

13/16

## Sight & Sound Deep Focus: The Roots of Neorealism

**Includes screenings of *Voyage to Italy*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *People on Sunday* and *An Inn in Tokyo***



**16 April 2013, London.** In May, **BFI Southbank** will present **The Roots of Neorealism**, a season of films that helped inspire one of the most important moments in film history - *Italian Neorealism*. Season curator **Pasquale Iannone** notes how relevant the movement continues to be decades on:

*“The first neorealist picture may have been made more than 70 years ago, but the trend still fascinates critics, scholars and filmmakers alike...In 2013 one of the last surviving neorealists, 91-year-old Carlo Lizzani (*Achtung Bandit!*, 1951, *The Verona Trial*, 1962) will release a documentary entitled *We Weren’t Only Bicycle Thieves*, which will include contributions from Bernardo Bertolucci, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Martin Scorsese, Ridley Scott and Ron Howard, among others. Listing these famous names together makes you realise just how far neorealism’s branches have spread” (Pasquale Iannone, *Sight & Sound*, May 2013)*

This season is the first to be programmed around **Deep Focus, Sight & Sound’s** new series of in-depth articles examining significant themes, genres, or historical moments in cinema. Neorealism was a politically-committed reaction to the glossy Hollywood-influenced films approved by Mussolini’s regime, determined to take cameras to the streets to capture the ‘real Italy’. However, the turn toward realism in global cinema had begun much earlier, and this season offers a very rare opportunity to savour films from around the globe which helped lay the groundwork for neorealist cinema such as ***An Inn in Tokyo*** (Dir. Yasujiro Ozu, 1935), ***People on Sunday*** (Dirs. Robert Siodmak & Edgar G Ulmer, 1929) and ***Man of Aran*** (Dir. Robert Flaherty, 1934). The season will also include several notable neorealist films including ***Bicycle Thieves*** (Dir. Vittorio De Sica, 1948), ***Rome, Open City*** (Dir.

Roberto Rossellini, 1945) and the newly restored **Journey to Italy** (Dir. Roberto Rossellini, 1953), which will be re-released by the BFI on May 10.

The neorealists in general favoured location shooting, casts that blended professionals and non-professionals as well as narratives that often lacked the structure and linearity of classic Hollywood. Many of these traits can be seen in the global cinema that preceded the neorealist movement. **Robert Siodmak** and **Edgar G Ulmer's People on Sunday** (1929) is a city film like no other – poised between fiction and documentary, it chronicles one Sunday in the lives of a small group of youthful Berliners who are all portrayed by non-professional actors. In 1934, Michigan-born documentary pioneer **Robert Flaherty** was invited by British producer Michael Balcon to make a film about life on the islands of Aran. The resulting film, **Man of Aran**, concerns itself with the struggle of man versus nature as well as the onset of modernity. It was hugely influential, and its mark can be felt in Visconti's second neorealist picture, *La Terra Trema*. While neorealist directors are usually seen to depart from the formalism of Soviet montage, figures such as Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov and in particular, Vsevolod Pudovkin were undoubted influences on the Italian post-war generation. Pudovkin's **The End of St Petersburg** (1927) focuses on the intense personal drama of a character caught up in the Bolshevik Revolution. Work by hugely influential directors such as **Yasujiro Ozu** and **Jean Renoir** will also be screened in the season. Ozu's **An Inn In Tokyo** (1935) anticipates themes and situations in **Bicycle Thieves** (1948) by more than a decade, while Renoir once said of **Toni** (1935) 'My ambition was to throw out anything unnatural...to approach a style that would be based as closely as possible on everyday events'.

Following on from these precursors to neorealism BFI will also be screening a number of neorealist titles including **Luchino Visconti's Ossessione** (1942) (generally considered to be the first Italian neorealist film) and **Bicycle Thieves** (Dir. Vittorio De Sica, 1948). With a deceptively simple narrative it was born out of director Vittorio De Sica's desire to depict the drama of everyday life. The season will also screen two titles by **Roberto Rossellini**, the first of the director's celebrated war trilogy, **Rome, Open City** (1945) and arguably his greatest film **Journey to Italy** (1953), which the BFI will re-release on May 10. This season offers audiences a chance to take a look at a crucial moment in film history from a new angle, showing that before the neorealists got the chance to make their own films, they had been looking elsewhere for inspiration.



**Deep Focus is Sight & Sound's new series of in-depth articles, each built around a programme of 12 key films, in which noted experts explore the significant themes, genres or historical moments in cinema and what made them happen. Read more on The Roots of Neorealism in the June issue, on sale from 7 May**

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**Screenings taking place in the season:**

**Sight & Sound Panel Discussion: The Roots of Neorealism**

Where did Italian neorealism come from? Can we in fact identify its 'roots' beyond Italy, in a number of ground-breaking films that emerged – seemingly unilaterally – across the globe in the 1920s and 30s? These are the intriguing questions that will be explored by Alexander Jacoby, Henry K Miller, Ginette Vincendeau and Chris Wagstaff in an illustrated discussion event chaired by Pasquale Iannone, curator of our Roots of Neorealism season.

**Tickets £6**

**Tue 7 May 18:15 NFT3**

**The End of St Petersburg** Konets Sankt-Peterburga

USSR 1927. Dir Vsevolod Pudovkin. With Vera Baranovskaya, Alexandr Chistyakov, Ivan Chuvelyov. 98min. PG. Live piano accompaniment

While neorealist directors are usually seen to depart considerably from the formalism of Soviet montage, figures such as Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov and in particular, Vsevolod Pudovkin were undoubted influences on the Italian post-war generation. Pudovkin's *The End of St Petersburg* – like the director's earlier film, *Mother* – focuses on the intense personal drama of a character (here a peasant boy) caught up in the vicissitudes of the Bolshevik Revolution.

**Wed 1 May 20:40 NFT2**

**Sun 12 May 16:00 NFT2**

**People on Sunday** Menschen am Sonntag

Germany 1929. Dir Robert Siodmak & Edgar G Ulmer. With Erwin Splettstösser, Brigitte Borchert, Wolfgang von Waltershausen, Christl Ehlers. 79min. Live piano accompaniment

Famous for showcasing the burgeoning talent of several major filmmakers of the future (Robert and Curt Siodmak, Billy Wilder, Fred Zinnemann, Edgar G Ulmer and Eugen Schüfftan), *People on Sunday* was made toward the end of the silent era and chronicles one Sunday in the lives of a small group of youthful Berliners. The film's unvarnished, sun-drenched vitality is poised between fiction and documentary: a city film unlike no other.

**Thu 2 May 20:40 NFT2**

**Sat 11 May 18:20 NFT2**

**1860**

Italy 1933. Dir Alessandro Blasetti. With Giuseppe Gulino, Aida Bellia, Gianfranco Giachetti, Mario Ferrari. 80min. EST

Alessandro Blasetti was a key filmmaker during the Fascist era in Italy. However, unlike many of his contemporaries, he continued to inspire the younger generation of directors after the war. His patriotic, realist epic *1860* is a 'history-from-below' chronicle of the unification of Italy as seen through the eyes of a Sicilian shepherd who leaves his family to join Garibaldi's Mille.

**\*Introduced by Pasquale Iannone**

**Fri 3 May 20:45 NFT2**

**Tue 7 May 20:30 NFT3\***

**Man of Aran**

UK 1934. Dir Robert Flaherty. With Colman 'Tiger' King, Maggie Dirrane, Michael Dirrane, Pat Mullin. 76min. Digital. U

In 1934, Michigan-born documentary pioneer Flaherty was invited by British producer Michael Balcon to make a film about life on the islands of Aran. Like previous Flaherty works such as *Nanook of the North* or *Moana*, *Man of Aran* concerns itself with the struggle of man versus nature as well as the onset of modernity. Hugely influential, its mark can be felt in Visconti's second neorealist picture, *La Terra Trema*.

**\*Introduced by Pasquale Iannone**

**Mon 6 May 15:00 NFT2\***

**Thu 9 May 20:40 NFT2**

**An Inn In Tokyo** Tôkyô no yado

Japan 1935. Dir Yasujiro Ozu. With Takeshi Sakamoto, Yoshiko Okada, Chôko Iida, Tomio Aoki. 80min. Live piano accompaniment

One of Ozu's most moving 1930s works. *An Inn in Tokyo's* themes and situations anticipate De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* by more than a decade. The story of a father and his two young boys searching desperately for work in the unforgiving climate of Depression-era Japan, it was Ozu's last (surviving) silent picture, made a year before his first foray into sound with *The Only Son*.

**Mon 13 May 20:45 NFT1**

**Thu 16 May 18:30 NFT1**

**Toni**

France 1935. Dir Jean Renoir. With Charles Blavette, Celia Montalván, Édouard Delmont, Jenny Héliat. 84min. EST. PG

Coming mid-point in an extraordinary, near-decade-long run which included masterpieces such as *La Grande Illusion* (1937) and *La Règle du Jeu* (1939), Renoir's *Toni* tells of an Italian immigrant and his involvement with two very different women in the sweltering heat of Martigues. 'My ambition was to throw out anything unnatural,' Renoir once said, 'to approach a style that would be based as closely as possible on everyday events.'

**Fri 10 May 20:40 NFT2**

**Tue 14 May 18:20 NFT2**

**Aniki Bóbo**

Portugal 1942. Dir Manoel de Oliveira. With Américo Botelho, Feliciano David, Nascimento Fernandes, Fernanda Matos. 71min. EST

The debut feature by the Portuguese filmmaker Manoel de Oliveira is a story of friendship, guilt and fear among a group of street children as well as of their relationship with an often hostile adult world. Shot on location in Porto and featuring a cast of non-professional young actors, *Aniki Bóbo* anticipates by several years De Sica's more celebrated *Shoeshine* (1946).

**Tue 14 May 20:40 NFT2**

**Sat 18 May 15:50 NFT3**

**Ossessione**

Italy 1942. Dir Luchino Visconti. With Clara Calamai, Massimo Girotti, Elio Marcuzzo, Juan de Landa. 140min. EST. PG

Generally considered to be the first Italian neorealist film, *Ossessione* brought together a group of young anti-fascist intellectuals, headed by director Luchino Visconti, in an (unauthorised) adaptation of James M Cain's 1934 thriller *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Visconti, a Milanese aristocrat, was able to draw on his time spent working with Jean Renoir in the 1930s to craft an earthy, subversive drama of adultery and murder.

**Wed 15 May 20:20 NFT1**

**Fri 17 May 18:10 NFT1**

**Le ciel est à vous** The Woman Who Dared

France 1944. Dir Jean Grémillon. With Madeleine Renaud, Charles Vanel, Jean Debucourt, Raymonde Vernay. 105min. EST

Unusual for both its location shooting and proto-feminist perspective, *Le ciel est à vous* tells of Thérèse (Madeleine Renaud), the wife of a former fighter pilot, who becomes obsessed with the idea of flying in her own right and sets out to break the long-distance aviation record. The last of three major features made by Grémillon during the Occupation, it's an uplifting tale of female courage and determination.

**BFI Southbank will present a Jean Grémillon season in July**

**Mon 20 May 20:40 NFT2**

**Fri 24 May 18:20 NFT2**

**Rome, Open City** Roma città aperta

Italy 1945. Dir Roberto Rossellini. With Anna Magnani, Aldo Fabrizi, Marcello Pagliero, Vito Annichiarico. 100min. EST. 12A

*Rome, Open City* was the first film in Rossellini's celebrated war trilogy and was inspired by the true story of an Italian priest who was executed for his resistance activities. The director wanted, above all, to faithfully represent the atmosphere of terror he himself had experienced living under Nazi occupation. The film features career-defining performances from Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi in a key work of the neorealist canon.

**Restored by CSC-Cineteca Nazionale**

**Wed 22 May 18:00 NFT1**

**Sat 25 May 16:15 NFT1**

**Bicycle Thieves** Ladri di biciclette

Italy 1948. Dir Vittorio De Sica. With Lamberto Maggiorani, Enzo Staiola, Lianella Carell, Gino Saltamerenda. 93min. Digital. EST. U

Perhaps the most famous of all the neorealist productions, *Bicycle Thieves*' deceptively simple narrative of a father and son's search for a stolen bicycle was fruit of De Sica and (screenwriter) Cesare Zavattini's desire to connect with the drama in the everyday. 'Why go looking for extraordinary adventures,' said the director, 'when what is happening right before our eyes to the most unfortunate in society is filled with such real anxiety'.

**Thu 23 May 18:30 NFT1**

**Sat 25 May 18:30 NFT1**

**Bitter Rice** Riso Amaro

Italy 1949. Dir Giuseppe De Santis. With Vittorio Gassman, Silvana Mangano, Doris Dowling, Raf Vallone. 108min. EST. PG

Nowhere near as well-known outside of Italy as he should be, Giuseppe De Santis was one of the most important figures of the neorealist period, first as a critic, then as a filmmaker. *Bitter Rice* was his breakthrough second feature and an unusual (though not necessarily unique) combination of crime melodrama and neorealism. The film is also famous for marking the smouldering feature debut of 19-year-old beauty Silvana Mangano.

**Sun 26 May 16:15 NFT1**

**Fri 31 May 20:40 NFT2**

**Journey to Italy** Viaggio in Italia

Italy-France 1953. Dir Roberto Rossellini. With Ingrid Bergman, George Sanders, Maria Mauban. 86min. Digital. PG. A BFI release.

Arguably the very greatest of Rossellini's films, this piercing study of a marriage on the rocks is also one of the cinema's most miraculous love stories. Its magic lies partly in the pitch-perfect casting of George Sanders as cynical, supercilious English businessman Alex Joyce and Ingrid Bergman as his restless wife Katherine. Already bored by the time they reach a property they're selling, the troubled couple allow differences in taste and temperament to drive them towards divorce, even as Naples, Capri and Pompeii also take their toll... While Rossellini's customary interest in documentary realism enhances the depiction of the region's influence on the disenchanted pair, he here moves far beyond social realities to focus on the kind of deeper emotional and psychological truths one finds in the work of Bergman and Antonioni. This digital restoration by Cineteca di Bologna does full justice both to the immediacy of Enzo Serafin's images and to a vividly colourful soundtrack; the film remains wondrously alive.

**Fri 10 – Fri 31 May (Continues in June)**

**Screening on Fri 10 May 18:15 NFT1 introduced by Geoff Andrew**

**Seniors' Matinee, with introduction: Fri 17 May 14:00 NFT3**

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

### **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 Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £10.00, concs £6.75 Members pay £1.50 less on any ticket. Website [www.bfi.org.uk/southbank](http://www.bfi.org.uk/southbank)

**Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment**

### **BFI Shop**

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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 \*\*\***

**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) under BFI / BFI Southbank / May 2013**