

13/23

The Boulting Brothers

BFI celebrate their centenary with screenings of Brighton Rock, I'm Alright Jack and other classics



Tuesday 25 June 2013, London.

2013 marks the centenary of the birth of filmmaking brothers **John and Roy Boulting**, who over the course of 40 years chronicled British life through their perfectly crafted dramas and satirical comedies. **BFI Southbank** will celebrate these famous twins with a two month season throughout August and September. The season will include a rare opportunity to see early work including new prints from the **BFI National Archive** of the Boultings' first two fiction shorts, **The Landlady** and **Consider Your Verdict**, not seen on a big screen since their release in 1938. Another highlight of the season will be the premiere of the Imperial War Museum's digital version of Oscar-winning documentary **Desert Victory** (1943). Also screening will be **Brighton Rock** (1947), starring **Richard Attenborough**, the wartime-produced features **Pastor Hall** (1941) and **Thunder Rock** (1942) and comedies starring Boulting Brothers regulars such as **Peter Sellers**, **Terry Thomas** and **Ian Carmichael**. Appearing onstage to introduce screenings during the season will be **Liz Fraser** (actress, **I'm Alright Jack**, 1959) and **David Tringham** (assistant director, **There's a Girl in My Soup**, 1970). Unrivalled at wrapping issues of social conscience in a cloak of entertainment, their films seem as fresh and pertinent today as when they were first unleashed on the public.

'Our chief source of pride is that we've managed to aggravate, provoke, irritate, annoy and perhaps stimulate practically every side of the business. I think we're now accepted, rather like the local lavatory. People wish it wasn't there and that its function wasn't even necessary but, alas, it does fulfil a basic purpose.' - John Boulting.

The Boulting Brothers possessed an uncanny ability to capture the public mood and a sharp eye for the absurdity of national institutions. Few of these institutions escaped their attention: the army, trades unions, public schools and civil service all came under their critical gaze. They made a handful of titles before their careers were interrupted by the outbreak of war. However, they had clearly made their mark on the industry and were given dispensation from wartime duties to bring to the screen two features, **Pastor Hall** (1941) and **Thunder Rock** (1942). In 1943 **Desert Victory** won the Oscar for best documentary, leading to two further excursions into the form. When the conflict ended, they turned their attention to the mood of post-war malaise, producing two of Britain's finest films of the period: **Brighton Rock** (1947) and **Seven Days to Noon** (1950).

The second part of the season in September focuses on the latter part of their career including the pinnacle of their satirical output **I'm Alright Jack** (1959). The film won the BAFTA for best screenplay and is still the definitive, and funniest, commentary on union and management conflict. By the late 1950s the brothers had assembled an informal repertory company from which they cast their films; **Peter Sellers**, **Ian Carmichael** and **Terry-Thomas** all became comedy stars under the Boultings' tutelage. Between them they appeared in a number of Boulting comedies including **Heavens Above!** (1963), **Carlton-Browne of the F.O.** (1958) and **There's a Girl in My Soup** (1970). By the end of the 1960s their success was on the wane and their media profile was being dominated by the scandal provoked by Roy's romance with, and eventual marriage to, Hayley Mills, more than thirty years his junior. Although the brothers undertook solo projects, their talents and ideals were so perfectly balanced that their best work is as a team. They paved the way for anti-establishment humour of the 1960s such as *That Was The Week That Was* (BBC, 1962-63) and the satirical magazine *Private Eye* (1961 onwards) and their films remain immensely enjoyable proof that the British have an innate ability to laugh at themselves.

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Screenings taking place in the season:

Boulting Brothers shorts

Includes new prints of their first two fiction shorts, not seen since release.

Ripe Earth (UK 1938. Dir Roy Boulting)

Harvest time in the village of Thaxted.

The Landlady (UK 1938 Dir Roy Boulting. With Vi Kaley, Dorothy Vernon. New print)

A landlady evicts a flighty female lodger in this evocation of that most British of settings, the boarding house.

Consider Your Verdict (UK 1938. Dir Roy Boulting. With Marius Goring, Olive Sloane New print)
Courtroom drama in which a juror has his own motive to ensure the accused is found innocent.

Dawn Guard (UK 1941. Dir Roy Boulting)

Propaganda short. Two home guards on duty dream of a better world.

Total 92min

Mon 5 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Sun 11 Aug 18:20 NFT2

Pastor Hall

UK 1941. Dir Roy Boulting. With Wilfrid Lawson, Seymour Hicks, Nova Pilbeam

Based on a true story, this tale of a German priest interned for defying the regime found great favour with critics and public alike. Refused permission to bring it to the screen before the war for fear of offending Hitler's government, the Boultings found the authorities more than receptive to the idea by 1940 and the film's indictment of Nazism and emotional power guaranteed it success.

Sat 3 Aug 18:20 NFT2

Mon 12 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Thunder Rock

UK 1942. Dir Roy Boulting. With Michael Redgrave, James Mason, Lilli Palmer. 112min

Michael Redgrave recreates his role from the popular wartime play, as a lighthouse keeper who escapes the chaos of war by hiding away on an isolated rock in Lake Eyrie. For company, he brings to life the ghostly figures of immigrants from Europe searching for a better life who drowned in 1849. This rare venture into allegorical fantasy is a clear call to join the fight against oppression, so much a part of the zeitgeist in Britain at this point in the war.

Sun 4 Aug 16:00 NFT2

Thu 15 Aug 18:20 NFT2

Desert Victory

UK 1943. Dir Roy Boulting. 60min

This documentary about the battle of El-Alamein manages to create a strong, compelling narrative out of the geographical and tactical details of war. A collaboration between the armed forces film units and Ministry of Information, the film's successful marrying of material filmed on the ground, animation and captured enemy footage earned it an Oscar in 1943 and influenced wartime documentary making for the remainder of the war.

We are delighted to present the premiere of the Imperial War Museum's new digital restoration of the film with an extended introduction by David Walsh.

Thu 29 Aug 18:30 NFT1

Brighton Rock

UK 1947. Dir John Boulting. With Richard Attenborough, William Hartnell, Hermione Baddeley, Carol Marsh. 92min

This dark and powerful tale of spivvery and gang warfare in interwar Brighton is undoubtedly the best known of the Boultings' work. Although the film's preamble states that the seaside town is no longer the den of vice it once was, Graham Greene's story of petty crooks and protection rackets seems perfectly suited to the atmosphere of the years immediately after the war. Attenborough, only 24, gives the performance of his young career as the prematurely corrupt and ruthless Pinkie.

***Introduced by Archive curator Nigel Algar**

Tue 13 Aug 20:40 NFT2*

Sun 18 Aug 18:20 NFT2

Seven Days to Noon

UK 1950. Dirs Roy & John Boulting. With Barry Sloane, Olive Sloane, Andre Morell. 94min

A scientist involved in atomic research, despairing of the path the world is taking towards destruction, causes a city-wide evacuation when he threatens to blow up London. The film's distinctly unstarry cast give outstanding performances, while the deserted London streets provide an eerie backdrop to the increasingly tense scenes, while looking ahead to the post-apocalyptic visions of films like *28 Days Later*. Writer Paul Dehn won the Oscar for best screen story in 1951.

***Introduced by Archive curator Nigel Algar**

Tue 20 Aug 20:30 NFT3*

Sat 24 Aug 18:10 NFT3

Lucky Jim

UK 1957. Dir John Boulting. With Ian Carmichael, Terry-Thomas, Jean Anderson. 95min

Loosely based on the comic novel by Kingsley Amis, the Boultings' third comedy shows them already masters of the form. Carmichael, now established as their favourite accidental hero, plays Jim Dixon, a young university lecturer struggling to survive in the stuffy realm of academia. Hugh Griffith plays his bushy-eyebrowed nemesis, Professor Welch, ably supported by pompous son Bertrand (Terry-Thomas). The film's well-crafted set pieces are a delight.

Mon 26 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Fri 30 Aug 18:20 NFT2

Carlton-Browne of the F.O.

UK 1958 Dir. Roy Boulting and Jeffrey Dell. With Terry-Thomas, Peter Sellers, Luciana Paluzzi

The Boultings were often far sighted in their satires but this tale of trouble in a forgotten British outpost seems to foreshadow the Falklands crisis by 30 years. When Russia begins to show interest in an isolated island once part of the British empire, the foreign office mobilises to defend its territory, with chaotic results. The portrayal of the civil service is gloriously funny, with Terry-Thomas at the helm, how could it be otherwise?

Mon 2 Sept 20:40 NFT2

Fri 6 Sept 18:20 NFT2

I'm All Right Jack

UK 1959 Dir. John Boulting. With Ian Carmichael, Peter Sellers, Terry-Thomas, Richard Attenborough

In this, perhaps the pinnacle of the Boultings' satirical output, the brothers take on industrial relations in a society where everyone wants a share of the profits. Carmichael is impeccable as Windrush, the gormless stooge caught between unions and management, each trying to use him for their own ends. Sellers gives perhaps his finest comic performance as Fred Kite, the union official constantly waxing lyrical about the joys of life in Soviet Russia.

Sun 8 Sept 20:40 NFT2

Fri 13 Sep 18:10 NFT3

We're delighted that Liz Fraser will introduce both screenings.

A French Mistress

UK 1960 Dir. Roy Boulting With Cecil Parker, James Roberston Justice, Raymond Huntley

A return to the public school system examined earlier in *The Guinea Pig*, this time exploring gender rather than class issues. At Melbury School, the post of French teacher is filled by an attractive young woman, her appointment propelling pupils and teachers into turmoil. It's an enjoyable romp, more gentle than some of the Boulting's comedies, although critics at the time found its suggestion of incest distasteful. Agnes Laurent and Ian Bannen provide the romance but it's Cecil Parker's film; his performance as the headmaster of the minor public school is wonderful to watch.

Mon 9 Sept 20:30 NFT3*

Sun 22 Sept 18:20 NFT2

***Introduced by Archive Curator Vic Pratt**

Heavens Above!

UK 1963 Dir. John and Roy Boulting. With Peter Sellers, Cecil Parker, Eric Sykes, Irene Handl

Sellers is terrific as the well meaning prison vicar whose radical ideas cause mayhem in the sedate village of Orbiston Parvae, to which he has been mistakenly posted. Based on an idea by controversial TV presenter Malcolm Muggeridge (who has a cameo in *I'm All Right Jack*), *Heavens Above!* takes on Britain's relationship with religion and the lack of room in our modern leisure-heavy lifestyles for any kind of spiritual pursuit.

Wed 11 Sept 20:40 NFT2

Sat 14 Sept 18:20 NFT2

Twisted Nerve

UK 1968 Dir. Roy Boulting. With Hywel Bennett, Hayley Mills, Billie Whitelaw, Phyllis Calvert

The Boultings only foray into the horror genre, this film reunites the two actors who played the young newly-weds in *The Family Way* but places them in a very different relationship. It's the study of a cool detached stalker who adopts a childlike persona to disguise his murderous intentions; Hywel Bennett's boyish good looks make him ideal casting for the role. The film was criticised for associating Downs Syndrome with mental illness but its real undercurrent is the way mother love can stifle maturity.

Tue 17 Sept 20:30 NFT3*

Sat 21 Sept 18:10 NFT3

***Introduced by film historian Jonathan Rigby**

There's a Girl in My Soup

USA 1970 dir. Roy Boulting. With Peter Sellers, Goldie Hawn, Nicky Henson, Tony Britton

The casting of Sellers as an ageing restaurant critic who 'goes native' with the swinging young things of 60s London is particularly apt; at 44, he was still getting his fair share of female attention. Goldie Hawn sparkles as the flip young chick who sucks him in then spits him out. Terence Frisby's play ran for several years in the West End but, although the film adaptation didn't find the same success, it offers a view of how far the older generation was out of step with a permissive society.

Sun 6 Oct 16:00 NFT2

Mon 7 Oct 20:40 NFT2*

***We're delighted to welcome assistant director David Tringham to this screening.**

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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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.

***** 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 / August 2013