



BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL

5 – 16 October 2016

in partnership with



BFI LFF ARCHIVE GALA SCREENING ANNOUNCED: WORLD PREMIERE OF NEW RESTORATION OF THE INFORMER (1929) WITH LIVE SCORE [14TH OCTOBER, BFI SOUTHBANK]



Embargoed 25th August 2016, 00.01hrs. London. The 60th BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express® is proud to announce this year's Archive Gala – the World Premiere of a new BFI National Archive restoration of Arthur Robison's **The Informer** (1929). This rare silent adaptation of Liam O'Flaherty's famous novel is set among Dublin revolutionaries in the early days of the newly independent Irish Free State, formed in 1922. The Archive Gala will take place at BFI Southbank on Friday 14th October, 6.30pm in NFT1 and features a specially commissioned live score by Irish composer Garth Knox with a six piece ensemble.

The new restoration by the BFI will offer a chance to see this powerful and important film in its silent form with newly reinstated atmospheric, lavender tinting. BFI National Archive curator, Bryony Dixon has described it as "one of the finest films produced in a British studio in the 1920s" *100 Silent Films* (2011).

Robin Baker, Head Curator, BFI National Archive said,

"The BFI National Archive is delighted to have restored another major British feature film from the silent period and to be premiering it at the BFI London Film Festival. The quality of the restoration is extraordinary, despite some huge challenges that we had to overcome. The

noirish cinematography looks spectacular once again, especially the lustrous quality of the inky, velvety shadows achieved by the restoration team."

Clare Stewart, BFI London Film Festival said,

"The Archive Gala has become one of the Festival's most anticipated presentations for film lovers, matching vibrant film restoration work with newly commissioned scores. Our commitment to profiling the history of British cinema, and the vital preservation and restoration work of our BFI colleagues, feels more essential than ever in our 60th year when we also shine a light on the BFI London Film Festival's heritage."

The Adaptation and Liam O'Flaherty

This is the earliest adaptation of O'Flaherty's novel **The Informer**. It has been adapted a total of four times, most famously by O'Flaherty's cousin, **John Ford** in 1935.

Liam O'Flaherty was born in the Aran Islands off Galway and was still in his twenties when he wrote the novel in 1925. He was involved briefly in the post-Treaty troubles in 1922 and so was in a position to write with some authority about this complex period in Ireland's recent past.

The story

The action begins when a group of revolutionaries from an un-named group are meeting undercover in a working-class district unknowingly observed by the police. During the ensuing raid the Chief of Police is shot and killed by Francis, a trigger-happy member of the group, who is forced to flee in order to preserve the group's secrecy. When he returns to say goodbye to his mother he goes to see his former lover and co-revolutionary, Kate. When he discovers that she appears to have taken up with another of their comrades, the scene is set for betrayal and tragedy as events gather pace over during the following day and night.

The film style

O'Flaherty claimed in his autobiography that he wrote **The Informer** "based on the technique of the cinema," as "a kind of high-brow detective story". Robison's style in the film reflects this, anticipating the expressionistic aesthetics of film noir. Less ostentatiously arty than some of his contemporaries, Robison's claustrophobic design has one foot in the 1930s. The oppressive, boxed-in feel is reinforced by the studio photography, with nearly all shots framed in mid-shot or close-up.

The dense narrative develops in a short time heightening the intensity of emotional effect. Our sympathies are challenged to deal with the complexity of personal versus political loyalties, where no-one is entirely innocent and the implications of seemingly minor or impulsive decisions create inescapable moral dilemmas for all the protagonists.

The Production

Although made at Elstree Studios by British International Pictures, **The Informer** was a supremely international production, boasting an acclaimed German/American director, **Arthur Robison**; English actor **Carl Harbord** plays the tragic Francis, while Swedish actor **Lars Hanson** is his love rival Gypo Nolan. The object of their affections is the luminously beautiful Hungarian star, **Lya de Putti**. **The Informer** was entirely photographed in the studio,

although the design and photography - by **J. Elder Wills** and Germans **Werner Brandes** and **Theodor Sparkhul** respectively - is good enough make you believe you are in 1920s Dublin.

The new score – Garth Knox

The new BFI commissioned score is by Irish composer and violist **Garth Knox**. Garth is at the forefront of the new music scene in many fields, drawing on his vast experience as viola player of the Arditti Quartet and the Ensemble InterContemporain. Composing for a six piece ensemble including accordion, flute, Irish pipes and viola d'amore, he brings a wealth of cutting edge composition techniques, whilst also opening up the music of the past with his interest in medieval, baroque and traditional Celtic music.

The Restoration and DVD Release

Like Hitchcock's **Blackmail (1929)**, **The Informer** was shot in both silent and sound versions. Building on our previous work in restoring the sound version, the restoration team disentangled the two versions from existing film copies in order to establish the silent edit. This detailed analysis applied not only to the differing camera takes but also the text of intertitles. All the copies in the archive collection were thoroughly examined and the restoration work has drawn on them all – crucially, the existence of an original nitrate release print established the film's delicate tint colour. Restoration work began in 2014 and has taken many thousands of hours of work to recreate a masterpiece. The restoration was generously supported by Matt Spick.

The newly restored version of **The Informer** will be released on DVD and Blu-ray by BFI DVD in February 2017.

Interviews

Bryony Dixon and Garth Knox are available by arrangement for media interviews.



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Images are available via – www.image.net | BFI >BFI National Archive>Informer

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead organisation 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.

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.

LFF Archive gala presentations

Each year a new restoration of a British silent feature film is premiered as the LFF Archive Gala. These restorations have played a major role in repositioning British silent cinema in the UK and internationally.

2009: Underground (Anthony Asquith, 1928)

2010: The Great White Silence (Herbert Ponting, 1924)

2011: The First Born (Miles Mander, 1928)

2012: The Manxman (Alfred Hitchcock, 1929)

2013: The Epic of Everest (Captain John Noel, 1924)

2014: The Battles of Coronel and Falkland Islands (Walter Summers, 1927)

2015: Shooting Stars (Anthony Asquith, 1929)

The BFI London Film Festival

BFI London Film Festival is Britain's leading film event and one of the world's best film festivals. It introduces the finest new British and international films to an expanding London and UK-wide audience and attracts significant international film industry participation. LFF is a compelling combination of red carpet glamour, friendly audiences and vibrant exchange. LFF provides an essential profiling opportunity for films seeking global success; promotes the careers of British and international filmmakers through its industry and awards programmes and positions London as the world's leading creative city.

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