

57TH BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL ARCHIVE GALA: *THE EPIC OF EVEREST* WORLD PREMIERE OF NEW RESTORATION



Click here to see the trailer: <http://youtu.be/MwuPmg68mKU>

Tuesday 27th August 2013, London. The BFI National Archive's gala screening in the 57th BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express is today announced as the world premiere of the newly restored official film record of the legendary 1924 Everest expedition, *The Epic of Everest* dir. Captain John Noel. Screening at the Odeon West End cinema on the evening of 18 October 2013 in London's Leicester Square, the film will have a remarkable new score performed live by composer Simon Fisher Turner with a specially created musical ensemble featuring electronic music, found sounds, western and Nepalese instruments and vocals.

The Epic of Everest will have a simultaneous release in cinemas nationwide (18th Oct) including BFI Southbank from (19th Oct).

This record of the third attempt to climb Everest is one of the most remarkable films in the BFI National Archive.

Robin Baker, Head Curator, BFI National Archive said,
"This is one of the greatest treasures of the BFI National Archive. It represents a key moment in the history of mountaineering and remains an enduring monument to Mallory and Irvine. This film is a precious record of endurance and is a powerful piece of cinema now beautifully restored to show

how Everest was so nearly conquered. It is highly appropriate to present the film now, just sixty years since Everest was finally conquered by a British expedition and one hundred years since Captain John Noel, the film's director, first set eyes on the mountain itself."

The 1924 Everest expedition culminated in the deaths of two of the finest climbers of their generation, George Mallory and Andrew Irvine, and sparked an on-going debate over whether or not they did indeed reach the summit.

Filming in brutally harsh conditions with a specially adapted camera, Captain John Noel captured images of breath-taking beauty and considerable historic significance. The film is also among the earliest filmed records of life in Tibet and features sequences at Phari Dzong (Pagri), Shekar Dzong (Xegar) and Rongbuk monastery. But what resonates so deeply is Noel's ability to frame the vulnerability, isolation and courage of people persevering in one of the world's harshest landscapes.

The restoration by the BFI National Archive has transformed the quality of the surviving elements of the film and reintroduced the original coloured tints and tones. Revealed by the restoration, few images in cinema are as epic – or moving – as the final shots of a blood red sunset over the Himalayas. BFI National Archive experts have gone back to the earliest surviving elements donated to the BFI in the 1960s. The BFI has worked closely with Captain Noel's daughter, Sandra Noel, to review the surviving materials. Before his death in 1989 Captain Noel had been in correspondence with the BFI about creating a definitive version of his film.

Captain Noel was a heroic, pioneering explorer who had reconnoitred the mountain in disguise while on leave from his Indian regiment, as early as 1913. In 1919, in the course of a paper to the Royal Geographical Society, Noel made the first public suggestion that Mount Everest should be climbed, a challenge taken up in 1920 when members of the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club of Great Britain formed the Mount Everest Committee.

The first reconnaissance trip was undertaken in 1921 and no moving images are known to exist. The 2nd Everest expedition took place in 1922 and Captain John Noel took the first ever film of the mountain, which is also the first ever film shot in Tibet. For the 3rd Everest expedition in 1924 Noel bought the rights to all still photography and moving image material and was himself the official cameraman.

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THE EPIC OF EVEREST (1924) directed and photographed by Captain John Noel

Restoration supported by The Eric Anker-Petersen Charity

Director/Producer/Cinematographer: Captain John Noel
UK 1924
85 mins

UK distributor and world rights holder: BFI

Notes to Editors:

SIMON FISHER TURNER

Simon Fisher Turner's score for *The Epic of Everest* was a year in the making. The result is an epic of contemporary music-making, full of a dizzying range of instruments, musicians,

found sounds and natural noise collaged into a resonant and evocative homage to mountains and those in thrall to them. The score is a companion piece to his equally haunting score for *The Great White Silence*, the official film record of Scott's last expedition to the South Pole, released by the BFI in 2011 and premiered in the BFI London Film Festival in 2010.

The essence of SFT's compositional practice is bold and experimental. In a strange way the composer's musical journey has been every bit as involved and sometimes almost as challenging as an attempt to climb Everest.

At the heart of the score are a recurring group of complementary sounds, those of harsh winds, deep breaths, unexpected frequencies, and traditional instruments offering a soaring, sonic, re-imagining of the emotional highs and lows of the Everest expedition. Sounds of Yak bells, sighs, Himalayan silence, typewriter keys striking paper, mix with samplings of the original recordings made by Captain John Noel of Tibetan lamas who accompanied the film at its premiere run at London's Scala cinema in 1924.

Simon Fisher Turner said, *"Everest is the world's highest peak and I had a vision of it as somewhere that all the winds of the world could be heard. I have been privileged to collaborate with an extraordinary group of musicians who have brought their own very different enthusiasms and instruments to the piece. It has been a wonderful challenge to find sounds which sound like something else, which inform the score but don't offer a literal version of what you're seeing. How do you score a new born donkey with wobbly legs?"*

Simon Fisher Turner's other recent work includes composing for an exhibition relating to the work of John Berger *Ways of Seeing* at Somerset House in London last year. He has also developed an on-going collaboration with artist Alyson Shotz. The soundtrack album of *The Epic of Everest* will be released by Mute on 21 October 2013.

Extreme Summits

Beginning in late October and running until the end of November, **BFI Southbank** will mark the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest with **Extreme Summits**. This season of films will celebrate the heroic endeavours of mountaineers, from Everest to K2 and Kangchenjunga to Mount Kamet.

BFI Southbank will also host some of the best films from the **Kendal Mountain Festival** with a special weekend of events (Fri 22 Nov – Sun 24 Nov). This film festival will bring the best of adventure, discovery and mountain film to BFI Southbank.

Interview opportunities: Sandra Noel and Simon Fisher Turner

Captain John Noel's daughter, Sandra Noel and composer Simon Fisher Turner are available for selected interviews on request to the BFI Press Office.

Press contacts:

Brian Robinson, Senior Press Manager, Cultural Programme, BFI

Tel: 020 7957 8940 brian.robinson@bfi.org.uk

Judy Wells, Head of Press, BFI

Tel: 020 7957 8919 judy.wells@bfi.org.uk

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 London Film Festival

BFI London Film Festival is an iconic international film festival that supports London's position as the world's leading creative city. It presents the best new British and international films to an expanding London and UK-wide audience. It provides career-enabling opportunities for British and international filmmakers through its industry and awards programmes.

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