violent film which gave the Board some concerns was *Cape Fear* (Dir. J Lee Thompson, 1962). However, on this occasion the BBFC found itself in the unusual position of being vilified by the tabloids for being *too* stringent: '161 Cuts In One Film' declared a concerned and somewhat outraged centre-page spread in the *Daily Express*.

FEAR AND HORROR!

Based on *The Island of Doctor Moreau* by HG Wells, the notorious 30s horror film *Island of Lost Souls* (Dir. Erle C Kenton, 1932) tells the tale of an obsessed scientist who performs experiments on animals on a remote island. The film was banned outright when it was first submitted to the (then) British Board of Film Censors in 1933, and then rejected a further two times. Co-starring the legendary horror actor Bela Lugosi, *Island of Lost Souls* was eventually passed uncut with a PG in 2011. Another film which censors feared might be too frightening for audiences was *Shock Corridor* (Dir. Samuel Fuller, 1963). This tale of a sane man whose infiltration into a mental asylum drives him mad caused the BBFC to worry that its 'unjustified and alarmist' tone might frighten those with incarcerated relatives. Sam Raimi's now legendary first feature *The Evil Dead* (1981) starred cult hero Bruce Campbell as possessed chainsaw wielding Ash, and was one of the films at the centre of the so-called 'video nasties' witch-hunt. *The Evil Dead* was effectively outlawed on video for years in the wake of several successful prosecutions, and this screening presents the original uncut version in all its gory glory.

NOT SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN!

Providing a stark contrast to Raimi's horror are two films which could be viewed as more family friendly, the first of which is *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (Dir. Mark Herman, 2008). This film provided a difficulty for the BBFC in that it attempts to boldly address the Holocaust in a manner that will be acceptable to younger audiences. Rated 12A, the film raises important questions about the classification of upsetting images for children, and the parental responsibility of 'advisory' classifications. *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (Dir. Steven Spielberg, 1984) was cut by distributors in the UK in order to achieve a family friendly PG certificate. The season will give audiences a chance to see the 12 rated and uncut *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* for the first time in a UK cinema.

TEENAGE OUTRAGE!

Having wrestled with the 'teenage rampage' issues of *The Wild One*, the BBFC passed *Blackboard Jungle* (Dir. Richard Brooks, 1955) only after several minutes of cuts. This tale of an altruistic teacher attempting to 'reach' his disillusioned students prompted reports of Teddy Boy audiences being provoked into seat-slashing revelry. *This Is England* (Dir. Shane Meadows, 2010) is a more recent example of a film which provoked discussions of certification for teenagers. This brilliant coming-of-age tale follows a young boy who becomes seduced by the bigotry of a racist skinhead mentor. Rated 18 by the BBFC for strong racist violence and language, the film made headlines when Meadows insisted that its target audience was 15 year olds. Take this opportunity to decide for yourself whether or not our censors and classifiers have got it right or wrong over the years with this varied programme of potentially cut-able classics.

The season also ties in with an exhibition about the history of the BBFC and a centenary book mapping 100 years of film classification and controversy. Available from November, the book, 'Behind the Scenes at the BBFC: Film Classification from the Silver Screen to the Digital Age', invites a range of writers from both inside and outside the BBFC's walls to help form a picture of what the BBFC is all about. The BBFC exhibition, at the BFI Southbank Atrium throughout November, uses images and documents from the BBFC archives to bring to life the development of film classification over the past 100 years.

David Cooke, Director of the BBFC, said: "The BBFC's centenary gives us a double opportunity: to showcase our initiatives for making the BBFC a still more trusted and up to date guide to the public in the internet age; and to celebrate the sometimes controversial, sometimes quirky, but always absorbing history of film classification in the UK. I am grateful to those who have made this film season possible, and especially to our industry partners and to the BFI. I am also grateful to the BFI for other collaborative work including on the centenary book and exhibition. This will be a really fascinating film season, showcasing films which, as well as being important films in their own right, raised classification issues which in many cases go to the heart of the balance between freedom of expression and the grounds for intervention. It also adds up to an unmissable slice of British culture and social history."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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 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 £10.00, concs £6.75 Members pay £1.50 less on any ticket. Website www.bfi.org.uk

Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment

BFI Filmstore

The BFI Filmstore 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.

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.

About The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC)

The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) is an independent, private, not for profit company which classifies films, videos, DVDs and certain video games, advertisements and trailers. The BBFC operates transparent, well-understood and trusted co-regulatory and self regulatory classification regimes based on years of expertise and published Guidelines which reflect public opinion and the risk of harm; and is accountable to Parliament.

The BBFC provides academic case studies and information about the history of the BBFC and film classification through its website. Further online activities and information about film releases are also available to younger viewers, encouraging them to think about classification, viewing choices and what they want to watch.

The BBFC also provides free education resources and visits to schools and colleges across the UK, as well as video conferencing services www.bbfc.co.uk

***** 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 / November 2012