

Peter Lorre season at BFI Southbank

Season marks the fiftieth anniversary of Lorre's death and will include screenings of 22 films including M, Mad Love, Casablanca and The Maltese Falcon



Monday 28 July 2014, London

BFI Southbank today announces a season dedicated to one of the most nuanced and complex actors of his generation **Peter Lorre**. Marking the fiftieth anniversary of his death, this five week retrospective from Tuesday 2 September – Tuesday 7 October will feature some of Lorre's most celebrated roles. Lorre was famed for playing sinister characters and even holds the prestigious position of being the first actor to ever portray a Bond villain, when he played Le Chiffre in a 1954 television adaptation of *Casino Royale*. The season will showcase a number of Lorre's villainous screen moments such as *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) and *Crime and Punishment* (1935), as well as his roles in some of the most iconic films of the golden age of Hollywood including *Casablanca* (1942) and *The Maltese Falcon* (1941). The centrepiece of the season will be the film which made Lorre a star, **Fritz Lang's** psychological thriller *M* (1931), re-released by the BFI in cinemas across the UK on September 5.

Born László Loewenstein in the small Austro-Hungarian town of Rózsahegy (now in present day Slovakia), Lorre won critical acclaim for his theatre work with Bertolt Brecht and international fame beckoned after his first major film role as a compulsive child murderer in *M*. Made two years before Hitler came to power Lang's film was renowned for its striking imagery and inventive use of sound; playing on extended run at BFI Southbank this re-release can now be enjoyed in a pin-sharp restoration. Also screening in the season will be both films Lorre made with the master of suspense, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) and *Secret Agent* (1936); Lorre's understated style and subtle humour were perfectly suited to both these Hitchcock thrillers.

Despite only appearing on screen for a few minutes, the season would not be complete without a screening of *Casablanca* (1942) in which Lorre makes an unforgettable appearance as Urgarte, a shady crook dealing in exit visas. Made the following year was *The Mark of Dimitrios* (1943), a stylish thriller which had Lorre unusually cast as a Dutch mystery writer who is inspired by the true-life tale of evil genius Dimitrios Makropoulos.

Lorre's first American film, ***Mad Love*** (1935) combined pacey Hollywood entertainment with European arty panache; rejected by the public as 'sick' it was everything an audience could wish for in a B-movie. Screening alongside it will be ***The Face Behind the Mask*** (1941), which offered Lorre a rare chance to win the audience's sympathy as a Hungarian immigrant who becomes a social outcast when he suffers horrific injuries in a fire. The season will also offer audiences a chance to see two of the eight films in which Lorre starred as the dapper Japanese detective Mr Moto – ***Think Fast, Mr Moto*** (1937) and ***Mr Moto Takes a Vacation*** (1939).

Lorre worked with many celebrated directors, and the season will offer audiences a chance to see a number of classic films on the big screen, including John Huston's ***The Maltese Falcon*** (1941), Frank Capra's ***Arsenic and Old Lace*** (1944), Roger Corman's ***The Raven*** (1963) and Rouben Mamoulian's ***Silk Stockings*** (1957), the latter of which saw Lorre steal the show as a Russian Commissar with some unexpectedly dapper dance moves. Also screening will be Lorre's only directorial offering ***The Lost One*** (1951); this flawed but fascinating blend of noir and neorealism was set amid the ruins of post-war Hamburg, and starred Lorre as a doctor whose life is darkened by a terrible secret.

The selection of twenty two films from his vast filmography being screened in the season shows how Lorre both exploited and subverted his image, revealing a versatility which stretched from comedy, drama and adventure to even a Fred Astaire musical.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

FULL LISTINGS FOR PETER LORRE SEASON:

M

Germany 1931. Dir Fritz Lang. With Peter Lorre, Otto Wernicke, Gustaf Gründgens. 117min. Digital. EST. PG. A BFI release

Made two years before Hitler came to power, Fritz Lang's first sound film is a great psychological thriller, a trenchant treatise on crime and justice, and a vivid portrait of the rapidly disintegrating Weimar Republic. Peter Lorre shot to stardom as the compulsive child murderer who is hunted down not only by a desperate, frustrated police force, but – rather more ruthlessly – by Berlin's criminal underworld. The extraordinarily detailed police procedures are based on Lang's research at the Alexanderplatz police headquarters, while the documentary-style depiction of Berlin's prostitutes, beggars and grotesquely respectable citizens recalls the sharp-eyed satire of artists such as Grosz and Dix. Lorre's first major screen role was also his greatest – no monstrous caricature but a quietly credible psychopath who could easily be your next-door neighbour. Yet the explosive revelation of his inner torment is one of cinema's great set-pieces. Renowned for its striking imagery and inventive use of sound, *M* can now be enjoyed in a pin-sharp new restoration. For once, such words as 'seminal', 'unmissable' and 'masterpiece' are not just hype.

Fri 5 Sept – Tue 7 Oct

Seniors' matinee + Introduction Fri 12 Sept 14:00 NFT3

Restored by TLEFilms Film Restoration & Preservation Services in association with CNC – Archives françaises du film

F.P.1 No Answer From F.P.1 antwortet nicht

Germany 1932. Dir Karl Hartl. With Hans Albers, Sybille Schmitz. 114min. EST (German version)

This lavish production, shot in three different language versions, was one of the last big hits of the Weimar Republic. A daredevil 'trans-oceanic' pilot (Hans Albers) champions the construction of a floating airstrip in the middle of the Atlantic, but the project is threatened by sabotage. Sybille Schmitz, fresh from playing the 'vampyr' in Dreyer's film, is the pilot's frustrated girlfriend. Lorre, pre-typecasting, is the hero's sidekick, a melancholy little photo-journalist whose deadpan style owes much to Brecht

Tue 2 Sept 20:40 NFT2

Sat 6 Sept 16:00 NFT2

The Man Who Knew Too Much

UK 1934. Dir Alfred Hitchcock. With Leslie Banks, Edna Best. 75min. U

Hitchcock's cosmopolitan thriller, with locations ranging from the ski slopes of St Moritz to the mean streets of Wapping, reflected the European tensions of the time. Lorre plays the head of a terrorist gang which plots to assassinate a visiting foreign statesman in the Albert Hall. A chubby, baby-faced baddie, he alternates smiling, smoking and Shakespeare-quoting with outbursts of chilling brutality. Although Lorre is said to have struggled with his English, his understated style and subtle humour are purest Hitchcock.

Wed 3 Sept 20:50 NFT1

Sat 6 Sept 18:10 NFT3

Mad Love

USA 1935. Dir Karl Freund. With Colin Clive, Frances Drake. 68min

Lorre's first American film, a remake of the German silent *The Hands of Orlac*, combines pacy Hollywood entertainment with arty European panache. The celebrated Dr Gogol (Lorre) is creepily obsessed with actress Yvonne Orlac. When her husband, a concert pianist, is injured in a train crash, Yvonne unwisely turns to Gogol for help. Lorre's performance begins with uncanny restraint and builds to a powerful crescendo. Rejected by the public as 'sick,' *Mad Love* is everything you could wish for in a B-movie.

+ The Face Behind the Mask

USA 1941. Dir Robert Florey. With Evelyn Keyes, Don Beddoe, George E. Stone. 68min

Hungarian immigrant Janos Szabo (Lorre) is working as a dishwasher in a New York hotel when fire breaks out, causing him horrific injuries and turning him into a social outcast. This suspenseful, heart-rending tale, superbly photographed by Franz Planer, offered Lorre one of his most rewarding roles and the rare chance to win the audience's sympathy. Despising make-up, he portrayed the despairing burns victim with minimal cosmetic aid.

Print courtesy of the Austrian Film Museum

Wed 3 Sept 18:00 NFT2

Sun 7 Sept 17:50 NFT2

Crime and Punishment

USA 1935. Dir Josef von Sternberg. With Edward Arnold, Marian Marsh, Tala Birell. 88min. U

Raskolnikov is the part Lorre longed to play – the brilliant but impoverished writer whose intellectual arrogance gets the better of him. It's an intriguing variation on his role in *M*, and his nuanced portrayal is strikingly captured in von Sternberg's close-ups. At times, you can almost smell his fear. Victorian stage star Mrs Patrick Campbell plays the greedy old pawnbroker who inspires his murderous hatred, while Edward Arnold excels as the genial but cunning police inspector.

Fri 5 Sept 18:10 NFT3

Wed 10 Sept 20:30 NFT3

Secret Agent

UK 1936. Dir Alfred Hitchcock. With John Gielgud, Madeleine Carroll. 86min. U

Lorre's second and last film for Hitchcock is based on W Somerset Maugham's Ashenden stories, set during World War One. Sent to Switzerland on a secret mission, a British spy (Gielgud) is allocated a fictitious wife (the alluring Carroll) and an assistant known as 'The General' (Lorre) – a pint-sized professional assassin devoid of moral scruples. Including a wonderful scene in a Swiss chocolate factory, *Secret Agent* is full of wit, absurdity and surprises, much of which is supplied by Lorre.

Fri 5 Sept 20:45 NFT2

Thu 11 Sept 18:30 NFT2

Think Fast, Mr Moto

USA 1937. Dir Norman Foster. With Virginia Field, Thomas Beck, Sig Ruman. 70min. PG

'Mr Moto,' said Peter Lorre, 'is the character who never quite lets anyone know what he's going to do next.' This is the first of eight films in which he starred as the dapper Japanese detective, man of many masks and unusual talents. He's also surprisingly athletic (thanks to legendary stuntman Harvey Parry). Here, Moto pits his wits against a ruthless gang of diamond smugglers, demonstrates his mastery of jiu-jitsu and reveals a miracle cure for hangovers.

+ Mr Moto Takes a Vacation

USA 1939. Dir Norman Foster. With Joseph Schildkraut, Lionel Atwell, Virginia Field. 65min. PG

The last of the *Mr Moto* series opens with the excavation of the long lost crown of the Queen of Sheba. Present at its unveiling is a bearded Viennese professor who hails the discovery in a strangely familiar accent. Not long afterwards, Mr Moto – who just happened to be on holiday in Cairo – pops up. The priceless treasure will, he believes, prove irresistible bait to a certain master criminal. Watch out for Joseph Schildkraut, another great character actor of Austro-Hungarian origin.

Sun 7 Sept 15:00 NFT2

Fri 12 Sept 20:20 NFT2

Strange Cargo

USA 1940. Dir Frank Borzage. With Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, Ian Hunter. 113min

Verne (Clark Gable), a convict on Devil's Island, is powerfully attracted to local prostitute Julie (Joan Crawford). When another convict (Ian Hunter) leads them in a daring escape attempt, they – and the other fugitives – react in different ways to his eerie, moral authority. Lurking in the background is M'sieu Pig (Lorre), a loathsome spy who lusts after Julie and envies the charismatic Verne. This strangely disquieting tale of physical and spiritual adventure was condemned by the Legion of Decency.

Tue 9 Sept 18:20 NFT2

Sun 14 Sept 20:20 NFT2

Stranger on the Third Floor

USA 1940. Dir Boris Ingster. With John McGuire, Margaret Tallichet, Elisha Cook Jr. 64min

Brimful of shadows, flashbacks and expressionist angles, this is reputed to be the first ever film noir. When a café proprietor is found with his throat cut, one of his customers (Elisha Cook Jr.) is sentenced to the electric chair. Lorre, a striking, largely silent apparition, plays the unearthly stranger who may or may not know more about the crime. His first words, gently murmured, are: 'I'd like a couple of hamburgers and I'd like them raw...'

Sun 7 Sept 20:45 NFT2

Sat 13 Sept 18:20 NFT2

The Maltese Falcon

USA 1941. Dir John Huston. With Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Sydney Greenstreet. 100min. PG

Based on a novel by Dashiell Hammett, John Huston's brilliant debut feature is a twisting tale of deception and delusion. Private eye Sam Spade rarely loses his cool, but a seductive new client spells serious trouble, leading him to make some very bizarre acquaintances. One of these is Joel Cairo (Lorre), a 'pocket edition desperado' with a gardenia-scented calling card. 'Lorre,' said Huston, 'is always doing two things at the same time, thinking one thing and doing something else.'

Thu 11 Sept 20:45 NFT1

Fri 19 Sept 18:30 NFT1

Casablanca

USA 1942. Dir Michael Curtiz. With Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains. 102min. Digital. U

'You despise me, don't you?' This question is put by Ugarte (Lorre) to Rick (Bogart), proprietor of the Café Americain, louche haunt of refugees in a wartime Casablanca. To Rick, Ugarte is just one of the many shysters who trade in exit visas and human misery. But – as so often with the characters played by Lorre – the truth is somewhat more complicated. With just a few minutes on screen, Lorre makes an unforgettable imprint on this legend of movie history.

Sat 6 Sept 20:45 NFT1

Sat 20 Sept 16:00 NFT1

The Mask of Dimitrios

USA 1943. Dir Jean Negulesco. With Sydney Greenstreet, Faye Emerson, Zachary Scott. 95min

This stylish, picaresque thriller has Lorre unusually cast as a Dutch mystery writer who is inspired by the true-life tale of evil genius Dimitrios (Zachary Scott). Embarking on a journey across Europe to learn more about his subject, he runs into the sinister, formidable bulk of Mr Peters (Sydney Greenstreet), a former associate of Dimitrios. Though he claimed to have difficulty playing straight, Lorre is splendidly urbane, and the double act with Greenstreet is, as always, a treat.

Sat 13 Sept 16:00 NFT2

Thu 18 Sept 20:45 NFT2

Arsenic and Old Lace

USA 1944. Dir Frank Capra. With Cary Grant, Priscilla Lane, Raymond Massey. 118min. PG

Theatre critic Mortimer Brewster (Cary Grant), a long-term opponent of marriage, is about to succumb to wedlock when he discovers a terrible family secret. This gloriously gruesome farce, based on a Broadway hit, has Peter Lorre as Dr Einstein, a plastic surgeon whose skills have had a startling effect on Mortimer's criminal brother. Director Frank Capra admired Lorre's talent for innovation and adopted many of his suggestions, allowing him and Grant to indulge their love of ad-libbing.

Mon 15 Sept 20:40 NFT1

Wed 17 Sept 20:40 NFT1

Black Angel

USA 1946. Dir Roy William Neill. With Dan Duryea, June Vincent, Broderick Crawford. 81min. Digital

Mavis Marlowe, a glamorous chanteuse, lies dead on her bedroom floor while a record called 'Heartbreak' plays in the background. Her married lover is convicted of her murder, but the condemned man's wife decides to investigate further, teaming up with Mavis' ex-husband (Dan Duryea), an alcoholic musician, to infiltrate a nightclub on Sunset Strip. Marko (Lorre), the chain-smoking nightclub owner, has a world-weary air and a discerning dislike of artists who make too much noise.

Thu 18 Sept 18:30 NFT2

Tue 23 Sept 20:45 NFT2

The Verdict

USA 1946. Dir Don Siegel. With Sydney Greenstreet, Joan Larring, George Coulouris. 86min. PG

As noir as they come, Don Siegel's directorial debut opens with the hanging of an innocent man in fog-bound Victorian London. Blamed for the miscarriage of justice and forced to resign, the Chief of Police (Sydney Greenstreet) takes a keen interest in the re-investigation of the case. So too does his friend and neighbour, the bibulous, womanising artist Victor Emmric (Lorre). Why is his taste for the macabre so finely developed? Lorre by gaslight is as inscrutable as ever.

Wed 24 Sept 20:45 NFT2

Sun 28 Sept 18:30 NFT1

The Beast with Five Fingers

USA 1947. Dir Robert Florey. With Robert Alda, Andrea King, Victor Francen. 88min. 15

The Beast with Five Fingers is a cult gothic noir in which an elderly pianist with only one hand meets a sudden, violent death. His family, vulture-like, worry that his pretty young nurse will inherit, while his secretary (Lorre), a student of astrology, cares only about the old man's valuable library. An atmosphere of greed, fear and guilt culminates in hallucinatory horror. Lorre, black-clad and bespectacled, resembles a demented Brecht in a performance that runs the gamut from naturalism to expressionism.

Mon 29 Sept 20:40 NFT2

Fri 3 Oct 20:40 NFT2

My Favourite Brunette

USA 1947. Dir Elliott Nugent. With Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, Lon Chaney. 87min. PG

A delightful comedy thriller in which a photographer of babies (Bob Hope) is mistaken for a private detective by a beautiful, flirtatious baroness with a missing husband. When he visits the lady's villa, the door is opened by what appears to be a butler (Lorre) but is really Kismet – a lethal, humourless, knife-throwing gangster

who reacts badly when Bob addresses him as 'Cuddles.' Lon Chaney adds to the fun as an amiable thug who doesn't know his own strength.

Wed 1 Oct 18:30 NFT1

Sun 5 Oct 18:30 NFT3

The Lost One Der Verlorene

Germany 1951. Dir Peter Lorre. With Karl John, Johanna Hofer, Gisela Trowe. 99min. EST

Returning to Germany 20 years after *M*, Lorre made his only film as director – a potent blend of noir and neorealism set amid the ruins of post-war Hamburg. He himself stars as a doctor in a displaced persons' camp whose life is darkened by a terrible secret. Flawed but fascinating, it's not only a nightmarish thriller, but a meditation on guilt and the futility of trying to forget past crimes. Its lack of success was a bitter blow to Lorre.

Fri 3 Oct 18:30 NFT2

Sat 4 Oct 20:45 NFT2

Beat the Devil

USA 1953. Dir John Huston. With Humphrey Bogart, Jennifer Jones, Gina Lollobrigida, Robert Morley. 89min. U

This strange, sardonic romp, co-scripted by Truman Capote, fell flat in its day but achieved cult status in the 60s when the zeitgeist caught up with its improvisatory feel and irreverent sense of humour. Humphrey Bogart is head of a motley gang who want to get their hands on the uranium wealth of British East Africa. As gang-member O'Hara, a chain-smoking Chilean-German with a philosophic bent, Lorre gets some of the best lines.

Sat 4 Oct 16:30 NFT1

Mon 6 Oct 20:45 NFT1

Silk Stockings

USA 1957. Dir Rouben Mamoulian. With Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, Jules Munshin. 117min. U

This musical remake of Lubitsch's *Ninotchka* stars Cyd Charisse as the Soviet 'envoy extraordinaire' who is sent to Paris on a special mission. As well as sorting out a potentially dissident composer, she has to discipline three Russian commissars seduced by capitalist vice. Peter Lorre is the lugubrious, cherubic one who always seems a beat behind the others. He claimed he couldn't dance, but managed to steal the show with some moves of his own devising.

Thu 2 Oct 20:40 NFT1

Fri 3 Oct 20:40 NFT1

Sun 5 Oct 18:20 NFT1

Tue 7 Oct 18:10 NFT1

The Raven

USA 1963. Dir Roger Corman. With Vincent Price, Boris Karloff, Jack Nicholson. 86min. PG

Edgar Allan Poe's melancholy gothic poem is merely the starting point for this outrageous spoof starring the screen's three 'titans of terror.' Dr Scarabus (Boris Karloff), a master magician, bitterly envies the superior powers of Dr Craven (Vincent Price). One night, a talking bird flies in at Craven's window. Sounding just like Peter Lorre, it claims to be Dr Bedlo, a wizard who's been placed under a spell. A young Jack Nicholson in plumed hat and tights plays the little wizard's unfeasibly handsome son.

Sat 4 Oct 18:30 NFT1

Tue 7 Oct 20:45 NFT3

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- 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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