



## BFI SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON EALING STUDIOS WITH MAJOR NEW PROJECT EALING: LIGHT & DARK

**London - Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

For the first time in a generation the BFI will present a major project celebrating the historic output of one of Britain's best loved and most influential studios with a two month retrospective at BFI Southbank **Ealing: Light and Dark** from 22 October to 30 December 2012. This is a chance to enjoy the great classics and comedies but also to discover the little known and unheralded more serious side of Ealing Studios during the 1940's and 50's, with its rich vein of challenging, provocative and sometimes subversive films, often surprisingly radical in their implications.

The project will include a national re-release of *It Always Rains On Sunday* (1947) and a new digital clean-up of the neglected *They Came to a City*, a major new book of essays *Ealing Revisited*, and special guests and events including an exhibition of Ealing posters, stills and memorabilia drawn from the BFI National Archive's rich holdings and a new collection in the BFI Mediatheques. A parallel season celebrating director Alexander Mackendrick will feature all of his Ealing films from October 22 to November 30 at BFI Southbank.

Ealing Studios has a unique place in the history of British cinema and it has become a byword for a certain type of British whimsy and eccentricity. But the studio's films boasted a surprising variety. Many of the films of Ealing rank among the undisputed

classics of the period, among them *Dead of Night*, *The Blue Lamp*, *The Cruel Sea*, *The Man in the White Suit* and *Passport to Pimlico*.

The theme of Ealing: Light & Dark is a rich and revealing one. Even the renowned comedies have a dark side within them: *Kind Hearts and Coronets* is a wittily immoral tale of a serial killer in pursuit of a dukedom; *Whisky Galore!* has a mischievous approach to law and order as a Scottish island population attempt to beat the Customs men to the free whisky washed ashore from a shipwreck; in *The Ladykillers* a sweet old lady proves more than a match for a gang of brutal bank robbers.

Part of the enduring appeal of Ealing is its witty challenging of authority in films such as *Passport to Pimlico* and *The Lavender Hill Mob*, which touched a nerve with audiences eager for social and political change faced with the austerity of the immediate post-war era.

Beyond the apparent frothy entertainment, Ealing's darker side dares to show wartime failures, imagine the threat of invasion or to contemplate the unsavoury after-effects of the war in the subtly supernatural *The Ship That Died of Shame* or the European *noir* *Cage of Gold*, in which Jean Simmons is lured by the charms of an *homme fatal*. Another pan-European story, *Secret People* (featuring an early appearance for Audrey Hepburn), contemplates the ethics of assassination, while in *Frieda*, Mai Zetterling faces anti-German prejudice in a small English town.

There are treats for even the most thoroughgoing Ealing aficionados in our programme of the studio's barely known wartime propaganda shorts, many of them unseen and inaccessible for decades. BFI curators will tell the untold story of Ealing's short-lived documentary unit, overseen by the great Alberto Cavalcanti, and its importance to Ealing's feature films.

Ealing was presided over by Michael Balcon, a towering figure in British cinema who was an early supporter of Alfred Hitchcock. He gathered around him a band of talented collaborators including the very influential Cavalcanti and directors Charles Crichton, Robert Hamer, Basil Dearden and Alexander McKendrick. All of these remarkable filmmakers were born within a few years of each other, around 100 years ago.

The posters for Ealing Studios films feature artwork by many of the era's greatest artists including John Piper, Edward Bawden, Eric Ravilious, Edward Ardizzone and Mervyn Peake, while the acting talent is a roll-call of many of Britain's greatest performers, among them Alec Guinness, Stanley Holloway, Margaret Rutherford, Joan Greenwood, Dennis Price, Jean Simmons, Googie Withers, Michael Redgrave, John Mills, Thora Hird, Diana Dors, James Fox, Virginia McKenna (who will introduce a screening of *The Cruel Sea*), Herbert Lom, Maggie Smith, Jack Warner, Alastair Sim, Will Hay and many more.

Join in the conversation at [#bfiealing](#).

We are grateful to STUDIOCANAL for their support and collaboration across the BFI's Ealing project. They will be releasing *It Always Rains on Sunday* on 12 November 2012 and *The Man in the White Suit* on 19 November 2012 on DVD and Blu-ray.

### **Dark Ealing: October 22 – December 30 2012**

Best known for a very English strand of comic whimsy, Ealing Studios also produced tough, cynical and challenging portraits of British life. Michael Balcon's Ealing is celebrated today as the emblem of a certain kind of unselfconscious British cinema: witty, strong on character and craft, stripped of neon and flash. We love it for its pluck, for its wit and whimsy, and for the charming eccentrics that populate its glorious comedies, from *Passport to Pimlico* to *The Titfield Thunderbolt*. But memory can be selective. Our two-month season begins with a look at Ealing's other side. 'Dark Ealing' cuts against the studio's popular image: tough, morally complex, socially critical, challenging and even cynical, unafraid to show Britain's seamier side. The standard bearer for this dark side is horror anthology *Dead of Night*, as chilling today as it was in 1945. But perhaps the pinnacle is *It Always Rains on Sunday*. Now digitally remastered by the BFI National Archive, Robert Hamer's 1947 film is a triumph of postwar British cinema, richly evoking a grimy East End London where 'respectable' working and criminal classes alike struggle to carve out some kind of life, a noir-ish world of doomed passion, thwarted dreams and betrayal. The darkness emerged in wartime, with alarming fantasies of defeat (*Next of Kin*) or invasion (*Went the Day Well?*). Later films such as *Cage of Gold*, *The Ship that Died of Shame* or *Nowhere to Go* challenged comforting myths of consensus and social progress, just as *Frieda* or *The Cruel Sea* picked at old wounds from the war while others preferred to talk of building the peace. The comedies had their dark side too: Hamer's deliciously cold-blooded *Kind Hearts and Coronets* sits beside Alexander Mackendrick's comedic quartet from the mischievous *Whisky Galore!* to the serially murderous *The Ladykillers*.

### **Light Ealing: December 1 – December 30 2012**

Please consult press office for full schedule of dates and screening times which will be confirmed on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

After the dark, let there be light! We complete our two-month celebration of the great Ealing Studios by turning to what is, for most, the heart of Ealing. On the 'light' side sit some of the warmest and most joyous British films ever made - meaning, of course, the comedies. The studio redefined itself after the war with high-spirited 'fantasies of rebellion' like *Passport to Pimlico*, which temporarily wishes away austerity and rationing. In *The Lavender Hill Mob*, the movies' nicest and most endearing gang rob the Bank of England, while the villagers of Titfield keep the golden age of steam alive in *The Titfield Thunderbolt*. More youthful high spirits propel the children's army of *Hue and Cry* and the imaginative mischief of *The Magnet*. Not that Ealing needed the war's ending to discover its funny bone. *Cheer Boys Cheer* offered a delightful pre-echo of the postwar comedies as early as 1939. But in the early 40s, 'Ealing comedy' meant George Formby, Tommy Trinder or Will Hay, the last represented here by the spiky fun of *My Learned Friend*.

But 'light' means more than just comedy. Where the films of Ealing's 'dark' side moved from critical to cynical, their 'light' counterparts embraced hope, and dared to dream of a better world, in which the united spirit of the war years carried over into a warmer and more egalitarian society. Ealing found rousing wartime tales among the Welsh coal miners whose labours kept the war machine stoked (*The Proud Valley*), with the intrepid firefighters facing the Blitz (*The Bells Go Down*), in the against-all-odds triumph of the crew of the *San Demetrio London*. And as the war neared its end, the studio boldly imagined how a better peace might be built in the utopian fantasy *They Came to a City*.

Even after the war, darkness tempers the light. If the tale of Captain Scott (*Scott and the Antarctic*) seems too tragic for the 'light' side, Ealing's film is above all an inspiring celebration of a national hero. Similarly, the violence and tragedy at the centre of the police drama *The Blue Lamp* ultimately give way to a profoundly optimistic conclusion. Even if we accept, as some believe, that Ealing in its later films too often retreated into cosy respectability, there's something admirable and even defiant about its assertion of hope during and immediately after the war. As Margaret Rutherford's Professor in *Passport to Pimlico* almost said, "Floreat Ealing!"

#### **Alexander McKendrick: October 22 to November 30 2012**

Of all the regular stable of Ealing directors, Alexander Mackendrick was the most consistently gifted. Like his fellow Ealing maverick, Robert Hamer, he found himself out of tune with the studio's good-natured, consensus-minded ethos; but where Hamer tended to clash head-on with studio boss Michael Balcon in his desire for more acerbic material, Mackendrick was cunning enough to slip his subversive attitudes into his work under the guise of innocuous comedy. Often Balcon only realised after the event how his director had put one over on him. 'I've given a promise on your behalf,' he told Mackendrick when the director was planning another film in the wake of *The Man in the White Suit*, 'that there's no satire in this one.' Even before *White Suit*, the most politically aware film Ealing ever produced, Mackendrick had given clear notice that, given what he called 'my perverted and malicious sense of humour', consensus really wasn't his thing. *Whisky Galore!* ends with the only principled man on Tordar, the wretched Captain Waggett, blown off the island in a gale of callous laughter. In *The Maggie* an honest American businessman is cheated, assaulted and bilked of his possessions, and *The Ladykillers* climaxes with a string of brutal murders. Mackendrick's only Ealing non-comedy, *Mandy*, about a child born deaf, is clear-eyed and wholly devoid of sentimentality. Mackendrick trained at Glasgow School of Art, entering the film industry as a designer and storyboard artist, and an acute visual sense underlies all his films. These qualities – the visual acuity and the dark, sardonic view of the world – came together in his post-Ealing masterpiece, *Sweet Smell of Success*, one of the late major entries in the classic Hollywood noir cycle. His last three films were compromised by circumstance and studio interference; but even there, the subtlety, vitality and intelligence of his filmmaking comes strongly through.

## **BFI SOUTHBANK EXHIBITION**

An Ealing Studios mezzanine display drawn from the BFI's rich Special Collections of working papers, scripts, posters, costume and production designs and photographs. The display will follow Ealing Studios up to its twilight years and the auction of the contents of the studio in 1956. It will also explore its innovative approach to publicity and marketing through a colourful and occasionally quirky array of press campaign books, publicity brochures and stunning posters with artwork by artists such as John Piper, Edward Bawden, James Boswell and Edward Ardizzone. The display runs from 1 November 2012 to 3 February 2013

Additional items from the BFI's Ealing collection will also appear in the London Film Museum, Covent Garden's forthcoming exhibition. 'Lights, Camera, London!' exploring London's screen history. The exhibition is due to open at the end of October 2012. Further details will be available shortly at [www.londonfilmmuseum.com/covent-garden/exhibitions](http://www.londonfilmmuseum.com/covent-garden/exhibitions)

## **MEDIATHEQUES – EALING STUDIOS:PROPAGANDA SHORTS**

The Mediatheque serves up some truly exotic Ealing fare. The thirty-odd documentary and propaganda shorts released by the studio between 1939 and 1946 are barely known even to film historians; several titles in our collection have lain unseen for decades, and many are missing altogether. Ealing's first foray into this territory came even before war was declared. *Happy Family* (1939) was a rousing call to ordinary citizens to prepare for the impending conflict, featuring John Mills.

Mills turned up again in *All Hands* (1940), one of a trio of films made to illustrate the Ministry of Information's 'Careless Talk Costs Lives' message. With the arrival of the great Alberto Cavalcanti from the GPO Film Unit, Ealing adopted documentary as a key part of its strategy. Cavalcanti's new unit turned out comic instructionals, recruitment and campaign films, satire and 'story' documentaries, serving as a training ground for Ealing directors and technicians. Gradually, a documentary sensibility seeped into the studio's features, bringing greater realism and a 'people's war' flavour that led Ealing in a new direction.

**Ealing Studios: Propaganda Shorts** will be available to view free of charge in BFI Mediatheques around the UK from November. [www.bfi.org.uk/mediatheque](http://www.bfi.org.uk/mediatheque)

## **FIVE TO TRY**

### **Now You're Talking (1940)**

Never trust a stranger offering mild and bitter. Blabbermouthed van driver Alf puts more than lives at risk in this cautionary tale on a 'careless talk' theme.

### **Go to Blazes (1942)**

Clueless know-it-all Will Hay demonstrates how not to put out incendiary bombs in an entertaining instructional film. A young Thora Hird plays his more diligent daughter..

### **Did You Ever See a Dream Talking? (1943)**

Spendthrift Claude Hulbert gets a lesson from his good angel in this enjoyably daft promotional film for War Savings Bonds.

### **Return of the Vikings (1944)**

A Norwegian whaleboat captain does his bit for the Allied cause in this fine example of Ealing's distinctive take on the 'story documentary'.

### **The Sky's the Limit (1945)**

John Mills heads up a stirring recreation of a daring bombing raid to rival the more famous *Target for Tonight*, made for the RAF's 'Wings for Victory' campaign.

## **EALING SEASON BOOK TIE-IN**

Ealing Re-Visited, edited by Mark Duguid, Melanie Willaims, Keith M. Johnston, and Lee Freeman, BFI/Palgrave Macmillan.

A series of essays on Michael Balcon's Ealing Studios offers a new look at the films and history of Ealing Studios, best known as the producer of famous film comedies such as *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951), *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949) and *The Ladykillers* (1955). Yet there is more to Ealing Studios than those famous comedies, and this book draws together some of the leading experts on Ealing and British cinema to explore the history of Britain's best loved film studio.

The book presents a closer look at the known and unknown elements of Ealing, its films and their sometimes unsung creators. This new approach explores what has gone unexplored, or unspoken, in popular and academic histories of the studio, and considers the impact that Ealing has had on British cinema and society from the 1930s to the present day.

£65 hardback, £18.99 paperback, 288 pages, publication date: 9 November 2012  
BFI/Palgrave Macmillan.

## **DARK EALING FILM PROGRAMME 22 October – 30 November 2012**

**Full schedule of dates and screening times will be confirmed on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.**

### **Next of Kin**

*UK 1942. Dir Thorold Dickinson. With Mervyn Johns, Guy Mas, Basil Radford, Nova Pilbeam, Thora Hird. 102min*

Ealing's first major artistic triumph for the war effort, *Next of Kin* is a cautionary tale about careless talk and the scourge of fifth columnists at large in the UK. The film's sober tone marked a change in war propaganda for Ealing, whose earlier blind celebration of military prowess gives way to an authentic depiction of the dangers and sacrifices faced by the wartime nation. Plus *All Hands* (UK 1941. Dir John Paddy Carstairs. 9min) a MoI short that warns of the dangers of careless talk in the navy.

**\*Introduced by Archive curator Katy McGahan**

**Mon 22 Oct 20:40 NFT2**

**Thu 25 Oct 18:20 NFT2\***

**Went the Day Well?** *UK 1942. Dir Alberto Cavalcanti. With Leslie Banks, Basil Sydney, Frank Lawton, Elizabeth Allan. 93min. PG*

In the middle of World War II Cavalcanti provocatively imagined a postwar England in which the failure of the threatened German invasion could be safely seen in flashback, thanks to the resourceful villagers of Bramley End. Once the ostensibly British troops in their village

are revealed as Nazis, and the local squire as a fifth columnist, the community unites and fights back with startling ferocity. A call to arms as persuasive as Powell and Pressburger's *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*.

Plus short ***Now You're Talking*** (1940. 11min).

***Introduced by an Archive curator (TBC)***

**Thu 25 Oct 20:40 NFT2**

**Sat 3 Nov 18:20 NFT2**

### **Dead of Night**

*UK 1945. Dir Alberto Cavalcanti. With Googie Withers, Mervyn Johns, Michael Ralph, Michael Redgrave. 102min*

Straying from more familiar realist fare, *Dead of Night* was Ealing's only venture into the horror genre. The film recounts five supernatural tales, held together by a linking story which itself has a creepy conclusion – a forerunner to the anthology films that flourished in the early 1970s. The film's nightmarish world of haunted mirrors and ghostly hearses lingers long after the closing credits, with Michael Redgrave's performance as a crazed ventriloquist proving particularly unsettling.

***\*Introduced by Jonathan Bignell***

**Sat 27 Oct 16:15 NFT1**

**Wed 31 Oct 20:40 NFT2\***

### **Pink String and Sealing Wax**

*UK 1945. Dir Robert Hamer. With Googie Withers, Mervyn Johns, Gordon Jackson, Sally Ann Howes. 89min. PG*

Two worlds collide in this melodrama set in Victorian Brighton: a repressive household, run by a tyrannical chemist, and a sleazy tavern, presided over by a passionate landlady. The chemist's son (Jackson) finds himself, understandably enough, in thrall to the landlady (Withers). His naïve passion and rebellious feelings against his father lead him into a murder plot from which he barely escapes, prompting a very equivocal happy ending.

***Introduced by Archive curator Nigel Algar***

**Sun 28 Oct 16:15 NFT1**

**\*Fri 2 Nov 20:30 NFT3**

### **Frieda**

*UK 1947. Dir. Basil Dearden. With David Farrar, Glynis Johns, Mai Zetterling, Flora Robson. 98min. PG*

Telling the story of a family trying to make sense of a postwar world, *Frieda* asks the question, 'Does a good German exist?' There isn't one simple answer but many, represented by the varying reactions of the inhabitants of the English village of Denfield when a German refugee arrives as the wife of one of their war heroes. In her first British film, Zetterling portrays Frieda sympathetically but the film allows the audience to reach its own conclusion over her individual responsibility for the horrors of war.

***\*Introduced by Archive curator Nathalie Morris***

**Sun 28 Oct 18:20 NFT2**

**Mon 5 Nov 20:40 NFT2\***

### **Saraband for Dead Lovers**

*UK 1948. Dir Basil Dearden. With Joan Greenwood, Stewart Granger, Peter Bull, Flora Robson. 96min. U*

In this rare excursion for Ealing into historical drama, Bull and Greenwood are perfectly cast as the dissolute Prince George-Louis and his reluctant bride Sophie-Dorothea. Shooting in

colour for the first time allowed the studio to give full rein to the period costumes and sets (the latter were nominated for an Oscar). The design provides an evocative backdrop to the princess's tragic story. As her lover, Granger shows why he was soon poached by Hollywood, his stature and looks making him the perfect screen hero.

**Introduced by Archive curator Jo Botting**

**Mon 29 Oct 18:30 NFT1**

**Wed 7 Nov 20:40 NFT2**

### **Whisky Galore!**

*UK 1949. With Basil Radford, Joan Greenwood, Wylie Watson, Bruce Seaton, Gordon Jackson. 82min. PG*

Mackendrick's glorious debut was the second of the trio of 1949 films that defined Ealing Comedy. When the whisky-parched Todday islanders spy salvation in the form of a shipwreck and 50,000 contraband cases, first they must outwit the morally upstanding English home guard Captain Waggett. One in the eye for puritan English priggishness and a joyous salute to the transformative power of a 'wee dram' – or 'the longest unsponsored advertisement ever to reach cinema screens the world over,' as producer Monja Danischewsky put it.

**Tue 30 Oct 20:45 NFT1**

**Sun 4 Nov 20:30 NFT3**

### **Kind Hearts and Coronets**

*UK 1949. Dir Robert Hamer. With Dennis Price, Alec Guinness, Joan Greenwood, Valerie Hobson. 106min. U*

Even Hitchcock couldn't make murder this much fun. Hamer's ageless classic challenges *The Ladykillers* for the title of Ealing's blackest comedy (call it a score draw, though *Kind Hearts* has the higher body count). Near perfect script and direction are crowned by wondrous performances. History tends to remember Guinness's virtuoso turn as all seven members of the lofty, aristocratic D'Ascoynes. But it's really Price's film: as the D'Ascoynes' ruthless nemesis Louis he gives us surely the screen's wittiest and most charming psychopath.

**Introduced by an Archive curator**

**Sat 3 Nov 16:15 NFT1**

**Wed 14 Nov 18:20 NFT2**

### **Cage of Gold**

*UK 1950. Dir Basil Dearden. With Jean Simmons, David Farrer, James Donald, Herbert Lom. 83min. PG*

Simmons's only film for Ealing is an unfairly neglected slice of Euro-noir, built upon the (apparently) un-Ealing foundations of passion, infidelity and blackmail. Simmons is a nice, middle-class girl with a nice, steady fiancé who is enticed to the dark side by the return of an old flame. The film flits between cosy suburbia and a vivid Parisian demi-monde, and if the conclusion inevitably opts for safety, the alternative is painted with relish, and Farrer, as ever, makes an appealing rogue.

**Introduced by an Archive curator**

**Sun 4 Nov 16:00 NFT2**

**Fri 9 Nov 20:40 NFT2**

### **The Man in the White Suit**

*UK 1951. Dir. Alexander McKendrick. With Alec Guinness, Joan Greenwood, Cecil Parker, Michael Gough, Ernest Thesiger. 85min. U*



Mackendrick's plague-on-all-your-houses industrial satire may be the most cynical Ealing film of all. Guinness delivers his most complex comic performance as the unworldly genius Sidney, whose invention of an indestructible, dirt-proof fabric terrifies textile barons and trade unions alike. A parable of the inexorability of technological progress and the tyranny of vested interests – with some sly sexual politics thrown in – it's as acerbic a piece of social commentary as ever escaped from Ealing.

**Sat 3 Nov 20:30 NFT3**

**Sun 11 Nov 16:15 NFT1**

### **Secret People**

*UK 1952. Dir Thorold Dickinson. With Valentina Cortese, Serge Reggiani, Charles Goldner. 96min. PG*

An untypical Ealing film, drawing on Dickinson's own Spanish Civil War experiences. Maria (Cortese), orphaned in London, is a hesitant revolutionary enlisted by her lover to assassinate her country's fascist leader, the man responsible for her father's death. Compelling and strikingly inventive, *Secret People* upset contemporary critics for its apparent indecision, but today it seems an intriguing study of a moral dilemma, with engaging performances from its Italian leads and a notable early role for young Audrey Hepburn.

**\*Introduced by Archive curator Mark Duguid**

**Sun 4 Nov 18:10 NFT3**

**Tue 6 Nov 20:30 NFT3\***

### **Mandy**

*UK 1952. With Phyllis Calvert, Jack Hawkins, Terence Morgan, Mandy Miller, Edward Chapman. 93min. PG*

In this rare Ealing tearjerker, Calvert and Morgan play a couple who disagree about how best to help their deaf child; their relationship is strained further when they become pawns in a political situation at a special school. The story is presented largely from the female point of view and Calvert gives an exceptionally moving performance as the mother torn between her husband and her child. *Mandy* never succumbs to mawkishness, approaching the subject with sensitivity and reason.

**Wed 7 Nov 18:20 NFT2**

**Sat 10 Nov 20:40 NFT2**

### **The Cruel Sea**

*UK 1952. Dir Charles Frend. With Virginia McKenna, Stanley Baker. 126min*

The 'Battle of the Atlantic', as experienced by the captain and first lieutenant of an anti-submarine convoy escort. Based on Nicholas Monsarrat's novel, Ealing's most popular war film celebrates the commitment and bravery of the British naval forces but isn't afraid to engage with the harsh realities of combat. Jack Hawkins and Donald Sinden lend British grit to the military spectacle and claustrophobic tension, depicting those men shaped and permanently shadowed by the war.

**\*Introduction by Virginia McKenna**

**Sun 11 Nov 18:20 NFT2**

**Mon 12 Nov 20:20 NFT2\***

**Thu 30 Nov 20:30 NFT3**

### **The Maggie**

*UK 1954. With Paul Douglas, Alex Mackenzie, Abe Barker, Tommy Kearins, Hubert Gregg. 92min. U*

An unsentimental counterpart to Ealing's *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, with the latter's vintage steam train crewed by high-spirited amateurs replaced by a ramshackle 'puffer' boat and its gnarly old skipper. The devious MacTaggart cheats his way to the commission to transport a US businessman's cargo – the first in a series of indignities heaped on his hapless client. *The Maggie* pits wealth and modernity against heritage and intransigence in a gleeful subversion of Ealing's 'small versus big' convention.

**Fri 9 Nov 14:00 NFT2\***

**Tue 13 Nov 20:40 NFT2**

**Sun 25 Nov 15:50 NFT3**

### **The Ship That Died of Shame**

*UK 1955. Dir Basil Dearden. With George Baker, Richard Attenborough, Bill Owen, Virginia McKenna. 95min*

Director Basil Dearden combines sharp thrills with loose social commentary in this tale of Motor Gun Boat 1087 and her once-celebrated officers now turned smugglers. Ealing's occasional engagement with the supernatural and nostalgia for the war is spun into one of the studio's darkest and best final films. Richard Attenborough is on form as a crooked chancer making the best out of the bleak social realities of postwar Britain.

**\*Introduced by Archive curator Dylan Cave**

**Wed 14 Nov 20:40 NFT2\***

**Sat 24 Nov 18:20 NFT2**

### **The Ladykillers**

*UK 1955. With Alec Guinness, Herbert Lom, Cecil Parker, Peter Sellers, Danny Green, Katie Johnson. 97min. U*

Everyone's favourite knockabout black comedy caper – or a political fable with the 'ladykillers' as the incoming post-war Labour government and the little old ladies as the obstacles of Conservative tradition? Beyond any doubt *The Ladykillers* is the last great Ealing comedy, and the studio's final production before its sale to the BBC.

American screenwriter William Rose apparently dreamed up the plot overnight, but casting, script, production design, and the Technicolor camerawork combine effortlessly for the blackest of farces.

**Thu 15 Nov 20:40 NFT2**

**Tue 20 Nov 20:45 NFT1**

### **Nowhere to Go**

*UK 1958. Dir Seth Holt. With George Nader, Maggie Smith, Bernard Lee, Bessie Love. 97min. U*

A rare, late excursion into *noir* for Ealing Studios, scripted by first-time director Holt and critic Ken Tynan. A good-looking ex-con (Nader) coolly robs an old lady of her coin collection, anticipating prison, but also the later recovery of the proceeds. Nothing proves that simple and he discovers the truth of the film's title. Stylish low-key cinematography, a jazz score and Maggie Smith's debut performance add to the pleasure.

**\*Introduced by Archive curator Vic Pratt**

**Fri 23 Nov 18:20 NFT2**

**Mon 26 Nov 20:40 NFT2\***

### **Ealing's Documentary Shorts c90min**

Virtually written out of the Ealing story and unknown even to most film historians, the studio's 30-odd wartime shorts have lingered in obscurity for decades. Led by former GPO man Alberto Cavalcanti, Ealing's in-house documentary unit served up a range of propagandist forms and subjects and trained up a new generation of filmmakers. BFI curators Mark Duguid and Katy McGahan present a selection of extracts and complete films, including *Dangerous Comment* (1940), *Sea Fort* (1940) and *The Sky's the Limit* (1943), and explore how the unit injected a documentary ethos into Ealing's bloodstream.

**Fri 26 Oct 18:20 NFT2**

**Mon 29 Oct 20:30 NFT3**

### **Mandy**

*UK 1952. With Phyllis Calvert, Jack Hawkins, Terence Morgan, Mandy Miller, Edward Chapman. 93min. PG*

Mackendrick's only non-comedy at Ealing also carries political overtones: public versus private. A girl, Mandy, is born deaf. Her father (Morgan), backed by his snobbish parents, insists she should be privately schooled and sequestered from other children; her mother (Calvert) believes she could be helped at a special school run by a brilliant but grumpy teacher (Hawkins). In the title role, seven-year old Mandy Miller gives one of the outstanding child performances, unmawkish and totally convincing.

**Wed 7 Nov 18:20 NFT2**

**Sun 10 Nov 20:40 NFT2**

### **The Maggie**

*UK 1954. With Paul Douglas, Alex Mackenzie, Abe Barker, Tommy Kearins, Hubert Gregg. 92min. U*

Mackendrick's second Scottish-set comedy, once again pitching an unwary outsider against native Scots guile. A forceful American businessman, Calvin Marshall (Douglas), wanting to ship cargo to his new house on a Hebridean island, is tricked into entrusting it to an ancient, ramshackle 'puffer boat' and its incompetent crew. He succeeds in intercepting the vessel, but his attempts to rectify the situation are repeatedly frustrated by ill luck or the machinations of the crew.

**\*Seniors' Matinee**

**Fri 9 Nov 14:00 NFT2\***

**Tue 13 Nov 20:40 NFT2**

**Sun 25 Nov 15:50 NFT3**

### **The Ladykillers**

*UK 1955. With Alec Guinness, Herbert Lom, Cecil Parker, Peter Sellers, Danny Green, Katie Johnson. 91min. U*

Last of the great Ealing comedies, rivalling *Kind Hearts and Coronets* for the gleeful blackness of its humour. Posing as an amateur string quintet while planning a robbery at Kings Cross, an ill-assorted group of crooks led by the sinister Professor Marcus (Guinness) rent rooms from a sweet little old lady (Johnson). Despite a few setbacks, the Professor's plan works superbly. But there's one factor he hasn't allowed for... At 77, veteran bit-part player Johnson all but walks off with the film.

**Thu 15 Nov 20:40 NFT2**

**Tue 20 Nov 20:45 NFT1**

## LIGHT EALING FILM PROGRAMME 22 October – 30 November 2012

### **There Ain't No Justice**

UK 1939. Dir Penrose Tennyson. With James Hanley, Edward Rigby, Edward Chapman, Mary Clare. 81 min

An aspiring boxer hopes to transcend humble origins and build a name for himself, but comes up against the corruption of the sporting establishment. 'The film that begs to differ', announced the publicity for this first film by Ealing's youngest director, the gifted 25-year-old Pen Tennyson, great-grandson of Lord Alfred. It's a striking departure from the shallow representation of working-class life in 1930s British films, and the first film to set out recognisably Ealing values: decency, courage and an optimistic faith in humanity and community.

### **Cheer Boys Cheer**

UK 1939. Dir Walter Forde. With Edmund Gwenn, Peter Coke, Nova Pilbeam, 84 min.

An 'Ealing comedy' before its time? Venerable family brewery Greenleaf finds itself under threat from monopolistic industry titan Ironside. But with an unlikely ally in Ironside's lovelorn scion, plucky little Greenleaf mounts a courageous fightback. Predating *Passport to Pimlico* and its comic cohort by a decade, this half-forgotten film was an almost uncanny premonition of Ealing delights to come, in its evocation of community, gently progressive values and 'small v. big' dynamic. A missing link in the Ealing story, then, but thanks to comedy veteran Forde, a joyous one.

### **The Bells Go Down**

UK 1943. Dir Basil Dearden. With Philip Friend, Tommy Trinder, James Mason, Mervyn Johns. 90 min.

"In the East End they say London isn't a town, it's a group of villages," begins Dearden's tribute to the intrepid firefighters confronting the Luftwaffe's nightly raids. Village London is a very Ealing conception: the vast, anonymous city reduced to a more human scale. But *The Bells Go Down* is no mere sentimental homily. Its community has its share of divisions, petty squabbles and criminality, but these fade in the face of a common enemy and the stoic endurance of routine tragedy. An inspiring companion piece to Humphrey Jennings' *Fires Were Started*.

### **San Demetrio London**

UK 1943. Dir Charles Frend. With Ralph Michael, Walter Fitzgerald, Robert Beatty, Gordon Jackson. 104 min.

In 1940 the oil tanker *San Demetrio*, half torn apart by U-boat torpedoes but still somehow afloat, was valiantly rescued by a handful of its crew and steered home through treacherous Atlantic waters. Frend's admirable second feature takes a true story of wartime heroism and, without sensationalism or triumphalism, shapes it into something approaching national myth (the damaged but defiant ship stands for Britain, the crew a people united by determination, courage and democratic values). It's Ealing's most potent and inspiring fusion of propaganda, documentary and people's war ideals.

### **They Came to a City**

UK 1944. Dir Basil Dearden. With Googie Withers, John Clements, Raymond Huntley, Renée Gadd. 78 min.

This most unusual of Ealing's features has long been hard to see, and is presented here in a new digital transfer. A fantastical allegory from the pen of J.B. Priestley, it transports nine disparate Britons to a mysterious city. What they find there is, according to their class and

disposition, either an earthly paradise of peace and equality or a hell starved of ambition and riches. A film once dismissed as naïve and uncinematic, it has more recently been viewed as a striking expression of its era's most utopian impulse.

### **The Blue Lamp**

*UK 1950. Dir Basil Dearden. With Jack Warner, Dirk Bogarde, James Hanley, Peggy Evans. 82 min.*

Ealing's defining contribution to the police procedural genre - with ex-policeman T.E.B. Clarke's script lending authenticity - sits on the border between the studio's dark and light sides. There's tragedy at its core, and a portrait of snarling, lawless youth (a mesmerising young Dirk Bogarde) that's tough for its time, not least for Ealing. But if it takes us to dark places, its conclusion expresses an irrepressibly optimistic and comforting vision of the ability of society to overcome its most hostile elements.

### **The Proud Valley**

*UK 1940. Dir Pen Tennyson. With Paul Robeson, Simon Lack, Edward Chapman, Janet Johnson. 77 min.*

An American seaman is welcomed into a Welsh mining village and bolsters a community facing industrial decline and the tremors of war. Paul Robeson brings warmth, integrity and powerful bass tones to his role as David Goliath, the figure around whom the struggling miners unite and discover their own proud voices. Pen Tennyson directs this simple story with compassion, beauty and dignity to make *The Proud Valley* one of the most satisfying of early Balcon-era Ealing.

### **The Halfway House**

*UK 1944. Dir Basil Dearden. With Mervyn Johns, Françoise Rosay, Glynis Johns, Esmond Knight. 96 min.*

Towards the end of the war, Ealing films took a positive turn and *The Halfway House* uses a ghostly setting to look towards a future in which wartime problems such as black marketeering, broken relationships and mourning for lost ones are left behind. A disparate group of people find themselves at a remote inn in the Welsh valleys which turns out not to be quite what it seems. A fine ensemble cast balances the film's humour with its more serious undertones and the supernatural atmosphere is reinforced by a haunting score.

### **The Overlanders**

*UK 1946. Dir Harry Watt.*

*With Chips Rafferty, Daphne Campbell, John Fernside, John Nugent Hayward, Peter Pagan. 91 min.*

A band of Australian drovers, led by Dan McAlpine (Chips Rafferty), drive 1000 cattle across the harsh Northern Territory to fresh pastures in Brisbane. Ealing's first Australian production is a stellar tribute to the country's WWII scorched earth defence against the Japanese. Rafferty embraces the spirit of defiance that characterised a nation under threat of invasion, while director Harry Watt brings a documentary sensibility that celebrates the sheer ambition and vast achievement of the drive.

### **Hue and Cry**

*UK 1946. Dir Charles Crichton. With Harry Fowler, Jack Warner, Alastair Sim 82 min*

Harry Fowler leads the 'Blood and Thunder Boys', a group of adolescents who discover their favourite boys-own magazine is being used by criminals to plan robberies. Largely acknowledged as the first in Ealing's cycle of post-war comedies, *Hue and Cry* gives us a joyfully chaotic of the kind of English eccentrics that would come to characterise the later

films. Alistair Sim and Jack Warner are the old hands whose exaggerated performances lead a cast of mostly newcomers.

### **Scott of the Antarctic**

UK 1948. Dir Charles Frend. With John Mills, Kenneth More, John Gregson, James Roberston Justice. 109 min.

Michael Balcon's self-confessed preference was for tales of adventure and derring-do and *Scott* fits the bill perfectly. The British spirit of endeavour and determination, even to the point of foolhardiness, pervades the film, as Scott's expedition gets ever closer to failure. Filming in Technicolor was an interesting choice given the bleak locations but the scenery is captured exquisitely and offers a dramatic backdrop to the exploits of the party. Vaughan Williams' score heightens the drama so poignantly enacted by Mills and the rest of the sterling cast.

### **Passport to Pimlico**

UK 1949. Dir Henry Cornelius. With Stanley Holloway, Margaret Rutherford, Jane Hylton, Paul Dupuis. 84 min.

A group of Pimlico residents discover that they are in fact citizens of the Duchy of Burgundy, a change of nationality that offers them the opportunity to dodge post-war strictures. Tearing up their ration books, they embark on self-governance but soon find that, despite all its problems, Blighty is the best place to be. Cornelius's only directing credit for Ealing (though he went on to success with *Genevieve*), *Passport to Pimlico* is perhaps the studio's most joyous celebration of Britishness.

### **The Magnet**

UK 1950. Dir Charles Frend. With William Fox, Stephen Murray, Kay Walsh, Meredith Edwards. 79 min.

James Fox, (credited here as William) plays Johnny, a 10-year-old who tricks a younger boy into giving him a toy magnet. Feeling guilty over his deception Johnny anonymously offers the magnet to auction, but when it raises enough funds to buy a life saving piece of hospital equipment he is nowhere to be found. A comedy of childhood errors, *The Magnet* pokes fun at a cosy adult world made insensible by the fantasies of some of its younger inhabitants. Ealing regulars Gladys Henson, Thora Hird and a disguised James Robertson Justice provide support.

### **The Lavender Hill Mob**

UK 1951. Dir Charles Crichton. With Alec Guinness, Stanley Holloway, Sidney James, Alfie Bass. 78 min.

Ealing's theme of the 'little man fighting back' finds its culmination here, as upstanding citizens Guinness and Holloway turn to crime, hooking up with two small time crooks to form a gang of unlikely gold smugglers. The heroes' dreams of freeing themselves from wage slavery in a grey, bombed out London have us rooting for them against the inept police pursuit. Writer T. E. B. Clarke's comic observations are spot on; he creates a postwar Britain in which demure-looking little old ladies devour American detective fiction with relish.

### **The Titfield Thunderbolt**

UK 1952. Dir Charles Crichton. With Stanley Holloway, George Relph, John Gregson, Hugh Griffith, Sid James. 87 min.

The commuters of Titfield form an amateur rail company when they discover that their local branch line is to close. Despite physical opposition from a rival bus company, the train enthusiasts unite behind their eccentric village vicar (Relph) and his affable drunk benefactor (Holloway), to bumble their way to an operators licence. Perhaps the archetype of 'Ealing Light' Crichton's gentle and nostalgic film was also the studio's first made in colour.

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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