

13/03

Beryl Vertue: A Talent to Entertain

with Beryl Vertue, Simon Nye & Martin Dennis onstage



Throughout February **BFI Southbank** will host a TV season dedicated to one of the UK's most respected and experienced producers, **Beryl Vertue**. Currently the Executive Producer of the international phenomenon *Sherlock* (BBC-Hartswood, 2010), Beryl Vertue has an enviable record of consistent success and this season will give audiences a chance to explore some of the extraordinary highlights of her career. During the season Beryl Vertue will be **In Conversation** with ITV's former Director of Entertainment & Comedy, **Paul Jackson** on the BFI Southbank stage. This event will see Vertue discussing some of her biggest TV hits including **Men Behaving Badly** (BBC-Hartswood, 1992-98), **My Good Friend** (ITV-Hartswood, 1995-96) and **Is It Legal?** (LWT-Hartswood, 1995-98), as well as her successes in selling British TV hits to the US. Another season highlight will be **The Comedies of Beryl Vertue** in which Vertue's frequent collaborators **Simon Nye** (writer, *Men Behaving Badly*, *Is it Legal?*) and **Martin Dennis** (director, *Men Behaving Badly*, *Coupling*, *Friday Night Dinner*) will introduce three of Vertue's favourite comedies.

Beryl Vertue's love and understanding of comedy was honed by representing the likes of **Spike Milligan**, **Tony Hancock**, **Ray Galton** and **Alan Simpson** and she pioneered the original concept of selling basic television formats to Europe and America, including selling *Steptoe and Son*, *Till Death Us Do Part* and *Coupling* in the US. In the 1980s Vertue became one of the first UK producers to found their own production company, Hartswood Films, and she soon had her first major success as an independent producer with Simon Nye's *Men Behaving Badly* starring **Martin Clunes** and **Neil Morrissey**. Her reputation would be further enhanced by *Is it Legal?* starring **Imelda Staunton**, *My Good Friend* with **George Cole** and **Minnie Driver** and *Coupling* written **Steven Moffatt**, a driving force behind two of the biggest hits on television: *Sherlock* and *Doctor Who*.

Vertue's drama credits include **A Woman's Guide to Adultery** (Carlton ITV-Hartswood, 1993) written by **Frank Cottrell Boyce** and **The English Wife** (Hartswood-

Meridian-ITV, 1996) about a young English girl who arrives in France to become the au pair for a seemingly respectable couple. Also screening will be two examples of highly accessible and informative documentaries made by Hartswood Films: **Officers and Gentlemen** (BBC, 1997) and **War Behind the Wire** (Hartswood-BBC, 2000). The former was the first documentary to gain access to the Royal Chelsea Hospital to hear the Chelsea Pensioners tell their unique stories in their own words while *War Behind the Wire* uses a mix of archive footage and reconstruction to tell the story of the Great Escape from the Prisoner of War camp Stalag Luft III. Amidst all these television hits, Beryl Vertue also found time to executive produce the late **Ken Russell's** rock opera **Tommy** (1975), which will also be screened during the season. Quality has always been at the heart of everything Beryl Vertue does, owing to her unique ability to spot and support writing and production talent and construct character-driven programmes that have a broad appeal across generations.

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Screenings taking place in the season:

Tommy

UK 1975. Dir Ken Russell. With Roger Daltrey, Oliver Reed, Jack Nicholson, Elton John. 108min. 15
Executive-produced by Beryl Vertue, the film's cult status sometime obscures its true significance as the first real 'rock opera'. Drawing iconic performances from Tina Turner as the Acid Queen and Elton John as the Pinball Wizard, Ken Russell proved the perfect interpreter of The Who's concept album as a mix of high-energy kitsch and darker psychological nightmare. Ann-Margret received an Oscar nomination for her performance, as did Pete Townshend for his score, and few can resist the kaleidoscopic blast of great music and imaginative visuals. Grab the chance to see it again on the big screen.

Fri 1 Feb 18:20 NFT2

Sun 3 Feb 20:50 NFT2

A Woman's Guide to Adultery

Carlton ITV-Hartswood 1993. Dir David Hayman. With Theresa Russell, Amanda Donohoe, Neil Morrissey, Sean Bean. 153min

An early commission for Hartswood Films, this popular drama boasts a fantastic cast and focuses on four women's friendship and the search of each for love. Written by Frank Cottrell Boyce (who collaborated with Danny Boyle on the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games), it nicely captures the emotional price to be paid for an affair. Caught between a desire for happiness and the dissatisfaction of being 'the other woman', our heroines come to learn something about themselves and the value of friendship in a world where men still seem to have it all.

Sat 9 Feb 17:20 NFT2

Officers and Gentlemen

BBC 1997. Dir Michael Davies. 60min

This sensitive and revealing documentary was the first to gain access to the Royal Chelsea Hospital to hear the Chelsea Pensioners tell their unique stories in their own words. Cut together with archive footage of the various campaigns in which they fought, the interviews provide a fascinating glimpse in to the horrors of two World Wars.

+ War Behind the Wire: The Great Escape

Hartswood-BBC 2000. Dir Michael Davies. 58min

Captured airmen tell the story of the Great Escape as they experienced it. Six hundred prisoners of war were organised to facilitate the escape of 200 men from Stalag Luft III. Using a mix of archive footage and reconstruction, the film captures both the elation and the sense of loss as 76 men escape and only three make it home, after sparking the largest manhunt of the Second World War.

Tue 19 Feb 20:40 NFT3

The English Wife

Hartswood Films-Meridian-ITV 1996. Dir Simon Shore. With Geraldine O'Rawe, Zoë Wanamaker, Jean-Claude Falet. 105min

When a young English girl arrives in France to become the au pair for an ostensibly respectable professional couple, she is charged with looking after their small son. Abandoned to fend for themselves, they begin to develop a bond, filling the void the child's absent parents leave. But mysterious phone calls begin to alert our heroine to the truth about her employers. Scripted by David Reid, the drama builds to a surprising climax and the bittersweet ending is a nicely-judged testament to the terrible price some have to pay for love.

Wed 20 Feb 20:40 NFT2

The Comedies of Beryl Vertue with introductions by Simon Nye & Martin Dennis

Beryl Vertue has chosen three of her favourite comedies. We are delighted to welcome the writer Simon Nye to introduce the screenings and discuss the art of creating the television situation comedy with the director of so many of Hartswood's comedies, Martin Dennis.

Men Behaving Badly: In Bed With Dorothy

Series 4, Ep 6. BBC-Hartswood 1995. Dir Martin Dennis. With Martin Clunes, Neil Morrissey, Caroline Quentin, Leslie Ash. 30min

The show that spawned the cult of laddism with its outrageous but endearing characters.

My Good Friend Ep 3. ITV-Hartswood 1995. Dir Martin Dennis. With George Cole, Minnie Driver, Richard Pearson. 30min

In his first post-Minder TV role, Cole plays a mischievous, meddling pensioner who refuses to slow down. He and a retired librarian embark on adventures not entirely appropriate for men of their advanced years.

Is It Legal?: Big Desk Bob

Series 3, Ep 3. LWT-Hartswood 1998. Dir Martin Dennis. With Imelda Staunton, Patrick Barlow, Richard Lumsden. 24min

Amid the chaos in the ramshackle offices of solicitors Lotus, Spackman and Phelps is Stella, the snappy senior partner permanently poised to jump down someone's throat.

Tickets £5

Tue 26 Feb 18:15 NFT2

Beryl Vertue in Conversation

Interviewed by Paul Jackson (former Director of Entertainment & Comedy at ITV and current CEO of Eyeworks), Beryl Vertue discusses her extraordinary career, ranging across her time as an agent for the likes of Eric Sykes and Tony Hancock, her experience of selling formats to America, the founding of one of the UK's first independent production companies, and her track record of TV success through to the current phenomenon of *Sherlock*. There will also be a chance to ask your own questions of one of our most experienced female television executives.

Tickets £5

Presented in association with BAFTA

Tue 26 Feb 20:40 NFT1



NOTES TO EDITORS:

About the BFI

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- 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

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

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***** 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 / February 2013