

WORLD PREMIERE AT SHANGHAI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FOR HISTORIC COLLECTION OF UNSEEN CHINA FILMS FROM BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE



l-r: The Bund in Shanghai in 1936, an outdoor barber in Beijing in 1910, and ladies in a garden in Shanghai in 1936; scenes from *Around China With a Movie Camera*

London, 10 June 2015. The BFI is pleased to announce the world premiere at the Shanghai International Film Festival on 13 June 2015 of *Around China with a Movie Camera*, a new film compiled from the BFI National Archive's unparalleled holdings of early films of China, presented at the festival in partnership with the British Council, and part of 2015 UK-China Year of Cultural Exchange. Robin Baker, Head Curator, BFI National Archive will introduce the collection which features films from 1900 – 1948 filmed across China. Among a wealth of rare and beautiful images audiences will be treated to a few tantalising frames of what could be the world's oldest surviving scenes shot in China, unseen for 115 years. The BFI's restoration of *Piccadilly* (1926) starring Anna May Wong will also be screened at the festival.

The cinematic journey of *Around China with a Movie Camera* contains many films which may never have been seen in China, or at the very least not for over 70 years. These travelogues, newsreels and home movies were made by a diverse group of British and French filmmakers, some professionals, but mainly enthusiastic amateurs, including intrepid tourists, colonial-era expatriates and Christian missionaries. Highlights include Shanghai's bustling, cosmopolitan Nanjing Road in 1900, the Great World Amusement Park in 1929 and a day at the Shanghai races in 1937. Films of the streets around the Qianmen, Beijing, in 1910, Hangzhou's picturesque canals seen in 1925 and

early 20th century views of big city glamour in Hong Kong, Chongqing, Guangzhou and Kunming compete with scenes captured in remote villages in Hunan and Yunnan provinces offering a dazzling and unprecedented view of China at a key period in its history. One of the most fascinating items in the collection are the only known home movies from the 1930s made by a Chinese British family (Mr S K Eng) who recorded an extensive holiday visit to China in 1933 including scenes from Shanghai where he had received his education. The programme will be accompanied live by John Sweeney, one of the UK's leading silent film pianists.

The BFI will also present in the Shanghai International Film Festival a restoration of the classic *Piccadilly* (1926) dir. E.A. Dupont which offers a revealing insight into life in London's Chinatown of the time (which was then located in the docklands district of Limehouse, seen here in a vivid studio reconstruction) with stunning cinematography and costumes. Anna May Wong is magnificent in the lead as a kitchen assistant whose sudden promotion to become a spectacularly successful dancer inspires love, lust and dangerous jealousy.

The BFI National Archive is one of the world's most significant collections of film in the world and includes materials from 1895 to the present day.

Amanda Nevill, BFI CEO said, "The priceless international heritage of cinema is preserved in archives around the world including the BFI National Archive. We are delighted to be at the Shanghai International Film Festival presenting films which so vividly capture China's historic past. The inspiring sight of China as it was over a century ago is unforgettable. We are grateful for the opportunity to continue to forge ever wider links with the film community across China for our mutual benefit. "

The BFI's international strategy identified China as a priority territory for UK film, offering opportunities across co-production, export and cultural exchange to drive growth, creatively, culturally and commercially.

This year the BFI has already undertaken an extensive programme of collaboration with China culminating in a landmark Co-Production Treaty between China and the UK. The BFI led the UK's first major film trade delegation in March and China remains a key area for continuing collaborations with key strategic partners including the British Council, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, UKTI and the government's GREAT Campaign.

BFI activity and involvement in the Shanghai Film Festival is part of a continuing journey of cultural and industrial exchange between the BFI and China. The Duke of Cambridge presented a copy of *Nankin Road* (1901) to Chinese film experts at the Beijing International Film Festival earlier this year in March; in addition, an extract from the historic UK-China film *The Legend of the Willow Pattern Plate* (1926) was screened and Carol Morley's film *The Falling* was acclaimed by audiences. The BFI presented a year-long programme of activity with China: *Electric Shadows* in the UK in 2014, including a series of rare early films entitled 'Shanghai on Film: 1900-1946' exploring life and landscape in Shanghai during the first half of the 20th century. In addition to supporting significant trade delegations, the BFI's restorations of Alfred Hitchcock's early silent films were screened across China in 2013 in partnership with the British Council.

Around China with a Movie Camera

A journey from Beijing to Shanghai, 1900-1948

13 June 2015, 20.45hrs, Hall 1, SFC Hew Heng Shan Cinema

14 June 2015, 18.30hrs, Hall 1, SFC Hew Heng Shan Cinema

Director: Various

Year: 1900-1948 (programme edited 2015)

Running time: 70 mins

Projection format: DCP

Silent with English intertitles

Programme compiled by Edward Anderson, BFI National Archive.

Edited by Edward Anderson, Douglas Weir.

Special thanks to Dr Clarence Eng, Satwant Gill, Chanel Kong, Peng Wenlan.

Thanks also to Robin Baker, Conrad Bodman, Dylan Cave, Margaret Deriaz, Bryony Dixon, Mark Duguid, Tim Everett, Jan Faull, Holly Hyams, Patrick Russell, Annabelle Shaw and Peter Stanley at BFI. Jo Griffin, Ben Harris and Andy Penfold at Prime Focus.

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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 is now 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 Greg Dyke.



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