

Marilyn Monroe

15 of her best-loved films on the big screen at BFI Southbank this June



Friday 1 May 2015, London

Throughout June **BFI Southbank** will celebrate one of Hollywood's most iconic actresses, **Marilyn Monroe**, with a season of 15 of her best-loved films including *Some Like it Hot* (1959), *There's No Business Like Show Business* (1954) and *The Misfits* (1961), the latter of which will play on extended run. Sex symbol, Hollywood starlet and tragic heroine, the story of Marilyn Monroe has been pored over countless times, often resulting in her considerable acting ability being overlooked. Monroe invented her own image of femininity and performed it so flawlessly that it still resonates in our own time, having influenced performers from Madonna to Rita Ora. Her luminescent star quality, warmth and humanity made her roles in such films as *The Seven Year Itch* (1955) and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) much more than comic dumb blonde stereotypes. The season will also offer audiences a chance to see some of Monroe's rarely-screened early films including *We're Not Married* (1952) and *Clash By Night* (1952), and look behind the legend of Marilyn Monroe with dedicated talks and study days.

Born Norma Jeane Mortensen on June 1 1926, Monroe overcame a difficult childhood to become one of the world's biggest and most enduring sex symbols. Married to a merchant marine by the age of 16, she developed a successful career as a model and changed her name to Marilyn Monroe in preparation for an acting career. Roles in *We're Not Married* (1952), *Don't Bother to Knock* (1952), *Monkey Business* (1952) and *Clash By Night* (1952) gave her some early success, but it was first star billing in *Niagara* (1953) which began to really propel Monroe towards stardom. Monroe starred opposite Joseph Cotton as a young married woman out to kill her husband with help from her lover. A number of light comedic roles followed in films such as *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953) and *The Seven Year Itch* (1955), but she began to feel typecast as a 'dumb blonde' and decided to take control of her career. She studied at the Actors Studio to broaden her range, resulting in a Golden Globe nomination for her role in *Bus Stop* (1956) and she also formed her own production company, Marilyn Monroe Productions, which produced *The Prince and the Showgirl* (1957), in which she starred alongside Laurence Olivier. Completing the season will be John Huston's *The Misfits* (1961). Written for Monroe by her husband Arthur Miller, the film gave her the fragile role that she had trained for in her time at the Actors Studio. With script revisions throughout the shoot as Monroe and Miller's marriage broke down, this powerful and emotional drama was the final completed film for both Clark Gable and Monroe, and will play on extended run during the season. On August 5, 1962, at only 36 years old, Marilyn Monroe died at her Los Angeles home. An empty bottle of sleeping pills was found by her bed.

– ENDS –

NOTES TO EDITORS

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SCREENING IN THE SEASON:

Who do you think you are, Marilyn Monroe?

Sex bomb, Hollywood starlet, tragic heroine; the ‘story’ of Marilyn Monroe has been as endlessly refashioned as her ubiquitous image. As we begin our season, writer and academic Jacqueline Rose (author of *Women in Dark Times*), film scholar Lucy Bolton (Queen Mary, University of London) and playwright, novelist and critic Bonnie Greer (whose play *Marilyn and Ella* premiered in 2008) are joined by chair Jemma Desai to discuss Monroe’s enduring feminist significance.

Tickets £6.50

WED 3 JUN 18:10 NFT3

We’re Not Married

USA 1952. Dir Edmund Goulding. With Victor Moore, Ginger Rogers, Marilyn Monroe. 86min. Film. U

Marilyn Monroe plays Annabel, a married beauty pageant contestant who has just won the ‘Mrs Mississippi’ title. Her ambitions, however, contrast with those of her stay-at-home husband. When they’re suddenly told that they aren’t legally married – as the officiating judge didn’t have a valid license – Annabel sees a tempting opportunity for a new life.

MON 1 JUN 18:30 NFT1

THU 4 JUN 18:30 NFT1

Clash By Night

USA 1952. Dir Fritz Lang. With Barbara Stanwyck, Paul Douglas, Robert Ryan, Marilyn Monroe. 105min. Film. PG

A woman (Stanwyck) who begrudgingly returns home to settle down in a small fishing town embarks on an affair, with violent repercussions. Monroe is introduced as the fresh-faced Peggy – a mixture of naïve and breathy sexuality and an independent girl who ‘doesn’t like to be bossed’ – and offers a ray of light among the world-weary cynicism of this tense drama.

FRI 5 JUN 20:45 NFT1

SAT 6 JUN 18:20 NFT1

Don’t Bother to Knock

USA 1952. Dir Roy Ward Baker. With Marilyn Monroe, Richard Widmark, Anne Bancroft. 76min. Film. PG

Beginning the evening buttoned-up, anxious and quiet, babysitter Nell (Monroe) is brought in to care for a young girl as her parents dine in the same hotel. Soon she’s trying on the mother’s perfume, peignoir and slippers, and accepting a late-night visit from a man. Is she a dangerous siren, or a tragic figure out of her depth?

TUE 2 JUN 20:45 NFT1

SUN 7 JUN 18:20 NFT1

Monkey Business

USA 1952. Dir Howard Hawks. With Cary Grant, Ginger Rogers, Charles Coburn, Marilyn Monroe. 97min. Film. U

Miss Laurel (Monroe) is a secretary with no typing skills but an exaggerated figure and a free-wheeling appetite for life. The film lets rip when she goes joyriding with Cary Grant’s scientist, who has regressed to the mind-set of a child after experimenting with a rejuvenation drug. His wife (Rogers), however, doesn’t approve of Miss Laurel and wants to ‘pull her blonde hair out by its black roots.’

TUE 2 JUN 18:30 NFT1

TUE 9 JUN 21:00 NFT1

Niagara

USA 1953. Dir Henry Hathaway. With Marilyn Monroe, Joseph Cotten, Jean Peters. 92min. Digital. PG

Rose Loomis, a Technicolor femme fatale and Monroe's first star billing, is young and highly sensual. Her marriage to the jealous and depressed George (Cotten) plays out in front of honeymooning couple Polly and Ray, including the unveiling of Rose's many secrets. Unlike Monroe's later roles exploring playful and innocent sexuality, this noir portrays sex as deadly.

SAT 6 JUN 20:45 NFT1

MON 15 JUN 18:30 NFT1

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes

USA 1953. Dir Howard Hawks. With Marilyn Monroe, Jane Russell, Charles Coburn, Elliott Reid. 91min. Digital. U

Monroe is at her sparkling comic best as the eponymous blonde Lorelei Lee; a role that sparked repeated homages. While sailing to Paris to be married, Lorelei is distracted into casual flirtation with diamond mine owner 'Piggy' Beekman, much to the delight of the private investigator hired to keep tabs on her. This much-loved classic features the hit song 'Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend.'

WED 3 JUN 21:00 NFT1

SUN 7 JUN 16:10 NFT1

FRI 12 JUN 20:40 NFT2

How to Marry a Millionaire

USA 1953. Dir Jean Negulesco. With Lauren Bacall, Marilyn Monroe, Betty Grable. 95min. Digital. U

This fantastically funny exploration of how to tell a tycoon from a tramp stars Bacall, Monroe and Grable as fashion models venturing to marry money in New York – a place for 'millionaires and Cinderellas.' As the comic relief, Monroe showcases her skill with timing and slapstick physicality playing the practically blind Pola Debevoise, who refuses to wear her glasses lest she put men off.

WED 10 JUN 20:55 NFT1

WED 24 JUN 17:45 NFT1

River of No Return

USA 1954. Dir Otto Preminger. With Robert Mitchum, Marilyn Monroe, Rory Calhoun. 91min. Digital. PG

When he's released from jail, cowboy Matt Calder (Mitchum) has to confront his prejudices about Monroe's saloon singer Kay, who's been caring for his son while he's been away. Kay subverts social stereotypes and shows that she can look after herself in the wilderness, displaying greater moral courage because she isn't tied to Matt's distorted ideas of honour.

MON 15 JUN 20:45 NFT1

THU 18 JUN 18:10 NFT3

There's No Business Like Show Business

USA 1954. Dir Walter Lang. With Ethel Merman, Dan Dailey, Donald O'Connor, Mitzi Gaynor, Marilyn Monroe. 117min. Digital. U

Monroe plays hard-nosed ambitious singer Vicky Parker who exploits the illusion of desire – exemplified by her singing 'After You Get What You Want, You Don't Want It' in a sensational semi-nude snowflake dress. Tensions rise when she gets tangled up with the son in The Five Donahues vaudeville act. Mother doesn't approve of her type, but has she got Vicky all wrong?

FRI 19 JUN 18:10 NFT3

MON 22 JUN 20:40 NFT3

The Seven Year Itch

USA 1955. Dir Billy Wilder. With Marilyn Monroe, Tom Ewell, Evelyn Keyes. 105min. Digital. PG

It's a 50's *Playboy* fantasy come true! Monroe plays the un-named girl upstairs who appears in art photo magazines, of the kind that Richard Sherman (Ewell) buys. With his wife and son out of town, Richard indulges himself in forbidden things, but barely escapes with his sanity intact after feeling the full force of the girl's sexual allure.

FRI 19 JUN 20:55 NFT1

SUN 21 JUN 18:10 NFT1

Bus Stop

USA 1956. Dir Joshua Logan. With Marilyn Monroe, Don Murray, Arthur O'Connell. 96min. Digital. U

Monroe's trademark sleepy eyes and breathy voice are gone – replaced here with a Southern accent, an open face and a brave performance as a tone-deaf singer. Saloon 'chanteuse' Chérie embodies the line 'I've been trying to be somebody' as she dreams of Hollywood stardom, but rodeo champion Bo has other plans for his 'Cherry' after deciding he wants a bride to add to his trophies.

SAT 20 JUN 20:50 NFT1

TUE 23 JUN 18:10 NFT3

The Prince and the Showgirl

UK-USA 1957. Dir Laurence Olivier. With Marilyn Monroe, Laurence Olivier, Richard Wattis. 117min. Film. PG

Monroe re-stages her own star spectacle in the Olivier-directed version of Terrence Rattigan's play about the importance of political freedom and the clash of the American way with old European privilege. Her BAFTA-nominated performance, in a film made by her own production company, exposes the construction of the Monroe image as a kind of female drag.

SUN 21 JUN 20:00 NFT2

TUE 30 JUN 18:10 NFT3

Some Like It Hot

USA 1959. Dir Billy Wilder. With Marilyn Monroe, Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon. 121min. Digital. 12A

Well-documented personal troubles led Monroe to attempt to sabotage her role as Sugar; despite this, *Some Like It Hot* remains one of the best-loved comedies of all time. Fun-loving Sugar is oblivious to the two cross-dressing men (Lemmon and Curtis) who join her all-female travelling jazz band to escape the Mob, and is won over by Joe who also pretends to be a millionaire to woo her (Curtis, in an homage to Cary Grant).

THU 18 JUN 20:50 NFT1

SUN 21 JUN 15:30 NFT1

SAT 27 JUN 20:30 NFT1

Let's Make Love

USA 1960. Dir George Cukor. With Marilyn Monroe, Yves Montand, Tony Randall. 119min. Digital. U

Monroe is Cinderella to Montand's billionaire prince who is searching to find his authentic self. He falls in love with the actress after witnessing her mesmerising performance of 'My Heart Belongs to Daddy' in a play that satirises his own rich lifestyle. To win her affection, he auditions incognito to play himself and experiences first-hand her critical views on the arrogance of wealthy men.

FRI 26 JUN 18:10 NFT3

TUE 30 JUN 20:40 NFT3

The Misfits

USA 1961. Dir John Huston. With Marilyn Monroe, Clark Gable, Montgomery Clift. 125min. Digital. PG. A Park Circus release

This powerful emotional drama gave Monroe the role she had been waiting for. The final completed film for both Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe sees the beautiful Roslyn – wounded, shivering and cynical after her divorce – meet experienced cowboy Gay (Gable) and move in with him. Harm to innocent creatures is a recurring theme as Roslyn becomes increasingly distressed by the masculine aspects of Gay's lifestyle, and is evident when Gay's friend Perce (Clift) is injured in a brutal rodeo. *The Misfits*, written for Monroe by her husband Arthur Miller – with script revisions throughout the shoot as their marriage broke down – gave Monroe the fragile role that she had trained for in her time at the Actors Studio, and by having her relationships played out in the public eye.

Fri 12 – Thu 25 June

Marilyn Monroe Study Day: Understanding a Cultural Phenomenon

As our Marilyn Monroe season draws to a close, film scholar Lucy Bolton convenes an afternoon of illustrated presentations and in-depth discussion, providing an opportunity to examine the actress from multiple perspectives. With contributions from key experts Sarah Churchwell (author of *The Many Lives of Marilyn Monroe*) and Pamela Church-Gibson (author of *Fashion and Celebrity Culture*), we'll consider Monroe's

performances, her much-contested biography, her style and her huge cultural significance in an attempt to understand cinema's most enduring icon.

SAT 27 JUN 12:00 – 16:00 NFT3

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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The benugo bar & kitchen

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 *****

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